

Celebrating 50 years of the

PONTE VEDRA



Recorder

December 5, 2019

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Not your average newspaper, not your average reader

PonteVedraRecorder.com



STARS OF THE SHOW

Anna Hopson, 5, dances with Santa and other children at the Nov. 24 Nutcracker Tea at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club. Read more on page 17

Photo by Maggie FitzRoy

Senior Living
SPECIAL SECTION
Recorder
GUIDE
DECEMBER 5, 2019



Senior Living
Guide

Pages 19-30



Santa Paws

Pages 36-37

In the Arts

Pages 41-43



CAR OF THE WEEK

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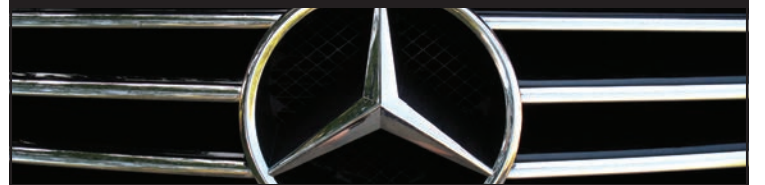


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Send us your news

We welcome submissions of photos, stories, columns and letters to the editor. Let us know what's happening. Email submissions to pvrecorder@opcfla.com or bring them by our office at **1102 A1A N., Unit 108, Ponte Vedra Beach**. Submissions may be published in the paper, on our website or on our social media platforms.

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Also, check out the **Ponte Vedra Recorder** channel on YouTube.

WHAT'S THIS?



Do you know what this is?

Email answer to pvrecorder@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.

Five readers correctly identified last week's photo as the sign for L'Atrium. The winner of the random draw was **Ted Veber**. Congratulations, Ted — you may pick up your prize at the Recorder office during normal business hours.



ADOPT A PET

CAT OF THE WEEK

Dottie was picked up and brought to the Pet Center as a stray. She is a 1-year-old female domestic shorthair tabby. She is a beautiful little girl who is very lovable. Just scratch and cuddle her, and you will have a lifelong fur-ever friend. Come see Dottie at the Pet Center today. #52444



DOG OF THE WEEK



Uma was brought in to the Pet Center as an owner release. She is a sweet, very playful 1½-year-old terrier

mix, who loves to run and be active. Come see Uma at the Pet Center today. #52633

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 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 in St. Augustine, 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.**

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

V	I	E	W		T	I	P		T	U	N				
A	R	I	A		U	R	D	U		C	A	R	E		
S	I	R	S		M	U	O	N		P	O	N	G	O	
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4	5	2	3	6	8	7	1	9
9	1	8	7	4	5	6	3	2
3	7	6	1	2	9	8	5	4
1	6	3	5	7	2	9	4	8
5	4	7	8	9	3	2	6	1
8	2	9	4	1	6	3	7	5
6	3	1	9	8	4	5	2	7
7	9	5	2	3	1	4	8	6
2	8	4	6	5	7	1	9	3

Solutions correspond to last week's puzzles.


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COLLECTION



SEBASTIAN SQUARE
\$494,000

Beautiful Dostie home on peaceful preserve lot in Palencia. Features a charming front porch, open great room with gas fireplace, formal dining room, kitchen with stainless steel appliances & granite countertops, beautiful sunroom, hardwood floors, & new roof plus epoxy garage floors. MLS 1014342

Cammy Ray | 904.806.3489
CammyRay@WatsonRealtyCorp.com



MERIMAR PLACE
\$539,314

Great duplex east of 3rd Street in Neptune Beach! Units are tenant occupied & each includes 2 bedrooms & 1 bath. Purchase as an investment & enjoy the income it produces, or convert to a single family home. Listing agent must be present for showings. Priced to sell as is. MLS 1026653

Diana Kelly | 904.859.4368
DianaKelly@WatsonRealtyCorp.com



THE WOODLANDS @ PV
\$785,000

Low country style home in superb Ponte Vedra Beach location! This wonderful home features 5 bedrooms, 4.5 baths, an office, formal living & dining rooms, updated kitchen, spacious family room, Florida room leading to screened lanai with sparkling pool & hot tub, & a private backyard. MLS 996245

Barbara Maple | 904.571.1764
BarbaraMaple@WatsonRealtyCorp.com



PONTE VEDRA BY SEA
\$874,900

Stunning lakefront home in picturesque setting with oversized deck. This entertainer's dream home features 2 master bedrooms, a renovated kitchen, great room, screened porch, & summer kitchen. Walk to the beach using the private walkway over Guana Preserve! MLS 1023317

Denise Miles-Tagami | 904.654.0490
DTagami@WatsonRealtyCorp.com



PALENCIA
\$949,999

Stunning 2-story home on beautiful, private lot. Features vaulted foyer, open staircase, hardwood floors, an open kitchen & living space with fireplace, master suite with full sitting room & exquisitely appointed master bath, & large open backyard with views of the marsh. MLS 1019240

Marsha Bergen | 904.525.7037
MBergen@WatsonRealtyCorp.com



Interested in your home's value? Call our Watson Office: 904.285.6300
Like us on Facebook! [Facebook.com/WatsonPonteVedra](https://www.facebook.com/WatsonPonteVedra)



St. Johns County annual Beach Driving Passes available Dec. 9

St. Johns County Beach Driving Passes go on sale Monday, Dec. 9, in time to make them available as practical stocking stuffers for the holiday season. St. Johns County resident passes are \$50, nonresident passes are \$100, and handicap passes are \$40. Passes will be available during normal business hours at the following locations:

- Tax Collector's Main Office – 4030 Lewis Speedway, St. Augustine
- Tax Collector's DuPont Center Office – 6658 U.S. 1 South, St. Augustine
- Tax Collector's Julington Creek Office – 725 Flora Branch Blvd., St. Johns
- Tax Collector's Ponte Vedra Office – 151 Sawgrass Corners Drive, Suite 100, Ponte Vedra Beach
- St. Johns County Beach Services Office – 901 Pope Road, St. Augustine

■ St. Johns County Ocean and Fishing Pier Gift Shop – 350 A1A Blvd., St. Augustine

Residents must present a valid I.D. with a St. Johns County address or present proof of property tax payments in St. Johns County to purchase a resident pass. When requesting a handicap pass, a handicap hangtag or proof of qualification must be presented. Disabled military are eligible for a free annual pass by presenting military I.D. or a letter from Veterans Affairs verifying disabled status. Vehicles accessing the beach do not need a beach pass until March 1, 2020. After March 1, 2020, beach passes will be available for purchase (at the same rate) at the tollbooths.

For more information, call the St. Johns County Beach Services Office at (904) 209-0341. Visit the Reach the Beach Mobile App or www.sjcfcl.us/beaches for current beach access updates and beach driving conditions.



Photo by Amber Lake

Mickler's Beach closes for a staging area and storage of sand and heavy equipment necessary to complete a dune restoration in early November.

Revised Mickler's Landing Beachfront Park public access set

Mickler's Landing beach access will now be open to the public Monday through Friday from 11 a.m. to sunset. On Saturday and Sunday, it will be open to the public sunrise to sunset. The hours were set in response to requests from the community. The St. Johns Board of County Commissioners directed the Mickler's Landing Beachfront Park dune reconstruction schedule to be revised to allow daily public access.

Construction activity on the beach north of the park will continue while the park and parking lot are open. Activity related to the dune reconstruction project will occur in the park and parking lot from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m.

Monday through Friday and will continue in a restricted portion of the parking lot through a secondary construction entrance from 11 a.m. to sunset Monday through Friday.

The amended schedule prioritizes public safety, while allowing the dune reconstruction project to proceed as expeditiously as possible. Alternate parking and public access to the beach are available at GTM Research Reserve, located three miles south of Mickler's Landing Beachfront Park on Florida A1A.

For more information regarding the project, call (904) 209-0333.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

The Intracoastal Waterway is more than a boating highway, it's a vein pumping prosperity to the communities along its banks. Charleston, Savannah, Norfolk and hundreds of other towns are thriving thanks to their embrace of the Intracoastal.

On Dec. 17, Palm Valley will have the opportunity to tap into this extraordinary natural resource as well. On that date, the St. Johns County Board of Commissioners can approve the development of a community marina, with additional boat storage, along the Intracoastal. The marina would be located underneath the Palm Valley Bridge at the local boat ramp.

The long-term benefits of this project to the community far outweigh local concerns about increased traffic on the waterway.

Opponents of the project claim that the Intracoastal is too narrow in this area to support heavy boat traffic, saying that it could become a safety hazard. But this area has safely handled heavy traffic previously with no issues. Last spring, Freedom Boat Club navigated 32 vessels from St. Augustine to Jacksonville Beach on the Intracoastal, cruising directly through Palm Valley. The fleet of vessels even assembled for a group photo under the bridge. There was ample space for safe passage.

In fact, the Intracoastal Waterway was designed to support heavy boat traffic. This course was created as an alternate route for large ships to avoid the dangerous Atlantic coast. It is properly marked and customized for efficient navigation. It was, literally, built for safety.

Some marine experts believe that a marina would actually increase safety. A professional deckhand, loading boats into the water with a lift, would have safety advantages over inexperienced boaters trying to get vessels down the ramp.

Other opposition to the plan comes from homeowners on the Intracoastal who prefer less traffic near their homes. While this is understandable, it is also short-sighted. Choosing to live on the nation's largest boating highway means you are choosing to be a part of a community supported by boaters. You wouldn't purchase a home that backs up to I-95 and complain about the cars.

The Intracoastal Waterway delivers a desirable demographic to Palm Valley's doorstep by the boatload. Increased boat storage would channel revenue from this wealthy waterway.

On Dec. 17, St. Johns County will decide if it wants to seize the opportunity flowing up and down the Intracoastal or continue to wave as it passes by, denying the lifeblood that is fueling numerous other communities.

Lisa Almeida, Owner of Freedom Boat Club Jacksonville

CORRECTION

In the December 2019-January 2020 edition of the First Coast Register magazine, two photos for the wine column by Steven Lourie from Coastal Wine Market on page 22 were misidentified. The correct photos and information are below. We apologize for the error. The mistake has been corrected on the E-edition of the Register online at pontevedrarecorder.com.



8 Years in the Desert Red Blend, Orin Swift Cellars is a real blockbuster powerhouse wine!



Veuve de Vernay Sparkling Brut Rose presents red and citrus fruits that bound out of the glass.

Kate Amato Foundation holds annual fundraiser to fight pediatric cancer

By Daniela Toporek

The Kate Amato Foundation hosted its annual dinner and fundraiser Nov. 24 at Aqua Grill in Ponte Vedra Beach. The event raised funds to benefit pediatric cancer research, while also honoring 11-year-old Kate Amato, who inspired the cause and died of pediatric cancer in 2016.

Guests, new and old, streamed into Aqua Grill's outdoor area, where a silent auction was held, along with a quick photo opportunity. Kate's parents, foundation founders Lisa and Jeff Amato, greeted everyone before the dinner began.

"I love this evening. It's exciting," Lisa Amato said. "It warms my heart to know there are so many people standing behind us and our mission."

The dinner marked the beginning of the annual Kate Klassic Golf Tournament, opening the event with a four-course feast from the land and sea, and continuing the following morning with the competition.

Scallop crudo was served as an amuse bouche and tease for what was to come, artistically plated on a seashell, with yuku, black radish, cilantro oil, pistachio and minced jalapeno, to add some spice. The main course was a smoked, bacon-wrapped veal osso bucco with veggies, followed by an ice cream sandwich, Neapolitan-style, for dessert. Each dish was paired with a glass of wine from Jordan Winery of California, presented by representative, Matt Malinski.

Speeches from Aqua Grill owner Cary Hart, Dr. John Sarandria, who met Kate during his residency at Wolfson Children's Hospital and Lisa and Jeff Amato reminded guests of the reason for the dinner. A live auction followed.

"I've been to Costa Rica before, so I've got my eye on South Africa," said guest, Tim Fredrickson, who, after outbidding multiple



Tim and Tracy Fredrickson pose after outbidding guests for a trip to South Africa, with the auction money going to the Amato Foundation.



Matt Malinski, from California's Jordan Winery, paired each dish with quality wines from the west coast winery.

contestants, won his sought-out trip with wife, Tracy.

The dinner's eye-opening moment was when Lisa Amato took two wine glasses, one filled with blue-green beads and the other, empty. She held up the filled glass, representing the money that funds adult cancer research and treatment. The empty glass represented pediatric cancer. She took a few beads from the filled glass to sprinkle in the other, not even a third of the way full, in comparison.

"No child should have to endure that kind of pain and misery," she said. "And the memories of her (Kate's) pain and suffering are the driving force behind this foundation."

For more information about Kate Amato and the Kate Amato Foundation, visit www.kateamatofoundation.org.



Foundation founders and Kate Amato's parents, Lisa and Jeff Amato, pose before dinner is served at the third annual Kate Amato Foundation dinner on Nov. 24.



LEFT: Dr. John Sarandria speaks at the dinner and shares his memories of Kate Amato to dinner guests.

BELOW: The Kate Amato Foundation dinner was held Nov. 24 at the Aqua Grill to raise money for pediatric cancer research and honor 11-year-old, Kate Amato, who died in 2016 of pediatric cancer.

Photos by Daniela Toporek



SOUPer Bowl fundraiser to fight student hunger



Photo by Christine Rodenbaugh

The SOUPer Bowl V planning committee met Tuesday to continue preparations for the Jan. 30 fundraiser.

By Christine Rodenbaugh

More than 9,000 St. Johns County students rely on the free and reduced lunch program during the week, but often go hungry on weekends or during long school breaks. The SOUPer Bowl was created in 2015 to help fill the gap by providing food for children to take home.

SOUPer Bowl V is a service project for juniors enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program. However, other Academies lend support — digital design students provide graphics to promote the event in print and online and hospitality

students volunteer the night of the event to greet and direct guests.

"The goal is to raise awareness as well as money," said Patti Ann Farrar, who has been a part of the event since SOUPer Bowl I in 2015.

A \$25 ticket will give guests the opportunity to sample signature soups created by more than 20 local chefs in a tasting event from 6 to 8 p.m. Jan. 30 at Nease High School in the cafeteria. Some of the soups served last year were charred Vidalia onion bisque with garlic chips and thyme oil, to-

Anthony Egel of Ponte Vedra Beach has portrayed Herr Drosselmeyer in "The Nutcracker" production performed by the Christ Episcopal Church Dancers for five years. The father of three adult children, he supports the show, slated for Dec. 14 at the Lazzara Theater at the University of North Florida, because it gives children of all ages the opportunity to dance and because it supports children's charities.

Anthony Egel

As told to Maggie FitzRoy

How did you get the role of Herr Drosselmeyer, an important one in the opening party scene?

I've been in the show for 12 years, starting as an adult dancer. My son, Anthony Jr., was drafted to be a dancer because a girl needed a partner in the party scene. Then the girl's mother decided she wanted to be in it, and she needed a partner, so I became her partner. Then, when the priest who played Drosselmeyer retired, I took the role.

Had you ever performed before?

Yes, in my younger days I had done commercial acting and modeling and community theater.

Where?

The acting and modeling in Jacksonville, and the community theater in Delaware, where we lived before moving to Ponte Vedra Beach. My wife, Suzanne, and I and our children, Anna, Margaret and Anthony moved from Lewes, Delaware to Ponte Vedra Beach in 2005.

Did your girls dance in "The Nutcracker"?

No, they danced when they were very young, then found athletics. Margaret was involved in both theater and chorus while at Ponte Vedra High School, however. She was a founding member of the Sharkapellas group.

Is your wife, Suzanne, involved in "The Nutcracker"?

Yes, she is a quick-change artist backstage. She helps dancers change costumes. She's a very important gear in that machine. Because some dancers can have up to five changes and they have to be very quick about it.

Do you have to rehearse a lot for your role?

It's a commitment of every Sunday for seven to eight weeks. For the dancers, mostly girls of all ages, it's a year-round commitment. For the guest dancers, like myself, including some boys, it's roughly eight weeks.

Were you nervous the first time you danced onto the UNF stage?

No, because I had performed on stage before. You don't pay attention to the audience. You just focus on the performance.

Had you ever danced before?

No, none of the shows I'd been in had dancing parts. I did sing, including in "Jesus Christ, Superstar." That was fun. I'd had no idea I had a voice. I took a voice lesson when I was in my late 40s and it turned out I did. I don't sing now, I've gotten away from it.

You are retired now; what was your career?

I was in the publishing business after college, then went on to a career as a Naval flight officer. After that, I was a stockbroker for a number of years. After moving to Ponte Vedra Beach, I founded the St. Augustine Woman's Journal. I sold it a couple of years ago and am fully retired now.



Photo by Maggie FitzRoy

Why do you still dance in "The Nutcracker"?

Miss Felicia (Felicia Rhoden, the director and choreographer) is very difficult to say "no" to. Also, it's a commitment to the work she is doing. The show supports charities and it gives girl dancers an opportunity to perform. If they didn't have guest performers like me, they couldn't do it.

Why do you think people should come to see it?

Number one, it brings you into the mood of the season. The color and the performance on stage is very delightful, the set and the costumes and the dancers. Two, because you will be supporting charities. We don't have snow here. We don't have sleigh rides here. The Nutcracker can help raise your Christmas spirit.

Ho Ho Ho...



Santa's a little early this year!



LIST or BUY with us by January 30, 2020 and receive a **FULL GOLF MEMBERSHIP** to Marsh Landing Country Club with no initiation fee AND up to six months of complimentary dues.

(Some restrictions apply – new members only)

Happy holidays & thank you for your continued business.

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Thursday, Dec. 5	Friday, Dec. 6	Saturday, Dec. 7	Sunday, Dec. 8
<p>'Every Christmas Story Ever Told (And Then Some!)' at the Limelight Theater At the Limelight Theater at 7:30 p.m., Dec. 5, instead of performing Charles Dickens' holiday classic for the umpteenth time, three actors decided to perform every Christmas story ever told, along with Christmas traditions from around the world and every carol ever sung. General admission tickets are \$27. For more information, visit www.limelight-theatre.org. Limelight Theater is located at 11 Old Mission Ave., in St. Augustine.</p> <p>'Elf: The Musical' Buddy is an orphan who sneaks into Santa's gift bag and is taken to the North Pole, where he was raised as an elf, unaware that he is actually a human, until he faces the truth. He journeys to New York to find his family, only to find that his father is on the naughty list and his half-brother doesn't believe in Santa. Buddy is determined to win over his family and help remind NYC the true meaning of Christmas. "Elf: The Musical" will be showing at the Alhambra Theatre & Dining, with the performances starting at 10 a.m., Dec. 5. For tickets and more information, visit www.alhambrajax.com. The Alhambra Theatre & Dining is located at 12000 Beach Blvd., in Jacksonville.</p> <p>TEDxFSCJ Adventure: Unmasked Join TEDxFSCJ for "Unmasked," an adventure event exploring the themes, identities, and fandoms that define nerd culture. Hosted by The Short Box podcast's Badr Milligan and Cesar Cordero, the event will discuss how the "nerd" culture functions as a lifestyle and marketplace; how comic culture empowers minority storytelling and how comic-cons and e-sports have reinvented community and belonging. For more information, call the MOSH at (904) 396-6674 or visit www.themosh.org/event. "Unmasked" starts at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 5, in the Bryan-Gooding Planetarium and is free to attend. The MOSH is located at 1025 Museum Cir., in Jacksonville.</p>	<p>Wolfson Children's Hospital's art and antiques show The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital art and antiques show will be featured at the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center, Dec. 6 through 8, from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Friday; 11 a.m. to 5 p.m., Saturday; and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., Sunday. The show will have decorative arts, textiles and furnishings, nationally-acclaimed designers and decorators, recognized art and antiques collectors and the Children's Fashion Show, featuring current and former patients of Wolfson Children's Hospital. The theme, Paris In Full Bloom, will capture the magic and style of the French city. For tickets or more information, visit www.ArtandAntiquesShow.com. The Prime Osborn III Convention Center is located at 1000 Water St., in Jacksonville.</p> <p>Ponte Vedra Professional Networking Group meeting The Ponte Vedra Professional Networking Group schedules weekly meetings inside Fidelity Bank, where members network with each other and guests. Each member/guest will introduce themselves and one member will present about the businesses he/she represents. The next meeting is Dec. 6 at 8:45 a.m. Fidelity Bank is located at 110 A1A N. in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p> <p>Seymour's holiday book & music sale The Ponte Vedra Library bookstore, Seymour's, is hosting its annual holiday book and music sale, Dec. 6, 7 and 9 (closed Sunday), featuring a variety of books, CDs and DVDs. The sale will be held in the library lobby during regular hours. For more information, call the bookstore at (904) 273-3990. The Ponte Vedra Beach Library is located at 101 Library Blvd., in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p> <p>Florida Shipwreck workshop Learn how to record and monitor historic shipwrecks with Flagler's Emily Jane Murray, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Dec. 6, at GTM Research Reserve. Identify basic ship elements, map out and draw ship timbers, and conduct general site assessments. For more information or to RSVP, contact Murray at emurray@flagler.edu or (904)392-7874. The GTM Research Reserve is located at 505 Guana River Road, in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p>	<p>Sawgrass Village's 2019 'Oh! What fun!' and 'Jingle Mingle' events Stop by Sawgrass Village for its fourth annual holiday "Oh! What Fun!" event from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m., Dec. 7. This free event is open to the public and will feature horse-drawn carriage rides, a visit from Santa, music, activities, stocking stuffers and more. After "Oh! What Fun!," from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., the Ponte Vedra Woman's Club, Inc. will host its "Jingle Mingle" event, filled with live music, food and drinks at the Sawgrass Village tent on Main Street. Tickets are available at www.PVWEvents.com and cost \$50 online and \$60 per person at the door. Proceeds go to charities supported by the Ponte Vedra Women's Club. Sawgrass Village is located at 215 Tourside Drive in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p> <p>Beaches Town Center tree lighting Join the Beaches Town Center, from 2:30 to 6:30 p.m., Dec. 7, for another year of celebrating the holiday season. Enjoy musical and dance performances, temporary tattoos and "make your own, take it home" craft tables for all ages. As tradition, the Mayors of both, Atlantic and Jacksonville Beach, will light the community tree, with Santa and Mrs. Claus arriving by sleigh at 5:30 p.m. The Beaches Town Center is located at 200 First St., in Atlantic Beach.</p> <p>Pearl Harbor Day breakfast The Pearl Harbor Day "Breakfast with Our Heroes" event, held at the Sheraton Hotel from 8 a.m. to 11 a.m., Dec. 7, will honor World War II veterans and Gold Star Families. Navy Capt. Ryman Shoaf will wow attendees with a rarely-told Pearl Harbor story and the Ponte Vedra High School club, Sharks for Heroes, and the Atlantic Coast Young Marines will also be in attendance. Nonperishable food for homeless veterans in re-employment programs will also be collected at the event. For tickets to the breakfast or more information, call (904) 373-8817. The Sheraton Hotel is located at 10605 Deerwood Park Blvd., in Jacksonville.</p>	<p>Nights of Lights boat cruise The Nights of Lights boat cruises are back, now through Feb. 2, 2020, for a tour of the lights along the water in downtown St. Augustine. Boats will launch out of Beaches of Vilano and run between two to three trips per night, every day of the week. For more information, call Night of Lights Cruise at (904) 248-4424. Beaches of Vilano is located at 254 Vilano Road, in St. Augustine.</p> <p>Jacksonville Jaguars vs. L.A. Chargers at TIAA Bank Field With Gardner Minshew III back as the starting QB, don't miss out as the Jacksonville Jaguars take on the Los Angeles Chargers at 1 p.m., Dec. 8, at TIAA Bank Field. Tickets can be found at www.Jaguars.com or www.Ticketmaster.com. TIAA Bank Field is located at 1 TIAA Bank Field Drive in Jacksonville.</p> <p>Downtown Dazzle display The Jacksonville Children's Chorus is hosting its fourth annual downtown holiday celebration at 5:30 p.m. by illuminating its downtown office with festive lights, synchronized to recorded songs of the season performed by JCC. Downtown Dazzle continues through New Year's Eve, with presentations each night, from 5:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. For more information, call JCC at (904) 353-1636. JCC is located at 225 E. Duval St. in Jacksonville.</p> <p>Junior Golf Initiative kickoff The Jacksonville Beach Golf Association is launching its "Kids Play Free" program, a junior golf initiative at Jax Beach Golf Club, at 2 p.m., Dec. 8, with the Ceremonial First Tee shot by local junior golfers. The program is from 2 to 3 p.m., on Sundays, for golfers 18 years or older. For more information, call the Jax Beach Golf Club at (904) 247-6184. The Jax Beach Golf Club is located at 605 Penman Road S., in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>Sundays at Surfer the Bar Join Big Fish Power Yoga on Sundays for a free "music & flow" class at Surfer the Bar. The class is held upstairs and runs from 10 to 11 a.m. Bring friends and family and enjoy brunch and mimosas after class. Register under classes at www.bigfishpoweryoga.com. Surfer the Bar is located at 200 First St., in Jacksonville Beach.</p>

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Monday, Dec. 9	Tuesday, Dec. 10	Wednesday, Dec. 11	Thursday, Dec. 12
<p>Monkey's Uncle Tavern paint party Join Katelin, from Paint Slinger, at Monkey's Uncle Tavern at 6:30 p.m., Dec. 9, to get in the holiday spirit and paint a 13" light-up bisque tree. Tickets to attend cost \$60 per person and can be purchased by searching for the Facebook event, "Monkey's Uncle Tavern Paint Party!," where \$5 from every purchase will be donated to Monkey's Uncle Tavern's second annual toy drive for the James Russell Fund, Inc., benefitting children in Northeast Florida during the holidays For more information, call Monkey's Uncle Tavern at (904) 246-1070. Monkey's Uncle Tavern is located at 1728 Third St. N., in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>Monday trivia at Mellow Mushroom Join Mellow Mushroom every Monday night at 7 p.m. for trivia with Trivia Nation. This event is free to play and there are prizes for the winners. Mellow Mushroom is located at 1018-2 Third St. N. in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>Jimenez Law Firm toy drive Jimenez Law Firm in Jacksonville will be hosting a toy drive at 10 a.m., Dec. 9, at its offices in San Marco. The firm's goal is to collect at least 100 toys for the holiday season. Drop off unwrapped and new toys for children ages 5 through 12 years old to the Jimenez Law Firm by Monday afternoon. For more information, call the firm at (904) 225-5866. Jimenez Law Firm is located 1930 San Marco Blvd., #204, in Jacksonville.</p> <p>Run Club at Southern Swells Join Jax Beach Runners Monday nights at Southern Swells Brewing Co. for an evening run at 7 p.m. It is a 4.2-mile route, but runners can run as much or as little as they'd like. After the run, hang out and enjoy \$1 Southern Swells beers for all who ran. For more information about Jax Beach Runners and their events, visit their meetup page at www.meetup.com/Jax-Beach-Runners/. Southern Swells Brewing Co. is located at 1312 Beach Blvd. in Jacksonville Beach.</p>	<p>'A Peter White Christmas' "A Peter White Christmas," starring contemporary jazz guitarist Peter White, will be presenting at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall at 8 p.m., Dec. 10, featuring Saxophonist Euge Groove, Multi-instrumentalist Vincent Ingala and Vocalist Lindsey Webster. This annual concert brings fans back to the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall, year after year, for an evening of holiday music and spirit. For tickets and more information, visit www.pvconcerthall.com. The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall is located at 1050 A1A N., in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p> <p>Florida Blue free Tuesday at The Cummer On Tuesday evenings from 4 to 9 p.m., enjoy free admission to the Cummer Museum and its historic gardens, thanks to the generous support of Florida Blue. Guests can enjoy free admission to the galleries and the Cummer Café, which is also open for Tapas Tuesday. This event is sponsored by VyStar Credit Union. The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens is located at 829 Riverside Ave. in Jacksonville.</p> <p>Lilies of the Valley widows support group Lilies of the Valley is a monthly support group offered free of charge to widows in the community. A luncheon and meeting is held the second Tuesday of the month, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., at Ponte Vedra Valley. For more information, call the Ponte Vedra Valley offices at (904) 285-1130. Ponte Vedra Valley is located at 4750 Palm Valley Road, in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p> <p>Wild Turkeys: An Educational Talk Thanksgiving may be over, but turkeys are still a symbol of the holiday season. Join Parks Naturalist Kelly Ussia from 4 to 5 p.m., Dec. 10, at the Ponte Vedra Library, for a festive, and informative talk about this charismatic bird. This program is free to attend and open to all ages. Seating for is first-come, first-served. For more information, email Kelly Ussia at kussia@sjcfl.us or call (904) 209-0335. The Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library is located at 101 Library Blvd., in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p>	<p>'It's a Big Band Christmas' at Casa Marina Celebrate the holidays at Casa Marina Hotel & Restaurant with The Chris Thomas Band, who will feature favorite holiday songs throughout the evening. Dance away or sit back and enjoy the exciting sounds of big band as they perform favorites from the Rat Pack era through Motown, on to today's hits. Table service and a full bar will be provided with a light dinner menu. Reserved-seating tickets are \$20 and guarantees a courtyard seat. General admission is \$15 and will be sold at the door. For more information, visit www.thechristthomasband.com. Casa Marina is located at 691 First St. N., in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>Wednesday Pier Farmers Market On Wednesdays from 8 a.m. to noon, the Pier Farmers Market at the St. Johns County Pier offers fresh produce, bread and local crafts, ranging from 60 to 80 different vendors. After browsing, visitors can take a stroll along scenic St. Augustine Beach. The market helps the local economy by allowing local merchants to sustain their business and also offer fresh, local foods to the community. For more information, call (904) 315-0952. The St. Johns County Pier Park at the St. Johns County Ocean Pier is located at 350 A1A Beach Blvd. in St. Augustine Beach.</p> <p>\$1 slices at Trasca & Co. Eatery From Monday to Friday, 2 to 5 p.m., Trasca & Co. Eatery will be serving \$1 pizza slices for dine-in guests. Choose from cheese or pepperoni pizza. For more specials and information, call Trasca & Co. Eatery at (904) 395-3983. Trasca & Co. Eatery are located at 155 Tourside Dr. #1500 in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p> <p>Teen Craft Hour Middle and high-school students ages 11-18 are invited from 6 to 7 p.m., Dec. 11, to get crafty with friends at the Ponte Vedra Beach Library's Teen Craft Hour. Registration is required, but the event is free to attend, with all materials provided. Bring friends, makes new ones, enjoy snacks, music and get creative. Register in person at the reference desk or call the library at (904) 827-6950. The Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library is located at 101 Library Blvd., in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p>	<p>Torah & Tea Join with fellow Jewish women for camaraderie, hot tea and refreshments, as they meet for "Torah & Tea," Thursday mornings at 9 a.m. Led by Leah Kurinsky, this weekly study group finds timely and relevant messages from the ideas and issues discussed in the Weekly Torah portion. Reservations can be made by emailing Leah Kurinsky at lkurinsky@gmail.com or by calling (904) 543-9301. Torah and Tea meets at Chabad at the Beaches, located at 521 A1A N., in Ponte Vedra Beach.</p> <p>Roy's Beaches holiday luncheon Join the Beaches Division for the end of the year holiday celebration from noon to 1:30p.m., Dec. 12, at Roy's Restaurant. Enjoy lunch as the Beaches Division announces the "2020 Beaches Small Business Leader of the Year" and the "2019 Walter Murr recipient". Wear holiday attire or an ugly holiday sweater as a prize will be awarded for the most creative look. There will also be a "Holiday Bake-Off Contest," so bring a homemade treat for a chance to win a prize. Cost is \$25, with advance online registration, or \$30 at the door. Visit the event's Facebook page, "Beaches Holiday Luncheon at Roy's Restaurant," to purchase tickets online. For more information, call Roy's Restaurant at (904) 241-7697. Roy's Restaurant is located at 2400 S. Third St., in Jacksonville Beach.</p> <p>Thirsty Thursdays at Al's Pizza What's a better combination than pizza and beer? Every Thursday, from open to close, Al's Pizza serves \$1.50 Yuengling Lager and house wines. Al's Pizza is located at 635 A1A N. in Ponte Vedra Beach.</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 Daniela@opcfla.com or call (904) 686-3939.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Compiled by Daniela Toporek</p>

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PVHS marching band caps off successful season

Ponte Vedra High School's marching band, the "Ocean of Sound," traveled to the Florida Marching Band Competition in Daytona Beach on Nov. 23 for the band's last performance of 2019.

Its show, entitled "Odyssey," did not win an award, but its performance was well-received and capped off a successful season. Band Director Jermaine Reynolds and his staff put together a modern and visually engaging show which became a judges' favorite at the various competitions the band attended.

In early October, the Ocean of Sound traveled to Leesburg for the Central Florida Marching Arts Invitational. Competing against 12 other bands from around the state, the band placed first in Division 4A and placed second overall for the entire competition, including beating two larger Division 5A schools.

A week later, the band traveled to Fleming Island to compete in the Golden Eagle Classic. Featuring 18 high school marching bands primarily from Northeast Florida, the competition provided the Ocean of Sound an opportunity to observe other marching bands and refine its show. The Ocean of Sound won not just Division 4A, but the entire competition. The judges rated the band as superior and best in class in all categories, but Reynolds said he was especially proud the judges' awarded the Auxiliary (color guard) a superlative of "Outstanding" for the first time in the band's history, as well as, an "Outstanding" for Percussion.

In early November, the Ocean of Sound competed in the Kingdom of the Sun Marching Band Festival where again it won not only its class, but the entire competition. The judges scored the Ocean of Sound as "Distinguished" for General Effect, Percussion, Auxiliary and Drum Major. That was another first for the band.

Almost 30% of the band are new members, and the Ocean of Sound's many wins and continued improvement throughout the season gave everyone a glimpse of what the band can accomplish next year as they continue to practice and develop.



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Photo by Christine Rodenbaugh

About 15 members of the Sharks for Heroes club volunteered at the Benghazi Tribute in October. Front row, from left: Cody Nelson, Matthew Adrian, Mason Romero (president), Jake Simone (vice president) and Shane Bloss. Back row, from left: Topher Wolf, Rett Maritato, Max Houser, Bryce Purcell and Mikey Olkiewicz.

New club connects student volunteers at PVHS with veterans' organizations

By Christine Rodenbaugh

"Sharks for Heroes" is a new club at Ponte Vedra High School this year, with a focus to connect student volunteers with veterans' organizations that need help. Its formation was inspired by an ad in the Ponte Vedra Recorder.

Like most young people, PVHS junior Mason Romero does not get his news from a daily or weekly thrown on the driveway. But he said his mother is an avid reader of the Recorder and called his attention to an ad for the annual First Coast Benghazi Tribute. Romero had been thinking about starting a club to connect students, who need to complete community service hours, with organizations seeking volunteers. He surmised that few students would see the ad in the paper and decided to spearhead Sharks for Heroes with his friend, Jake Simone.

"The Benghazi Tribute was something I wanted to help spread the word and bring awareness to," Romero said.

The first club meeting was in October with a handful of students and has grown to more than 30 active members.

Dec. 2 marked the end of a challenge with Nease High School to collect the most items for Toys for Tots. The final numbers were not in at press time, but he said some of the collection bins had to be emptied several times to make

room. Sharks for Heroes handled marketing for the challenge.

On Dec. 7, club members will greet guests, monitor silent auction tables and help as needed at the Pearl Harbor Day Breakfast hosted by We Can Be Heroes Foundation.

"I'm mainly looking forward to meeting veterans of Pearl Harbor and serving them, especially since it's Pearl Harbor Day," Romero said.

The breakfast is to honor World War II Veterans and Gold Star Families who can receive complimentary tickets by calling (904) 705-6439. Retired Navy Capt. Ryman Shoaf will share a rarely heard true story of Pearl Harbor. There will be a silent auction, raffles and a food drive of nonperishable items to benefit homeless vets.

For information or to purchase tickets, visit bit.ly/DEC7HEROES or call (904) 373-8817.

On Dec. 14, Sharks for Heroes will assist the Veterans Council of St. Johns County for Wreaths Across America. Students will help unload wreaths, and then lay a wreath on each grave at St. Augustine National Cemetery. The ceremony begins at 10 a.m. at 104 Marine St.

"Since we have so much going on, we won't have a formal meeting in December," Romero said.

Still, he's already seeking connections for January and beyond.

SOUPer Bowl

Continued from 5

mato puree with fire roasted eggplant and basil mousse, and a cold lemon raspberry soup with fruit mélange and chocolate.

As a memento from the event, each guest can choose a hand-crafted bowl made by a county student. Elementary, middle and high schools participate in the art project.

Since 2015, the event has raised more than \$100,000. This year, the SOUPer Bowl is partnering with Hugs Across the County to help students in need. The purchase of 10 tickets, or \$250, will feed one student for the entire year.

For information or to purchase tickets, visit www.StudentsTackleHunger.org.



Photo by Christine Rodenbaugh

In addition to the soup tasting, guests can take home a handmade bowl created by a student.

OBITUARIES

George Audi Bajalia

George Audi Bajalia, 62, died Nov. 23, 2019. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

William Carey

William Carey, 66, of Ponte Vedra, Florida, died Nov. 26, 2019. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

Alicia Carmona

Alicia Carmona, 104, of Jacksonville Beach, Florida, died Nov. 21, 2019. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. (904) 249-1100

Jackson Chase Jr.

Jackson Chase, Jr., 94, of Jacksonville Beach, Florida, died Nov. 26, 2019. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

Helene C. Gorab

Helene C. Gorab, 83, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Nov. 27, 2019. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. (904) 249-1100

Jack Greenberg

Jack Greenberg, 88, of St. Augustine, Florida, died Nov. 26, 2019. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

Robert K. Hitch

Robert K. Hitch, 74, of Neptune Beach, Florida, died Dec. 1, 2019. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. (904) 249-1100

Gwendolyn Anita Kepler

Gwendolyn Anita Kepler, 91, of Jacksonville Beach, Florida, died Dec. 1, 2019. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. (904) 249-1100

Georgiana Klingerman

Georgiana Klingerman, 77, of Jacksonville, Florida, died Nov. 30, 2019. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. (904) 249-1100

Genoveva Colberg Rivera

Genoveva Colberg Rivera, 87, of Jacksonville, Florida, died Nov. 9, 2019. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. (904) 249-1100

Joan Marie Romano

Joan Marie Romano, 61, died Nov. 21, 2019. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

Olga Velazquez

Olga Velazquez, 86, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Nov. 29, 2019. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – (904) 285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

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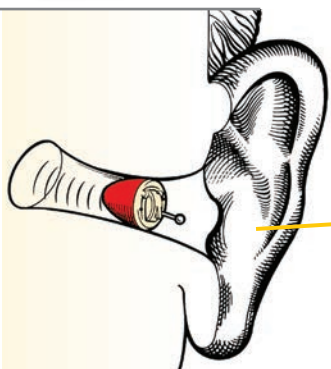
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NOCATEE HAPPENINGS: UPCOMING HOLIDAY EVENTS

NOCATEE-A-GLOW

Friday, Dec. 6 and Saturday, Dec. 7
6-9 p.m.

Splash Waterpark — Spray Waterpark,
Nocatee Station Field

Nocatee-A-Glow is Nocatee's biggest and brightest community event of the year. Festivities are set to include North Pole visits with Santa and Mrs. Claus, live nativity scene, horse-drawn carriage rides, train rides, a Food Truck Village, "Letters to Santa" station, various live musical and dance performances, a "snow" zone, balloon artist and much more. Both nights will feature a tree-lighting countdown, followed by the kickoff of Splash Waterpark's Christmas light show. The show will continue to run every night throughout the month of December with a special Hanukkah celebration on Dec. 23. This event is free for Nocatee residents and Friday night will be residents-only. Guests of residents will be admitted entry on Saturday for \$7 per person. Tickets can be purchased in advance online at www.eventbrite.com/e/nocatee-a-glow-guest-ticket-2019-tickets-77315070457



Photo by Amber Lake

Trees are decorated for last year's Nocatee-A-Glow at the Splash Waterpark.

HOLIDAY GOLF CART PARADE

Friday, Dec. 13, 6-7 p.m.
Nocatee Station Field

Nocatee will hold its second annual Christmas Golf Cart Parade on Dec. 13, featuring an array of festive golf carts adorned with Christmas lights and other holiday decorations. The parade starts at 6 p.m., and those participating in the

parade should start lining up at 5:30 p.m. The parade will be going around Splash Waterpark and the Town Center communities. To participate in the parade, RSVP to fun@nocatee.com. Those who aren't

participating are invited to watch and cheer along the route.

NOCATEE FARMERS MARKET: WINTERFEST

Saturday, Dec. 21, 10 a.m.-2 p.m.
Nocatee Station Field

This December, the Nocatee Farmers Market will feature the annual Winterfest. Get into the holiday spirit while enjoying great local shopping, a petting zoo, craft, and live music by the Crescendo Amelia Band. Santa Claus will also be visiting and taking photos for little ones with any last-minute Christmas wishes. Along with the seasonal and festive theme, the market will include over 70 local vendors offering items such as organic produce, herbs, spices, unique foods, crafts, jewelry and more. There will also be crafts and bounce houses for the kids to enjoy. The Nocatee Farmers Market is open to the public.

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Maya Adache, from Fort Lauderdale, shows off her figure skating routine in support of Special Olympics Florida.

Special Olympics athletes raise awareness for Polar Plunge event

Figure skaters show support for the festival-styled charity event

By Amber Lake

Special Olympics Florida set the stage for this year's Polar Plunge charity benefit by showcasing figure skating athletes at the opening of Adventure Landing's WinterFEST on Friday, Nov. 22.

The performances featured two Special Olympics athletes, 37-year-old Becky Lohr and 12-year-old Maya Adache. Each performed their own routine at WinterFEST's annual outdoor ice-skating rink. The event was aimed at welcoming the opening night of WinterFEST while raising awareness for this year's Polar Plunge event.

Each year, Adventure Landing transforms its outdoor waterpark into a winter wonderland, complete with alpine slides, winter scenery, a Santa's workshop and Christmas lighting. On Saturday, Dec. 7 from noon to 3 p.m., the park invites the community to participate in the Jacksonville Polar Plunge charity event, which raises funds for Special Olympics athletes.

"We are happy to showcase the abilities of Special Olympics Florida ice skaters at WinterFEST's opening night," said Jessica Ray, development director for Special Olympics Florida. "When our supporters



Photos by Amber Lake

Becky Lohr, from Palm Beach, performs her figure skating routine in support of Special Olympics Florida.

POLAR PLUNGE continues on Page 15

Free gift wrapping offered to benefit National Multiple Sclerosis Society

Volunteers from the National Multiple Sclerosis Society will return to South Beach Regional Shopping Center in Jacksonville Beach in December to offer Beaches residents free holiday gift wrapping.

For the sixth consecutive year, free wrapping will be offered outside of Hallmark and Five Below, the sponsoring stores, and will be available to all

shopping center shoppers and area residents. While the service is free, donations will be accepted and will go to help support programs and services for the more than 18,000 people impacted by the disease.

The wrapping service will be offered weekends throughout December from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m., and on Monday and Tuesday, Dec. 23 and Dec. 24.



Photo provided by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society

Beaches Rotaract Club hosting 'A Night at Alhambra' benefitting BEAM

The Rotaract Club of Jacksonville's Beaches is hosting its annual 'A Night at the Alhambra' fundraiser event, benefitting The Beaches' Emergency Assistance Program, in Dec. 12, at 5:30 p.m. at Alhambra Theatre & Dining at 12000 Beach Blvd. in Jacksonville.

The event will feature fellowship, a silent/live auction, a three-course dinner and Alhambra's presentation of "Elf the Musical."

BEAM is a community-based organization serving low-income residents in Jacksonville's Beaches communities and rely heavily on community support. This fundraiser will go towards setting up a mobile food bank to be used at elementary schools in the area. The supply drive will help BEAM stock up on sought-after items needed during the winter season.

The Rotaract Club of Jacksonville's Beaches is a part of Rotary International and a community-based service organization for young professionals. The club was chartered in 2005 and encourages membership in the Atlantic, Neptune, Jacksonville and Ponte Vedra Beach areas.

This event is open to everyone. Tickets must be bought in advance and can be found at www.beachesrotaract.org/alhambra.

Jacksonville Beach Pier Dance and Sterling's Birthday Party join forces to benefit BEAM

The 21st annual Jacksonville Beach Pier Dance and Sterling's Birthday Party event will be held Tuesday, Dec. 18, from 6 to 10 p.m. at Casa Marina in Jacksonville Beach. The event, once again benefitting Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry, will be boasting a 007 theme.

John Miller, founding attorney of Rock Solid Law, and his band BayStreet, will perform two sets of music starting at 7 p.m. The event is themed 007 in honor of former Casa Marina maitre d Sterling Joyce's 70th birthday and will also feature a fashion show and other performances. James Bond style dress is suggested.

Admission is at least one unwrapped toy and a nonperishable food item to make the holidays better for other Beaches area families.

Polar Plunge

Continued from 14

plunge into the wave pool on Dec. 7, they get to enjoy the winter wonderland at Adventure Landing. The more money that Plungers raise, the more activities they get to enjoy onsite post-Plunge. We are so happy to have a wonderful partner in Adventure Landing.”

Participants consist of athletes and friends and family of the Florida Special

Olympics who “take the plunge” toward funding uniforms, travel expenses and accommodation for Special Olympics Athletes. The community is invited to watch while enjoying food, refreshments and entertainment during the event, which supports the mission of Special Olympics Florida.

2019’s Jacksonville Polar Plunge will take place Saturday, Dec. 7 from noon to 3 p.m. at Adventure Landing. For more information about the event or to donate, visit specialolympicsflorida.org.

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Who needs snowmen when you have lifeguard chairs?

By Maggie FitzRoy

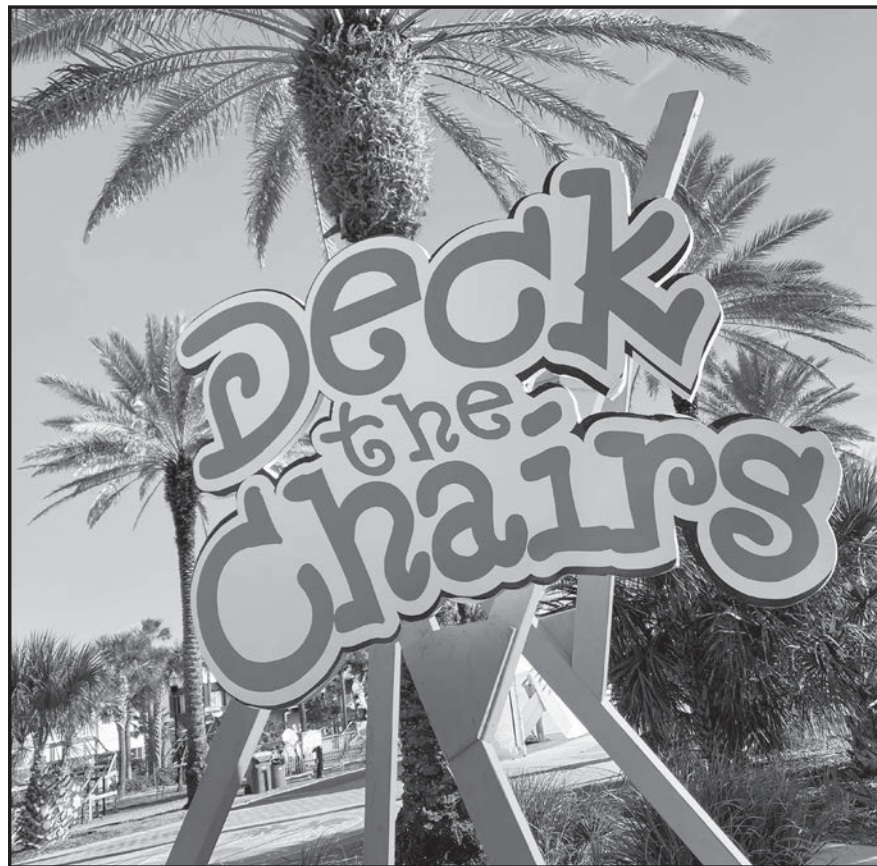
In cold-climate places people celebrate winter with skiing, sledding, ice skating and snowmen, decorating them in sometimes whimsical ways.

The last time it snowed at the Beaches was in 1989, however. So, snowmen are out of the question in Jacksonville Beach. But the seaside town does have plenty of tall, orange lifeguard chairs that are not needed during the chillier months.

In 2013, Jacksonville Beach businessman Kurtis Loftus decided to put the chairs to use during the holiday season. He asked the city to let him put some around Latham Plaza beside the SeaWalk Pavilion and then convinced some businesses and nonprofits to decorate them in colorful ways.

“Deck the Chairs” has since become a community tradition. Expanding through the years to its maximum number of 40 chairs, it also features family-friendly, non-alcohol events that are free and open to the public, beginning this year on Nov. 23 with an opening night holiday light show.

On Saturday, Dec. 14, a day-long Night of Music and Dance Tuba Christmas will begin at 1:30 p.m., herald the arrival of Santa at 2:45 p.m., and then



Deck the Chairs entrance at Latham Park in Jacksonville Beach



Photos by Maggie FitzRoy

Decorated lifeguard chairs are sponsored by local businesses and nonprofits.

continue into the evening with children’s dance programs.

Thirty-two of the whimsically decorated chairs are sponsored by businesses

and nonprofits, with the others used for decorative purposes. The chairs light up every evening, putting on a free magical show for anyone who cares to take a

stroll through the park.

In the daytime, they are also fun to look at, on display like a stationary parade.

“It literally does look like somebody stopped a parade, and we’re going to hold it here for six weeks for everyone to enjoy,” Loftus said. “It celebrates the holidays and the community.”

For chair sponsors, “it’s a wonderful way to do outreach,” he said. “To touch a heart or share a story.”

The sponsorship fees, which are

CHAIRS continues on Page 17

Every child's a star at The Nutcracker Tea



By Maggie FitzRoy

The tea at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club the afternoon of Nov. 24 was a dazzling display of magic for the many children there. It gave a tantalizing hint of what was to come, especially for 5-year-old Anna Hopson, who was in many ways the star of that day's show.

At the front of the vast dining room, a stage was set up, surrounded by colorful images illustrating the story of The Nutcracker ballet. After kids of all ages and their parents and grandparents nibbled on goodies, sipped punch and socialized, ballerina Sophia Jacobs danced the Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy, followed by other fairies, then *Senoritas*, a Spinning Top, then 13-year-old Audrey Geric as Clara, the story's protagonist, dancing with the Prince and the Dream Fairy.

The numbers offered the Nutcracker Tea audience a glimpse of "The Nutcracker" performance that hundreds of Christ Episcopal Church Dancers will perform Dec. 14 at Lazzara Theater at the University of North Florida.

And in between, with more glimpses to come featuring Raggedy Ann and The Jester, Licorice Tap, Russian Doll, Arabian dancers, Chinese Doll and swirling Marshmallows, little Anna got to dance with the other children in the audience when they were invited to the stage.

In her wheelchair, as scores of other children and teens twirled around her and danced with her, Anna beamed. As the afternoon wore on, she increasingly became the joyous focus.

Everyone knew who she was, because she had been introduced first, by emcee Claire Duffy. "Our sweet little Anna, from Community PEDS Care, who we're going to be dancing for today," said Duffy, whose mother, Felica Rhoden is the Nutcracker choreographer and director. Pointing to Anna and her mother, Kathleen Hopson and her nurse, Judy Sparks, sitting in front row seats of honor, Duffy said, "Thank you for all you do to inspire us."

This year marks the 24th annual performance for Rhoden's Nutcracker extravaganza at UNF. The event raises money for Community PEDS Care, Dreams Come True and Amistad, an orphanage in Bolivia supported by the church. Many of the children at the tea will be in the show, and they know they are dancing for other children.

ABOVE: Child guests at The Nutcracker Tea watch dancers perform Nov. 24 at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club. The Christ Episcopal Church dancers will perform "The Nutcracker" on Dec. 14, at UNF's Lazzara Theatre.

RIGHT: Rebecca McCary, 8, (left), dances with Anna Hopson, 5, at The Nutcracker Tea event.

Photos by Maggie FitzRoy



NUTCRACKER TEA continues on Page 18

Chairs

Continued from 16

\$1,800 for businesses and \$900 for nonprofits, are the major fundraiser for Deck the Chairs, a 501c3. The charity's vision is to provide a fun, alcohol-free community spectacular that everyone can be proud of. It also supports and promotes arts and arts education during the rest of the year.

"We keep pouring into it, making it better and better," said Loftus, who started Deck the Chairs in 2013 with 16 chairs and music piped out of a speaker next to his truck, coming from his iPod.

Before the Great Recession, the City of Jacksonville Beach had sponsored a free holiday celebration every year,

including visits from Santa and singing, musical performances and dance performances from community and school groups.

With budget cuts, that was reduced and then eliminated, and during the 2012 holiday season, the park was completely dark. Loftus said that inspired him to create Deck the Chairs. The city gives the organization park space, and Deck the Chairs funds the rest.

Jacksonville Beach is fortunate to have a seaside park, with a large stage and open greens and pathways for the enjoyment of all, Loftus said.

"We need to speak out into the world," he said, "how lucky we are as a community to have this space we can celebrate in."



Decorated lifeguard chairs are sponsored by local businesses and nonprofits at Deck the Chairs at Latham Park in Jacksonville Beach.

Photo by Maggie FitzRoy

Nutcracker Tea

Continued from 17

Community PEDS Care serves children with life-threatening illnesses as well as those who need palliative care, like Anna, Sparks said. Anna, a bright-eyed, talkative child, who sat on the edge of her chair as she watched the show, "has a lot of complex issues we help her with," Sparks explained, but her condition is not life threatening.

As each dancer took the stage, they stopped to bow to Anna, who will also have a front row balcony seat with her family at the UNF production.

At the tea, however, Anna wasn't content to just watch. Whenever she was invited, she went right out onto the stage.

"I think she's liking it a lot," her mother, Kathleen Hopson, said. "I think she really feels special."



Dancers perform a scene from "The Nutcracker" at The Nutcracker Tea.

Photos by Maggie FitzRoy



Felicia Rhoden (left), director and choreographer of "The Nutcracker" as performed by the Christ Church Dancers, and her daughter Claire Duffy, pose with Santa at the Nutcracker Tea.



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Main Sanctuary |
| 2:00 p.m. Serenata
Informal with music
South Ponte Vedra
Civic Association | 10:00 p.m. Traditional
Main Sanctuary |
| 4:00 p.m. Traditional
Main Sanctuary | Christmas Day |
| 4:00 p.m. Contemporary with music
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World War II veteran's life journey includes amazing 'epiphany'

By Maggie FitzRoy

Howard "Mike" Spencer was flying solo, high above German-occupied territory, when his P-47 Thunderbolt Fighter plane was badly hit by enemy fire.

Highly trained to make an emergency crash landing, the young pilot did everything he was supposed to do according to emergency procedures, but to no avail. The P-47 kept declining in altitude, and he was fast approaching the ground.

Out of options, Spencer looked up through the plane's canopy and shouted, "I need help."

And he is alive and well today, at age 98, because he received it.

"A voice came clearly into my senses," he said one recent day as he told his story. "The message came clearly: check the fuel transfer pump."

The pump was right next to his seat. So, he did. And discovered he had not checked it properly.

"I turned it, as the voice had told me, and the engine roared to life," he said. "It's amazing, that I got the message, and that it saved me from crashing."

That sense of being guided has never left Spencer, who wrote a book about his life two years ago, called "One Man's Journey, The Life, Lessons & Legacy of a World War II Fighter Pilot."

He calls what happened to him, an "epiphany," saying, "even today, I feel somebody is always with me. I know I have a contact I can use."

Spencer never heard the voice again. But the memory of it has remained a comfort. When people ask him if he is afraid of dying, he tells them he is not. "I don't fear it," he said. "But I enjoy life. And here I am. My life is good."

A resident of Ponte Vedra Beach since 1988, he moved to The Palms at Ponte Vedra assisted living community a few weeks ago and is very happy there.

Casey, his wife of 65 years, died 10 years ago. He has three adult children, two daughters and a son, as well as two grandchildren and one new great grandchild, born the same day he moved into The Palms.

Writing his book, with the help of biographer Ken Overman, took a year, Spencer



Photo by Maggie FitzRoy

SPENCER continues on Page 21

Mike Spencer sits in the lobby of his new home at The Palms at Ponte Vedra.

“ I will be 99 in February. My objective is 102. Why not? My doctor said I could easily break 100. ”

Mike Spencer, resident of The Palms at Ponte Vedra and WWII veteran

Spencer

Continued from 20

said. “You don’t write your life story easily.” Since then, he has shared his story as a guest speaker on many occasions, including with many area book clubs.

“I will be 99 in February,” he said. “My objective is 102. Why not? My doctor said I could easily break 100.”

Born February 27, 1921, Spencer grew up in Youngsville, Pa., a small town of 2,000 people about 100 miles north of Pittsburgh, near Lake Erie. The second of four children, he was 5 feet tall and weighed only 100 pounds when he graduated from junior high, which prevented him from playing sports, where he said “all the excitement was.”

Since the football team was not looking for him, he decided to become an expert in outdoor survival. He took his German Shephard, Ludi, into the wilderness, where they lived off the land and slept on the ground, covered with pine boughs. He knew where the squirrels and birds went for the night, so he and Ludi never went hungry. “I did that for two years,” he said. “My mother never said anything, except for ‘where have you been for the last two days?’ And I said, ‘out in the woods.’ My dog loved it and I loved it.”

At age 18, Spencer went to a two-year college in Boston, and after graduating with a major in finance, landed a good job



Photo by Maggie FitzRoy

Mike Spencer as a young pilot in World War II, in a photograph on the cover of his autobiography.

with Westinghouse. Then, one day when he and some friends were coming out of a movie theater, they saw a crowd of people gathered in front of an ice cream shop.

“I said, ‘What’s going on?’” Spencer said. “And they said, ‘Some Japanese guys just bombed Pearl Harbor.’”

A week later, Spencer enlisted in the

Army Air Corps because he knew a war was coming and he wanted to choose his role in that war. He wanted to be a pilot.

After a year of training, “I became an officer, a gentleman and a pilot all at once,” Spencer recalled. As a fighter pilot, he was sent to England, where he flew missions back and forth to German-

occupied France. After D-Day, he was sent to a base in France, then Germany, as the Allied troops inched closer to victory. His squadron eventually crossed the Rhine River in Germany, which was “a big deal,” he said. “Because it opened up all types of possibilities.”

Spencer flew a total of 89 missions and was shot down twice but never seriously injured.

“I thought to myself, this is a lousy career,” he said. “I’m going to fly to Germany, where everybody wants to kill me. But that was my job.”

Spencer and Casey married in 1946 and Casey worked as a secretary so her husband could go back to school and earn a degree at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. After that, he climbed the ladder of success in business, taking the family at various times to Australia, Holland and Hong Kong, eventually becoming Chief Executive Officer at a small company.

He enjoys talking about his life, he said, because “I had such an interesting life. A desire to always be better drove me. And I could never stop.”

Now that he is long retired, Spencer said he is still determined to make the most of life and to live as long as he can, even though he does not fear death.

“I behave, I exercise, I eat right, and I sleep at least nine hours a night,” he said. “And I like fun. I flirt. With flirting, you get to talk to girls. That keeps me young.”

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Photo by Maggie FitzRoy

Jerry Norton with some pieces of his art in his studio at The Starling Independent Living community.

Joy of art relieves his pain

By Maggie FitzRoy

In his retirement, at 88, Jerry Norton is a contented, happy artist.

“I think I died and went to heaven, because my studio before was my garage,” Norton said one recent day as he walked into The San Pablo Art Studio at The Starling Independent Living condominiums in Nocatee.

Before moving into his unit at The Starling, he said, “I had my car, the water softener and a table next to the water softener, so this is quite the upgrade. Not a lot of residents paint here.” So far, “In fact, I’m the only one.”

Norton is well known to many in the Ponte Vedra Beach community, because

NORTON continues on **Page 23**



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Photos by Maggie FitzRoy

The Starling Independent Living resident Camille Fondriest looks at a display of Jerry Norton's art in the community art studio.

Norton

Continued from 22

for many years he coached children's sports and photographed and wrote sports stories for the Ponte Vedra Recorder.

He very recently coached his last football game and no longer covers sports, but he has embraced a new hobby, in which he is finding success. He is a painter, and a prolific one. His many paintings hang on the walls of the Starling art studio, and he only seriously began his new craft in January 2019.

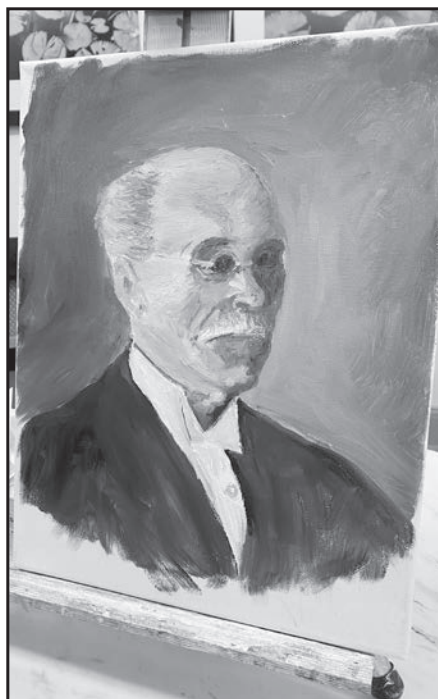
He doesn't call himself an artist, however. "I'm a copy artist," he said. "I don't create anything. I take what others do and I copy it."

Norton copies well enough to sell some of his works to other residents, who enjoyed an exhibit of his paintings at the recent grand opening of the independent living center at The Starling.

He doesn't paint for money, however, donating the modest proceeds to charity.

While the spacious Starling studio is designed to accommodate many artists, Norton is glad to fill the space with his supplies and works for now. On one table sits an easel with a painting of his grandfather, Jesus Vidal, who was friends with Sorolla, a famous Spanish impressionist. Norton's painting is a direct copy of one that Sorolla painted of Vidal, which Norton's sister has hanging at her home.

On one wall of the studio, Norton's paintings are displayed as in a miniature art gallery. There is a copy of a Monet sunset in France, and also a copy of a painting of the Brooklyn Bridge, which Norton admired, although he didn't know the name of the original artist.

**A portrait Norton painted of his grandfather.**

"I don't know who painted a lot of these things," he said. He finds some images on the internet, including one of his favorites, a little girl on the beach.

Norton painted a few pictures years ago, after retiring from a career as Director of Engineering at Grumman, but he put art aside to focus on sports coaching, photography and writing instead.

He was motivated to resume painting after a visit to the Mayo Clinic pain clinic in September 2018, where he went to get help managing his pain.

"Painting manages pain great for me," he said, better than medication. "When I paint, I don't think about things that ail me. So, I paint many hours a day. When I'm not playing Bridge or in the pool."

Writing used to serve that purpose for Norton, and he said even though he is not covering sports events anymore,

**One of Norton's earliest paintings.****One of Norton's favorite paintings.**

he has not given up writing altogether. Through the years, he wrote several non-fiction books, including a memoir, and is currently writing another book, "88 and Counting." He doesn't write books for the money, either, but he does donate proceeds to The Junior Development League Football youth program in Ponte Vedra Beach, which he founded in 1998.

Proceeds from his art also goes to the Starling Independent Living Activities Resource Fund.

Norton said he is not happy with everything he paints, but it's okay that he likes some of his works better than others. He doesn't take art lessons, saying he's too old, but he does learn by doing.

"I'm happy as a clam here," he said, looking around "his" art studio. "It really is a great place."

How to give back to seniors in community

The strongest communities tend to be those in which members make a concerted effort to give as much as they get. Giving back to one's community can foster strong relationships with fellow residents and ensure that everyone, including the less fortunate, is in position to live happy, healthy lives.

Certain people in a community may be more vulnerable to issues that can adversely affect quality of life than others. For example, the National Institute on Aging notes that, as men and women age, many are alone more often than when they were younger, leaving them vulnerable to social isolation and loneliness. Such feelings can prove very harmful to their health, potentially contributing to problems such as depression, cognitive decline and heart disease.

Volunteering to help the aging members of one's community is a great way to give back, and such efforts can prove rewarding for both seniors and the volunteers who lend them a hand.

■ **Pull an extra chair up to the dinner table.** Many a meaningful connection has been made and maintained over the dinner table. Breaking bread with a senior from your community is a great way to foster such connections and provide an avenue for social interaction for seniors. Seniors who live alone might not enjoy cooking for one each night, but they might jump at the chance to eat dinner with a neighbor and even help prepare the meal. Invite a senior over once per week, encouraging them to share stories about their lives as well as how the community has developed over the years.

■ **Help seniors manage their finances.** Many seniors struggle to manage their finances, as laws regarding taxes and investing are subject to routine changes. A little help in this area can go a long way for seniors. Adults who want to help but don't know where to begin can do the legwork for their aging neighbors. Contact agencies such as AARP to determine if there are any financial assistance programs that can help seniors effectively manage their money and take advantage of age-specific perks, such as programs that may help seniors lower their energy costs.

■ **Offer to help around the house.** Seniors who reside in single-family homes may not be able to keep up with routine home maintenance. Neighbors who want to help can offer to mow the lawn, tend to the landscaping and tidy up inside. Keep an eye open for other issues, such as clogged gutters, that can be fixed easily but prove costly if they go ignored.

Helping aging neighbors is a great way to give back and build strong communities.

River Garden Foundation turns Sawgrass Marriott into 'A Night in Shanghai'

By Daniela Toporek

Oil-paper umbrellas hung from the Sawgrass Marriott Resort & Spa ceiling as the Ponte Vedra Beach resort hosted "A Night in Shanghai," the River Garden Foundation's 27th annual gala, Nov. 16. It was a festive evening, where drinks were had, donations were made and Chinese lion dancers enchanted attendees.

The event began outside of the Marriott's convention center, where a red carpet welcomed everyone inside and the culinary staff served light bites to accompany the open bar centering the room.

"We're looking to show everyone our vision of A Night in Shanghai and give them a taste of what we were working on so hard for so long," said 2019 Gala Chair, Talie Zaifert, who worked with Rebekah Selevan to put on the lively party and charitable event.

"It's our job to also remind everyone that this is for a cause," Selevan added.

"It's fun, but we're still trying to raise funds."

The Gala Chairs set up a silent auction that awaited guests in the lobby, with proceeds going to River Garden. Prizes, ranging from Star Wars autographed posters to extravagant trips abroad, were displayed in the main area and at the very end, a green-screen photo opportunity presented itself for memorable photos and souvenirs.

Drums beating in the distance alerted guests to move to the dining area, where the Chinese lion dancers awaited on the dance floor for a fiery performance before dinner. Steamed Cantonese grouper was served with bok choy stir fry, along with an almond sponge cake for dessert. Vegan guests were welcomed with sweet, soy and ginger-grilled butternut squash, with Udon noodles, peanuts and veggies.

"The tuna rangoons were my favorite, as well as the scallion sauce on the grouper," said Chef Melanie Cuartelon, who said her Filipino heritage helped craft the night's dishes. "The menu was Chinese forward and with Filipino cuisine having

GALA continues on Page 25



ABOVE: Nov. 16 marked the 27th annual River Garden Foundation Gala, hosted at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort in Ponte Vedra Beach, where guests celebrated for a cause and were in awe at this year's theme, "A Night in Shanghai."

LEFT: 2019 Gala Chairs Talie Zaifert (left) and Rebekah Selevan pose during the cocktail reception, welcoming everyone inside.

Photos by Daniela Toporek

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Photos by Daniela Toporek

Gala guests Katherine Weatherspoon (from left), Kurtus and Margaret Loftus, Max and Jacqueline Boss before dinner begins.

Gala

Continued from 24

Chinese influence, it was a familiar cuisine for myself and the team.”

Cuartelon said seeing the guests’ smiles throughout the dinner was one of her favorite sights of the night. “It helps us know they enjoyed it and we did our jobs,” she said.

After, the smooth sounds of The Voltage Brothers serenaded gala guests and brought them to the dance floor before the final event of the night, a party after the party, with more dessert and champagne.

“Not-for-profit community agencies like River Garden exist for one reason,”



River Garden CEO Martin Goetz poses with River Garden Marketing and Communications Director Kari Bell.

said River Garden CEO Marty Goetz. “And it’s to provide care. I don’t answer to stockholders. I answer to stakeholders, and all 630 guests tonight are stakeholders. It makes a difference.”



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RIVER HOUSE EVENTS LISTING

The listed programs, unless otherwise noted, are held at River House at 179 Marine St., St. Augustine, FL 32084. They take place Monday-Thursday between 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Friday 8:30 a.m. to noon. For reservations and information about these and other ongoing classes, call River House at (904) 209-3655 visit the website at www.coasjc.org or contact Twyla Abo, Program Coordinator at tabo@stjohnscoa.com.

RIVER HOUSE BRIDGE GROUP

River House offers Bridge on Mondays and Wednesdays 1 p.m.-4 p.m., complimentary to members and \$4 for nonmembers. Anyone interested in joining the group may contact Judy Swindull at (904) 829-2285 for more information.

NEW SESSION: CHAIR YOGA

River House is now offering additional afternoon sessions of Chair Yoga from 2 p.m.-3p.m. on Wednesdays. Chair Yoga is a practice that is accessible to people of all ages and all fitness levels. It has therapeutic benefits to seniors who may not be able to stand for long periods or may be uncomfortable seated on the floor. They also offer Tuesday and Thursday morning sessions from 9-10 a.m. The class is complimentary for River House members/\$4 for nonmembers.

Call (904) 209-3655 for questions or reservations.



POLE WALKING FOR FITNESS, HEALTH AND FEELING HAPPY

Pole Walking has a low impact on joints, improves balance, burns more calories, and improves posture. River House Pole Walkers meet five different times each week for group walking with instructor Sheila Vidamore. Join up at River House the first Tuesday of each month at 2 p.m. for the required complimentary Pole Walking Clinic. This clinic will include the history of pole walking, information about its benefits, a hands-on demonstration and a lesson with a set of provided poles. Reservations are required as space is limited. Call (904) 209-3655 to register.



NEW CLASS: MAT PILATES

Come to River House on Tuesdays from 2:30-3:30 p.m. for Mat Pilates. The class has numerous benefits including increasing flexibility and bone density, strengthening one's core, back muscles, and improving the overall health of the entire spine. Suitable for all levels with individualized modifications. Cost is \$4 for River House members/\$5 for non-members. Call 904-209-3655 to register.

RIVER HOUSE BOOK CLUB

Held 3-4 p.m. the second Tuesday of every month. Joining a book club is a great way to be consistent in your reading, delve deeper into books, and make some great friends. This group is complimentary and made possible by the SJC public library bookmobile.

SENIOR SINGLES GROUP

Join local seniors for fabulous food and fun conversation the first Tuesday of each month at various restaurants. Call Victoria Balsamo at (419) 651-0411 for reservations.

GRIEF SUPPORT GROUP

Seniors grieving over the loss of a loved one are welcome to join a monthly bereavement group to share thoughts, memories and issues. The complimentary support group is led by Rhona (Ronnie) Botnick, a Bereavement Counselor with over 25 years of experience. The group meets the third Tuesday of each month from 10:30 a.m.-noon at River House.



LEGALLY SPEAKING LECTURE SERIES

Join attorney Megan Wall from St. Johns County Legal Aid as she discusses various legal topics for seniors. A free and open to the public lecture will be held at River House from 10-11 a.m. on Friday, Dec. 6. Topic: How to Handle Your Kids On Legal Issues.



COMING SOON! WINTER WONDERLAND DANCE SHOW

Held 10 a.m. Thursday, Dec. 12. The annual holiday dance show will feature the River House Dancers, who will showcase their skills in this complimentary program.

Photos provided by metrocreativeconnection.com

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Photos provided by The Palms at Ponte Vedra

Morton Perry plays jazz music for residents at The Palms during a Thanksgiving luncheon.



ABOVE: Catherine and Gwen Snowden

LEFT: Tiffany Floyd, John Connor and Jana Colbert

Residents at The Palms at Ponte Vedra celebrate Thanksgiving together

The Palms at Ponte Vedra assisted living and memory care community hosted a Thanksgiving luncheon for residents and their families Thursday, Nov. 21.

The event featured live music by jazz artist Morton Perry, and the centerpieces for the tables were donated by The PGA TOUR.

Pastor Loy of First Baptist Ponte Vedra gave a prayer of thanks before everyone enjoyed a traditional Thanksgiving feast.

Barbara Matteson, Executive Director, thanked members of her team for preparing the delicious meal and then wished everyone a "Happy Thanksgiving."



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ABOVE: The Wall of Heroes at Cypress Village honors residents who served in the U.S. Armed Forces.

RIGHT: "America's White Table," set up at the Wall of Heroes dedication ceremony, pays special tribute to servicemembers who are POW/MIA.

Photos provided by Cypress Village



Cypress Village honors resident veterans with Wall of Heroes

Since the month of November was officially designated as National Veterans and Military Families Month, Cypress Village celebrated with an unveiling of their Wall of Heroes in their Assisted Living area, and by honoring veteran residents at the community who served in the United States Armed Forces.

The community gathered photographs of residents with their service photos and held a special ceremony to dedicate the wall to honor the patriotism and sacrifice of those who served. It stands as a continued reminder to all those who pass by it.

Cypress Village boasts of more than 120 veterans at the community, and Jessica Murphey, Resident Programs Coordinator and Emily

Patel, Sales Manager, put the event together to honor them.

"These people are not only residents, but are truly an extension of my family and I wanted them to feel special and know that what they did was amazing, and it should never be forgotten," Murphey said.

The dedication was attended by residents, associates, friends, family members, both active and veteran members of the military and honored guests.

Ted Laveck of the Cypress Village Veterans Committee regaled the heroism of those who were honored and thanked them for their years of dedication to our country. Navy

HEROES continues on Page 29

Cypress Village Croquet Club hosts '50 and Fit' croquet events

Members of the Cypress Village Croquet Club recently hosted the annual City of Jacksonville Senior Games "50 and Fit" Croquet events. Players from all around the city gathered at the community to play three rounds of elimination Golf Croquet and six Wicket Croquet.

Each year the City of Jacksonville presents The Forever Fit 50 & Beyond: Jacksonville Senior Games, an Olympic-style event series designed for seasoned athletes to participate on a competitive level and novice athletes to participate for their own enjoyment and promote healthy and active lifestyles for First Coast seniors.

Cypress Village hosted 20 players over the two days as part of the ongoing festivities, and players were awarded medals for their standings from the City of Jacksonville. Cypress Village residents Madeline Grader and Syd Balsbaugh, playing as a team, took home the gold medal. Players from Fleet Landing received the silver and George Wilson and Edie Barret won the bronze.

"All in all, it was a beautiful day on our newly re-furbished courts," Cypress Village resident Gene Bland said. "Visitors were very pleased with the Boat House setting and the natural turf courts. Thanks go especially to long-time player Madeline Grader for help with the logistics of the morning."

Cypress Village is slated to host the games again in 2020.



Members of the Cypress Village Croquet Club competed in the City of Jacksonville Senior Games "50 and Fit" Croquet tournament, which was hosted by Cypress Village.



A competitor at the Senior Games "50 and Fit" Croquet event lines up her shot.



Liz Seymour competes in the event for Cypress Village.

Photos provided by Cypress Village

Avoiding scams: Seniors can give safely and successfully

People often gain a greater sense of purpose and happiness after giving to charity, and seniors are no exception. According to a study from Merrill Lynch and Age Wave, today's retirees are almost six times more likely to define success by generosity than their wealth when compared to seniors of yesteryear.

Seniors' eagerness to give makes them prime targets for charity fraud. Giving in retirement while avoiding fraudsters is challenging, but seniors who recognize their vulnerability can reduce their risk of falling victim to criminals.

RESEARCH BEFORE GIVING

To ensure a donation will be spent in the way it was intended, seniors should thoroughly research organizations before becoming donors. One of the first places to start is Charity Navigator. A 501(c)(3) public charity, Charity Navigator has been steering the public in the right direction regarding charities since 2001. Their analysts research thousands of financial documents, rating charities on accountability, transparency and performance, among other criteria.

Individuals also can research charities by getting recommendations from friends and family, as well as learning about organizations through the Better Business Bureau. Online rankings and scam alerts can help with decision-making as well.



Photo provided by metrocreativeconnection.com

Seniors can find gratification through charitable giving.

DON'T FEEL PRESSURED

High-quality charities do not need to resort to pressure tactics to solicit funds. Similarly, individuals should not feel put upon to donate because of gifts received in the mail. Such gifts commonly include note pads and return address labels. Seniors should make donations based on how they feel about a particular charity and the difference they want to make.

BE AWARE OF SOUND-ALIKE CHARITIES

Some fraudulent charities like to piggyback on the suc-

cess of reputable organizations. They may operate under names that sound similar to legitimate charities or create business logos that are nearly identical. People should not be fooled by these tactics.

EXPLORE ALL THE WAYS TO GIVE

Seniors can give back in various ways. Charitable gift annuities and charitable trusts are great ways to give, and seniors can even donate senior discounts through a giving site called Boomerang Giving. Seniors also can volunteer their time.

DONATE DIRECTLY

Contact a charity directly to donate instead of using a middle person or unconfirmed entity on the phone. Use a credit card or check so there is a receipt of the donation.

OPT OUT OF INFORMATION SHARING

Donating to one charity should not result in a deluge of solicitations from others. Individuals should tell a charity they do not want their personal information shared. This also helps to reduce the risk of being contacted by bogus charities.

Seniors who give to charity reap many rewards. But safeguarding one's finances is of paramount importance when donating to charity.

Heroes

Continued from 28

Color Guardsmen from NAS Jax opened the event with the presentation of the colors and the Pledge of Allegiance and then the Assisted Living Director, Connie Hickman, expressed the community's gratitude towards their resident service veterans and announced the names to be honored.

Along with the seal of each branch of the United States Armed Forces, 15 photos were placed on the wall of those who served in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, Coast Guard, as well as those who were first responders as firefighters and police officers.

Jeff Faulkner of the National Association of Veterans and Families spoke of the heroes on the wall, and how their organization partners with Cypress Village in order to serve those who once served us, and of the importance of fighting for veterans' rights over the years. NAVF also presented a special service flag to go alongside the wall in the dedication of each branch of the military present. In an especially moving presentation, VITAS Healthcare awarded a "Military Wives Pin" to those surviving spouses in the audience to pay tribute to their sacrifice as well.

After a humbling moment of silence, a poem was read to dedicate the POW/MIA table that will forever remain set and empty and as a reminder that not everyone makes it home. Tears were shed, memories were shared, hugs were given as the ceremony closed.

The wall will remain at Cypress Village as a monument to the dedication,

service and sacrifice of the residents and associates who dedicated themselves to protecting our freedom.

A similar wall was erected in Clare Bridge, Cypress Village's memory care area, and plans are in place to add another monument to resident veterans in the community's newly renovated bar and bistro. The community is an active advocate for veterans living at Cypress Village and hosts birthday parties for each branch of military service throughout the year. Additionally, the community hosts a regular "Coffee and Comrades" social group for veterans and has onsite services through NAVF, where residents receive assistance in maximizing their benefits from the V.A.



Photo provided by Cypress Village

Dick Hoover poses with his service photo on the Wall of Heroes at Cypress Village.

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Cruise-themed grand opening spotlights Starling at Nocatee Independent Living community

By Maggie FitzRoy

People 55 and older who attended the grand opening celebration of the Starling at Nocatee Independent Living community Nov. 19 were treated as if they were on a cruise. Issued “passports” on arrival, they got to visit “ports of call” throughout the community, tasting treats, enjoying musical entertainment and sipping tropical drinks, all while collecting passport stamps along the way for a chance to win a Caribbean cruise.

“Our community here is very much like being on a cruise ship,” said Kerri Dufour, executive director.

Residents began moving into the rental community, which does not have buy-in-fees, in September. It offers spacious apartments, restaurant style dining at multiple venues, a spa and salon, fitness center, yoga lawn, massage room, resort-style heated saltwater pool and group exercise classes, as well as a calendar of social activities and trips and an art studio, library, game room and multiple lounges.

Additional outdoor amenities include



Photos by Susan Griffin

Melissa Bagley, Director of Sales at Starling at Nocatee Independent Living

a fire pit, resident gardening area, putting green, bocce ball, pickleball court, dog park and landscaped courtyards.

It is adjacent to the Assisted Living and Memory Care units, which were phase 1 of the Starling at Nocatee.

Dufour said the new Independent Living community has also been compared to a luxury resort. “It’s a cruise ship on dry land,” she said.



Laura Clouser and Marilee Howland



Sharon and Steve Lucie



ABOVE: Silver Salon & Spa's Lisa Johnson, Sheryl Cangemi-Knopf, Mary Ann Chadwick and Denise Norris



LEFT: Heidi Aderman and Donna Peeler

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Business Weekly

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2019

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St. Augustine-based craft distillery offering new gift packs

Page 34



St. George Street was busy during most of the long Thanksgiving weekend.

It's not too late to 'shop small'

By Christine Rodenbaugh

On Small Business Saturday, Nov. 30, mid-day foot traffic in St. Augustine's historic district was heavy as expected during a long holiday weekend. With Black Friday the day before mainly focused on big box stores, and Cyber Monday dedicated to online deals, American Express created Small Business Saturday in 2010. The idea was to encourage people to "shop small" the Saturday after Thanksgiving.

Five or six customers perused unique teas, spice blends, salts and sugars at The Spice & Tea Exchange on Hypolita Street downtown. Angie Fletcher, store manager, said the shop was busy Friday and Saturday, but they didn't actively promote Small Business Saturday this year.

"With the influx of tourists, we don't have many locals this weekend," she said. "We'll run specials during the week when they're more likely to come downtown."

Stephanie Sisson, Taylor Jefferson and Alexis Routa came from Sarasota to see the Nights of Lights. They were not aware of Small Business Saturday, but were just checking out the downtown shops.

"We just love it here," Sisson said. "It's our first Nights of Lights."

H.W. Davis Clothing and Shoes, in business since 1894, is located on St. George Street. Owner Robert Lichter said the shop is a local destination as well as a stop for tourists. They have seasonal customers return each year. Store manager Mark Bowen said they didn't participate in Small Business Saturday.

"We get a half million people this week," Bowen said. "It's tough competing with online (merchants). The only way to survive is to constantly be changing."



Photos by Christine Rodenbaugh

Tom Whatley tries on shoes with his wife, Kathy, at H.W. Davis Clothing and Shoes in St. Augustine on Small Business Saturday. The couple was visiting from Bainbridge, Georgia.

Over the Bridge of Lions on Anastasia Island, High Tide Gallery owner Wayne McNees said he did some Small Business Saturday promotions on Facebook and Instagram. The gallery recently relocated from downtown.

"One advantage is we have plenty of free parking," McNees said. "A disadvantage is we don't have tourists walking by."

Let's all support local businesses this holiday season



Isabelle Renault
President/CEO,
St. Johns County
Chamber of Commerce

The brisk evening air was a refreshing change from the usual Florida heat — the topic of conversation with the neighbors this evening — but as the minutes ticked on the discussion turned to that of business. My neighbor, a local

ice cream shop owner, started to talk about his customers and the gradual drop-off the shop experiences as the seasons change. His story told of the importance of supporting small, locally owned businesses. The patrons that come in all throughout the year are greatly appreciated by this ice cream shop owner, but this is true across all industries and sectors for small business owners. When you shop with a small business you support a mother, father, sister, brother, cousin, friend, or neighbor.

Support for small, local businesses is not just helpful to their owners, but is essential to the community as a whole. From 2011 to early 2019, St. Johns County, Florida saw an increase of 1,846 businesses and 21,438 jobs, just in the private sector alone, according to the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity. When you spend your money with small businesses your support goes far beyond just their pockets. Dollars are recycled back into the local economy — according to a 2017 FreshBooks study, 66% of small businesses will outsource services to other small businesses. Small businesses will also often support local schools, charities and churches. They provide unique characteristics to the community, a one-of-a-kind shopping experience for consumers, helping to generate local economic development. "Going local does not mean walling off the outside world. It means nurturing locally owned

Veteran-owned Pennington Insurance Services holds ribbon cutting

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce hosted a ribbon cutting with Allstate Insurance Company Dec. 2 to celebrate the opening of a new office in St. Augustine. Located at 10440 U.S. 1 North, it is independently owned and operated by David Pennington, a U.S. Army veteran, who has more than 15 years of experience in the financial services and insurance industries. He is dedicated to helping families accomplish their goals while delivering impeccable service, drawing upon his experience as an Army Sergeant in the 82nd Airborne Division from 1999 to 2005.

Pennington's office sells auto, property and life insurance as well as protection for motorcycles, boats, renters and more. Additionally, the agency specializes in helping small businesses throughout Northeast Florida with business insurance and voluntary employee benefits. They offer insurance services in both English and Spanish to meet the growing needs of the community.

"As a veteran, husband, father, and active member of the community, it is important to me to help families protect the things that matter most – their family, home, car, boat and more," Pennington said. "And with over 110,000 veterans in Northeast Florida, I am proud to serve the



Photo by Susan Griffin

Representatives from Pennington Insurance Services hold a ribbon cutting with St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce members Dec. 2.

veteran community with their insurance needs."

The five-person team at Pennington Insurance Services has over 40 years of

experience, and primarily serves Jacksonville, Saint Augustine, Ponte Vedra and Nocatee families and business. The office is open Monday through Friday from 8:30

a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Evening hours are available by appointment. Reach Pennington and his team at (904) 347-2443, or email David.Pennington@allstate.com.

The gift of truth

I am guilty of having strong, stubborn convictions regarding certain issues and regrettably, I am too darn quick to point to negativity in situations and people. This is one of those times. Therefore, please do not make the mistake of interpreting the foregoing as an outburst of egotism and self-righteousness. In a world so full of folks who cannot wait to announce their accomplishments on social media or at a dinner party, it was refreshing to read the enlightening book, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* by Brené Brown. To underscore what psychologist Robert Glover once said, "Humans are attracted to each other's rough edges." Brown states, "Vulnerability is the path of true human connection and becoming a truly attractive person. Show your rough edges. Stop trying to be perfect."

Living authentically is being ourselves, not an imitation of what we think we should be. I love what best-selling author, Mark Manson, says about vulnerability, "A man who's able to make himself vulnerable is saying to the world, 'Screw the repercussions; this is who I am, and I refuse to be anyone else.'" I argue that most folks have a remarkably difficult time being vulnerable in the form of authenticity because his or her ego gets in the way. One of my favorite self-help authors, the late Wayne Dyer, says that our ego is our worst enemy that convinces us of three primarily false premises:

- 1.) Who I am is what I have.
- 2.) Who I am is what I do.
- 3.) Who I am is what others think of me.

By succumbing to the mental seduction of the ego, we erroneously place ourselves at the center of the universe and it becomes extremely problematic to be authentic, as we incorrectly believe that we run the risk of appearing less than who we are. Although we all have weaknesses, embarrassments, and vulnerabilities, it is amazingly



Harry Pappas
Columnist

troublesome for many peeps to share his or her shortcomings with others. Instead of selling truth and authenticity, one pretends that everything is just perfect when in fact they are hiding behind their armor of pride. In his thought-provoking book *The Restored Man: Becoming a Man of God*, author Randy Hemphill says, pride repels while brokenness attracts. Our brokenness is what unites us as men and paves the way for God's power. How honest have you been with your community of men or with another man? Why are you afraid of admitting brokenness to others?"

I believe that most of us agree with Mr. Hemphill's views and I argue that just about everybody finds people more attractive and trustworthy when they show their vulnerability through their weaknesses instead of trying to impress us with all their self-professed successes. Perhaps like you, how much money someone has or his or her degrees and titles does not impress me. Instead, what truly affect me are one's kindness, integrity, generosity, and humility. I love authenticity. I love real while despising fake! One of my favorite childhood stories is the 1922 classic, *The Velveteen Rabbit*, by Margery Williams. The read is a beautiful metaphor for the value of being real, authentic and vulnerable. Here is a passage from the book where Skin Horse wisely tells the little rabbit that sometimes being "real" hurts.

"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but REALLY loves you, then you become real. 'Does it hurt?' asked the Rabbit. 'Sometimes,' said the Skin Horse, for he was always truthful. 'When you are real you don't mind being hurt. 'Does it happen all at once, like being wound up,' he asked, 'or bit by bit?' 'It doesn't happen all at once,' said the Skin Horse. 'You become. It takes a long time. That's

why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are real you can't be ugly, except to people who don't understand. But once you are real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always.

Amen Skin Horse! Wouldn't life be much more enjoyable if we truly appreciated and accepted our cracks and imperfections and were not reluctant to share them with others? I argue that we should take off our armor, put down our weapons and let ourselves be seen, as we truly are. I will allow Mother Teresa to give you my closing arguments, "Honesty and transparency make you vulnerable. Be honest and transparent anyway." It is okay being imperfect. People crave authenticity ... Be YOU!

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Renault

Continued from 32

businesses which use local resources sustainably, employ local workers at decent wages and serve primarily local consumers,” according to Michael H. Shuman, author of Going Local.

As the Thanksgiving festivities came to an end and just before the next swell in the Holiday season events began, we

had Small Business Saturday. Founded by American Express in 2010, this day is celebrated annually on the Saturday after Thanksgiving to recognize local, small businesses. November 30, 2019 was the 10th Anniversary of Small Business Saturday — a day dedicated to supporting small businesses and communities across the country.

Supporting small businesses in our community can include purchasing goods or services in store/online, as well

as simply sharing the word —every small piece of promotion for a local business helps! Whether it is a suggestion to a friend or sharing a Facebook post from a local favorite, small business owners appreciate your word-of-mouth marketing.

If you shopped locally Nov. 30, thank you. In any case, there are plenty more shopping days to come. So, let us all show our gratitude for all of our local, small business owners in St. Johns County and support them.



Photo by Christine Rodenbaugh

Matt Stevens, St. Augustine Distillery's general manager, compares the 750ml bottle of rum with the newly released 375ml bottle available only in a three-bottle gift pack with vodka and gin.

St. Augustine craft distillery introduces new gift pack

St. Augustine Distillery Co. has introduced a boxed gift set of three 375ml bottles of vodka, gin and rum. The gift pack is available only at the Distillery gift shop for \$65 while supplies last.

“This is the first time a small bottle gift set is available from the Distillery,” Matt Stevens, general manager, said.

Until this release, only the small batch whiskey has been available in a smaller bottle. The vodka, gin and rum were only sold in 750ml bottles. This allows holiday shoppers to give a locally produced gift to friends and family who may have never tried the Distillery’s products.

Small Business

Continued from 32

He said the gallery relies on locals and tourists who return each year. The First Friday Art Walks also boost business.

According to a 2018 Small Business Economic Impact Study of businesses with fewer than 100 employees, for every dollar spent at a small business in the U.S., approximately 67 cents stays in the local community.

Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Isabelle Renault recently stated, “Support for small, local businesses is not just helpful to their owners, but is essential to the community as a whole.”

Small Business Saturday has passed, but holiday shoppers can still support the local economy and find unique gifts at area brick and mortar stores or purchase gift certificates to locally owned restaurants, gyms, spas or salons.



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THROWBACK THURSDAY




Ponte Vedra RECORDER

Volume 27, No. 49 One Dollar Friday, December 27, 1996



Santa brought along the Mrs. on his visit to Sawgrass recently, so Jean and Chip Seney could file their requests simultaneously. A full moon Christmas Eve will aid tykes watching for Santa's silhouetted sleigh.

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The Ponte Vedra Recorder will run "Throwback Thursday" items throughout the year to celebrate the Recorder's 50th anniversary. This week, a look at some holiday content, including a Dec. 27, 1996 cover, an ad about Santa coming to Sawgrass Village and a "Thank You" Thanksgiving ad from Berry & Co. Real Estate. If you have any old clippings of articles, stories or ads that you would like to share from the past 50 years of the Recorder, send them to pvrecorder@opcfla.com.

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THEME: THE 1950s

ACROSS

- Bottomless pit
- Banned insecticide
- Exclamation of contempt
- Start with a clean one?
- Lennon's lady
- Editing command
- Feudal lord's property
- Dunce
- *Ayn Rand's "____ Shrugged"
- *Record-breaking Oscar-winner
- *TV's Jim Anderson
- Immeasurable period
- Editor's oversight
- Fugitive's get-away
- Vegas cube
- Even smaller
- "Rock of ____"
- Cleopatra's necklace
- Saddam Hussein's Islam
- Surrender
- Young Atlantic cod
- Eastern ____
- Work the dough
- Diamond Head island
- Quarterback's downfall
- Pollen producer
- Charged particles
- "____ must I be a teenager in love?"
- Sound of pain or pleasure

DOWN

- Us, in Mexico
- *Levittown, e.g.
- *Like one born in '50s
- Like a private circle
- Highest card in "War"
- Sea near Australia
- "The ____ Runner," pl.
- *Cuban syllable
- Musician's exercise
- Heroic poem
- Boy toy
- Sterilize
- Cigar residue
- Blister
- New Haven Ivy
- Kidney problem
- Modus operandi
- Point of entry
- *Crick/Watson/Franklin discovery
- Toffee, alt. sp.
- Trodden track
- "Cast Away" setting
- *"A ____ Is Born" with Judy Garland
- "For ____ a jolly ..."
- Jamaican vernacular
- Yards and miles, e.g.
- Address abbreviation
- T in ATV
- *Source of immortal Hela cells
- *Occupation of Ian Fleming's protagonist

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	6						5	
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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.

- Mythological princess of Colchis
- *Fashion designer who made a comeback in 1954
- Small pieces
- *Rose to Jackie
- Methuselah's father
- *Tenant of Fred Mertz
- Clothing line
- Type of salmon
- Formal objections, in court
- And not
- Like Santa after
- coming down the chimney
- Taken follower
- Inflict a blow
- Barber shop sound
- To, in the olden days
- Swarm members
- Pinto or black
- Outback birds
- Was a passenger
- *"We'll take ____ to Washington"
- *Guevara's nickname
- Tyrannosaurus follower

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Want to adopt a cat or kitten?

A Ponte Vedra Beach adoption shelter for cats, called Katz 4 Keeps, found homes for many felines until it closed its door in March 2018.

But another cat shelter took up the cause Sept. 30, when Love Me True Rescue opened at 5150 Palm Valley Road, #403.

Love Me True Rescue provides a home for kittens and cats before they find their forever homes. The organization finds them forever homes by holding adoption events every Saturday between 11 a.m and 3 p.m. People looking to adopt a kitten or cat are encouraged to stop in and see the facility and meet the cats. Visit the website at LoveMeTrueRescue.com for more information.

The organization is also looking for adult volunteers age 18 or older.

For information about volunteering, contact Peggy Hatfield at peggyhatfield63@comcast.net.



Free workshop helps people find relief after losing a pet

Losing a pet can be as difficult as losing a family member. Sometimes the loss becomes more difficult when other people may not understand such a grief or are not sympathetic.

For griever and their families, Community Hospice & Palliative Care will offer a free Pet Loss Workshop from 10-11:30 a.m., Wednesday, Dec. 11, in Fernandina Beach. The workshop will teach attend-

ees about grief, especially as it relates to the loss of a pet, and to develop ways to minimize grief reactions and to meet others with similar experiences. The goal is for attendees to leave with a renewed sense of hope during the upcoming holiday season.

The Pet Loss Workshop is free and open to the public, but attendees should RSVP at petlossworkshop.eventbrite.com or call (904) 407-6464.

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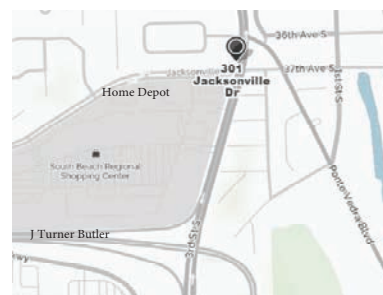
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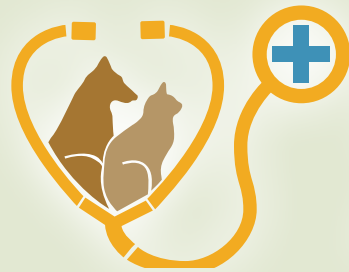


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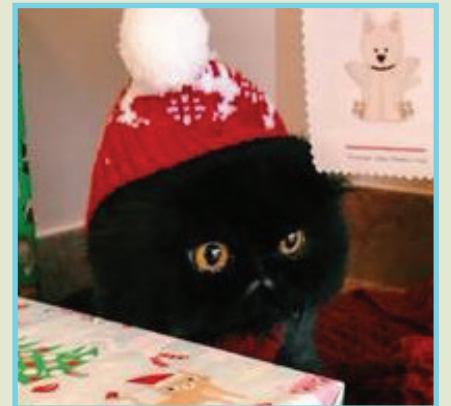
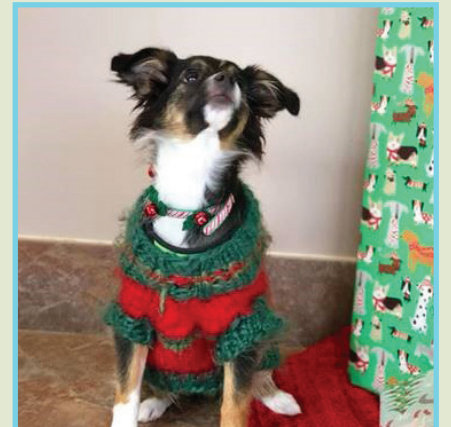
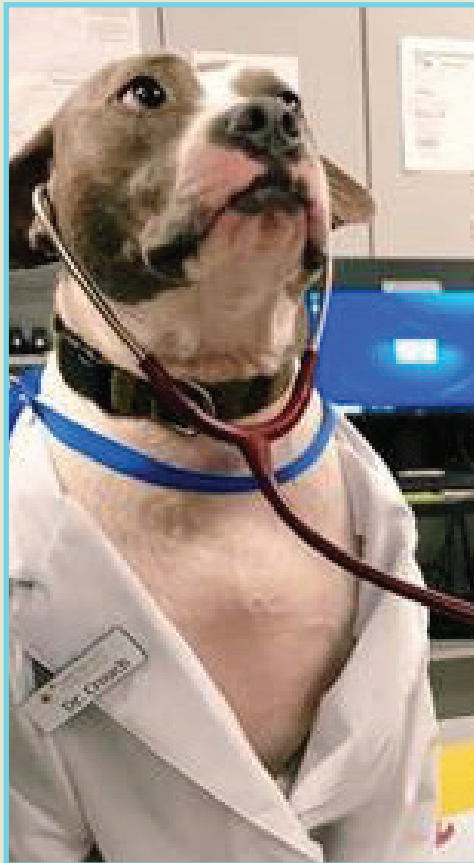
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TPC SAWGRASS TREE LIGHTING SPARKS HOLIDAY SPIRIT



Scores of people came to watch the large Christmas tree on the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse lawn go from dark to twinkling Friday, Nov. 29. In what has become a free community tradition overlooking the 18th hole of the Stadium Course, the tree lighting event also featured live musical performances, songs of the season and hot chocolate. Children's eyes lit up along with the tree, decorated with huge colorful balls that they could see themselves in.

Photos by
Maggie FitzRoy



HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS BRIEFS



Phone calls from Santa

The St. Johns County Parks and Recreation Department has partnered with The North Pole Telephone Company for its annual "Phone Calls from Santa" from Dec. 10-12. Parents with children under the age of 8 who live in St. Johns County can sign up to have Santa call their child at home this holiday season.

Visit sjcfl.us/youth and download the phone call request form or stop by the recreation department's main office located at 2175 Mizell Road in St. Augustine to fill one out.

Email completed forms to abrown@sjcfl.us or fax to (904) 209-0321. Calls will be made Dec. 10, 11 and 12 between 6 and 7:30 p.m.

Santa is busy checking his list, so make sure your form is in before 5 p.m. Dec. 6, to take advantage of this free program. For more information, call Ashley Brown at (904) 209-0379.

Attention: All children invited to the Beaches North Pole Express

The Beaches North Pole Express will pull back into the Beaches Museum & History Park Friday, Dec. 6 and Saturday, Dec. 7. Children and their families will be able to visit Santa and the train conductor, write a letter to Santa, enjoy cocoa and cookies, make crafts and enjoy other festivities at the historical park at 381 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville Beach.

The event will take place 2-6 p.m. Friday and from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

Beaches North Pole Express is sponsored by VyStar and World of Dance and is free to museum members, with a suggested \$5 donation from nonmembers. Contact the museum at (904) 241-5657 for more information.

ZOOLights brings holiday magic back to Jacksonville Zoo

ZOOLights returns Friday, Dec. 6 for its seventh year, transforming the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens into a winter wonderland during select nights in December.

This holiday tradition for the whole family is from 6-10 p.m. on Dec. 6-8, 12-15, 19-22, and 26-29. Thousands of twinkling LED lights, lighted sculptures, nightly visits from Santa Claus, local artists and performers, sweet treats, and even sweeter laughs will make ZOOLights a must-see holiday event.

New this year, children can visit to the North Pole to build a snowman, have a snowball fight, see Santa and Mrs. Claus, and check if they are on the naughty or nice list. Everyone will leave with holiday cheer after watch-

ing "Swingin' at Santa's Place" on the Great Lawn. This new nightly show at 7, 8, and 9 p.m. includes holiday hits everyone can sing and dance along to.

Tickets start at \$8 for Zoo Members and \$10 for non-Members. Total Experience tickets are \$12 for Members and \$15 for non-Members and include rides on the Zoo Express illuminated train, the 4D Theater, and the Carousel for children ages 12 and under.

Extra ZOOLights treats available include marshmallow roasting, cookie decorating, and hot cocoa for both children and adults.

The magic begins Thursday at Illumination, a VIP experience including dinner and a sneak peek of the lights.

Tickets for this special event are \$35 for adults and \$20 for children at JacksonvilleZoo.org/ZOOLightsIllumination.

For over 100 years, the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens has aimed to inspire the discovery and appreciation of wildlife through innovative experiences in a caring environment. Starting in 1914 with an animal collection of one red deer fawn, the Zoo now has more than 2,000 rare and exotic animals and 1,000 species of plants, boasting the largest botanical garden in Northeast Florida.

More information about ZOOLights and tickets are at ZOOLights.JacksonvilleZoo.org. ZOOLights is presented by Community First Credit Union.

Santa's mailbox to accept letters at Sawgrass Village and Recorder office

Letters mailed to Saint Nick will receive responses

Area children seeking to send their Christmas wishes to Santa Claus may drop them off at Santa's mailbox located in front of Publix in Sawgrass Village and at the Ponte Vedra Recorder office beginning Friday, Nov. 15.

Letters "mailed" between Nov. 15 and Dec. 15 will receive a response from Santa thanks to a special arrangement the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce has made with the North Pole.

Letters will be collected from the special mailbox; Santa asks children to use the special stationery stocked by all Sawgrass Village businesses. These special letters have a place for addresses so that Santa may mail a response letter. Please make sure you provide your return address!

Things at the North Pole get busy

towards Christmas, so the last day to deposit letters will be Dec. 15. The Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce also

serves as the Ponte Vedra Beach Visitor Center. Call (904) 285-2004 or visit at 200 Solana Road if you have any questions about Santa's mailbox or the area.



Photo provided by the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce



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Hey Kids ... Send your letters to Santa

Santa has asked the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber to put special mailboxes in Ponte Vedra Beach so he receives letters from all the children.

Dear Santa,



Mailboxes in place Nov. 15 until Dec. 15 After that, Santa will be busy!



Sincerely,

NAME: _____ **AGE:** _____

BE SURE TO INCLUDE YOUR RETURN ADDRESS SO SANTA CAN WRITE YOU BACK:



DROP-OFF AT SANTA MAILBOX LOCATIONS:

Sawgrass Village
(in front of Publix)
220 Front St.
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

Ponte Vedra Recorder Office
(inside)
1102 A1A N., Unit 108
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

Apex Theatre presents spin on holiday classic and cozy cabaret

The Apex Theatre studio in Ponte Vedra Beach will present a series of seasonal events which celebrate the sights and sounds of Northeast Florida during the holiday season. Their holiday series kicks off with *Eb Scrooge: A Southern Fried Carol*, a contemporary adaptation of Charles Dickens' beloved classic *A Christmas Carole* set in Jacksonville.

Featuring a world of grits and gravy, red velvet cake, along with an occasional glass of sweet tea, *Eb Scrooge* captures present-day life in Northeast Florida, while maintaining the spirit of the classic, beloved tale of greed and redemption. It features a cast of young artists from the Ponte Vedra Beach area as well as professional guest artists Andy Nance and Brooks Anne Meierdieks in the leading roles of Scrooge and Bertha.

The theatre will also include *Home For The Holidays*: a cozy cabaret experience featuring the vocal talents of the young artists from Apex Theatre Studio and also featuring notable Northeast Florida writers Laura Lee Smith and Teri Grimm and storytellers Derek Coghlan, Toni Phillips, and Kevin Bodge. "We wanted to create the feeling of families gathered around the table singing songs and swapping tales with a festive table of treats and beverages," said Ian Mairs, Managing Director. "Our newly expanded black box theatre has a lovely, intimate vibe and we are blessed with some truly remarkable storytellers from the region."

In addition to performances, the studio is hosting its second annual Festival of Trees: A Canned Goods Drive for local food pantries. Local businesses will decorate a



Photo provided by the Apex Theatre

The cast of *Eb Scrooge: a Southern Fried Carol* gathers for a group shot.

tree displayed in the lobby of Apex Theatre Studio. Audiences are encouraged to "vote" for their favorite tree by placing a donated canned good beneath it. The tree with the most canned goods will be declared the winner. "This is a fun way for the community to give back and brings the focus into what really matters: helping others," said Raines Carr, Associate Director. The Festival of Trees will kick off on Saturday, Dec. 7 with a tree trimming party

and concludes on Sunday, Dec. 22 with an open house event for the public. The display will be open daily, except Sunday, from 1-5 p.m. and one hour before performances.

Performances for "Eb Scrooge" are 7:30 p.m. Dec. 13 and 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. Dec. 14 and 2 p.m. Dec. 15.. Performances for "Home for The Holidays" are Friday, Dec. 20 and Saturday, Dec. 21 at 7:30 p.m. each night.

Tickets are available at www.apextheatrejax.com.

Alt-rock group Blue October to perform at The Amp



Photo provided by The Amp

Blue October will perform at The Amp on March 22, 2020.

The seminal alt-rock, post-grunge group Blue October will perform live on the Backyard Stage at The Amp on Sunday, March 2020, and tickets for Blue October go on sale Friday, Dec. 6.

Early fans of the band's work, those who haven't kept track of the band's journey in its latter years, might be hard-pressed to recognize the foursome — comprised of Ryan Delahoussaye, the band's multi-instrumentalist, Matt Noveskey on bass, and brothers Jeremy and Justin Furstenfeld, the band's drummer and front man, respectively.

The group, once known for its stormy dynamic and self-destructive tendencies, couldn't be more distinct today from the band it once was. And the members of Blue October want everyone they encounter to know the great place they're in, emotionally, physically

and spiritually.

"We've had the highest of highs and the lowest of lows, and we've come out the other side," said Noveskey, who describes the record as "emotional."

Such is the subject matter of a soon-to-be-released documentary, "Get Back Up," detailing the band's transformation from sordid to solid, from ravaged by the tempest of addiction to blessed by the joys of family life. Just like any other relationship, the band's dynamic is multifaceted, and what we're privy to on camera is but a snapshot into the group's complex world. The documentary is expected to be released in May 2020.

Tickets for Blue October will go on sale this Friday at 10 a.m. at the at The Amp and Ponte Vedra Concert Hall box offices. Tickets are also available at ticketmaster.com

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Photo provided by Ponte Vedra High School

Ponte Vedra High School theater students rehearse "Sister Act: The Musical."

Ponte Vedra High School bringing 'Sister Act' fun to stage

Ponte Vedra High School students will perform "Sister Act: The Musical" Dec. 12-15.

The family-friendly show features women of the cloth dancing effortlessly from one spotlight to the next. And the entire community is invited to groove along with the colorful characters and musical joy of the popular musical, made famous on Broadway.

Sister Act: The Musical features a

disco-themed score by Alan Menken, and is directed by local talent Jason Nettle, MFA, theatre instructor at PV High School. Nettle has performed at Alhambra Theatre & Dining, and this is his fourth season in the Ponte Vedra Beach community, after stints in New York and national tours. He was recently voted Teacher of the Year at the school.

PVHS continues on Page 43

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Photo courtesy of Ponte Vedra Concert Hall

Zoso – The Ultimate Led Zeppelin Experience returns to Concert Hall

The Ponte Vedra Concert Hall recently announced Zoso – The Ultimate Led Zeppelin Experience, will return on Thursday, April 30, 2020. Zoso last performed at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall in June 2017. Tickets for Zoso will go on sale Friday, Dec. 6.

The St. Petersburg Times called Zoso “the most exacting of the Zeppelin tribute bands in existence.” Zoso – The Ultimate Led Zeppelin Experience, formed in 1995 to perform the most accurate and captivating Led Zeppelin live show since the real thing. For Zoso, it’s more than just being a tribute. It’s about touching a golden era in music.

Each band member has been carefully selected to portray both the appearance and playing styles of their Led Zeppelin counterparts. In 18 successful years of touring, the band has perfected its art. As one of the longest-tenured Zeppelin tributes, Zoso’s 2,400 live shows around the world, including a slot at Bonnaroo in

2003, has established it as the most traveled and successful band in the market.

Zoso’s live shows are not about simply playing the right notes, they are about aura and feeling, harkening back to the unique atmosphere Led Zeppelin created. It’s in the way they play – each band member’s mastery of authentic vintage instruments coupled with spot-on vocals, guitar, bass, drums and keyboards, their compelling stage persona and distinct Led Zeppelin sound, with astounding visual imagery recreates the music, magic and mystery of a Zeppelin concert. The impact is so powerful that band members constantly hear from young rockers that they were the catalyst behind turning them into new, die-hard Zeppelin fans.

Tickets for Zoso go on sale at 10 a.m. Friday, Dec. 6, and will be available for purchase at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall and St. Augustine Amphitheatre box offices, ticketmaster.com and all Ticketmaster outlets.



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PVHS

Continued from 42

The show is the fall musical production at PVHS, where theatre students are slated to present The Hunchback of Notre Dame in April 2020. Tickets for “Sister Act,” and all shows, are sold at the door at the school’s auditorium. Thursday, Friday and Saturday shows are at 7 p.m. and Sunday’s show is at 2 p.m. Tickets cost \$10 and proceeds go to benefit the high school’s dramatic arts program.

The plot revolves around cabaret-artist-turned-nun Deloris Van Cartier, played by senior Jasmine Hurt, who is forced to seek refuge in a convent after witnessing a murder. The initial constraints of convent life give way to purpose for Deloris as she shows the nuns what tolerance and humble service truly look like. Hurt previously played a supporting role in Theatre Jacksonville’s production of “Sister Act.”



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Sports

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THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2019 • PAGE 44

www.PonteVedraRecorder.com

Basketball's progress from small town to big time

When the weather cools, the action heats up on basketball courts across the country. Basketball is a popular winter sport that has been ingrained in North American culture since its inception in the late 19th century.

Basketball is believed to have originated at Springfield College (once known as the International YMCA Training School) in Massachusetts. Male students were restless once football season ended and needed a sport that could provide exercise and help them work off steam. A physical activity instructor named James Naismith was tasked with coming up with a game that students could play indoors under artificial light without the roughness of football, soccer or rugby.

Naismith came up with a game that employed peach baskets nailed to the lower rail of the gymnasium balcony — one at each end. He then came up with the initial 13 rules of moving a ball across the court and getting the ball in the baskets and what constituted fouls, according to Springfield College.

The first game consisted of nine players on each team because Naismith's class included just 18 students. The final score of the inaugural basketball was just 1-0, but over time players began to excel at basket-

BASKETBALL continues on **Page 46**



Photo provided by metrocreativeconnection.com

MORE BASKETBALL

Season begins for area high school teams. **Photos, page 46**



Photos provided by the Jacksonville Jaguars

Jaguars defensive end Yannick Ngakoue poses with USO volunteers during his visit to the USO Center on Nov. 25.

Jaguars DE Ngakoue distributes Thanksgiving turkeys to military families

By Daniela Toporek

It's the season of giving and Jacksonville Jaguars defensive end Yannick Ngakoue gave his time by stopping by Jacksonville's USO Center Nov. 25 to distribute turkeys to 50 military families.

Ngakoue was joined by volunteers from the Jaguars Foundation and the Law Firm of Pajcic & Pajcic as he posed for photos with military families and friends while handing out their Thanksgiving turkeys.

"There are a lot of people who are not fortunate to have the means to provide certain meals for their families on holidays like this," Ngakoue said at the USO Center. "I feel like it's special to be able to help out people like that."

Ngakoue was also honored to help those in the military and spoke about how his mother works with military families at Bethesda Naval Hospital in Washington, D.C.

"My mom is a huge motivator in my life," he said. "She's a nurse and works with military families on a daily basis. That's why the military has a special place in my heart."



Ngakoue stopped by the USO Center on Mayport Road to distribute turkeys to 50 military families.

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ABOVE: Ponte Vedra High School's Joey DePorre (32) and Bishop Kenny's Garrett Beagle battle for the ball during the Sharks' 55-40 loss to the Crusaders on Nov. 25.

LEFT: The Sharks' Alex Madson drives to the basket during the game against Bishop Kenny. On Tuesday, Dec. 3, the Sharks won their game 55-37 against visiting St. Joseph's Academy. The PVHS boys (1-2) next play at Oakleaf at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6.

Photos by Eric Morris



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Basketball

Continued from 44

ball, and the game gradually became more popular.

Basketball is now popular across the globe. The National Basketball Association has opened 12 international offices and has started broadcasting games to more than 200 countries and territories. NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said in 2018 that he believes that basketball can be the No. 1 sport in the world (soccer currently holds that ranking). Young people are increasingly playing the sport, and rapid growth in China and India also has fueled basketball's popularity.

Total NBA revenue hit \$8 billion last season, according to Forbes, and it shows no signs of slowing down. Little did James Naismith know when he put up peach baskets and tossed a soccer ball that his sport would one day become a global phenomenon.



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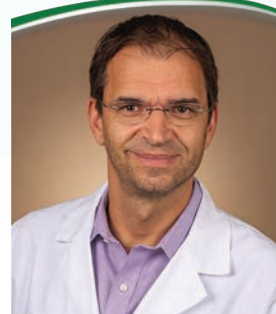
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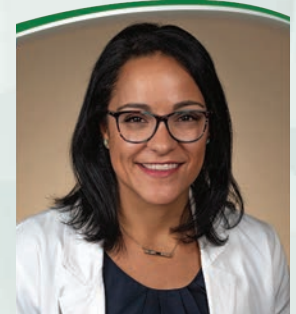
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