

Connections

THE CHAMBER 2018 & BEYOND

February 2018



ST. JOHNS
COUNTY
CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

Ponte Vedra
Recorder

ISABELLE RENAULT
St. Johns County Chamber of
Commerce President / CEO presents
the organization's newly adopted plan.
Read page 17 for more.

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Toni Boudreaux
Director PVB Division,
St. Johns County
Chamber of Commerce

It has been almost a year since I took over as director of the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce. It has truly been an honor and a privilege to serve our wonderful community, which Coastal Living ranked as one of the Top 20 Best Places to Live on the Coast in 2018.

Our Visitor Information Center is becoming busier every month with guests wanting to find their own piece of paradise here in Ponte Vedra. We all know that to have a strong economic environment, we must have a strong community. We are truly blessed to have leaders, business owners, teachers and residents working together to share in the responsibility of fostering economic success here in our beautiful community.

As we continue to make our way into the new year, I am thrilled to be implementing the Chamber's new strategic plan as introduced by Chamber President

& CEO Isabelle Renault and unanimously approved by our Board of Directors. The plan, entitled 2018 & Beyond, will provide action steps to increase our capacity to adapt, be a fierce advocate for members' success and a known influencer of public policy. Over the next three years — with the hard work, dedication and expertise of staff, board members and volunteers — we are dedicated to continuing to support local businesses through promotion, education, advocacy and by providing quality events.

Also, mark your calendars for March 14 at Ruth's Chris Steak House here in Ponte Vedra Beach for guest speaker Henry Dean, who is the chair of the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners representing District 5. He will join us during Chamber at Noon to speak about beach renourishment, smart growth and impact fees.

Then on April 12, we welcome the

CEO of K9s For Warriors, Rory Diamond, for our joint luncheon with the Jax Chamber. Based in Ponte Vedra, K9s for Warriors has now expanded west to Alachua County, taking over a 67-acre property where it will be able to pair more veterans with service animals.

The Ponte Vedra Beach Division offers three monthly events to serve our Chamber members: a Before Hours, Chamber at Noon and an After Hours. We invite you to join us at one of these events; don't forget to bring your business cards!

If you are not a member of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, please consider joining us today. Your membership will benefit your business and this community: one of the best places in Florida to live, work and play. Thank you again for a great year, and I look forward to seeing you out and about!

"Over the next three years — with the hard work, dedication and expertise of staff, board members and volunteers — we are dedicated to continuing to support local businesses through promotion, education, advocacy and by providing quality events."

Toni Boudreaux, Director PVB Division of St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

UPCOMING SJC CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PVBD EVENTS

MARCH EVENTS:

Chamber Before Hours

Date/Time: Wednesday, March 7 from 8-9 a.m.

Location: Allstate

Information: Enjoy your breakfast while networking among members and guests.

This is a great way to start your work day with a little breakfast and conversation!

Cost: Free for members and guests

Sponsor: Allstate

Chamber at Noon

Date/Time: Wednesday, March 14 from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Location: Ruth's Chris Steak House

Speaker: Henry Dean, District 5, St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners (Chair)

Topic: "Building Coastal Communities." Dean's address will include discussion on beach renourishment, smart growth and proposed impact fees for business/residential.

Cost: \$25 for pre-registered members and guests; \$30 on the day of the event

Sponsor: Fields Auto Group

Chamber After Hours

Date/Time: Wednesday, March 21 from 5:30 – 7 p.m.

Location: BBVA Compass Bank

Cost: Free for pre-registered members and guests; \$5 on the day of the event

Information: Chamber After Hours is designed for busy professionals who can't get out of their offices or off the job until the close of business. Join us to network among members and guests. The host will provide beverages and delicious bites. Bring your business cards!

Sponsor: BBVA Compass, BBVA Investment Solutions

APRIL EVENTS:

Chamber Before Hours

Date/Time: Wednesday, April 4 from 8-9 a.m.

Location: Ponte Vedra Wellness Center

Information: Enjoy your breakfast while networking among members and guests. This is a great way to start your work day with a little breakfast and conversation!

Cost: Free for members and guests

Sponsor: Ponte Vedra Wellness Center

PVB Division Joint Luncheon with JAX Chamber Beaches Division

Date/Time: Wednesday, April 12 from 11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

(Program starts at noon)

Location: Sawgrass Golf Club

Speaker: Rory Diamond, CEO of K9s For Warriors

Cost: \$25 for pre-registered members and guests; \$30 on the day of the event

Sponsor: Fields Auto Group

Chamber After Hours

Date/Time: Wednesday, April 18 from 5:30 – 7 p.m.

Location: Freedom Boat Club at Palm Valley Outdoors

Information: Chamber After Hours is designed for busy professionals who can't get out of their offices or off the job until the close of business. Join us to network among members and guests. The host will provide beverages and delicious bites. Bring your business cards!

Cost: Free for pre-registered members and guests; \$5 on the day of the event

Sponsor: Freedom Boat Club

Chamber president/CEO Renault presents Chamber plan during At Noon event



Photo courtesy of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Isabelle Renault presents the Chamber's 2018 & Beyond plan Feb. 14 at Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa in Ponte Vedra.

On Wednesday, Feb. 14, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce President/CEO Isabelle Renault was featured at the organization's monthly educational and issues focused luncheon, Chamber at Noon, at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa in Ponte Vedra.

"It is important that our members know our plans, how do we direct their investment to serve their businesses," Renault said, "also it is important to hear their feedback as to what we can do to better help them succeed."

Renault spoke to the Valentine's Day audience of about 40 to present the Chamber's 2018 & Beyond plan. Approved unanimously by the organization's board of directors, the new plan begins with the reality that businesses are continuously evolving. Issues such as increased competition, greater expectation of value and challenging generational differences that were addressed in the Chamber's previous plan, Elevate, Innovate, Accelerate, are still relevant today.

THE CHAMBER'S VISION FOR 2018 & BEYOND IS:

"The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce will be a fierce advocate for members' success. We will increase our capacity to adapt. We will impact the ever-changing business reality with proactive solutions. And, we will be a known influencer of public policy."

According to Renault, during the next three years and in some instances beyond even that, the Chamber will implement steps that she believes will take it to and past its tipping point to a moment when its resources are growing with its services and benefits.

She continued to state that some of the steps outlined in the 2018 & Beyond plan were already being executed.

"We have become much more active in the public policy arena and will continue to grow our influence so that we can be a more formidable advocate for our local businesses," Renault said. "In fact, it is a good example of how we are building on the foundation that we created under the Elevate, Innovate, Accelerate three-year plan that we adopted shortly after I ascended to the post."

CHAMBER PLAN continues on Page 18



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Photos courtesy of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce
Dick Williams, Toni Boudreaux and Chris Miller



Kim Scott, John Anderson and Kari Zerrahn



Randi Guthard, Lauren Braddock and Lacey Croy

Chamber plan

Continued from 17

Under Elevate, the Chamber created the Public Policy Council and contends that today it is one of the key elements in the organization's ability to predict and respond to issues that might affect the business community.

Another example that especially affects Ponte Vedra is the Chamber's changing role in the area's tourism industry, said Renault.

"We have long been host to the Ponte Vedra Visitors Center, but as a voice of the many businesses that benefit from visitors' spending, we felt there was an opportunity for us to make a greater impact on the industry," said the Chamber CEO.

During the organization's previous plan, the

Chamber commissioned a study to discover the best way to impact tourism in the area and is now assuming a role as a destination architect to help steer how best to attract people to the area.

According to Renault, these are just a few of the things the organization is focused on.

To find out more about the organization or to join the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and the Chamber's Ponte Vedra Beach Division, call (904) 285-2004 or visit www.sjchamber.com.

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PVBD Board of Directors conducts monthly meeting

The Board of Directors for the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce gathered at the Ponte Vedra Recorder office on Tuesday, Feb. 13 for its monthly meeting, which was catered by KC's Kitchen.

The board represents a broad cross-section of industries and individuals, each of whom brings years of professional experiences and business acumen to their board duties.

The board members and their respective titles on the board are as follows:

Chair: Susan Griffin, Ponte Vedra Recorder

Vice Chair: Rob Schlingmann, The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach

Secretary: Sarah Alexander, Berkshire Hathaway Home Services Florida Network Realty



Rob Schlingmann, Jen Hendrich, Sarah Alexander, Gloria Dongara, Lucia Miller, Susan Griffin, Toni Boudreaux, Isabelle Renault, Nancy Hallett and Wiam "William" Battah gather at the PVBD Board of Directors meeting Feb. 13 at the Recorder's office.

Photo by Recorder staff

Immediate Past President: Ed Mercel, Coldwell Banker Vanguard Realty

Board Member: Lori Adams, cabi/Harbor View Advisors/TPC Sawgrass

Board Member: Nancy Hallett, Gateway Business Advisors

Board Member: Janet Collins, Sawgrass Country Club

Board Member: Jennifer Belisario, TPC Sawgrass

Board Member: Jen Hendrich, THE PLAYERS Championship, PGA Tour

Board Member: Wiam "William" Battah, Ruth's Chris Steak House

Board Member: Gloria Dongara, AAA- The Auto Club Group

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Thursday, Feb. 22	Friday, Feb. 23	Saturday, Feb. 24	Sunday, Feb. 25
<p>Savvy Job Hunters Ministry Join the Savvy Job Hunters Ministry Feb. 22 from 9 a.m. to noon at Christ Episcopal Church, located at 400 San Juan Drive in Ponte Vedra Beach. The workshop, entitled "Taking the Plunge: Faith to Override Fear," will feature a presentation by J. Dianne Tribble on innovative ways to approach a job search. Tribble is a certified life coach, motivational speaker, published author and business start-up consultant. Register for the workshop by emailing Pam Ottesen at pottesen66@gmail.com. This event will take place in the Parish Center Conference Room on the second floor.</p> <p>Financial education class Karsten Jacobson will host a financial education class entitled "Rules of the Road" Feb. 22 from 11 a.m. to noon at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. Jacobson will discuss the most common investing mistakes and how to avoid them, investing strategies to help reach your long-term goals and how to prepare for the swings in the market. RSVP by phone at (904) 285-9898 or via email at Linda.Kobetitsch@edwardjones.com. Seating is limited. The Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library is located at 101 Library Blvd.</p> <p>Southern Culture on the Skids at St. Augustine Amphitheatre The St. Augustine Amphitheatre's Front Porch Series presents the country-fried Americana trio Southern Culture on the Skids Feb. 22 at 7 p.m. (doors open at 6). For more information and to purchase tickets, call the box office at (904) 209-0367 or visit www.staugamphitheatre.com. The St. Augustine Amphitheatre is located at 1340C A1A S.</p> <p>K9s for Warriors graduation K9s for Warriors will host a graduation ceremony for the 400th service dog team Feb. 22 at 6 p.m. on the pool deck at the organization's headquarters, located at 114 Camp K9 Road in Ponte Vedra Beach. For more information, visit www.k9sforwarriors.org.</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 Park 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>'Nature Reconstructed' exhibit at Beaches Museum & History Park The Beaches Museum & History Park is hosting "Nature Reconstructed," an exhibit by Lana Shuttleworth, until June 3. Shuttleworth uses common plastic castoff materials, particularly traffic safety cones, to create landscapes and sculptural figures that challenge the viewer's comprehension. This event is free to museum members with a suggested \$5 donation for non-members. For more information, call (904) 241-5657 or visit www.beachesmuseum.org. The Beaches Museum & History Park is located at 381 Beach Blvd. in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>John Dufresne book signing at The BookMark Award-winning author and professor John Dufresne will make an appearance at The BookMark Feb. 23 at 7 p.m. to talk about and sign copies of his new book, "FLASH! Writing the Very Short Story." Dufresne is the author of six novels, including "Louisiana Power & Light" and "Love Warps the Mind a Little." The BookMark is located at 220 1st St. in Neptune Beach. Email bkmrk@bellsouth.net for more information.</p>	<p>Camp I Am Special Fashion Show Catholic Charities will host the Camp I Am Special Fashion Show Feb. 24 at St. Matthew Catholic Church, located at 1773 Blanding Blvd. in Jacksonville. Doors open at 11 a.m., lunch is at noon and the show starts at 12:45 p.m. Tickets for the show cost \$15 at the door or in advance through the Camp I Am Special office, available at (904) 230-7447. Contact Fashion Show chairwoman Debra Capley at (904) 891-0181 for more information or visit www.CampIAmSpecial.com.</p> <p>Paint the Town Blue Gala The Paint the Town Blue Gala, sponsored by the Ponte Vedra Democratic Club, will take place Feb. 24 at 6:30 p.m. at the Marriott Sawgrass Resort in Ponte Vedra. Former Congresswoman Pat Schroeder will be on hand for the event. For more information and to purchase tickets (\$150), visit www.Facebook.com/PonteVedraDemocrats.</p> <p>83rd annual Bach Festival The Bach Festival Society of Winter Park is presenting its 83rd annual Bach Festival through March 4. Each year, the Bach Society fills Winter Park with choral, orchestral and chamber music for three weeks. For a complete list of concert times/dates, venues and performers visit www.BachFestivalFlorida.org.</p> <p>S*U*P*E*R Community Collection Day Residential materials will be collected Feb. 24 at the TPC Parking Lot, including paint, motor oil, pesticides, batteries, antifreeze, solvents, lighter fluid, extinguishers and more. Obsolete electronics will also be collected. This event will take place at CR210 @ A1A from 8 a.m. to noon. Call (904) 827-6980 for more information.</p> <p>Historical Landmark Dedication Ceremony Three landmarks will be dedicated at the Historical Landmark Dedication Ceremony in Switzerland, Florida, Feb. 24 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The event will take place at Alpine Groves Park at 2060 S.R. 13. For more information, call (904) 707-5207.</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>Black History Month sale at World Golf Hall of Fame The World Golf Hall of Fame & Museum is celebrating Black History Month by offering 50 percent off admission for any guest who mentions the Black History Month promotion throughout the month of February. The museum, located at 1 World Golf Place, is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. For more information, visit www.worldgolfhalloffame.org.</p> <p>Cathedral Festival The 2018 Cathedral Festival features rides, games, bingo, a silent auction, food, beverages, fireworks and live music Feb. 23-25. The festival takes place at the Mission Nombre de Dios beginning at 5 p.m. on Friday and noon on Saturday and Sunday. Fireworks go off Saturday at 9 p.m., weather permitting. Admission costs \$5 for adults. For more information, visit www.thecathedralfestival.com. Proceeds from the festival benefit the Cathedral Parish School and Cathedral Parish Early Education Center. Mission Nombre de Dios is located at 89 A1A Scenic and Historic Coastal Byway in St. Augustine.</p> <p>'Black Panther' at World Golf Hall of Fame IMAX Theater After the events of Marvel's "Captain America: Civil War," King T'Challa returns home to the reclusive, technologically advanced African nation of Wakanda to serve as his country's new leader. However, T'Challa soon finds that he is challenged for the throne from factions within his own country. This film is showing at the IMAX Theater at World Golf Hall of Fame Feb. 25 at 1:15, 4:15, 7:15 and 10:15 p.m. The World Golf Hall of Fame is located at 1 World Golf Place in St. Augustine.</p>

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Monday, Feb. 26	Tuesday, Feb. 27	Wednesday, Feb. 28	Thursday, March 1
<p>Caregiver support meetings The St. Johns County Council on Aging will host caregiver support meetings Mondays (except holidays) from noon to 1 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Memory Care Center at 1048 A1A N. For more information, call Paulette Kozlowski at (904) 209-3674 or email pkozlowski@stjohnscoa.com. The meetings will provide a supportive environment for people who are experiencing similar challenges in which they can share problems, ideas and solutions.</p> <p>First Coast Plein Air Painters exhibition This exhibition, presented by the First Coast Plein Air Painters, is on display through February at The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach Monday to Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach is located at 50 Executive Way; visit www.ccpvb.org for more information.</p> <p>MOSH Mondays The Museum of Science and History's MOSH Mondays features discounts including buy-one-get-one-half-off admission for adults, 10 percent off MOSH-branded items in the museum shop, 10 percent off memberships when signing up in-person and 10 percent off birthday packages when signing up in-person. MOSH Mondays also feature rotating weekly programs. MOSH is located at 1025 Museum Circle in Jacksonville. Visit www.themosh.org for more information.</p> <p>Free law school classes The St. Johns Legal Aid Staff will present free law school classes on the exploitation of the elderly and vulnerable in Florida, foreclosure defense, how to avoid the need for guardianship, landlord/tenant laws, avoiding predatory lending and other consumer scams, the rights of a debtor and more through April 30. Classes take place Mondays from 4 to 5 p.m. at the Southeast Branch library, located at 6670 U.S. 1 S. in St. Augustine.</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>Prenatal yoga Prenatal and postnatal yoga is designed to help women cope with the changing needs of their body before and after pregnancy and birth. The public is invited Feb. 27 at 6 p.m. to share individual experiences with other women and gain empowerment through yoga, meditation, and guided visualization. This approach is gentle and safe for women in all stages of pregnancy, and once recovered from birth, but prior approval from a healthcare provider is advised. This event will take place at the Y Healthy Living Center, located at 170 Landrum Lane in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p> <p>Family storytime and crafting Join Mr. Andy and Mrs. Marcia in The Randolph Caldecott Children's Room at the St. Johns County Main Branch library Feb. 27 at 11 a.m. for singing, stories and crafts. This program is open to children of all ages. The Main Branch is located at 1960 N. Ponce De Leon Blvd. in St. Augustine.</p> <p>Womens Food Alliance seafood dinner w/ Cindy Stavelly Get to know businesswoman and sharpshooter Cindy Stavelly and enjoy a seafood dinner Feb. 27 from 5:30 to 8:30 p.m. at St. Augustine Seafood Company. Menu options will include seafood baskets, fish and chips burritos, po'boys, anchor burgers, chowders, salads, oysters, shrimp and more. The reservation deadline is Feb. 22. For more information on how to register, email Leigh Cort at leighcort@bellsouth.net. St. Augustine Seafood Company is located at 33 St. George St.</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>Taize Service/Lenten Program On Wednesday evenings during lent, join St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church for a Taize Prayer service in the church at 6 p.m., followed by dinner and an evening program. The theme for this year is "Transforming Our World." There will also be a program available for children after dinner at 6:30.</p> <p>Keynote speaker at Palms Presbyterian Church In light of the recent school shooting in Florida, the general public is invited to view a presentation featuring keynote speaker Dr. Carolyn Lukensmeyer, the executive director of the National Institute for Civil Discourse. This event will take place Feb. 28 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Palms Presbyterian Church, located at 3410 S. 3rd St. in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>Candlebox at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall will host Candlebox Feb. 28 at 8 p.m. (doors open at 7). Formed in 1991 by singer/guitarist Kevin Martin, "Candlebox" is an American multi-platinum rock band from Seattle that has released six studio albums. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.pvconcerthall.com or call (904) 209-0399. The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall is located at 1050 A1A N.</p> <p>The Olde South Photography Series Rick McAllister's photography exhibition showcases structures that represent a part of the past in the South. The exhibition will be on display in the Rotunda Gallery of the St. Johns County Administration Building from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.</p>	<p>Yoga for Survivors The Y Healthy Living Center at the Ponte Vedra YMCA will host a Yoga for Survivors class March 1 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>Dixie Dregs Dawn of the Dregs Tour at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall will host six-time Grammy-nominated instrumental pop group Dixie Dregs and the Dawn of the Dregs tour March 1, featuring the Dregs' original band lineup for the first time in 40 years. Doors open at 7 p.m. and the performance starts at 8. For more information and to purchase tickets, visit www.pvconcerthall.com or call (904) 209-0399. The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall is located at 1050 A1A N.</p> <p>Sunset/moonrise at the St. Augustine Lighthouse Enjoy the sunset and moonrise from the top of the St. Augustine Lighthouse March 1 at 5:30 p.m. Admission costs \$30 and includes a champagne toast provided by San Sebastian Winery, hors d'oeuvres from The Reef and an overview of the history of the St. Augustine Light Station. For more information and to purchase tickets visit www.staugustinelighthouse.org. The St. Augustine Lighthouse is located at 81 Lighthouse Ave.</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 ben@opcfla.com, post online at www.pontevedrarecorder.com using the automated form or call (904) 686-3939.</p>

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County administrator addresses SJC's troubling financial state, urges engagement at Chamber luncheon

By Jon Blauvelt

**Originally published Jan. 18*

According to County Administrator Michael Wanchick, St. Johns County is offering its residents a quality of life that isn't sustainable financially, and something needs to change to ensure the county can balance its budget moving forward.

"Right now, we are not priced correctly in the market," said Wanchick on Thursday, Jan. 11 to members of the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce Beaches Division and the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce at a luncheon at Sawgrass Country Club. "The demand for what we are offering is going up, but our ability to collect revenue is going down."

Wanchick said the financial state of St. Johns County has been stressed for the better part of 10 years. He noted that in 2005/2006, the county was issuing about 4,000 single family residential building permits per year, with ad valorem increases at 20 and 22 percent. Today, Wanchick said, the county is issuing the same number of permits, but with property taxes down, its collections are at 8 percent.



Photo by Jon Blauvelt

St. Johns County Administrator Michael Wanchick, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce President/ CEO Isabelle Renault, Atlantic Beach Mayor Ellen Glasser, Jacksonville Beach City Manager George Forbes, Jax Chamber Beaches 2018 Division Board Chair Christine Wier, Brandon Starks of Fields Auto Group, Chamber PVB Division Director Toni Boudreaux and Brian Zehren of Fields Auto Group, gather following the Jan. 11 joint Chamber luncheon (Not pictured: Neptune Beach Mayor Elaine Brown).

FINANCIAL continues on Page 23

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Atlantic Beach Mayor Ellen Glasser addresses the joint Chamber luncheon.



Neptune Beach Mayor Elaine Brown addresses the joint Chamber luncheon.



St. Johns County Administrator Michael Wanchick addresses the joint Chamber luncheon.

Financial

Continued from 22

Wanchick said St. Johns County is one of the few counties in the state with a sales tax of 6 cents, which he said is low compared to others. He also noted the county doesn't charge a 5-cent gas tax or franchise fees, and its bed tax is only at 4 cents.

Wanchick said the county is adding over 10,000 residents per year, which is 4,000 less than the population of the City of St. Augustine. With this continued growth and lack of revenue, he said he wouldn't be surprised if conversations start to take place on implementing fees for individual services, like recreation programs and libraries.

Wanchick said the county has been able to "skate" in the past because developers were willing to make major investments prior to the housing crash, citing Nocatee as an example. Now, he said today's circumstances are making developers more reluctant to do so.

As a result, the county administrator said St. Johns County will have to make a difficult decision soon.

"How do you balance your budget?" he questioned. "Is it better to reduce our quality of life with lowered taxes? Or is there some level of tax or increase acceptable to preserve or enhance our quality of life?"

As this decision becomes more imminent, Wanchick said it's more important than ever for residents to become involved with their local government. He said lack of community engagement is the most significant challenge for local government, and that needs to change so that elected officials are not left in a position to guess about issues that affect residents' quality of life.

Wanchick also touched on hurricane recovery and said the county has invested \$10 million into Summer Haven over the past 10 years to maintain the area's beach and roads. The county administrator said that investment is gone and only a few dozen homes remain as a result of the recent hurricanes and storms. His fear is that

other parts of the county and coastline will face similar problems if a comprehensive and active coastal management plan is not implemented.

Updates from other officials

In addition to Wanchick, other local officials attended the luncheon to speak about their respective cities.

Atlantic Beach Mayor Ellen Glasser said business is on a "really good trajectory" in her city, noting that over 150 business licenses were issued last year. On another note, she discussed her efforts to reduce the speed limit on Mayport Road from 45 to 35 mph. She wore a button at the luncheon that is in memory of a 12-year-old boy that was recently killed on the road.

Neptune Beach Mayor Elaine Brown discussed a master plan for Jarboe Park that features a trailhead for the East Coast Greenway, connecting it to trails that will ultimately link Atlantic Beach, the greenway, Neptune Beach and Jacksonville Beach. She also said at the luncheon that Neptune Beach is thinking about selling city hall and its police department in the central business district and moving to a new location. In addition, Brown said the Kmart will soon be developed, and that landscape programs are currently in the works to make the Beaches Town Center more attractive. She noted that 48 new parking spaces have already been added on the right of way in the town center.

Jacksonville Beach City Manager George Forbes said he believes a bill will be proposed to the city council that will allow medical marijuana facilities in Jacksonville Beach "as long as they're as a permanent use in major commercial zones." In minor commercial zones, he said they would be allowed as a "conditional use." Forbes also noted that three new hotels may be coming to Downtown Jacksonville Beach within the next two to five years. He said two have been approved just north of Casa Marina.

Overall, Forbes said the City of Jacksonville Beach is in "excellent financial condition," and will be out of debt in two years.



Jennifer Belisario, Derek Sprague and Janet Collins



ABOVE: Ryan Betesh, Maury Kopman and Vince Serrano



LEFT: Toni Boudreaux and Kent Justice

Photos by Jon Blauvelt

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Mainstream Boutique Owner Carla Miles

Mainstream Boutique hosts Chamber 'Before Hours' event

Local business professionals in the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division gathered at Mainstream Boutique before work Wednesday, Jan. 10 for breakfast and networking.

Located at 880 A1A North (Suite 4), Mainstream Boutique features stylish women's retail clothing and accessories at non-boutique prices.

For more information on the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, visit sjchamber.com.



ABOVE: Ricki Taylor, Lori Adams and Lucia Miller

RIGHT: Jennifer O'Neal and Trudy Toche

BELOW: Treats from KC's Kitchen

Photos by Susan Griffin



Toni Boudreaux, Carla Miles and Trudy Toche





ABOVE: Pirates from the Fernandina Pirates Club attend the most recent Nocatee Farmers Market on Feb. 17.

RIGHT: Nocatee residents enjoy touring the Fernandina Pirates Club's ship at the Nocatee Farmers Market.

Photos by Susan Griffin



Local pirates pay visit to Nocatee Farmers Market

The Nocatee community — which was developed by Chamber of Commerce member The Parc Group — hosted a cast of pirates from the Fernandina Pirates Club on Saturday, Feb. 17 at the Nocatee Farmers Market.

Held at the Splash Waterpark Swim Club Green, the event allowed Nocatee residents to interact with the pirates, tour the group's ship and attend the group's

“pirate school.”

The event also featured crafts and a bounce house for kids, as well as beer and wine for adults. Life Exchange Insurance Services served as the market's sponsor.

An event that is held the third Saturday of every month, the market includes over 70 local vendors offering items such as organic produce, herbs, spices, unique foods, crafts, jewelry and more.

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Fluffy Cuts owner Brian Anderson (center) speaks with fellow Chamber members at the "Before Hours" event on Feb. 7.

Fluffy Cuts convenes local business leaders at Chamber's 'Before Hours' event

Local business leaders had the opportunity to network and enjoy breakfast before work on Wednesday, Feb. 7 at the Chamber's "Before Hours" event, which was sponsored by Fluffy Cuts and held at the Chamber's Ponte Vedra Beach Division office.

Fluffy Cuts, which is owned by Brian Anderson, is a pet groomer located at 2185 3rd St. South in Jacksonville Beach.



ABOVE: Dave Danzeisen and Michael Lenahen



ABOVE: Buck Smoak and Jennifer O'Neal



LEFT: Kim Scott and Donna McDonough

Photos by Susan Griffin

RIGHT: Breakfast bites provided at the Chamber networking event



New Life Healthcare hosts Chamber 'After Hours' event

By Benjamin Naim

New Life Healthcare hosted an “After Hours” event Wednesday, Jan. 24, for the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce.

Chamber members gathered at the event for food, drinks and live music from local guitarist Chase Rideman of Chilllula. The business also celebrated joining the Chamber with a ribbon cutting ceremony.

“It was a really good time,” said Dr. Sean Tracy of New Life Healthcare. “We had a great turnout between the Chamber of Commerce members here in Ponte Vedra and some of my friends and family and patients coming out to show their support.”

Tracy, a Jacksonville Beach native, is the founder and clinic director of New Life Healthcare, a family-owned business that provides patients with chiropractic care, regenerative medicine and other forms of treatment.

Tracy graduated as valedictorian of Duncan U. Fletcher High School and then completed his undergraduate studies at University of Florida with a major in exercise physiology and a minor in business administration. After working for a year in an integrated chiropractic and medical clinic under the guidance of Dr. Mark Pierce, Tracy attended the Palmer College of Chiropractic in Port Orange, Florida. Certified in Advanced Orthogonal Technique, Tracy subsequently started his practice in Ponte Vedra Beach, which he said also offers care for patients seeking better posture and balance.

“We focus on providing patients with another option to fixing their problems,” Tracy said. “We give them a very caring, consistent and excellent care. Patients who’ve had issues they haven’t been able to find much help for in the past, we’re giving them new and exciting options to treat whatever it is that’s bothering them.”

Among those options are sound-wave adjustments that realign the spine without the usual pushing, cracking or popping caused by regular chiropractic care.

“Because we do it so gentle and specific, patients actually hold their adjustments here rather than having to come back over and over again forever,” Tracy said.

New Life’s stem cell therapy is re-growing cartilage, tendons and ligaments in joints to heal patients, Tracy added, and the regenerative medicine offered by the facility is helping patients get back on their feet and avoid surgery.

Furthermore, Tracy said New Life Healthcare offers free consultations – and they don’t just treat injuries.

“Injuries are a lot of times what usually drives people to seek care,” he said. “But we love to take care of patients and just help them live a better life. Whether it’s fixing posture or correcting imbalances or just simply removing any pressure, interference off the nervous system and allowing the body to heal and function fully like it was designed to.”

For more information on the practice, which is located at 1102 A1A North in suite 105, visit www.newlifehc.com or call (904) 763-9707.



Photo courtesy of St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Dr. Sean Tracy and his wife Kelly celebrate New Life Healthcare’s Chamber membership with a ribbon-cutting ceremony.



ABOVE: Dr. Marijane Boyd, Kelly and Dr. Sean Tracy and Stacey Gabby of New Life Healthcare gather at the Jan. 24 Chamber “After Hours” event.

LEFT: Musician Chase Rideman performs at the event.



TOP RIGHT: Andrea Marcus and Chelle Thomas attend the Chamber event at New Life Healthcare.



BOTTOM RIGHT: Kim O’Steen and Bryan Fazio pose for a photo at the “After Hours” event.

Photos by Susan Griffin



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Chamber names Taylor PVBD Ambassador of the Quarter

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce recently named Ricki Taylor the Ponte Vedra Beach Division (PVBD) Ambassador of the Quarter.

Taylor currently serves as the chair of the PVB Division Ambassador Board, representing and championing the division at chamber events and in the community. She has been an active member of the Chamber PVB Division for over five years, ambassador for three years and ambassador chair for two years.

A Florida native, Taylor attended University of Georgia and then began her career in the mortgage business in 1985. She joined Synovus in 1998 and is now responsible for covering all of Northeast Florida for the company.

Outside of work, Taylor enjoys traveling, weight lifting, walking her dog and spending time with her two sons.



Ricki Taylor

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CHAMBER MEMBERS IN THE NEWS

The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach welcomes new employee

The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach — a member of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce — recently welcomed its newest employee, Grace, a 3-year-old Border collie skilled in bird control.

Seeking humane methods of bird control for its pristine golf course, The Plantation enlisted the help of Grace to patrol the grounds with her handler, Assistant Superintendent Andy Brown.

Together, they encourage geese to relocate off the property. Border collies are frequently trained for bird control, as their natural profile is comparable to a wolf, which geese view as a dangerous predator. When given the command to approach a gaggle, Grace will mimic the stance of a wolf to alert the geese to leave. While Grace seeks to emulate a wolf, she has been trained to bring no harm to the birds.

In addition to joining Brown on the course, she has also joined the Brown family at home.

“Grace has become fast friends with



ABOVE: Grace sits in a golf cart with family member and The Plantation's Assistant Superintendent Andy Brown as John Brandyberry stands by.



LEFT: Grace gets in position for her bird-control duties at The Plantation.

Photos courtesy The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach

Mae (a 3-year-old rescue Labrador-mix), and we are excited to have her as a new member to our family,” Brown said.

The Plantation is a residential neighborhood in Ponte Vedra Beach, with luxury amenities including a recently

renovated golf course, private beach club, tennis facility, amenities park, fitness center and a clubhouse with dining and social activities for all ages.

For more information about The Plantation, visit www.theplantationpvb.com.

K9s For Warriors to graduate 400th service dog team

K9s For Warriors — the nation's largest provider of service dogs for American veterans with post-traumatic stress (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and/or military sexual trauma (MST), as well as a member of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce — will graduate its 400th service dog team today, Feb. 22, and all are invited to attend.

“This month, we're celebrating our 400th graduate team; we are on par to reach 500 graduates by the end of this year,” said Brett Simon, president of K9s For Warriors. “The success of this program shows that our honorable veterans are truly being saved. While this growth is awe-inspiring, it's exactly what we prudently planned for.”

This milestone was reached seven years after K9s For Warriors served its first class of veterans. Founded in 2011, Shari Duval began K9s For Warriors to help her son, Brett Simon, recover from his own experience with PTSD. Nearly 30 percent of post-9/11 veterans suffer from PTSD.

In K9s For Warriors' unique program, veterans mitigate PTSD symptoms using task-centered dog commands taught by professional trainers. The training provided is intended to help veterans reintegrate into civilian society with dignity and independence. Warriors reside on K9s For Warriors' campus for three weeks and receive 120 hours of instruction with their service dog prior to graduation.

The organization has assisted veterans in 46 states and in more than 150 cities. Graduates of the program improve their lives and reduce their risk for suicide. The service dogs in the program are also given a new “leash” on life: 90 percent have been rescued from high-kill shelters or homelessness.

Once managed from a two-bedroom home, the program has experienced measurable growth since its inception, and now operates from a nine-acre, state-of-the-art facility. At the start of this year, K9s also opened a brand-new training facility near Gainesville named the Gold Family Campus.

The graduation ceremony will take place at the K9s for Warriors headquarters, which is located at 114 Camp K9 Road in Ponte Vedra. For additional information, contact Brianna Ehrhart at Behrhart@K9sForWarriors.org, or call (904) 686-1956.

Cultural Center promotes Marling to director of operations

The Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach — a member of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce — has selected staff member Dee Marling as the new director of operations and human resources, effective immediately.

Employed by the Cultural Center since 2014, Marling will now be responsible for day-to-day operations and will oversee the exhibition and communications department as well as the programs department.

“This is truly a well-deserved promotion,” Executive Director Donna Guzzo said. “Dee Marling is a hard worker, an enthusiastic individual who focuses on solutions and is in alignment with the vision of the Cultural Center: To inspire learning, model the organization's values, build and lead by allocating capital to the organization's priorities. With a background in finance, human resources and a strong work ethic, she will lead her department to greatness.”

Marling's new role follows an operations career in the finance industry that has taken her from federal government work at the Pentagon to the private sector, and finally into nonprofit work. She takes a directorial position at a pivotal



Photo courtesy of the Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach

Dee Marling

time, as a recently completed feasibility study showed wide support for a new, larger Cultural Center facility with a higher profile and expanded services. Marling recently attended the Future of Education Technology Conference in Orlando and brought back many ideas to enhance programming.

In her new role, Marling will hit the

ground running as the Cultural Center is in the process of hiring staff for several new positions while continuing to offer more than 180 programs and 15 exhibitions a year. The Cultural Center, established in 1996, offers arts classes, children's camps and workshops for adults taught by regional and national artists. Many of those programs are housed at the current Cultural Center facility at 50 Executive Way in Ponte Vedra Beach, and in order to expand program offerings and the arts throughout St. Johns County, the Cultural Center is embarking on a multimillion-dollar capital campaign for construction of larger headquarters.

“I'm thrilled about this new opportunity,” Marling said. “I have been fortunate to have been part of such a successful organization, working with a dynamic staff, donors, partners and volunteers over the last four years. I believe in our mission statement to bring the arts into the life of the community through arts education, exhibitions and outreach, and by honoring a donor-driven philosophy. Under Donna Guzzo's leadership and vision, I look forward to working together at the senior level, launching us into a bright future.”

Chamber's EDC Quarterly Breakfast convenes area business leaders, features remarks from Firehouse CEO

Local business leaders gathered at the Renaissance World Golf Village Resort on Friday, Jan. 19, for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Council (EDC) Quarterly Breakfast, which featured remarks from Firehouse of America, LLC Chief Executive Officer Don Fox.

The Firehouse executive discussed how his firm's success can be replicated by

entrepreneurs growing their own companies. Fox's company has grown from a few restaurants in Northeast Florida to 1,104 restaurants in 44 states and three countries. For more information on Firehouse, visit www.firehousesubs.com.

For more information on the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, visit www.sjcchamber.com.



ABOVE: Firehouse of America, LLC CEO Don Fox addresses the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce EDC Quarterly Breakfast on Jan. 19 at the Renaissance World Golf Village Resort.



Business leaders at the EDC Quarterly Breakfast show their pride for the Jaguars.



LEFT: Carol Saviak, Donna Guzzo, Chris Weber and Bill Curtis gather at the EDC Quarterly Breakfast.

Photos by Susan Griffin


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