

Ponte Vedra Recorder



December 14, 2017
Volume 47, No. 50
75 cents

Not your average newspaper, not your average reader

PonteVedraRecorder.com

A NIGHT AT 'THE NUTCRACKER'

Christ Episcopal Church presented its 22nd annual production of "The Nutcracker" Dec. 9 at UNF's Lazzara Performance Hall. **Read page 18 for more.**

Photo by Samantha Logue

Oak Bridge development update
Page 4



Last-minute Gift Guide
Pages 13-28
Sports
Pages 32-34



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INSIDE

One of Us
Page 6

Calendar
Pages 22-23

Last-minute
Gift Guide
Pages 13-28

Business Weekly
Pages 29-31

Send us your news

We welcome submissions of photos, stories, columns and letters to the editor. Let us know what's happening.
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Solutions correspond to last week's puzzles.

WHAT'S THIS?



Do you know what this is?

Email your answer to jonb@opcfla.com
by Monday at 5 p.m.

All correct entries will be entered into a random drawing to win tickets for two adults and two children to the Jacksonville Zoo. In order to allow as many families as possible to win, participants are only eligible to win a ticket prize pack once every four months.

Eight readers correctly identified last week's photo as the Gwen Berlin sign. Good job, everyone! The winner of the random drawing was **Danelle Kensbock**. Congratulations, Danelle – you may pick up your prize at the Recorder office during normal business hours.



ADOPT A PET

CAT OF THE WEEK

My name is Archie, and I am a 1-year-old male cat who is looking for a new home. I was brought to the pet center as a stray, which means there may be some traits that are unknown at this time. Come visit me today here at the pet center! #40553



DOG OF THE WEEK

My name is Boo, and I am a 3-year-old male dog who is looking for a new home. I was brought to the pet center because my owners could no longer care for me. Come visit me today here at the pet center! #40968



Any new pet being introduced to a new home will need time to adjust to its new environment. Please reinforce house training and behavioral training, and be mindful of interacting with other pets.

St. Johns County Pet Center

Cat adoptions at the St. Johns County Pet Center are \$30 for males and \$40 for females. Dog adoptions are \$45 for males and \$60 for females. Adoption fees include microchipping, neutering/spaying, rabies vaccinations and shots. The pet center is located at 130 N. Stratton Road off U.S. 1 between County Road 210 and International Golf Parkway. Business hours are Tuesday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The center is closed to the public on Sunday. On Monday, the office is open by appointment only to claim a lost pet. For more information, please call the **St. Johns County Pet Center at (904) 209-6190.**



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U.S.P.S. (705-300) Periodical Postage Paid at Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
Postmaster: Send change of addresses to: Ponte Vedra Recorder, P.O. Box 501, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL, 32004. (904) 285-8831
Subscription Rates, Bulk Mail: One year, \$35; six months, \$20. Rates not applicable in Canada or overseas.
To subscribe, call Circulation Manager Rob Conwell at (904) 686-3936.

The Recorder is published every Thursday at 1102 A1A N., Unit 108 Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

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PZA recommends approval of development plans for Oak Bridge Club

By Jon Blauvelt

The St. Johns County Planning and Zoning Agency (PZA) last Thursday unanimously recommended approval of zoning and land use changes that would allow Alta Mar Holdings LLC to sell six holes of the Oak Bridge Club golf course for development into an age restricted residential community (55+) up to 330 units and four acres of commercial uses with a maximum of 15,000 square feet.

The PZA specifically recommended approval of Alta Mar's requests for changes to the Caballos del Mar Development of Regional Impact (DRI) and Players Club at Sawgrass Planned Unit Development (PUD), which would allow the property owners to allocate existing, vested development rights to the golf course. Alta Mar's plans will go before the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners for final deliberation on Jan. 16, 2018.

"A great result, not just for our team, but for the entire community," said David Miller of Alta Mar Holdings LLC, the owner of the Oak Bridge Club, following the Dec. 7 PZA hearing in St. Augustine. "A lot of people didn't give us a snowball's chance in you know where of getting this to this point."

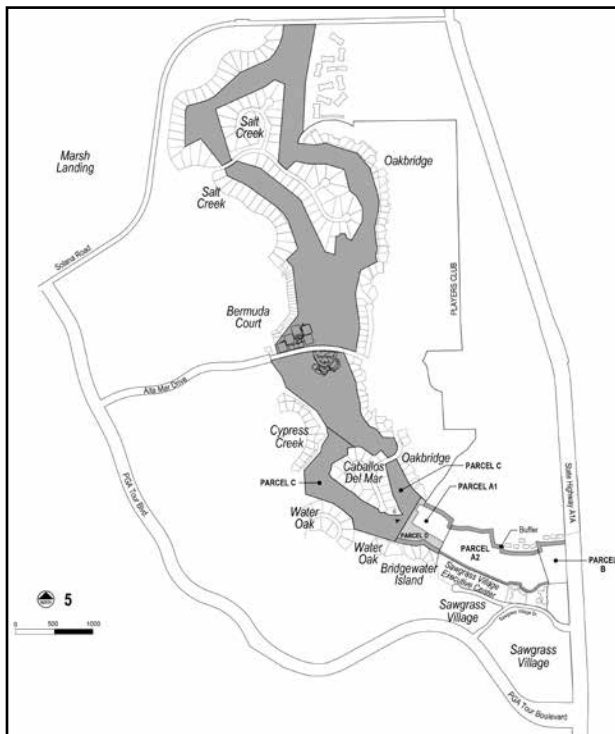
The genesis

David Miller and his partner and cousin Jeff Miller purchased the mortgage note for the Oak Bridge Club in 2014 after the club's former operator went into default. They initially believed a buyer would purchase the course but soon learned its condition would make that difficult. Couple that with the nosedive of the golf industry, said David Miller, and no buyer emerged. They foreclosed on the golf course in late 2015 and faced the reality that the club was losing \$55,000 a month.

The Millers hired Jacksonville-based engineering firm Prosser to determine which parcels of the property were developable and set a plan in motion to raise capital.

The plan? Sell the course's back 40 acres, with 23 of those acres to be developed, and reduce the course's holes from 18 to 12. Two of the proposed parcels of land (A1 and A2) would be developed for an age restricted community (55+). Parcel A1 would be for single-story residences (maximum building height of 24 feet), while building on Parcel A2 would be capped at three stories (maximum height of 58 feet). David Miller has said Vicar's Landing is interested in that property to expand upon its senior living community.

According to the plan, a third parcel (Parcel B) along A1A would be developed for either 15,000 square feet of



Map courtesy of Prosser

A map displays Alta Mar's proposed plan for the Oak Bridge Club, which received a unanimous recommendation of approval from the St. Johns County Planning and Zoning Agency on Dec. 7.

commercial/civic space or additional residences. David Miller has noted that the Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach is interested in this property.

The Oak Bridge owners said the property abutting Oak Bridge, Water Oak and Cypress Creek known as Parcel C would not be developed and would be used for retention ponds and green space. Parcel D, which abuts Bridgewater Island, would also be used for green space and would serve as a buffer, they added.

The Sawgrass Players Club Master HOA Board asked the Millers to invest in the club as an act of good faith. The property owners consequently redeveloped the clubhouse, tennis courts, driving range and more at the tune of \$2.5 million. The board then mandated that \$2 million from the potential sale of the property go into escrow and be deployed into the remaining 12 holes of the course.

This is the plan and agreement the HOA board ultimately agreed to, as well as the residents within the community encompassing 1,800 homes. In February 2017, these residents voted three-to-one to lift a restriction on the 23 developable acres of the course that required they remain a golf course until 2023. The vote allowed the land to be

sold, in exchange for a deed restriction that would guarantee the 100 other acres of the course remain a golf course until 2057.

"I think the crux of this project is it's a win, win, win situation for the vast majority of constituents," said David Miller. "The alternative is grim and dire. I think that's why we've had such an abundance of support."

Reaction at the PZA hearing

Sawgrass Players Club President Gerry Klingman kicked off public comment, expressing his support for the Oak Bridge plans. He said over 72 percent of the community responded to the vote in February, which is the largest turnout it's had for such an initiative. Of the 72 percent, he said 75 percent approved lifting the restriction.

"The whole community was involved," commented Klingman. "We definitely feel it is a win-win for the Sawgrass Players Club, and we feel it's going to enhance all of our property."

Much of the opposition, meanwhile, said the potential development will increase traffic.

Resident Michael Burns cited the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization's (TPO) recent study that revealed a rather gloomy forecast for traffic conditions in Ponte Vedra/Palm Valley and said this development will only make it worse. Burns also disputed Alta Mar's argument that residents of an age restricted or senior community will drive less; he said the older he gets, the more trips he takes and the more people that will visit him. Others expanded upon this argument and said staff of the community would also add to the traffic.

In response, Alta Mar attorney Ellen Avery-Smith said the master developer of the Caballos del Mar DRI has mitigation for traffic impact that dates to 1975.

"We are seeking to add 330 residential units and four acres of commercial from the existing, vested, mitigated development rights in the Caballos del Mar DRI," she explained. "That's the legal position we have."

David Miller added that because the community would be age restricted, residents in that demographic are not likely to be travelling at peak hours.

Linda Householder, whose property abuts the Oak Bridge golf course, said she's worried about access to and from the project.

"They're going to have to do a U-turn, either go south or do a U-turn to go north," she said.

Avery-Smith said there will be at least one access

OAK BRIDGE continues on Page 5

Ponte Vedra Beach residents encouraged to get informed, engaged in local development proposals

By Samantha Logue

At a meeting of the Ponte Vedra Beaches Coalition Wednesday, Dec. 6, Ponte Vedra Beach residents were encouraged to be more civically engaged regarding proposed development projects in the area.

"You're really unique here in Ponte

Vedra, and I think it behooves all of you to get really familiar with the codes that govern you specifically, because they aren't the same rules that the rest of the county has to play by," said Jane West, managing partner of Jane West Law and chair of the City of St. Augustine Beach Planning and Zoning Board. "Getting to know those

district regulations is really important for, in my opinion, everyone who lives here in Ponte Vedra—especially since the growth is so exponential these days."

With a long list of development proposals currently in the works for the Ponte Vedra Beach area, West and St. Johns County Director of Growth Management

Suzanne Konchan were invited to give presentations regarding the ways in which residents could become more involved in the approval process. According to Konchan, one easy way to stay informed is by making use of the resources provided on

PROPOSALS continues on Page 8

MSD Board expects CTF traffic survey results to be released soon

By Jon Blauvelt

At this month's meeting of the Ponte Vedra Beach Municipal Service District (MSD) Board of Trustees, Chairman John Wegl said the Ponte Vedra/Palm Valley Citizens Traffic Task Force Board (CTTF) is planning to release the results of its recent traffic surveys following a meeting with county staff scheduled for next week.

The CTFF circulated the first of its two online traffic surveys in October, collecting input on short-term improvements that can be made to various intersections in Ponte Vedra Beach and Palm Valley that would improve traffic flow and safety. A second survey was circulated in mid-November asking for input on the widening of A1A and Mickler Road.

Both surveys were developed by the CTFF Board to solicit feedback from area residents and businesses as a result of recommendations proposed in a recent study commissioned by St. Johns County and

the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO).

Wegl said the CTFF Board will review the survey feedback with county staff next week and then release all pertinent information to the public. Wegl did not provide a specific date for exactly when or how that information will be made available.

In other news, Trustee Brad Wester said a contractor for JEA is currently replacing pods in MSD residents' yards that are part of the vacuum sewer system. He said it's an ongoing project with no end date.

"They're out there putting these protections in to reduce any potential backups in the homes and businesses," he said. "You'll see them. They're contractor trucks so they're not specific to JEA."

Wester also said pavers have been implemented at two beach access points in the district as part of the MSD's ongoing beautification efforts. One is just south of the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club, he said, and the other is across from San Diego Road.

Wester noted that these are the two most heavily used access points other than the one at Solana Road.

The MSD Board discussed code enforcement at the end of the meeting. Wegl kicked off the discussion by asking the board if they should help the county with prioritizing the PRIDE complaints (anonymous, online complaints sent by residents to the county) it receives from Ponte Vedra. Wegl said the county has grown impatient with the number of PRIDE complaints coming out of their area.

Trustee Kitty Switkes said she analyzed the Ponte Vedra PRIDE complaints and doesn't believe Ponte Vedra's number is any higher than other areas in the county. She also doesn't think the MSD has the right to prioritize complaints by citizens of the area.

"Ponte Vedra was the first zoning district that has rules," she said. "The reason why we have such good community ap-

pearance is because we have those rules. And if people are sending in PRIDES, and they're supposed to be anonymous, then I don't see how the MSD can prioritize complaints by citizens of our area. We have the rules, and people have the right to point them out. This is the system the county has set up."

Vice chairman Gary Jurenovich voiced his opposition to the PRIDE complaint process and said residents should instead approach such situations as educational opportunities.

"If somebody dumps their yard trimmings on the street, if somebody has garbage out two or three days in advance, I think it's an educational issue, and I think we'd be more suited to go talk to that resident instead of simply turning in yet another PRIDE complaint," he said.

The next MSD meeting is Jan. 6, 2018, at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, where the board will elect a new chairman, vice-chairman and treasurer.

Oak Bridge

Continued from 4

driveway from A1A to the property. She also said the HOA Board is considering a perpetual easement over a portion of the site that would create a legal access to Sawgrass Village Drive. The attorney noted that the Millers are negotiating with the Sawgrass Village Association to do so.

A few other residents of adjacent communities such as Hidden Oaks also expressed concerns over their property values.

Ponte Vedra Central Park

Ponte Vedra resident and local realtor Cindy Nordman attended the hearing on behalf of the Ponte Vedra Central Park initiative, a grassroots fundraising campaign to purchase the 40 acres of the Oak Bridge Club and turn it into a public park.

Nordman said the organization was incorporated in May, received its tax-exempt status in June and has every intention to preserve the land.

In previous conversations with the Re-

cordier, Nordman and fellow organization leader Jake Bestic said Ponte Vedra needs such a park.

"Our town is severely lacking in open green space, public playgrounds, ball fields, exercise paths, that kind of thing, and we're not lacking in population and we're not lacking in automobile traffic," said Bestic. "I just think it's up to us to decide, citizens of this community, what the best use of the land is. I cannot see or envision an instance where a 55+ community adds any benefits to our local community."

During the PZA hearing, David Miller said he will maintain a dialogue with the community park representatives, even with the zoning change, if they can raise the funds in the necessary timeframe to purchase the property.

Bestic and Nordman noted that their organization needs more funding to ultimately pay for the land. They said they also need more volunteers and help in spreading awareness about their campaign. Those interested in donating to the Ponte Vedra Central Park initiative or learning more can visit www.PVcentralPark.com.

PZA Board deliberation

PZA Board member Dr. David Rice first expressed his support of the project, saying he doesn't recall an applicant who has completed more due diligence than the Millers. He also reiterated Avery-Smith's argument that the traffic generated by the development has already been paid and mitigated for due to the vested development rights. As a result, he said the board doesn't have legal standing to vote the plan down due to traffic.

Board chair Jeffrey Martin also called the project a win-win.

"It's either residential units that are age restricted and therefore less impactful than traditional residential, or you get a piece of property that's falling into blithe, which is not going to be good for anyone, especially in Ponte Vedra," he said.

Board member Jon Woodard responded to the property value concerns of adjacent properties and said he understands it but without seeing a study that spells out that potential impact, he can't "put a lot of weight into" it.

After each board member expressed their support of the project and voted

accordingly, David Miller said it was a rewarding feeling to see his efforts pay off.

"It has nothing to do with monetary feeling," he said. "It's that government still works in America. It's that community government still works. HOAs still do what's best for that community. And you can get a result like this. That's encouraging for our country and our county."

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A Ponte Vedra resident, Bill Haley is the CEO of Family Foundations in Jacksonville.

Bill Haley

By Jon Blauvelt

Can you please briefly tell us about your background?

My wife Laura and I raised our son and daughter in Westchester County, New York. Both of our children are married, and we have two granddaughters, with a third on the way. Prior to moving to Ponte Vedra three years ago, I worked as an investment banker in New York City for more than 30 years at large firms such as Salomon Brothers, Lehman Brothers and JP Morgan Chase. After 2008, I developed an interest in not-for-profit work and “social justice.” This led me first to work for Opportunity Finance Network in Philadelphia and then to the CEO position at Family Foundations here in Jacksonville.

How would you describe Family Foundations to someone who is not familiar with the organization?

Family Foundations is a 60-year-old social services agency that focuses attention on people in need. Our demographic includes people at or near the poverty level, and our caring professionals provide mental health and financial counseling, often at no cost, to provide individuals with critical skills to navigate life’s challenges. Our mission is to “grow strong, money-wise families,” and our ultimate objective is to help families break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

How can a family in need obtain your organization’s assistance?

Family Foundations has its main office in the Jessie Ball duPont Center on East Adams Street in Jacksonville. People in need can access us in different ways. We accept walk-in traffic at our office; we also have partnerships with many other not-for-profits, including the United Way 2-1-1 emergency line.

What’s the mission of 1000 in 1000?

Family Foundations administers this landmark program, which is unique to Jacksonville. 1000 in 1000 is a “theory of change” that employs a collective impact model of partners joining hands to contribute needed services that help individuals and families trapped in low-income status. Our research has taught us that families need certain pivotal assets to begin to build a living wage and increase self-sufficiency. The 1000 in 1000 leadership group includes philanthropic interests, social services, governmental and educational resources, legal and medical. Basic needs include affordable housing, quality child care, transportation solutions and job training. Additionally, there are medical and legal services, as well as financial education and mental health resources. Our current cohort includes 211 families with 405 children. Forty-six percent of the families in the group have scored average income gains of 20 percent and have achieved stable and aspirational job goals.



Photo by Jon Blauvelt

What do you enjoy most about living in Ponte Vedra?

Laura and I have greatly enjoyed our time in Ponte Vedra. After a lifetime in the Northeast, it is very easy to adapt to the climate and recreational opportunities in Northeast Florida. We have also found the people to be very warm and caring.

What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Away from work, my passion is golf. It is hard not to feel at home in a community that has so many first-class golf properties. I have also gotten involved in the Sawgrass Players Association HOA serving my neighbors as secretary of the board.

To watch a video portion of the interview, visit pontevedrarecorder.com and click One of Us.

Coastal Wine Market hosts Revolver Wine Co. winemaker for 'Meet the Winemaker' event

Coastal Wine Market & Tasting Room in Nocatee recently hosted Revolver Wine Co. winemaker and proprietor Bryan Page for its "Meet the Winemaker" event in November.

Page, who is based in Napa Valley, visited Coastal Wine Market for the second straight year, also coming in November 2016 for another "Meet the Winemaker" event.

According to his website, Page describes the style of his wine as "an elegant mouth feel with edgy flavor profiles." He began making wine nearly 20 years ago after taking a trip to Bordeaux region in France, where he fell in love with the region's wines. After the tour concluded, he returned home to California, where he worked at several restaurants and apprenticed at a number of Napa Valley wineries with the goal of creating his own wine label. He founded Page Wine Cellars in 1997.



Coastal Wine Market & Tasting Room co-owner Steve Lourie, Bryan Page and Gonzalo Oliva

Photos by Susan Griffin



Sabrina Federico, Lynda Mann and Ashley Hobbs

WHO DO YOU TALK TO??

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Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church hosts annual Bethlehem Visit

An estimated 5,000-6,000 people visited Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church's recreation of Bethlehem Dec. 9 to celebrate the holidays and the birth of Jesus Christ. The annual "A Bethlehem Visit" usually lasts two days, but the event on Dec. 8 was canceled due to poor weather conditions.

According to Senior Pastor Richard Cooper, visitors strolled through the city and kept warm by the bonfire while sipping hot chocolate and enjoying snacks.

"We had so many families tell us that 'A Bethlehem Visit' is a part of their family's tradition," Cooper wrote in an email to the Recorder. "We are so grateful to be a part of their tradition that helps to prepare their hearts for the Christmas season."

This year, the pre-show held at the sanctuary included a song by Grace Jones, PVPC's Worship Director Jeremiah Jones and musician Frankie Urzetta. After the music, guests were showered with Florida "snow" (tiny soap bubbles) before entering the city. The Bethlehem recreation featured animals such as camels, donkeys, ducks, goats and sheep along with snacks, costumed merchants, a nativity scene and more.

Cooper noted that "A Bethlehem Visit" is a special attraction for visitors because it's a free gift to the community.

"We receive a lot of feedback from our guests," he said. "But one thing always stands out for me and the hundreds of volunteers that help make this event a reality, and that is simply their appreciation that PVPC is sharing the Good News of Jesus' birth with the community."

For more information on Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church, visit www.pvpc.com.



Photos courtesy of Ponte Vedra Presbyterian Church



TPC Sawgrass Storytellers celebrate 10 years of service



Photo by Ryan Young, PGA Tour

The TPC Sawgrass Storytellers pose for a photograph at TPC Sawgrass on Dec. 6.

Dedicated to spreading the aura of THE PLAYERS Championship and the legends to walk its fairways, TPC Sawgrass Storytellers celebrated their 10th anniversary during an awards luncheon on Wednesday, Dec. 6, in the Clubhouse Sunset Room.

At the event, the Storytellers donated \$25,000 worth of tips collected throughout the year to five deserving charities. This year's beneficiaries included the Veterans Council of St. Johns County and Rolling Thunder, whose members initiated the ceremony with a ride up Championship Way, as well as Florida Urgent Rescue, Healing Hearts Project at Wolfson Children's Hospital and Therapy Animal Coalition.

"Our group of Storytellers is 50 strong," Committee Chair Denny Lynch said. "We're forever grateful for the generous contributions made by members and guests throughout the year. They

give us the ability to turn our personal passion for golf into a chance to help out on some truly amazing projects in the community."

In addition, local men and women in uniform were recognized at the luncheon, as winners from this year's military tournament were announced. The event is co-sponsored annually by TPC Sawgrass and the Storytellers and allows troops stationed at the three area Naval bases to compete for proceeds in a fun environment.

The Storytellers are a group of volunteers providing year-round tours of the 77,000 square-foot Mediterranean Revival-style Clubhouse at TPC Sawgrass, as well as the historic finishing holes of THE PLAYERS Stadium Course. At the end of the year, the group collects tips for deserving charities in the local community. Since inception, the Storytellers have donated more than \$180,000.

Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital presents Art & Antiques Show

The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital presented the 2017 Art & Antiques Show Dec. 1 to 3 at the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center in Jacksonville.

The 41st anniversary of the show featured nationally acclaimed lecturers, internationally recognized art and antiques dealers, a gala opening night party and a children's fashion show featuring current and former patients of Wolfson Children's Hospital. Guest speakers included Maria Crosby Pollard, India Hicks, Kathryn Ire-

land, Toma Clark Haines, Juli Catlin and William Nash IV. Proceeds from the event helped fund Wolfson Children's Hospital.

The Dec. 1 Art & Antiques Show featured "A Brilliant Melange" lecture by Maria Crosby Pollard from Crosby Designs, a reception event and more. On Dec. 2, guests enjoyed the "Live an Extraordinary Life" lecture by India Hicks from India Hicks Inc., a book signing from Kathryn M. Ireland and more. Finally, the Dec. 3 show featured "A Grand Tour" lecture from Toma Clark Haines, a

booth crawl, a children's fashion show, a reception and more.

The Wolfson Children's Hospital Women's Board founded the Art & Antiques show in 1977 to fund state-of-the-art services, programs, equipment and facilities to provide the best healthcare available for children in the Northeast Florida/Southeast Georgia area. For more information, visit www.womensboard-wch.com or follow The Women's Board on Facebook at www.facebook.com/womensboardwch.



Photo courtesy of Clockwork Marketing
Kasey Bubbs (Global Diamonds) and Joanne Lapoma gather at the show.

A participant tries out the new military-style obstacle course at Rodeheaver Boys Ranch.

Photo courtesy of Krista Purcell



Rodeheaver Foundation receives grant to build military-style obstacle course

Rodeheaver Foundation has received a grant to create a military-style obstacle course to benefit the boys at Rodeheaver Boys Ranch and honor fallen soldier Sgt. Timothy Officer. The organization also recently built a learning center with funds from a St. Johns County and Palatka Rotary Club Grant.

Children without a place to live due to parental death, desertion, divorce, disability or dysfunction can make Rodeheaver Boys Ranch their home. The ranch, which is located in Palatka, has been providing complete care for up to 50 disadvantaged boys over the last 68 years.

Sgt. Timothy A. Officer, a tactical air control party airman, stayed at the ranch as a child before serving 14 years in the Air Force during which he was deployed to Iraq and Afghanistan. He won the Bronze Star twice, once with the "V" device for valor, and over 20 medals and ribbons. Officer died in 2015 from a parachute-training incident during a military freefall training exercise at Elgin Air Force Base in Florida. The sergeant visited the ranch prior to the accident and showed interest in building a military-style obstacle course on the property.

The Rodeheaver Boys Ranch just completed his proposed obstacle course thanks to a grant from the Lastinger Family Foundation.

The ranch sits on 800 acres of land in

Palatka; it has its own boy scout camp, vehicle program, learning and tutoring center, equestrian program, garden and obstacle course.

Rodeheaver Foundation has also received a grant from the Quad Club Rotary Collaboration of St. Johns County and the Rotary Club of Palatka to build a learning center on the property. The center would replicate a modern library or student center and be used as a place for boys to be tutored with homework, SAT prep and other academics. The grants have allowed the foundation to build classrooms at the ranch with almost 20 new computers and laptops. Rodeheaver is currently fundraising for a part-time tutor to make use of the property's new learning center. Having a funded tutor in the past helped the ranch boys consistently maintain an overall grade point average of 3.00 or better. Rodeheaver Boys Ranch and Rodeheaver Foundation do not receive any government funding.

Rodeheaver Foundation is hosting its third annual fundraising tournament benefiting Rodeheaver Boys Ranch March 10, 2018, at the Palatka City Docks. This event draws registrants and boats from various cities in Northeast Florida, including St. Augustine, Palm Coast, Ponte Vedra, Palatka, Gainesville and Jacksonville. Contact Director of Development Krista Purcell at (386) 983-0658 or KPurcell@Rodeheaver-Foundation.org for more information.

Proposals

Continued from 4

the St. Johns County website.

"There's a ton of information on there, and I want to encourage everyone to go visit it," Konchan said, singling out the website's "Development Tracker" – an interactive map that details all the current development projects throughout the county – as a particularly helpful tool.

For those considering legal action, West emphasized that it is important to consider the ramifications, including legal fees and possible countersuits. She also advised that those who wish to challenge a specific development must be prepared to demonstrate a significant personal interest in the matter.

"If you challenge a local government's development order on the basis that it is inconsistent, you've got to have the standing, which means you have to allege an interest that exceeds the degree of just the general interest," she explained, stating that a person who lives directly adjacent to a proposed development – or one who regularly participates in activities near that development – would have a good case for standing.

As for increasing civic engagement, West proposed holding public meetings in which residents can speak one-on-one

with developers as a good method not only for raising public awareness, but also for conflict resolution.

"If you know of a development, I would encourage you to ask the developer to come to meetings like this and educate you," she said. "It shows a level of transparency, and we don't always have the luxury for [discussion] in public hearings, because those are governed by a different set of rules."

West closed with a call to action, stating, "It's not easy engaging, but I really hope you do. I think it's our duty as citizens to make sure that we do for future generations."

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Suzie Connolly



PONTE VEDRA BCH
5BR/4.5BA • \$849,000
Suzie Connolly

OBITUARIES

Mary Ann Bracco

Mary Ann Bracco, 96, of Ponte Vedra Beach, died Nov. 21, 2017. Services under the direction and care of Quinn-Shalz, A Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre.

Robert Brett

Robert Paul Brett, 95, of Ponte Vedra Beach, died Dec. 3, 2017. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz, A Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre.

Sophia Humpidge

Sophia V. Humpidge, 82, of Ponte Vedra Beach, died Nov. 24, 2017. Services under the direction and care of Quinn-Shalz, A Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre.

William Kamke

William A. Kamke, 96, of Ponte Vedra Beach, died Dec. 3, 2017. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz, A Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre.

Mary Ellen Kessler

Mary Ellen Kessler, 91, of Atlantic Beach, died Nov. 27, 2017. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz, A Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre.

Nelson Money Penny

Nelson North Money Penny, 90, of Ponte Vedra Beach, died Dec. 3, 2017. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravalley.com.

Scott Morgan

Scott Thomas Morgan, 64, of Jacksonville, died Dec. 9, 2017. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz, A Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre.

Mary Lou Northrop

Mary Lou Northrop, 86, of Ponte Vedra Beach, died Nov. 25, 2017. Services under the direction and care of Quinn-Shalz, A Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre.

Nancy Lee Roberts

Nancy Lee Roberts, 75, died Nov. 21, 2017. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravalley.com.

Ana Santiago

Ana Rita Santiago, 81, died Nov. 24, 2017. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravalley.com.

Joseph Sassa

Joseph Lawrence Sassa, 86, of Jacksonville, died Nov. 24, 2017. Services under the direction and care of Quinn-Shalz, A Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre.

Paul Scioscia

Paul John Scioscia, 57, of Ponte Vedra Beach, died Dec. 3, 2017. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz, A Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre.

Susan Smart

Susan Lewman Smart, 66, of Jacksonville Beach, died Dec. 8, 2017. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz, A Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre.

Stephen Swartz

Stephen E. Swartz, 74, died Dec. 5, 2017. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravalley.com.

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PVHS Ocean of Sound places ninth at 2017 FMBC State Competition

The Ponte Vedra High School Ocean of Sound capped off its 2017 marching band season by placing ninth out of 14 schools in the competitive 4A Division at the FMBC State Competition Saturday, Nov. 18 in Tampa.

This year marked the second consecutive year the Ocean of Sound has performed in the competition. At the event, the band presented its 2017 show, “Jack,” based on the classic fairy tale “Jack and the Beanstalk.”

“The band had a fantastic performance at state,” said second-year PVHS Band Director Jermaine Reynolds. “It was our best run of the year—which is saying something, as we’ve had other good runs this season, earning the Grand Cham-

panion awards in the Middleburg Echoes of Excellence Regional Competition and the Fleming Island Golden Eagles Classic event. I’m very proud of the band for coming through in another big moment. They poured their hearts and souls into ‘Jack,’ and it showed on the field.

“The state competition is the toughest championship of the year, and the judges are marking against a very high standard. Last year, the first year PVHS ever competed in the state event, we came in 12th out of 12 schools in the 4A division, so to place ninth out of 14 schools in 4A this year is a huge improvement. I’m grateful for all the hard work everyone has put into this year’s program. It’s been a great year.”



PVHS Ocean of Sound’s “Jack” gets a scare from the giant during the FMBC State Competition in Tampa on Nov. 18.



ABOVE: The trombone and trumpet sections perform in the marching band competition.

LEFT: PVHS Ocean of Sound seniors, drum majors and captains stand at retreat during the FMBC State Competition on Nov. 18.

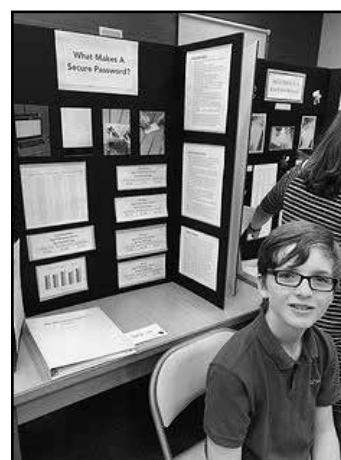
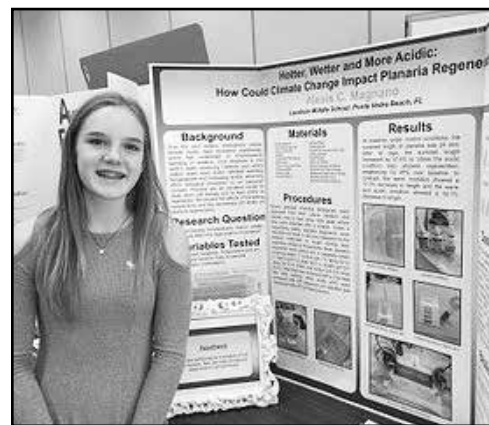
Photos by Robert Leverock

Landrum Middle School hosts annual science fair

Students presented original science projects spanning a wide range of ideas at Alice B. Landrum Middle School’s annual science fair Nov. 17. Categories included behavioral science, life science, chemistry and physics. 20 projects were awarded honors.

Seventh grader Katie Shapiro earned top honors in the behavioral science category with her “Impact of a Low, No-Added Sugar Diet on a Fitness Level” study. Eighth grader Benjamin Graham’s “What Makes a Secure Password?” project finished in second place. Caroline Maxwell won third prize for her “Reaction to Motion with Color in Peripheral Vision” project. Maggie Benfield, Matthew Sides and Bella Brinson all received honorable mention awards.

In the life sciences category, seventh grade student Sai Prakash took first place with her study entitled “Neem vs. Chemi-



TOP LEFT: First row: Alison Rhoads (from left), Katie Shapiro and Broc Obner. Second row: Aya Afsh (from left), Rhoda Tawk and Sai Prakash
Photo courtesy of Sai Prakash

TOP RIGHT: Alexis Magnano displays her efforts.

LEFT: Caroline Gentile stands proudly by her project.

FAR LEFT: Benjamin Graham presents his project.

Photos courtesy of Elizabeth Paul

cal Pesticides.” She was testing an organic versus a synthetic approach to farming, and she plans to further experiment in the next stage of their journey to regionals. Alexis Magnano finished in second with “Hotter, Wetter and More Acidic: How Could

Climate Change Impact Planaria Regeneration?” Finally, Victoria Walker-Kraljic’s “A Spectrum of Light: How Does Light Color Affect Plant Growth?” project received the third-place prize. Lauren Minx-Tomlinson, Andrew Hamm and Audrey Hackett

were each awarded honorable mentions.

Eighth graders Aya Afsh and Rhoda Tawk won the first-place prize in the chemistry category for their “Which Tea Has More Fluoride: Expensive Cheap?” project. Theodore Maddox won

second place for his study entitled “How Does a Different Form of Sucrose Effect the Length of a Carbon Tower?” Caroline Gentile also won second place with her “Got Gas?” project.

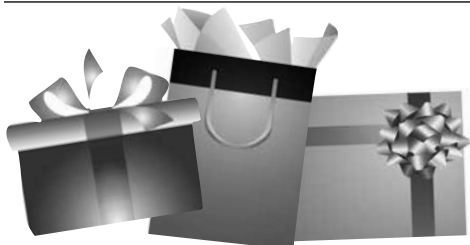
The physics category saw the most projects and two first place winners. Alison Rhoads won first for her “The Effect of Angle on Inclination on Solar Power Output” study, and Broc Obner clinched first place with “Cloud Chamber: See the Unseen” project. Gabriel Rigdon and her study entitled “Why is the Ice Melting Faster than Normal?” won second place, along with Noam Ben Simon’s “The Rieman Hypothesis.” Landon McIntosh’s “Image Generation through Machine Learning” and Carissa Talbert’s “A Magnetic Cure for Leukemia” won third place, while Matthew Hendrickson and Matthew Anderson received honorable mention awards.

Category winners and other selected high-scoring projects will advance to the Regional Science Fair Feb. 6, 2018 at First Coast Technical College in St. Augustine. The winners will earn a chance to compete at the 63rd State Science and Engineering Fair of Florida March 27-29, 2018 at the Lakeland Center.

Last-Minute Gift Guide

December 14, 2017
Special Section

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The gift of giving



Some last-minute ideas for gifts from area businesses and organizations



FOR SOMEONE WHO LIKES TO BE PAMPERED

Sawgrass Marriott Cabana Beach Club and Spa memberships: The Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa is offering guests an opportunity to enjoy the Florida sunshine and its world-class amenities all year long with Cabana Beach Club or spa memberships. The Cabana Beach Club is a private club on a beautiful oceanfront location outfitted with a beachfront pool and a shallow toddler pool. There's casual dining, plus wireless Internet access, shower and changing rooms, chairs and umbrellas, and a wide range of beach and watersports rentals. For more information on memberships, call (904) 280-3403 or go to www.sawgrassmarriottbeachclub.com. The recently renovated Sawgrass Spa features 19 private treatment rooms, including hydrotherapy and couples' massage facilities. The menu of offerings for skincare, body treatments, massage and hydrotherapy have been expanded to nearly 50 individual treatments, to enjoy either a la carte or in a day spa package. There is also a whirlpool, heated outdoor pool and private locker rooms with a sauna, steam room, whirlpool and relaxation lounge. The spa also boasts a nail care studio and a workout studio. Additional membership benefits include discounts at the Spa & Resort, unlimited facility access and fitness classes, members-only events and more. For more information on spa memberships, call (904) 674-4772 or visit www.sawgrassmarriottbeachclub.com.

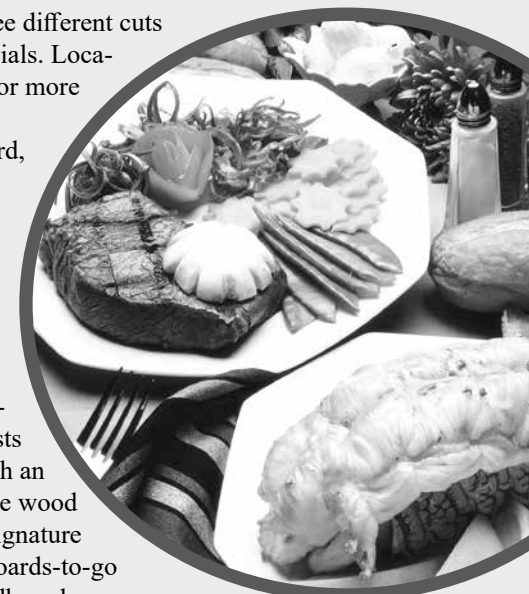
The Spa at Ponte Vedra Inn & Club holiday specials: The Spa at Ponte Vedra Inn & Club offers a selection of special deals throughout the season, including December's service of the month "mint chocolate mistletoes," which starts at \$70. The Spa is also offering an extra incentive for those who purchase a Spa gift card: For every \$150 spent on gift cards, guests will receive a complimentary \$15 voucher. Complimentary vouchers are redeemable Jan. 1, 2018 through Oct. 31, 2018. Gift cards can be purchased at the St. John's Town Center location (kiosk) through Dec. 24. For more information on The Spa at Ponte Vedra Inn & Club special deals, call (904) 273-7700 or visit www.pvspa.com.

FOR THE FOODIE

Ruth's Chris Steakhouse Holiday Surf & Turf: Get a choice of three different cuts of steak alongside twin cold-water lobster tails, plus other seasonal specials. Locations can be found in Ponte Vedra Beach and downtown Jacksonville. For more information, go to www.ruthschris.com/promotions.

The Bread & Board holiday season promotions: The Bread & Board, an independent restaurant in Jacksonville's Five Points neighborhood, has holiday promotions for gift cards, prepared meals and boards-to-go. Gift cards are available for purchase, and bonus cards will be offered in the following increments through Jan. 31, 2018: Buy \$50 in gift cards, receive a \$10 bonus card; buy \$100 in gift cards, receive a \$25 bonus card; and buy \$500 in gift cards, receive a \$150 bonus card. The Bread & Board also offers an assortment of The Bread & Board's house meats that can be pre-ordered to help eliminate the stress of holiday meal planning, and has also created four specialty boards-to-go, designed for guests who are hosting or attending a holiday gathering. Each board comes with an assortment of ingredients packaged for transport and a reusable live edge wood board, and options include an artisan cheese board, house charcuterie, signature ham and brie and holiday sweets. Orders for house meats and holiday boards-to-go may be placed by calling (904) 673-5557 or emailing info@thebreadandboard.com.

Orders must be placed at least 24 hours in advance for pickup through 2:30 p.m., Dec. 31 (except Dec. 25).



FOR THE SPORTS FAN

THE PLAYERS Championship special holiday packages: THE PLAYERS Championship is offering a special holiday ticket package that includes two Stadium passes, unlimited youth tickets and a pair of island green Stance socks. The packages are \$116 (Thursday and Sunday) and \$130 (Friday and Saturday). Another package is also available that includes one weekly ticket, unlimited youth tickets and a pair of island green Stance socks for \$195. Prices do not include tax. The special offer is available through Jan. 1, 2018, at THEPLAYERS.com/holiday. Additional ticket options are available by calling (844) 868-7465. For more information about THE PLAYERS, go to THEPLAYERS.com.

THE PLAYERS Stadium gift package: This includes a certificate for one round of golf on THE PLAYERS Stadium Course (includes cart, balls and forecaddie), a guest rate of 20 percent off rack rate, a TPC Sawgrass logoed hat, a TPC Sawgrass divot tool set, a TPC Sawgrass towel and a TPC Sawgrass customized bag tag. The cost is \$350 plus tax. The certificate is redeemable through Feb. 28. For more information, call (904) 273-3235 or visit tpc.com/sawgrass/holiday.

FOR THE MUSIC FAN

Ponte Vedra Concert Hall: Some of the upcoming performances at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall include Henry Rollins' "Travel Slideshow Spoken Word Tour" (Jan. 1), The Zombies: Odessey and Oracle 50th Anniversary (Jan. 12) and Black Violin (Jan. 27). For more information on these shows and other events at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall, go to www.pvconcerthall.com.

St. Augustine Amphitheatre: Some of the upcoming shows include Willie Nelson and Family with guest Los Lonely Boys (Feb. 18), country superstar Brad Paisley featuring Chase Bryant (March 10) and Barenaked Ladies with guests Better Than Ezra and KT Tunstall (July 6). For more information on these shows and other events at the St. Augustine Amphitheatre, go to www.staugamphitheatre.com.

Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra: Upcoming performances from the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra include Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto, featuring pianist Zhang Zuo (Jan 5-6); "Requiem for an Angel," featuring violinist Anthony Marwood (Feb.2-3); and "Film with Orchestra:" A symphonic night at the movies with "Raiders of the Lost Ark" (Feb. 16-17). For more events from the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, go to www.jaxsymphony.org



MORE GIFT OF GIVING IDEAS, Page 15

The gift of giving

Some last-minute ideas for gifts from area businesses and organizations

FOR THE ANIMAL LOVER

Jacksonville Humane Society: With a donation, the Jacksonville Humane Society will send your loved one an exclusive holiday card letting them know you care, or even name a pet in their honor. Orders are due by Dec. 20. For more information, call (904) 725 8766 or visit jaxhumane.org.

S.A.F.E. Pet Rescue of St. Augustine: Give the gift of your time and make a new friend by adopting or fostering animals through S.A.F.E. Pet Rescue, which has saved more than 7,000 lives by rescuing pets from shelters before they are euthanized. Donations can also be made to S.A.F.E. to help give the animals in their care necessary medical treatment, food and supplies. For more information on S.A.F.E., go to www.safe-pet-rescue-fl.com.

Ayla's Acres No-Kill Animal Rescue: Animal lovers can help the St. Augustine-based nonprofit with its goal to help remedy overcrowding in animal shelters through neuter/spay programs, adoption and educational resources. The group also runs a 45-acre sanctuary "where 'unadoptable' animals may live out their lives with peace, love, and dignity." For more information on Ayla's Acres, go to www.aylasacres.org.



GIVING BACK AND HELPING OTHERS

Gifts by Rethreaded: Rethreaded is a nonprofit headquartered in Jacksonville with a mission to break the cycle of the sex trade by offering viable and creative work to those affected by the sex trade (i.e. prostitution, drug addiction and human trafficking). Rethreaded has directly helped 24 women locally through providing jobs in the Jacksonville area. Globally, Rethreaded has positively impacted the lives of more than 2,000 women through its import company. Here's a look at some items that are made by local sex trade survivors at Rethreaded's headquarters in Jacksonville.

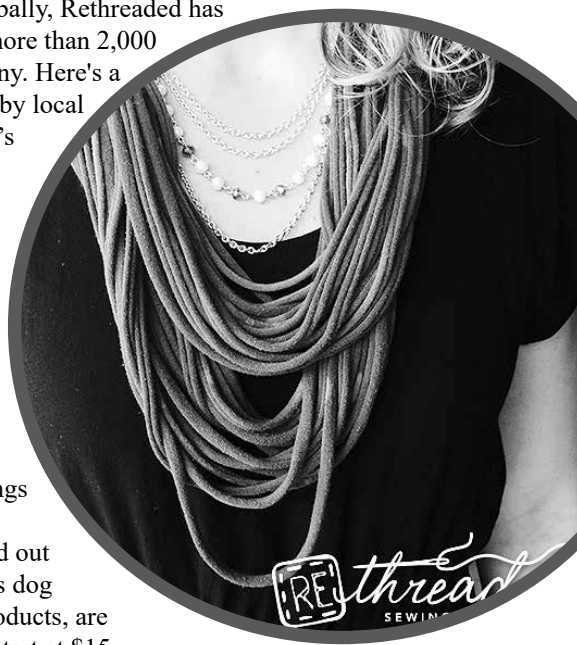
- **Grace scarf:** Handcrafted by a local sex trade survivor, the Grace scarf starts at \$28 and is made with 100 percent upcycled cotton T-shirts. The scarf was the first product made by Rethreaded survivor employees.

- **Joy earrings:** Made by sex trade survivors using upcycled leather and T-shirts, the Joy earrings start at \$20.

- **Dog chew toys:** Hand-knotted out of upcycled T-shirts, Rethreaded's dog chew toys, like all Rethreaded products, are made by sex trade survivors and start at \$15.

Rethreaded products are sold online, as well as at their retail store, located at 820 Barnett St. For more information visit www.rethreaded.com.

Dreams Come True: Give the gift of a lifetime to an area child with life-threatening illnesses. The locally based nonprofit has fulfilled the dreams of more than 3,700 area children, and 100 percent of donations go toward dream fulfillment. For more information on Dreams Come True, go to www.dreamscometrue.org.



Gift guide compiled by Paris Moulden

Photos courtesy of metrocreativeconnection.com and Rethreaded



Photo courtesy of metrocreativeconnection.com

Tips to avoid overspending during the holiday season

The chance to give gifts and spend time with loved ones makes the holiday season a special time of year. But for many people, the holiday season often leads to overspending.

A 2016 survey from the American Research Group found that American shoppers anticipated spending an average of \$930 on gifts that holiday season. Data from T. Rowe Price confirms that parents are spending between \$400 and \$500 per child each year. In 2015, CPA Canada conducted a random phone survey of 1,004 adult Canadians and found the average adult planned to spend \$766 on holiday gifts.

Although these numbers can reflect an overwhelming sense of generosity, many times excessive spending is based on a desire to outdo gifting from the year prior – sometimes at the risk of personal finances. Some people are taking drastic measures to make holidays over-the-top, with some delving into emergency savings while others withdraw prematurely from retirement accounts. Budgeting for the holiday season can help shoppers keep their finances in check.

Determine spending patterns

An examination of receipts and spending habits from previous holiday seasons can help individuals establish budgets for the current year. Make a list of all expenses – even the ones that extend beyond holiday giving. These may include expenses such as gym service fees, homeowner's insurance, traveling expenses, gift exchanges at work, and more. Extra costs can add up and should be factored into holiday budgets.

Try to recall if your spending last year

felt comfortable or if you were paying off credit cards long after the holiday season had ended. If it's the latter, resolve to make adjustments.

Establish a budget that fits

There is no such thing as a one-size-fits-all budget. Figure out if there is extra money this season or if times are tight. This will help you plan accordingly and avoid overspending. Shifting priorities can help free up some cash. If children are interested in this year's hot (and likely expensive) gift, cut back on holiday travel or entertaining. Instead of buying gifts for coworkers, buy a drink during a night out.

Use the holidays as an opportunity to sell

Collectibles, gently used toys, video games, action figures – all of these items may be collecting dust at your home, but they might be coveted by other shoppers. Rely on the season for spending to make some extra income that can be cashed in for your own holiday purchases.

Set up an account and track spending

Establish a separate account strictly for holiday spending. This can include a credit card only used for gifts and entertaining or a savings account at a bank or credit union. You won't know what is going out of your account unless you keep careful tabs on it. Tracking spending is the biggest key to sticking with a budget, according to the financial advice group The Balance.

Holiday budgeting can be challenging. But with some effort, it is possible to avoid debt and still enjoy a happy holiday season.

HOLIDAY EVENTS & SHOPPING SPECIALS

Holiday gingerbread cookies and candy canes are displayed at the One Ocean Resort & Spa gingerbread unveiling.

Photos by Benjamin Naim



One Ocean hosts annual gingerbread unveiling event

By Benjamin Naim

One Ocean Resort & Spa's culinary team hosted its 10th annual gingerbread unveiling Dec. 4.

The life-sized structure was made of gingerbread cookies, Hershey's chocolate bars, cream, cinnamon, powdered sugar, wafer bars and other sweets.

Visitors enjoyed Christmas snacks and drinks while taking pictures of the gingerbread castle. Past designs include an igloo, Santa's sleigh and a replica of Atlantic Beach.

Upcoming specials to keep in mind this holiday season

One Ocean Resort & Spa is offering two winter spa specials at the facility from Jan. 1 to March 31. The Spa at One Ocean will offer the Posh Pear Winter Warm Up Mani/

Pedi Combo and Cellulite Support Body Wrap to help guests tackle the new year.

The Posh Pear Winter Warm Up Mani/Pedi offers relief from crisp winter days. A brandy-infused pear & sea salt polish smoothes and refines, leaving hands and feet with nourished glow. Shea butter massage with bright notes of coconut, sweet cream and pear exude comforting warmth. This mani/pedi is a 90-minute session offered for \$125, including gratuity.

One Ocean Resort & Spa's Cellulite Support Body Wrap channels heightened confidence by naturally cleansing, reducing cellulite and improving weight loss and circulation. The treatment addresses cellulite by decongesting and stimulating the lymphatic system and eliminating toxins. The 80-minute Cellulite Support Body Wrap is offered at \$210, including gratuity.

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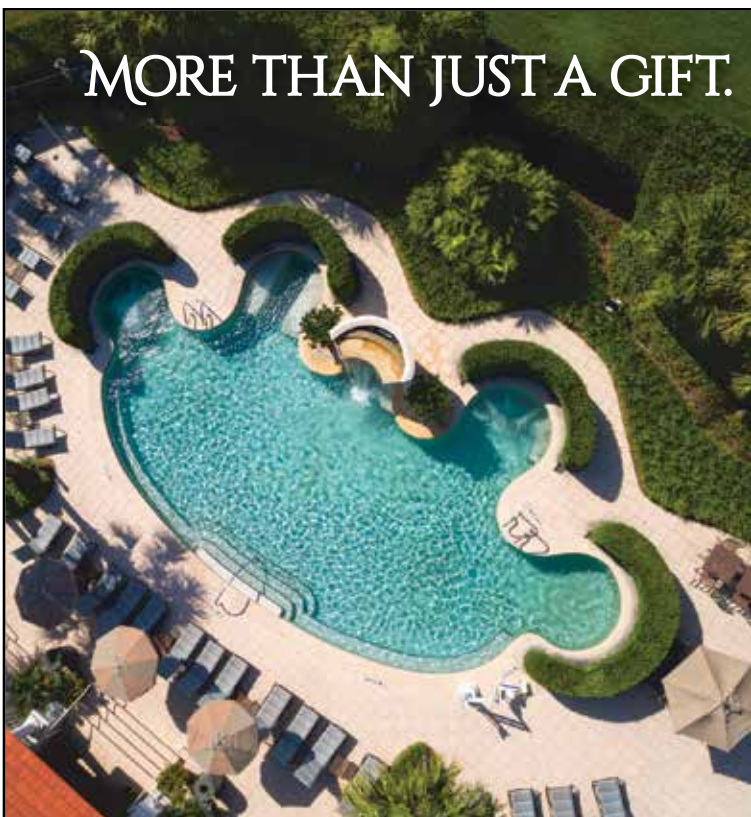
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A One Ocean Resort & Spa employee poses for a photo in front of the gingerbread castle.



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Dry ice oozes out of a silver bucket near the gingerbread castle.



The gingerbread castle at One Ocean Resort & Spa was designed with intricate detail.

'SEW AND CHAT' GROUP MAKES 475 ITEMS TO SPREAD HOLIDAY CHEER

The Cypress Village "Sew and Chat" group has worked hard to spread holiday cheer this year by making 475 items so far, with 400 going to UF Health Shands Hospital. The group also sent 75 bears to the Salvation Army as Christmas gifts for children. Sew & Chat, a group for ladies to enjoy time with friends and giving back to the community, meets twice a month at Cypress Village.

Photo provided by Abby Kulpa



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CELEBRATING THE CHRISTMAS CLASSICS

Christ Episcopal Church's 'The Nutcracker' places modern spin on a Christmas classic, brings joy to children in need

By Samantha Logue

From pirouettes to kick lines, Christ Episcopal Church's annual performance of "The Nutcracker" Saturday, Dec. 9 offered an assortment of dance moves and styles that Nutcracker enthusiasts of all ages could enjoy, giving a modern twist to the classic ballet.

Directed by Felicia Rhoden, the 22nd annual Christ Episcopal Church "Nutcracker" incorporated elements of ballet, jazz, tap and even some gymnastics. Held at the University of North Florida Lazzara Performance Hall, the production offered every performer the opportunity to shine. Standout performances of the night included those of Jordan Polster (Sugar Plum Fairy); Jamie Ulrich (Guardian Angel) and Ellie McCary (Clara).

Dating back to the late 19th century, the Nutcracker Ballet tells the story of a young German girl named Clara Stahlbaum who receives a magical nutcracker as a present one Christmas Eve. She falls asleep and awakens at midnight to find herself surrounded by giant mice. As Clara struggles to escape, the nutcracker comes to her rescue and defeats the leader of the mice, the Mouse King, in battle. The nutcracker then transforms into a handsome prince, and he and Clara embark on a fantastical journey together.

While "The Nutcracker" has become a fixture of the holiday season, many have struggled to relate the story back to the biblical roots of the Christian holiday. Prior to the performance, Doug McCary – father of this year's Clara – offered his own interpretation.

"It's the battle of the nutcracker against the evil Mouse King, and there's been a battle between good and evil for a long time," he said. "Two thousand years ago, a real 'Prince of Peace' came, and he brought an end to that battle. And that is why we celebrate Christmas – because of Jesus. He is the 'Prince of Peace,' and he brings joy. There's all kinds of broken people in the world, and we all need peace. We all need joy."



Sugar Plums surround the Sugar Plum Fairy, portrayed by Jordan Polster (center left).



Photos by Samantha Logue

Clara, portrayed by Ellie McCary, receives a nutcracker doll from her Uncle Drosselmeyer, played by Anthony Egel Sr.



Angelic cherubs blow kisses to the audience at the Christ Episcopal Church performance of "The Nutcracker" Dec. 9.

The Christ Episcopal Church production of "The Nutcracker" annually helps to provide that joy to the less fortunate, as the proceeds of the event benefit non-profit organizations dedicated to assisting

children in need.

"These kids are dancing for the Amistad Mission in Bolivia, as well as Dreams Come True and Pediatric Hospice, so these kids know how to live right



Caroline Crespo is lifted by her fellow performers during the Arabian dance.

and shine the light of Christ out in the world," Rev. Jessica Babcock said.

To learn more about Christ Episcopal Church and its ministries, visit www.christepiscopalchurch.org.

TAKE A TRIP TO AMERICA'S OLDEST CITY



Photos courtesy of Old City PR

St. Augustine experiences to consider as gift ideas

It's almost time to say goodbye to 2017 and welcome a new year full of possibilities and adventures. Before you do, consider these travel opportunities in America's Oldest City as potential gift ideas for the holidays.

■ **Historic lodging:** There is no shortage of beautiful inns, hotels and bed and breakfasts dotting the landscape of St. Augustine's downtown. Built in 1865, The Kenwood Inn on Marine Street is an ideal locale for your stay in the Nation's Oldest City. Individually decorated guest rooms feature rich, hardwood floors, four-poster and antique beds for a mix of Old Florida elegance with a hint of the tropics.

■ **Craft brews and spirits:** From pale ales and small-batch vodka to port-finished bourbon and coconut porter, St. Augustine's craft beer and distillery scene has been growing leaps and bounds over the past five years. Check out St. Augustine Distillery, housed in a renovated ice manufacturing plant from the turn-of-the-century, for artisanal vodka, gin, rum and bourbon. If beer is more your thing, spend time at the half-dozen or so craft breweries in town including Dog Rose Brewing Co., Ancient City Brewing, Bog Brewing Company and Old Coast Ales.

■ **Sightseeing tours:** With so much to see and do in St. Augustine, a hop-on, hop-off Old Town Trolley Sightseeing Tour is a great way to take in hundreds of sights for the entire family. This fun, fully narrated tour will take you to dozens of stops including the Old Jail, Colonial Quarter, St. George Street, Villa Zorayda Museum, Lightner Museum, San Sebastian Winery and other points of interest. You'll also get to see the Castillo de San Marcos Fort that guarded the city against foreign invaders, and is the oldest European fort of its kind still standing. Tickets are between \$9 and \$24 with children ages 6 and under riding free.

■ **Head to the movies:** For the eighth year in a row, the Saint Augustine Film Festival (SAFF) will descend upon the Nation's Oldest City for a four-day, intimate film festival held Jan. 18 through Jan. 21. Movies will be held at various venues including Lewis Auditorium, Koger-Gamache Theater (located inside Flagler College's Ringhaver Student Center) and the Corazon Cinema and Café. According to the festival's website, this year's lineup will focus on foreign and independent films including movies such as "Waiting For You," "Serious Laundry" and "The Earth Is Flat."

■ **Rest and relaxation:** Erected in 1888 and a member of the National Trust for Historic Preservation's Historic Hotels of America, the Casa Monica Resort & Spa is the perfect spot for rest and relaxation while taking in all that beautiful downtown St. Augus-

tine has to offer. Located on Cordova Street across from Flagler College, Casa Monica blends Moroccan-inspired décor with modern conveniences and the brand new, full-service Poseidon Spa.

■ **Turn back time:** With guest books dating back to 1868, Ponce de León's Fountain of Youth Archaeological Park is the oldest attraction in Florida. It's also chock-full of history. Located in the area first explored by Juan Ponce de León in 1513 and settled by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés in 1565, Fountain of Youth boasts 15 waterfront acres filled with lush gardens and nearly 30 beautiful peafowl that strut their stuff for visitors. But it's the Spring of Eternal Hope that's been flowing for centuries and said to hold the powers of eternal youth that you'll put at the top of your list. Take a sip, relax and sit back while you wait for the magic to happen. Tickets are \$14.

Visions of flowers greet visitors at 'Dressing Downton' holiday exhibit

The Lightner Museum in St. Augustine is hosting "Dressing Downton: Changing Fashion for Changing Times," through Jan. 7, 2018, and thanks to the Garden Club of St. Augustine, the first thing you see as you enter the exhibit are flowers and greenery arranged in the style of the Granthams of Highclere Castle.



Photo courtesy of The Garden Club of St. Augustine

The Garden Club of St. Augustine pitched in to provide "Dressing Downton" with a floral signature not seen at other stops on its tour. Members of the Floraliners Guild of the Garden Club have designed

a new flower arrangement every week, each reminiscent of a signature episode in the show. In the weeks before the exhibit's conclusion on Jan. 7, the arrangements pay floral homage to holiday celebrations in the spirit of post-Edwardian royalty.

The "Dressing Downton" exhibit features the costumes featured on the PBS hit series "Downton Abbey." The furnishings and art featured in the exhibit's 17 vignettes are from the Lightner's own collection, and many have not been displayed for decades. These historic pieces are contemporaneous with the era of the TV series.

Tickets to the exhibit are available at www.lightnermuseum.org.

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Thursday, Dec. 14	Friday, Dec. 15	Saturday, Dec. 16	Sunday, Dec. 17
<p>Yoga for Survivors The Y Healthy Living Center at the Ponte Vedra YMCA will host a "Yoga for Survivors" class Dec. 14 at 11:30 a.m. Cancer patients, survivors, caregivers and others with range of motion and pain limitations are invited to join in this gentle and safe yoga practice, which is free and open to the public. Call (904) 202-5376 or visit www.baptistjax.com/ymca to reserve a spot. The Ponte Vedra YMCA is located at 170 Landrum Lane.</p> <p>'Star Wars Episode VIII: The Last Jedi' at IMAX Theater Having taken her first steps into a larger world in 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens,' Rey continues her epic journey with Finn, Poe and Luke Skywalker in the next chapter of the Star Wars saga. This blockbuster is showing at the World Golf Hall of Fame IMAX Theater at 7 and 10:15 p.m. Visit www.worldgolfimax.com for tickets and more information.</p> <p>Evenings at Whitney Evenings at Whitney presented by the Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience returns Dec. 14 at 7 p.m. with a talk by Pam Soltis, a distinguished professor and curator at the Florida Museum of National History. Her presentation, entitled "Transformation and Conservation: Climate Change and the Southern Landscape," will take place at 9505 Ocean Shore Blvd. in St. Augustine.</p> <p>Purity Ring at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall will welcome "future pop" synth duo Purity Ring Dec. 14 at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6). Visit www.pvconcerthall.com or call (904) 209-0399 for more information and to purchase tickets.</p> <p>'Chanukah on the Green' for Beaches Young Jewish Professionals Join the Beaches Young Jewish Professionals Dec. 14 for a meeting at Green Room Brewing in Jacksonville Beach at 7:30 p.m. The group will light the menorah and ring in the holiday season at this special event. Contact Max Lesser at (954) 732-8443 for more information; RSVP via Facebook at the Beaches YJP page.</p>	<p>Coastal Wine Market wine tasting Coastal Wine Market & Tasting Room hosts Friday wine tastings from 6 to 8 p.m. at 641 Crosswater Parkway, Suite B in Ponte Vedra Beach. Taste six wines for \$10. For more information, call (904) 395-3520.</p> <p>Cannon Firing Demonstration at Castillo de San Marcos National Parks Service volunteers and personnel demonstrate a cannon firing at the Castillo de San Marcos museum / monument every Friday, Saturday and Sunday at 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 2:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m. Rangers and volunteers demonstrate the weapons and relate the experiences of the colonial Spanish soldier of 1740s St. Augustine. Firing times are subject to change depending on weather conditions and staff availability. Castillo de San Marcos is located at 1 S. Castillo Drive in St. Augustine.</p> <p>Enchanted Christmas Village Enjoy Christmas with Santa and his elves at the Enchanted Christmas Village. This event, which runs on weekends through Dec. 23, features holiday musical performances, bounce houses, wagon rides through the enchanted trail, pictures with Santa, yard games, photo ops, food and more. The Village is open from 5 to 10 p.m.; admission costs \$19 for adults, \$10 for youth ages 17 and under, free for kids 2 and under and \$50 for a family-of-four pack. Visit www.jacksonvillechristmas.com for more information and to purchase tickets. This event takes place at 899 Palm Valley Road in Ponte Vedra.</p> <p>Light of Christmas Join Turning Point at Calvary for its yearly Light of Christmas event. Experience a Christmas light display nightly Dec. 15-25 at 3500 S.R. 16 in St. Augustine. Visitors can also take a stroll through the nativity tent and winter wonderland. The Light of Christmas takes place from 6 to 9 p.m.</p>	<p>Ho Ho Holiday Fun with St. Johns County and the YMCA St. Johns County is partnering with the St. Augustine YMCA to host a free Winter Wonderland event from 10 to 11 a.m. Dec. 16 at the Solomon Calhoun pool, located at 1300 Duval St. Families are invited to celebrate the holidays with fun activities such as snowman relay races, a scavenger hunt, cookie decorating, a hot cocoa bar, fun holiday crafts and photos with Santa Claus. For more information, call (904) 471-9622.</p> <p>Ladies Starbucks meetup All women are invited to a meetup at Starbucks in Jacksonville Beach Dec. 16 at 7:15 p.m. for a night out in celebration of Chanukah. There will be a white elephant gift exchange at the event along with coffee, shmooze and fun. To participate in the gift exchange, bring a wrapped Chanukah gift valued at \$10 or less. Starbucks is located at 975 3rd St. S. in Jacksonville Beach. RSVP online at www.chabadbeaches.com, call (904) 543-9301 or email Leah@ChabadBeaches.com.</p> <p>'From Prophecy to Peace' The St. Augustine Community Chorus, under the direction of Mike Sanflippo, will perform "From Prophecy to Peace" Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m. and Dec. 17 at 2 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine. The chorus will be joined by the St. Augustine Youth Chorus, directed by Kerry Fradley. Concert tickets cost \$20 in advance for adults, \$25 at the door and \$5 for students and military with ID. Advanced tickets can be purchased online at www.staugustine-communitychorus.org.</p> <p>SJSO Holiday toy drive The St. Johns County Sheriff's office holiday toy drive will take place Dec. 16 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Sheriffs have teamed up with Honeybaked Ham on S.R. 312 to collect new toys for kids of all ages along with new sneakers and jackets. Additionally, Honeybaked Ham is offering anyone who brings a toy worth \$5 or more a free sandwich. The event will feature music, photo opportunities and a visit from SJSO's K9s. This toy drive will take place at 272 State Road 312 in St. Augustine.</p>	<p>Sandals, Shorts and Steel Drum Service Every Sunday from 11:30 a.m. to noon, St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church invites guests to put on sandals and shorts for a more casual worship service featuring the tropical sound of steel drum music. The church is located at 465 11th Ave. N. in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>Santa Claus at the Pirate Ship Black Raven Every weekend through Dec. 24, Santa Claus will appear on the Black Raven pirate ship, which departs on treasure hunt trips at 2:15 p.m. from the St. Augustine Municipal Marina. Visit www.blackravenadventures.com for more information.</p> <p>Stories with water painting exhibition More than 30 water color paintings will be up for sale at this painting exhibition set to take place Dec. 17 from 1 to 5 p.m. at the KK Dance Studio. Proceeds will benefit the MANOFA charity drive. The KK Dance Studio is located at 9551 Baymeadows Road, suite 7, in Jacksonville.</p> <p>'The Best Christmas Pageant Ever' by Barbara Robinson In this comedic Christmas classic, a couple struggling to put on a church Christmas pageant is faced with casting the most inventively awful kids in history. This performance will take place at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall Dec. 16 at 6 p.m. and Dec. 17 at 2 p.m. Tickets cost \$15. The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall is located at 1050 A1A N.</p> <p>'The Florida Project' at the Corazon Cinema and Cafe Set over one summer, this film follows precocious 6-year-old Moonee as she courts mischief and adventure with her ragtag playmates and bonds with her rebellious but caring mother, all while living in the shadows of Disney World. Watch "The Florida Project" at the Corazon Cinema and Cafe, located at 36 Granada St., Dec. 17 at 3 p.m. and 8 p.m.</p>

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Monday, Dec. 18	Tuesday, Dec. 19	Wednesday, Dec. 20	Thursday, Dec. 21
<p>WinterFEST 2017 Adventure Landing in Jacksonville Beach will transform its Shipwreck Island Water Park into a winter wonderland for the annual WinterFEST celebration. This year's festival runs from Nov. 18 through Jan. 8, 2018. The event will feature outdoor ice skating, an alpine ice slide, visits and pictures with Santa, s'more roasting and other attractions. Additionally, visitors can wind through a snowy village and enjoy window displays, hologram lights and decorations. Adventure Landing is located at 1944 Beach Blvd. Call (904) 516-9739 or visit https://jacksonville-beach.adventurelanding.com for more information.</p> <p>High Tea at Cafe Alcazar Visitors are invited to immerse themselves in the full experience of the Dressing Downton exhibition with a special tea at Cafe Alcazar, located in the pool area of the Lightner Museum in St. Augustine. Teas will take place at 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 2 p.m. Friday and Saturday until Jan. 7.</p> <p>Small works holiday show Cutter & Cutter Fine Art of St. Augustine & Ponte Vedra Beach will host its Small Works Holiday Show through Dec. 31 at 25 King St. in St. Augustine. The exhibition features more than 200 original paintings in oil, acrylic, watercolor and pastel including works by local artists Lyn Asselta, Matthew Cutter and Estella Fransbergen. The gallery is open 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday; admission is free and all the art is for sale.</p> <p>Downtown Dazzle The Jacksonville Children's Chorus will present its third annual holiday lights celebration by illuminating the outside of its downtown office with festive lights synchronized to recorded songs of the season. This event takes place at 225 E. Duval St. from 5:30 to 9:30 p.m. through Dec. 31. Holiday music will be broadcast on 94.5 FM. Visit www.jaxchildrenschorus.org for more information.</p>	<p>Tapas Tuesday The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens presents Tapas Tuesday at the Cummer Cafe every Tuesday from 5 to 7:30 p.m. View the sunset on the Cummer Cafe patio while listening to local musicians and enjoying beer, wine or artfully inspired tapas for sale at the Cafe. Reserve your table by calling (904) 899-6022. For more information, visit www.cummermuseum.org. The museum is located at 829 Riverside Ave.</p> <p>Drive thru Christmas lights Jax Illuminations' Drive Thru Holiday Light Show is a 1-mile drive thru featuring two mega trees, a 300-foot tunnel of lights, custom Christmas scenes and more. Shows take place nightly through Dec. 31 from 6 to 9:30 p.m. at the Morocco Shrine Center, located at 3800 St. Johns Bluff Road S. in Jacksonville. Email info@jaxilluminations.com, call (904) 361-6257 or visit www.jaxilluminations.com for more information.</p> <p>Horton's Holiday Hayride at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall will host a rockabilly event featuring Horton's Holiday Hayride along with the Godfather of psychobilly, the Reverend Horton Heat and country/blues/rock superstars Junior Brown, The Blasters and Big Sandy. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the performance starts at 6:30; admission costs \$35. The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall is located at 1050 A1A N.</p> <p>The Bronx: The Way it Was Travel back in time to New York City on a 90-minute journey to the Bronx with Steve Samtur, editor-in-chief of Back in THE BRONX magazine. Samtur's presentation, entitled "The Bronx: The Way it Was," will include 400+ photos and a number of videos of the inner-city from the 1940s, 50s and 60s. This event will take place Dec. 19 from 2 to 3:30 p.m. at the Mandarin Branch Library, located at 3330 Kori Road.</p>	<p>Toastmasters Club Toastmasters Club #5199 of Ponte Vedra Beach meets every Wednesday at 7:30 a.m. at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center. These meetings help attendees improve public speaking and gain leadership skills. The senior center is located at 175 Landrum Lane in Ponte Vedra Beach. Email Lucy Reep at lucyreep@gmail.com for additional information.</p> <p>Yoga at church Join St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal for Yoga every Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. Attendees are encouraged to bring a mat to this yoga class, which is suitable for all skill levels and ages. St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church is located at 465 11th Ave. N. in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>Wednesday Market Each Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., approximately 60 to 80 vendors participate in the Wednesday Market in St. Augustine Beach. Vendors and artists display produce, prepared foods, local seafood, art, crafts and more, placing an emphasis on home-grown and homemade items. The Market is held at the St. Johns County Pier Park at 350 A1A Beach Blvd., St Augustine Beach.</p> <p>Blue Christmas Service at Palms Presbyterian Church Palms Presbyterian Church will host its annual Blue Christmas Service Dec. 20 at 6:30 p.m. in Hess Chapel. Blue Christmas will feature a time of worship, prayer, silence and communion. All are welcome and a nursery will be provided. Palms Presbyterian Church is located at 3410 3rd St. S. in Jacksonville Beach. For more information on the church, call (904) 246-6427 or visit www.palmschurch.org.</p> <p>'Polar Express' bedtime storytime The whole family is invited to celebrate the holidays with a "Polar Express" readers theatre, a craft and milk and cookies. This event, to be held Dec. 20 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, is sponsored by the Friends of the Library.</p>	<p>Yoga for Survivors The Y Healthy Living Center at the Ponte Vedra YMCA will host a "Yoga for Survivors" class Dec. 19 at 11:30 a.m. Cancer patients, survivors, caregivers and others with range of motion and pain limitations are invited to join in this gentle and safe yoga practice, which is free and open to the public. Call (904) 202-5376 or visit www.baptistjax.com/ymca to reserve a spot. The Ponte Vedra YMCA is located at 170 Landrum Lane.</p> <p>Grief support group St. Paul's Catholic Church will host a grief support group in room 102 of the Family Life Center Dec. 21 at 7 p.m. The group is for men and women who are grieving the death of a family member or friend. For more information, call Kathy at (904) 553-8933 or Catherine at (904) 247-0665. The church is located at 578 1st Ave. N. in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>Jax Beach Pier Dance Rock Solid Law will raise money for toys and food to be distributed by Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry (BEAM) by combining their holiday party with the Jax Beach Pier Dance at Casa Marina Hotel Dec. 21. The event will feature live music by BayStreet, dancing and more from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. Admission is free with one new unwrapped toy and one non-perishable food item; cash donations to BEAM will be accepted. The Casa Marina Hotel is located at 691 1st St. N. in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>Nocatee light show The Nocatee light show will take place through the month of December at 245 Nocatee Center Way. Nocatee's Variety Spectacular starts at 6, 7:30 and 9 p.m. The Christmas Traditional starts at 6:30, 8 and 9:30 p.m. and the Contemporary Christmas Celebration will take place at 7, 8:30 and 10 p.m.</p> <p>Free calendar listings for community groups and nonprofit organizations are published at our discretion on a space-available basis. Send your event at least 10 days before publication. Submit events to recorderintern@opcfla.com, post online at www.pontevedrarecorder.com using the automated form or call (904) 686-3939.</p>

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GIFT IDEA: SOUNDS OF THE SEASON

St. Augustine Community Chorus to hold holiday performances Dec. 16-17

The St. Augustine Community Chorus (SACC), under the direction of Mike Sanfilippo, will open its 2017-2018 concert season with two performances of "From Prophecy to Peace," to be presented Saturday, Dec. 16 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Dec. 17 at 2 p.m. at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine.

The holiday program will honor SACC's continuing commitment to perform the music of living composers, featuring music with chamber orchestra accompaniment by Z. Randall Stroope, Donald Fraser, John Rutter and Mary Lynn Lightfoot, along with several favorite traditional choral arrangements. The chorus will be joined

by the St. Augustine Youth Chorus, and the program will feature excerpts from Handel's "Messiah," as well as sing-alongs of the "Hallelujah Chorus" and several well-known Christmas carols.

The Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine is located at 38 Cathedral Place. Tickets are priced at \$20 for adults (\$25 at the door) and \$5 for students and military with identification. Tickets can be purchased in advance at Carter's Jewelry, Flowers by Shirley, Herbie Wiles Insurance, Southern Horticulture, Sterry Piano and online at www.staugustinecommunitychorus.org. Please specify Saturday or Sunday attendance when buying tickets.

Jacksonville Symphony to present 'First Coast Nutcracker' and Handel's 'Messiah' this weekend

The Jacksonville Symphony is presenting "The First Coast Nutcracker" Dec. 15-17, and will have its annual performance of George Frideric Handel's "Messiah" Dec. 16-17.

The Symphony's "First Coast Nutcracker" performance has been captivating the Jacksonville area for more than 40 years. This weekend's showing at the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts is the only performance of "The Nutcracker"

in the area with a live symphony orchestra. In total, there are 350 different costumes seen throughout the performance, including some new ones this year. Also making its first appearance is a magical, growing tree that will appear on stage. With world class artists and a 15-foot Nutcracker tree in the lobby, this event presents entertainment in and out of the theater.

Once again, the ballet will be choreographed by Rhonda Stampalia, who has been the artistic director/choreographer for the "First Coast Nutcracker" since 1998. Jacksonville Symphony assistant conductor Deanna Tham will lead the performance.

Yumelia Garcia will return as lead dancer for "The First Coast Nutcracker." Garcia was born in Caracas, Venezuela, where she received her professional training at the Escuela de Ballet Gustavo Franklin. Upon graduation at the top of her class, she was invited to join the National Ballet of Caracas at the age of 15 and was promoted to soloist one year later. Garcia began her U.S. career with Heinz Pohl at Ohio Ballet and soon after, she joined Milwaukee Ballet rising to principal dancer.

After retiring from Joffrey Ballet in 2014, Yumelia Garcia continues her close collaboration with the Jacksonville Symphony this holiday season as the Sugar Plum Fairy in "The Nutcracker," after performances in "Sleeping Beauty" and "Cinderella" during Jacksonville's 2014-15 and 2015-16 seasons.

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GIFT IDEA: GIVING TIME TO A WORTHY CAUSE

Jim & Tabitha Furyk Foundation packs over 3,500 bags of food for local children in need at 'Hope for the Holidays' event

By Jon Blauvelt

Last week's poor weather conditions may have forced the Jim & Tabitha Furyk Foundation to change venues for its annual "Hope for the Holidays" event, but it didn't stop the charitable organization from ultimately helping those in need once again.

For the sixth year in a row, the Ponte Vedra-based foundation organized a group of community volunteers to pack bags of food for underprivileged, First Coast children to ensure they don't go hungry over the holiday school break. With initial plans to hold the event in the TPC Sawgrass parking lot, Mother Nature had other plans, forcing the organization to relocate its efforts indoors to the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall within 48 hours of the packing initiative.

"I was driving here today in the rain and actually started crying because it's just amazing how many people have come into play to make this happen," said Tabitha Furyk before the Dec. 7 event. "The PGA Tour, their employees, the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall just to give us the facility. And then, just all day we've been receiving donations to help us pay for these bags."

The foundation ultimately packed over 3,500 bags filled with canned ham, green beans, mashed potatoes, stuffing, cornbread, special treats like hot cocoa and more. In 2011, the organization packed 500 bags of food when the inaugural event was held.

"There has been a lot of growth that's been due to a lot of support from our community," said PGA Tour golfer Jim Furyk. "It's been a real fun project."

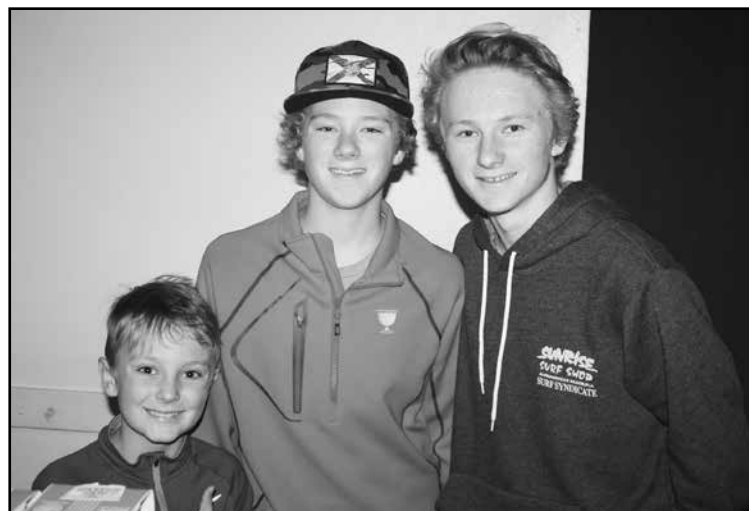
The packing process at the holiday event began with volunteers grabbing a red bag and then moving down the line to fill it with one of each food item. After collecting each of the items, volunteers then ended the process by tying the bag and placing it with the others, which were soon lifted into the back of a truck. The Furyks emphasize that this experience provides families, especially local kids, with an opportunity to truly understand what it's like to give during the holidays.

"A hands-on, touch and feel,



Photo courtesy of the PGA Tour

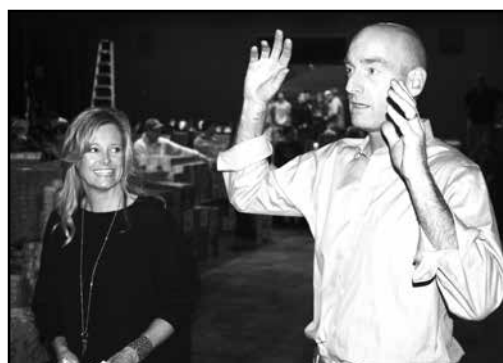
Volunteers join Jim and Tabitha Furyk following their foundation's "Hope for the Holidays" event on Dec. 7 at Ponte Vedra Concert Hall, which resulted in the packing of 3,500 bags of food for local children in need.



ABOVE: Barrett, Tyler and Taggart Dryden help pack bags at 'Hope for the Holidays.'

RIGHT: Tabitha and Jim Furyk address and thank the group of volunteers prior to the beginning of the packing process.

Photos by Jon Blauvelt



bag a bag and know that they're doing something to help another child," said Tabitha Furyk. "Knowing that the need is increasing in our community for kids that are food insecure and

all of the people who come out to pack the bags and how important it is to them just means the world to us."

This year's recipients of the food include students at 23



A group of youngsters makes its way down the packing line.

schools in Duval and St. Johns counties in the First Coast Blessings in a Backpack Program, which is a nonprofit organization that provides consistent weekend nutrition for children on the federal free and reduced meal program. Since these students rely on the schools' subsidized meals, they usually don't have enough food at home to eat during the holiday break. Data provided by Feeding Northeast Florida reports there are 81,660 children in the area who are unsure of where the next meal will come from and the foundation said it has certainly seen the need increasing each year.

The foundation also distributed food to the MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation, Hugs across the County, Anthony J Stinson Association for Change, Hubbard House and Community PedsCare, along with other smaller organizations requesting assistance. Funds for the food and the event were raised during the annual Furyk & Friends Concert and Celebrity Golf Classic as well as from donations from PepsiCo.

The Jim and Tabitha Furyk Foundation was created in 2010 to help children and families in need. Visit jimandtabithafurykfoundation.com/ for more information.

GIFT IDEA: CONTRIBUTING TO AREA CHILDREN

PGA Tour pays holiday visit to Webster Elementary School

Students at Webster Elementary School in St. Augustine received a special holiday surprise from THE PLAYERS Championship and PGA Tour last week.

Company staff visited Webster on Thursday night, decorated the school and dropped off backpacks for each of the students filled with various goodies. PGA Tour representatives then returned on Friday morning to read "A Visit from St. Nicholas" to students.

St. Nick himself joined the tour and visited all 31 classrooms and 550 students. THE PLAYERS Championship Executive Director Jared Rice and St. Johns County School District Superintendent Tim Forson also attended the holiday event on Friday morning.



Photos by Ryan Young/PGA Tour

A Webster Elementary School student plays with a toy from his new backpack.



Webster Elementary School students crowd around St. Nick for a selfie.

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Joining a Local Chamber of
Commerce*
Shapiro Group, 2012.

PV2-LV45493

Symphony

Continued from 24

Mauro Villanueva will join the ballet as lead male dancer. Villanueva grew up in San Antonio, and began his dance training at 6 years old with Shawn Knife. At age 9, he joined the University of Incarnate Word Ballet School directed by buddy and Susan Trevino, co-founders of The Joffrey Workshop Texas. In 1998, he attended a

summer course and consequently studied for two years at the Nutmeg Conservatory in Connecticut. In August of 2000, Villanueva joined the Joffrey Ballet as an apprentice and two years later received a full company contract.

Additional lead dancers include James Boyd, Brian Palmer, Benjahmin Svyatoslavich and Carlos Garland.

The performances of The First Coast Nutcracker will be 8 p.m. on Friday Dec. 15, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. on Saturday, Dec. 16

and 2 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 17.

The same weekend, the Jacksonville Symphony will also be presenting its annual performance of George Frideric Handel's "Messiah," part of the Jacksonville Symphony Special Presentations. The concerts will feature four guest artists and the Jacksonville Symphony Chorus.

Jacksonville Symphony associate conductor Nathan Aspinall will lead both performances of "Messiah." Recent performances of Aspinall's have included

Handel's "Messiah," Prokofiev's "Cinderella" and a special event concert with organist Cameron Carpenter. The Jacksonville Symphony Chorus, under the direction of Donald McCullough, is an all-volunteer group of individuals who have a love of singing choral music. The 100 members must audition to participate. This season, the chorus will participate in several performances including Faure's "Requiem," "Holiday Pops" and the final Masterworks performance, "Twilight of the Gods."

The four guest artists joining the Symphony for the performance will be American soprano Emily Birsan, a critically acclaimed recitalist, American mezzo-soprano Amanda Crider, tenor Jason Ferrante and operatic baritone Craig Irvin.

The Symphony's performances of Handel's "Messiah" are at 8 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16, and 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 17 at the Jacoby Symphony Hall in the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts.

For tickets or more information about "The First Coast Nutcracker" or Handel's "Messiah," visit JaxSymphony.org

Symphony's Youth Orchestras to hold holiday concert Dec. 18

The Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestras (JSYO) will perform their annual holiday concert at 7 p.m. Monday, Dec. 18 at Jacoby Symphony Hall in the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts.

The JSYO is under the direction of principal conductor and Symphony assistant conductor Deanna Tham. Hailing from Saratoga, California, Tham has conducted and guest conducted all over the United States, most recently working with renowned conductors Marin Alsop and James Ross at the Cabrillo Contemporary Music Festival. Before joining the Jacksonville Symphony, Tham was the music director of the 350-piece Louisville Youth Orchestra.

The JSYO assistant conductors are Helen Morin, who will conduct both Encore Strings and Premier Strings; Rose Francis, who will head up Foundation Strings at the Florida State College of Jacksonville's South Campus; violinist Naira Cola, who will serve as the conductor of the Clay County Foundation Strings; David Song, who will conduct the Jump Start Strings ensemble at the Florida State College of Jacksonville's South Campus; and John Wieland, principal bass for the Jacksonville Symphony, who is in charge of Woodland Acres Jump Start Strings and Foundation Strings.

Throughout the evening, the five ensembles will play a selection of holiday favorites from "Carol of the Bells" to "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas." The Philharmonic will end the evening with A Christmas Festival and selections from "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone."

During the evening, the JSYO will be selling T-shirts, jackets and other items. Profits from these sales will go toward supporting the JSYO.




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Business Weekly

New executive chef comes to TPC Sawgrass

Page 31

PAGE 29 THURSDAY, DECMEBER 14, 2017

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SJC Chamber PVB Division holds 'Jingle & Mingle' holiday party

The Ponte Vedra Beach (PVB) Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce held its "Jingle & Mingle" holiday party Dec. 6 at a private home in Marsh Landing.

Event attendees enjoyed networking opportunities, cocktails provided by St. Au-

gustine Distillery and hors d'oeuvres from Sawgrass Events. The party also featured entertainment from the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestras (JSYO) and a raffle and silent auction.

For more information on the Chamber, visit sjcchamber.com.

ABOVE: Dave Danzeisen, Barry McDonald and Suzan Lupton

RIGHT: The Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestras provide entertainment at the holiday party.

Photos by Susan Griffin



ABOVE: Malcolm Anthony and Chamber President and CEO Isabelle Rodriguez

LEFT: Mel and Felicia Cox

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty celebrates power of giving during holiday season

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty is continuing its longstanding tradition of giving back to the community this holiday season.

Along with Luminaria 2017 on Sunday, Dec. 17, benefitting local neighborhood charities, company associates throughout Northeast Florida are supporting additional initiatives to make the holidays brighter for those in need.

"The holidays serve as an important reminder of how blessed we are, and our agents and employees are grateful to be in a position to help others," said Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty Founder, President and CEO Linda Sherrer. "We love that the holiday season provides many opportunities to spread cheer and make a positive difference in the lives of many local children and families."

During the holiday season, realtors and employees in the company's branch offices donate time, talent and financial support to many community initiatives. Here's a look at some of the charities and events Berkshire Hathaway is involved with this season:

■ **Avondale/San Marco:** Through Dec. 21, associates are purchasing toys and gifts for children supported by Holiday Helpers. The office is also collecting food donations for the Community Health Outreach Lord's Pantry. Donations are accepted at the Avondale office, located at 3627 St. Johns Ave., Jacksonville, weekdays during normal business hours and on weekend from noon to 3 p.m. Call (904) 296-1737 for more information.



Photo courtesy of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty

Berkshire Hathaway realtors and employees in the company's offices are donating time, talent and financial support to many community initiatives during the holiday season.

GIVING continues on Page 30

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Giving

Continued from 29

■ **Beaches:** Through Dec. 15, agents in the Beaches office are accepting donations to purchase holiday gifts ranging from bikes to games for students at Mayport Elementary School. The Beaches office is located at 375-1 Atlantic Blvd. in Atlantic Beach. Call (904) 241-2417 for more information.

■ **Mandarin:** The Mandarin office, located at 11576 San Jose Blvd. in Jacksonville, is a drop-off location for Toys for Tots and local food banks, supporting other branch offices' collections. Call

(904) 260-4300 for more information.

■ **St. Augustine/Murabella/World Golf Village:** Through Dec. 23, the St. Augustine and Murabella/World Golf Village offices are collecting food and donations for the St. Francis House in St. Augustine and Pie in the Sky in Hastings. They are also collecting toys for the Sertoma Club of St. Augustine. The St. Augustine office is located in the SeaGrove Town Center in St. Augustine Beach, and the Murabella office is located in the Shoppes at Murabella on State Road 16. Call (904) 471-6906 for more information.

For more information, visit www.FloridaNetworkRealty.com.

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Unacceptable Items:

Loose, Unseparated, Unstacked Piles
Items, Bags or Bundles Over 50lbs.
Items More Than 6ft in Length
Unbagged or Unbundled Material



Acceptable Items:

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Items Less Than 50lbs & 6ft in Length



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PV3-LV45339

TPC Sawgrass welcomes new executive chef

TPC Sawgrass has appointed Azhar Mohammad as its new executive chef.

Mohammad brings more than 20 years of global experience in the hospitality industry and will be responsible for planning and managing the culinary operations for the club's restaurants, lounges and banquet facility.

Chef Mohammad joins TPC Sawgrass from AT&T Hotel and Conference Center in Austin, Texas, where he served as executive chef, as well as regional executive chef for 12 additional properties in the

brand's portfolio. Previously, he gained extensive experience at Omni Grove Park Inn in Asheville, North Carolina, and several Ritz-Carlton and JW Marriott properties, including Ritz-Carlton hotels in New Orleans, Grand Cayman, St. Louis, San Juan, Puerto Rico, and the JW Marriott in Dubai. Chef Mohammad has a degree in hotel management from the Institute of Hotel Management and Catering Technology in India.

"It was crucial that we find a culinary professional who understands and

has hands-on experience managing the complexity, volume and world-class expectations of an iconic property like TPC Sawgrass," said PGA TOUR Golf Course Properties National Director of Food and Beverage Kent James. "We are confident we found these qualities in Chef Azhar." From overseeing a \$37 million multi-

unit restaurant, resort and convention operation, to running world-class operations at 5-star properties around the globe, Chef Mohammad's rich experiences and diverse background are expected to bring great innovation to the club's culinary programming, said TPC Sawgrass representatives.

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Ride to: Visitor Information Ctr., 10 S. Castillo Dr.

Complete information and shuttle schedule at
www.CityStAug.com

The NIGHTS OF LIGHTS and the park and ride shuttle are produced by the City of St. Augustine with funding assistance from the St. Johns County Tourist Development Council, but the success of the NIGHTS OF LIGHTS would not be possible without the wide participation of the St. Augustine community.



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Sports

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2017 · PAGE 32

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Jaguars make statement with win over Seahawks

By Jon Blauvelt

As First Coast fans erupted in “Let’s go Jaguars” and “DU-VAL” chants in the closing minutes of Jacksonville’s victory last weekend over Seattle, one fact became apparent: The Jacksonville Jaguars are for real.

With both teams entering the contest 8-4, the Jaguars topped the Seahawks 30-24 and are now 9-4 on the season and in sole possession of the AFC South lead after the Tennessee Titans lost to the Arizona Cardinals. The win guarantees the Jaguars their first winning season since 2007.

“I was excited for our players,” said Jaguars coach Doug Marrone. “I was excited for our fans to come out there today. I thought all three phases kind of complimented each other at times during the game, which I think you have to do to win games late in the season in December.”

Jacksonville receiver Jaydon Mickens, who returned a punt in the third quarter 72 yards, said the game was a statement win for the Jaguars.

“This is a game that nobody picked us to win, and if they did pick us to win, it wasn’t by



Leonard Fournette busts a run for the Jaguars. The rookie back had 101 yards and a touchdown on 24 carries.

much,” he said, adding that the win sent a message to the rest of the NFL. “The Jacksonville Jaguars are here. They’re here, they’re ready to play, they’re focused, they’re hungry and they’re resilient.”

Coming into the game, the question for Jacksonville was simple: Could the Jaguars con-

tain quarterback Russell Wilson? For three quarters of play, Jacksonville did just that, forcing three interceptions from Seattle’s most potent weapon and limiting him to only 13 completions for 122 yards.

“We just had to strike fear in his heart,” said defensive end Yannick Ngakoue, who finished

Photo by Rick Wilson/Jacksonville Jaguars

with one of the defense’s two sacks. “From the first plays we were just trying to get to him and hit him and keep him contained, and that’s what we did. We did a great job of it, and the defense from the back seven and the DBs did a great job of locking down.”

The Jaguars capitalized on the defensive’s efforts with points on

the scoreboard, thanks in large part to the impressive efforts of quarterback Blake Bortles against a historically strong defense in Seattle. The Jacksonville signal caller finished 18 of 27 for 268 yards and two touchdowns.

“I felt as though I put our offense in a chance to score points,” said Bortles. “Obviously not turning the ball over is a big part of that.”

After coming out of halftime with a 3-0 lead due to a 38-yard field goal from Josh Lambo, the action picked up for Jacksonville in the third quarter. On the Jaguars’ first drive in the second half, quarterback Blake Bortles orchestrated a five play, 42-yard drive that was capped off by a beautiful 18-yard fade to rookie wide receiver Dede Westbrook.

Seattle responded with a 28-yard field goal from Blair Walsh and then a 26-yard touchdown pass from Wilson to Doug Baldwin after Jacksonville’s Corey Grant fumbled a kick return. Jacksonville’s response, however, was stronger. Bortles connected with receiver Keelan Cole on a 75-yard touchdown bomb, and a few minutes later,

JAGUARS continues on Page 34



BOYS BASKETBALL

NEASE RALLIES FOR 57-42 WIN VS. MIDDLEBURG

LEFT: Nease’s Aaron Cochran drives to the basket in a district 3-7A matchup against Middleburg. Cochran scored 14 points in the 57-42 win.

RIGHT: Nease’s Darien Witherspoon (0) defends against a Middleburg player during the Panthers’ win on Dec. 5. Witherspoon had 17 points in the game, all in the second half. The Panthers trailed Middleburg 24-17 at the half, but held the Broncos to just four points in the third quarter. Nease fell to Englewood 56-37 in a district game on Dec. 7, and lost to White 46-40 on Dec. 12. The Panthers (2-3, 1-1) next play at rival Ponte Vedra at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 15.

Photos by Jeff Heineman/theimagecaddy.com





GIRLS SOCCER

PVHS TOPS CLAY 7-1

TOP: Kai Hayes (10) of the Sharks controls the ball on the attack in Tuesday's win over Clay. Hayes finished the game with three goals.

RIGHT: Piper Dotsikas (4) of the Sharks heads downfield. She finished with one goal of her own.

Photos by Jerry and Chris Norton



Landrum Middle School XC teams place second at event, win top individual honors

The Landrum Middle School Lions won first-place individual medals in the girls and boys division at the St. Johns Middle School Cross Country Championships held at Bartram Trail High School.

Both the Landrum boys and girls teams came in second in the event, which included 160 girl runners and more than 180 participants in the boys division. Fruit Cove Middle School finished first.

Tori Balsler won the individual medal for the girls with a time of 12:36, and Reinhardt Harrison came in first place for the boys with a time of 10:29. Other top Landrum finishers for the girls were Ella Harrison (13:53) in 16th place and Amelia Coker (14:26) in 27th place. Other top finishers for the boys were Wyatt Rogers (11:24) in fourth place, and Quinn Remisiewicz (11:24:50) in fifth place.



Tori Balsler



Photos courtesy of Sherbrooke Balsler
Reinhardt Harrison

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THEME: YEAR IN REVIEW

ACROSS
1. Pepsi and Coke, e.g.
6. Batman punch
9. Tit for tat
13. Notable period
14. Opposite of hence
15. Cook-off dish
16. Nile's mouth
17. Jan. predecessor
18. *A United passenger was dragged down one
19. *2017 solar event
21. *Natural disaster or center of Hollywood scandal
23. Second Testament
24. "Best _____ schemes o'mice an' men"
25. Is no longer
28. Supermarket section
30. Broadband predecessor
35. Lyric poems
37. Commiserate
39. *Album of the Year Grammy recipient
40. Opposite of eve
41. *POTUS
43. Fender-bender damage
44. Kindle content
46. a.k.a. Atlantic Richfield Company
47. Jazz singing
48. Freshman?
50. Chutzpah
52. "Listen up!"
53. Freight horse cart
55. Noisy talk
57. *Late Playboy

60. *Fidget _____, banned by many schools
64. Hindu dance gesture
65. Anything female
67. Ransack or plunder
68. 4-letter word in speech on broadcast TV
69. Three strikes
70. Lucifer
71. *Tiffany to Ivanka and Don Jr.'s kids
72. *Its neutrality was being threatened in 2017
73. Craftily or cunningly

DOWN
1. Surrender land
2. Crude group?
3. Take it easy
4. _____ a play
5. Formed
6. _____ farewell, past tense
7. Bio bit
8. Barista's creation
9. Blade in Litchfield
10. Solomon-like
11. Friend in war
12. Crusty dessert
15. Esophagus-stomach connection
20. Hidden under a rug
22. "Farm _____" benefit concert
24. Church ritual
25. *January 21 marchers
26. Hacienda brick

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Fill in the blank squares in the grid, making sure that every row, column and 3-by-3 box includes all digits 1 through 9.

27. Asian goat antelope
29. Turkey money
31. Contributes
32. Olden day doctor's prescription
33. Arm bones
34. *Deceased heart-breaker
36. One who looks down on others
38. Village People song
42. Tissue growth
45. Do this and hope for ransom
49. Before of yore

51. Landowners in the olden days
54. Match play?
56. Land on patellas
57. **"The Handmaid's Tale" channel
58. Adam and Eve's garden
59. Drive oneself crazy
60. Cobblestone
61. USS Constitution organization
62. Inherently bad
63. To bank on
64. Executive's degree
66. Tint

Jaguars

Continued from 32

running back Leonard Fournette pounded in a 1-yard rushing touchdown after the Mickens punt return. Fournette finished his strong day on the ground with 101 yards and a touchdown on 24 carries. Add in another Josh Lambo field goal at the

beginning of the fourth quarter, and the Jaguars led 27-10 with 10 minutes remaining in the game.

“We knew we were going to have to score points,” said Bortles. “I think guys did a really good job of when [Seattle] made big plays and scored touchdowns, no one got down or hung their head or anything. That’s fine, we knew we could go back and score again so it was alright.”

The game wasn’t over yet though. Wilson added 14 quick points off 61-yard and 74-yard touchdown passes to Paul Richardson and Tyler Lockett, respectively. Josh Lambo added his final field goal of the day between Seattle’s two fourth quarter scores. With about four minutes to play, the Seahawks scratched and clawed their way within six points, but ultimately could not finish the comeback. After one

final stop, the Jaguars finished on top, 30-24.

The game didn’t end without its fair share of drama. Seahawks defensive linemen Sheldon Richardson and Quinton Jefferson were ejected following scuffles on consecutive plays as Bortles kneeled to end the game. On his way to the locker room, Jefferson ultimately got into a screaming match with a Jacksonville fan who threw a drink at him. The Seattle defensive lineman actually attempted to climb into the stands to retaliate, but EverBank Field security officials prevented him from doing so. Bortles had a simple response to the chippiness of the game.

“I think it’s a little bit of people aren’t used to getting beat like that by the Jaguars,” the quarterback said. “We just beat the crap out of you for 60 minutes.”

As for the next 60 minutes, the Jaguars will face the Houston Texans in the team’s final home game of the season at 1 p.m. on Sunday. Following the win against the Seahawks, Marrone said there’s still a lot of football left to be played.

“I also told the players, ‘Hey listen, this is the first game of the fourth quarter. Let’s not get distracted with any noise on the outside. Let’s get ready,’” said Marrone. “We have a division opponent next week. You’ve got to get ready to play again, and obviously the season is not over. We’re not going to get too high. We’re not going to get too low. We’re going to work our butts off and see if we can get ourselves ready for next week.”

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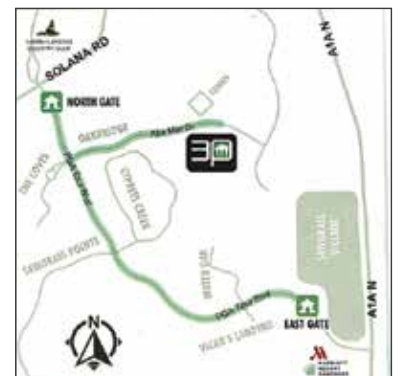
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