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ABOUT THIS MAGAZINE

The First Coast Register is a bimonthly general interest magazine published by The Ponte Vedra Recorder and Osteen Media Group. The magazine can be found throughout the upscale areas of greater Jacksonville. For advertising inquiries, call 904.285.8831.

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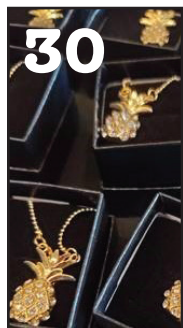
ON THE COVER



The cover features the Christmas tree from the 2020 lighting ceremony at TPC Sawgrass. For a roundup of holiday fun this year, go to page 34.

PHOTO BY SHAUN RYAN

CONTENT



- 6 ONE OF US! DONNA GUZZO
- 8 A LOOK INSIDE THE WORLD OF LUXGIFTSNGOODS.COM
- 10 UNDERWOOD'S ENJOYS BUSY TIME OF YEAR
- 14 COASTAL WINE TO LAUNCH FIRST LABEL
- 15 TRY SOME OF THESE TASTY DRINKS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON
- 16 EVENT HELPS CHILD SERVICE AGENCY RENOVATE COTTAGES
- 17 INITIATIVE MAKES SURE FOSTER KIDS AND TEENS NOT OVERLOOKED
- 17 GROUP SEEKS HELP TO PURCHASE GIFTS
- 18 BOW TIES & BOAS: CHEMO NOIR GALA RAISES \$30K
- 19 GOLFING FOR A GOOD CAUSE
- 20 FACES OF THE FIRST COAST
- 23 BEAM OF LIGHT BEACH BALL HELPS THOSE IN NEED
- 24 VETERAN REALTOR MARTIN AND TEAM MAKES MOVE TO COMPASS
- 26 GIFT GUIDE
- 29 ST. AUGUSTINE COMMUNITY CHORUS TO PRESENT 'WE NEED A LITTLE CHRISTMAS!'
- 30 GOLDEN PINEAPPLE AWARDS CELEBRATE WOMEN, SUCCESS
- 34 HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS
- 36 LIGHTHOUSE ILLUMINATIONS FEATURES 21 UNIQUELY DECORATED TREES AND MORE
- 38 HOLIDAY RECIPES
- 40 DECK THE CHAIRS FEATURES NEW ATTRACTION
- 41 NIGHTS OF LIGHTS RETURNS FOR 28TH YEAR
- 42 LIGHTNER EXHIBITS REVEAL THE DREAMS, OBSERVATIONS OF LONG AGO
- 44 HISPANIC FESTIVAL CELEBRATES SPANISH-SPEAKING CULTURES

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One of Us!

as told to
SHAUN RYAN

DONNA GUZZO

Donna Guzzo is president and executive director of the First Coast Cultural Center, which is a major part of the arts and culture scene in Northeast Florida. She is a dynamic force who always has something interesting in the works. And she is known for her positive, signature phrase: "Success is imminent!"

This has been a busy year for the First Coast Cultural Center. Tell us about the center itself, its new location and how it came to have a new name.

We are now more inclusive of our representation; First Coast Cultural Center is now in two counties. Ninety percent of our service is provided in St. Johns County. Now, having a studio for art classes in Duval has allowed us to expand services to the Beaches area, has attracted new members, donors and grants.

The First Coast Cultural Center has a big role at the link, which opened in Nocatee last summer. Tell us about that relationship.

We serve residents of Nocatee at Care Connect+ inside the Flagler Health+ building. We have started theater classes there that have taken off with Sheri Lahris, former Disney coach!

Tell us about the center's importance to the area. What does it bring to the community?

First Coast Cultural Center brings the arts into the life of the community. We have 176 annual programs, three events a year and a couple of school programs. We fulfill our mission by providing music therapy for children with disabilities in St. Johns County schools. We continued to fulfill our mission by adding a new program during the pandemic, Kick StART, an after-school enrichment program for children to learn about art, make art and have fun! We have added some virtual art and music classes, some which have attracted students from all over the nation. We are getting ready to launch a women's empowerment series with Dr. Carla Rodrigues to have you look for the power within you, to encourage women, to focus on our strengths, have a support tribe and plan an



international retreat trip that may be involved with the series!

Looking ahead, what's in the works for the First Coast Cultural Center?

Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts, which is a sold-out event, is next spring! 2022 will be the third year recognizing artists and philanthropists in our community. This is my favorite event because it is not about us. Here's where we recognize the great people of the First Coast, including our Volunteer of the Year, a recognition I started when I was promoted to executive director four years ago.

What are some of your responsibilities at the center?

As president and executive director, I wear all the hats. I oversee the operations of the center. I fundraise and develop donor relationships. I train others. I develop mentees through St. Johns County schools and Rotaract. I have a dream job, so it is not work for me. It is what I get to do with beautiful people around me.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 ■

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A look inside the world of LUXGIFTSNGOODS.COM

An interview with Michael J. Mills, CEO of LuxGiftsnGoods.com



First Coast Register: What makes LuxGiftsnGoods.com different from the competition?

LuxGiftsnGoods.com: We have over 5,000 unique gifts for women, men, pets, home goods, jewelry, wellness and gourmet food items that most of our vendors prohibit selling on third party websites such as Amazon and ebay. More unique products that are not so easily or readily available combined with stellar, customer service make for a more special, retail purchase experience. I want someone shopping on LuxGiftsnGoods.com to always find something that is a surprise for them in a unique product that they have not seen before.

FCR: What was your inspiration to start LuxGiftsnGoods.com?

LuxGiftsnGoods.com: I had been an ebay power seller, but I had also desired to do something above and beyond. I have been fortunate to travel to 44 countries and 35 states, and I wanted to bring the best of what I have seen at home and abroad to our online offerings. We feature a handmade, olive wood box with premium olive oil from Karvelas Farms on Evia Island, Greece. That is perhaps our most unique and luxurious item.

FCR: How do you find unique gifts and

products for LuxGiftsnGoods.com?

LuxGiftsnGoods.com: I attended the larger trade shows in New York, Atlanta, Dallas and Las Vegas. Now, a number of wholesale vendors are seeking out LuxGiftsnGoods.com given that we now have a five-year history and a large social media presence on the major social media sites.

FCR: What has been your biggest challenge growing LuxGiftsnGoods.com?

LuxGiftsnGoods.com: Having potential e-commerce customers find LuxGiftsnGoods.com has taken some time, and we continue to work daily to get the word out about all we are doing and offering. Now, having vendors be able to ship the product timely given the interruptions in supply chains due to the pandemic has been our biggest challenge. Customer education and communication are key. Many people are willing to wait for something truly special, but they also need to know that you are working diligently to get what is desired for them.

FCR: What are your short- and long-term goals for LuxGiftsnGoods.com?

LuxGiftsnGoods.com: Obviously, we want to obtain as many new and loyal customers as we can over the next years. Eventually, I would like to relinquish

the reins of LuxGiftsnGoods.com to a successor person or entity who can get it to the next level. I would also like to have an Asian and European version as what is considered luxurious can often be cultural or regional. It would be a lot of fun for me to also host a show on QVC or HSN that showcases the many unique LuxGiftsnGoods.com vendors who are accomplished in their own right. Many have great senses of humor and stories to share along with their wonderfully designed, high quality, unique products. Having a large cash infusion would assist in making this happen, but I am proud that LuxGiftsnGoods.com is debt-free. We have grown as we go where other companies would have borrowed a bunch of money and folded due to pandemic-related issues with supply chain shortages. This has unfortunately happened to a number of my vendors. The wholesalers that have survived this pandemic are stronger for having done so.

FCR: Why did you move yourself and your company to Florida?

LuxGiftsnGoods.com: I moved myself to Florida from Nashville, Tennessee because Florida is a great state for entrepreneurs with tremendous opportunity for growth. I also like the business climate and actual

LUXGIFTS continues on Page 29



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Erica Courtney, Clayton Bromberg and Christy Bromberg.



Shoppers browse the selection on display at Underwood Jewelers' Ponte Vedra Beach location.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN GRIFFIN

UNDERWOOD JEWELERS HOSTS DESIGN STAR

by ANTHONY RICHARDS

Erica Courtney's creations worn by celebrities

Some of the most famous female celebrities have worn Erica Courtney's jewelry designs over the years, and she made a visit to the Ponte Vedra Beach Underwood Jewelers location as part of a meet-and-greet event Oct. 21.

Coming to Ponte Vedra Beach has become an annual event in recent years brought about by the partnership she shares with Underwood Jewelers and its owner Clayton Bromberg.

The Ponte Vedra Beach location is the only Underwood

Jewelers to showcase Courtney's designs as part of its selection.

Julia Roberts, Jessica Alba and Sandra Bullock are some of the celebrities who have worn Courtney's jewelry designs during red carpet premieres.

According to Courtney's website, her jewelry collection includes fine and rare gemstones that are sourced around the

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 ■

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UNDERWOOD

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

world with the goal of creating a delicate, feminine style.

Courtney is known for her Drop Dead Gorgeous collection of jewelry which includes a variety of rings, necklaces, earrings and bracelets to choose from.

Underwood Jewelers was founded in 1928 and is a member of the American Gem Society, which is a jewelry trade organization dedicated to consumer protection.



John Rutkowski, Rebecca Foerster, Adam Fried and Clayton Bromberg.

Underwood Jewelers hosts Luminous Diamonds event

The Underwood Jewelers introduced luminous diamonds as part of its showcase at a launch party at its Ponte Vedra Beach location Oct. 14.

According to John Rutkowski, registered jeweler and manager of the Ponte Vedra Beach store, the night was to be the first opportunity to introduce a new brand of diamond to the community and one that he believes Underwood's clients will be intrigued by.

The diamonds are made in Italy and mined by ALROSA based out of Russia, which according to its website, is one of the world's largest companies in terms of the amount of rock mass processed.

"It's kind of a sleeping giant in the diamond industry," said Adam Fried, director of sales development for Luminous Diamonds. "The diamonds they get are close to the Arctic Circle."



Jenny Schroeder mingles at the event.

According to Fried, they wanted to partner with Underwood Jewelers because its owner Clayton Bromberg is held in such high regard within the diamond industry.

"Basically, last night we launched our brand," Fried said. "It was the right place to be for both of us."

Fried stated that the thing that makes Luminous Diamonds unique is the fact that they give a blue glow when placed under ultraviolet light.

"It is a reminder to each woman who wears them of their inner light inside," Fried said.

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PAGES 12-15

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PHOTOS PROVIDED BY COASTAL WINE MARKET
Bryan Page is seen with Coastal Wine Market owners Shaun and Steve Lourie

Coastal Wine

TO LAUNCH FIRST LABEL

Coastal Wine Market & Tasting Room is planning the release of its first, exclusive wine label, STONE to Crystal 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon during a red-carpet gala on Dec. 4.

Two celebrities will be present for the event: Bryan Page, Revolver Wine Co. and Page Wine Cellars, Napa Valley, California; and Jonquil LeMasters, artist and sculptor of Coastal Wine Market's dazzling "Gladstone Chandelier."

Coastal Wine is producing its new label in collaboration with Page.

This will be a private, ticketed event. While guests are asked to dress in their finest attire, black tie is optional.

Guests will be treated to endless passed hors d'oeuvres, three

complimentary high-end wine-tasting bars, tastings from Steve and Shaun's private wine collection and, of course, a tasting of the STONE to Crystal 2016 Cabernet Sauvignon.

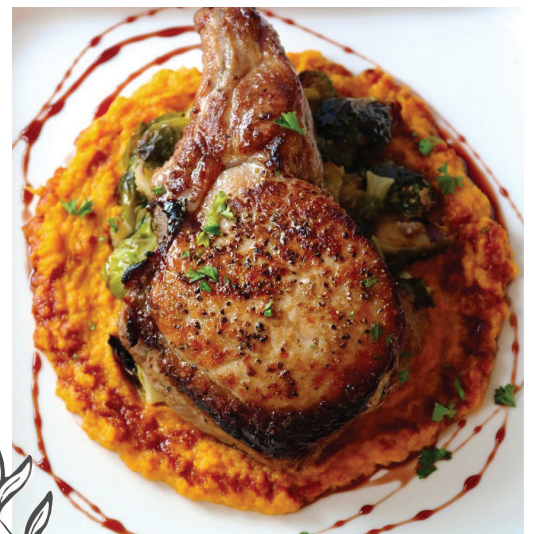
Tickets are \$175 plus tax. They include gratuity and are nonrefundable. To secure a reservation for the event, call 904-385-3520, or Venmo a payment of \$186.38 to @coastalwine with the name of guest or guests and phone number.

Coastal Wine Market & Tasting Room is located at 641 Crosswater Pkwy., Suite B, Ponte Vedra.

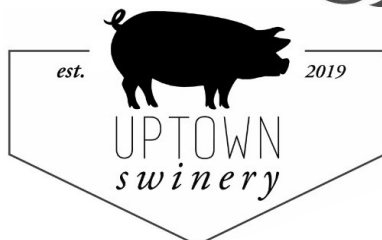
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TRY SOME OF THESE TASTY DRINKS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

In order to celebrate the most wonderful time of the year, ABC Fine Wine & Spirits experts have whipped up some festive, spiked drinks for those looking to get into the holiday "spirit." Here are some cocktail recipes with mouthwatering seasonal flavors.

CAPTAIN MORGAN WHITE MOCHA MARTINI

RECIPE:

- 1 ounce Captain Morgan Loco Nut
- ½ ounce white chocolate liqueur
- 2 ounces cold brew coffee
- 1 tsp heavy cream
- 1 pinch white chocolate shavings

DIRECTIONS:

In a cocktail shaker, combine Captain Morgan Loco Nut, white chocolate liqueur, coffee and heavy cream. Add ice and shake for 10 seconds. Strain into a chilled martini glass. Garnish with white chocolate shavings.



BOOZY CARAMEL BRÛLÉE LATTE

RECIPE:

- 2 ounces Ballotin Caramel Turtle Chocolate Whiskey
- 4 ounces strong coffee or espresso
- ¾ ounce salted caramel syrup
- 4 ounces steam milk
- Whipped cream
- Toffee crumbles

DIRECTIONS:

In a heat-safe glass, combine whiskey, coffee or espresso and salted caramel syrup. Add steamed milk and stir. Top with whipped cream and garnish toffee crumbles and salted caramel syrup.

For Iced Latte: Combine whiskey, chilled coffee or espresso, caramel syrup and chilled milk in a shaker. Shake well and pour over ice. Top with whipped cream and garnish toffee crumbles and salted caramel syrup.



SMIRNOFF PEPPERMINT HOT CHOCOLATE

RECIPE:

- 2 ounces Smirnoff Peppermint Twist
- 6 ounces hot chocolate
- Whipped cream
- 1 small peppermint candy cane

DIRECTIONS:

Pour Smirnoff Peppermint Twist into a mug of hot chocolate and stir to combine. Garnish with whipped cream and a peppermint candy cane or stick. Try adding cayenne pepper to your hot chocolate for a sweet and spicy twist!



MAPLE BOURBON COFFEE

RECIPE:

- 4 cups coffee, strongly brewed
- 4 cups whole milk
- 1 tablespoon vanilla extract
- 1 tablespoon ground cinnamon
- 9 ounces maple bourbon
- Whipped cream (optional)
- Grated cinnamon

DIRECTIONS:

Mix all ingredients, except bourbon and whipped cream, in a slow cooker. Heat on low for 1 ½ hours. Stir in bourbon. Serve in heat safe glasses and top with whipped cream and cinnamon.




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THE SEASON OF *giving*



EVENT HELPS CHILD SERVICE AGENCY RENOVATE COTTAGES

Daniel, Florida's oldest child service agency, hosted its annual 1884 Giving Society event on May 20 in an outdoor, on-campus setting. Attendees enjoyed each other's company under the pavilion and had the opportunity to tour the newly renovated residential treatment cottage, which was dedicated as the Haynes Cottage during a brief ceremony.

The cottage is named in memory of Hank Haynes, long-time Daniel board trustee. Haynes' daughter, Zoie Morales, and her husband Michael were the primary benefactors for the cottage's extensive renovations.

Daniel is already planning for its next

1884 Giving Society event this spring, at which they plan to unveil renovations on the Creekside/Cedarwood Cottage. The agency just recently wrapped up fundraising for that project with the \$1.4 million it needed for remodeling.

The cottages house children and teens who have been abused, neglected or emotionally troubled while they receive intensive therapy to help them overcome their trauma and learn essential coping skills.

"These cottages are just the beginning of what we expect to be a transformation of our 1960s-era campus," said Daniel Chief Development

Officer Madison Shelly. "We are so grateful to our donors and hope they'll continue to support us on our ongoing journey to create the most welcoming and conducive healing environment for local kids in crisis."

For more information on joining the 1884 Giving Society contact Shelly at mshelly@danielkids.org.

A good time to donate is while the Jessie Ball duPont Fund is offering a match, doubling online contributions made now through Dec. 31.

For further information, go to danielkids.org/donate/give-now.



1884 Giving Society attendees gather under the pavilion for the fundraising event.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS
Haynes Cottage was recently dedicated.

INITIATIVE MAKES SURE FOSTER KIDS AND TEENS NOT OVERLOOKED



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES OF NORTH FLORIDA
Some local members of the military join Family Support Services of North Florida in its Be An Angel program.

Family Support Services of North Florida currently gathering gifts for more than 2,100 kids and teens in foster care as part of the Be An Angel program.

Through this initiative, the nonprofit will fulfill hundreds of wish lists so that the foster children they oversee can receive at least one gift of their choosing this holiday season.

The program is dedicated to the memory of Roberta Zipperer, a 30-year child well-being advocate, who created the yearly campaign specifically for youth in foster care who are less likely to receive gifts through standard community donations, which are often focused on much younger children.

Local kids in foster care tend to be older, making them less likely to have a “traditional” holiday season. Be An Angel aims to offer a solution to that problem.

The public can sponsor a gift for one of these youth (ages 10-23) in foster care by going online and selecting a wish list of the youth they'd like to sponsor.

Donors will then receive the name and age of a child in foster care along with their wish list. Corporate sponsors and monetary gifts are also appreciated and will be used to purchase gifts.

For more information, go to BeAnAngelJax.com.



Volunteers with the Family Support Services of North Florida gather toys for distribution.



GROUP SEEKS HELP TO PURCHASE GIFTS

The staff and volunteers at Jewish Family & Community Services (JFCS) make holiday giving event-like with the same caliber of planning and logistics. Most people don't realize that JFCS is one of the largest providers of children's holiday presents in Jacksonville each year. They give to foster kids of all races, religions and backgrounds, as well as the community's few precious Holocaust survivors. This year, they'll be gathering gifts for more than 2,000 children and families in need. However, they need the public's help to achieve that goal. To participate, simply choose a wish list, then shop for someone who needs some holiday cheer. Or just donate online. For information, call 904-394-5714 or go to jfcsjax.org/holidays before Dec. 13.



We hope you remember us this season.

In the Pink is a non-profit boutique dedicated to helping women heal, cope and survive the effects of cancer... physically AND emotionally.

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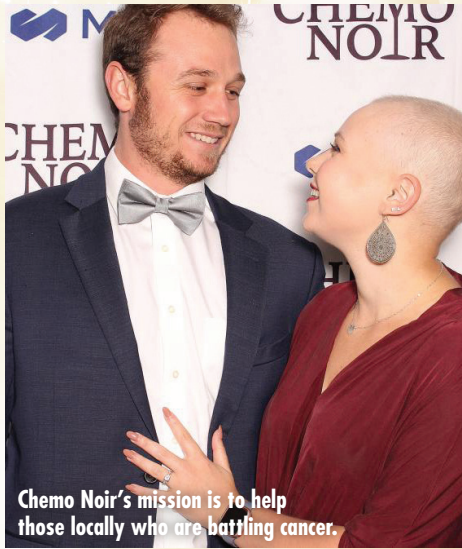
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Bow ties & boas

CHEMO NOIR GALA RAISES \$30K



"Bow ties and boas" was the theme of this year's fall gala.



Chemo Noir's mission is to help those locally who are battling cancer.

The following photos are from the 2021 Chemo Noir Fall Gala at 3 Palms Grille Nov. 6. The theme for the gala was "Bow ties and boas." Proceeds from the event help toward the nonprofit organization's mission to help those in their fight against cancer. Chemo Noir has helped more than 40 cancer patients in the local community since it began in 2017 and took a step toward growing that number by raising more than \$30,000 on the night. The organization raises money and provides inspiration to all by hosting wine-centric events, and the gala has been a major part of the fundraising effort since the start.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHEMO NOIR



Chemo Noir events promote having fun as well as raising money for those fighting cancer.



The event was held at 3 Palms Grille.



Not every gala has a theme, but this year's of "Bow ties and boas" was very popular.



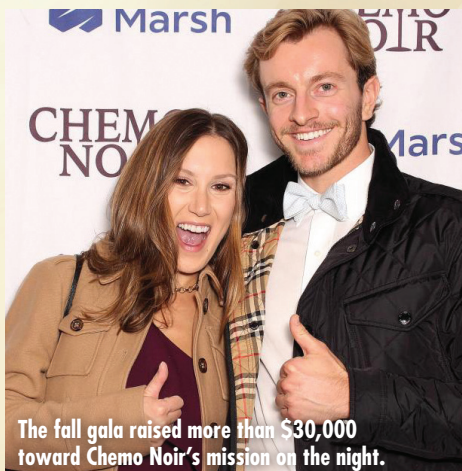
Chemo Noir has helped more than 40 cancer patients in the community since it started in 2017.



Chemo Noir hosts many fundraisers throughout the year, but none bigger than the fall gala.



The fall gala is an annual event.



The fall gala raised more than \$30,000 toward Chemo Noir's mission on the night.



The fall gala had quite the party atmosphere.



GOLFING FOR A GOOD CAUSE

The following photos are from the Inaugural PXG Women's Match Play Championship Charity Pro-am pairings party Oct. 24. The event was held at Murray Bros. Caddyshack Restaurant at World Golf Village in St. Augustine and offered guests the opportunity to interact with some of the best up-and-coming women's pro golfers in the world. The charity pro-am event benefited the ink! education foundation by raising more than \$50,000 for the nonprofit.

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY RICHARDS



Julia Dean and Jordy LaBarbera played in the tournament.



Sculptures made by Ocean Sole out of recycled flipflops welcomed guests as they walked into the event.



Lizzie Win and Mikayla Fitzpatrick took part in the inaugural PXG Women's Match Play Championship.

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City Rescue Mission has been serving men, women, and children experiencing homelessness, hardship, and addiction in Northeast Florida since 1946. It is our mission, through the love and compassion of Jesus Christ, to provide the tools, resources, and support needed to positively transform lives.

SAVE THE DATE for our 7th Annual Difference Makers Banquet on February 17, 2022 at the Southbank Hotel. For more information, contact Angela Washington, Resource Development Director, at (904) 421-5147 or awashington@crmjax.org.

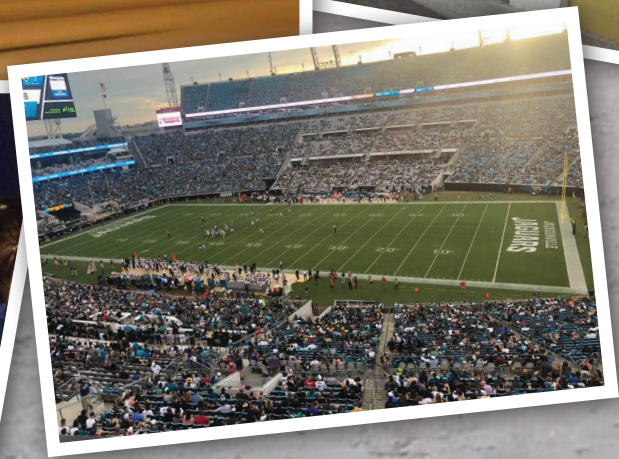
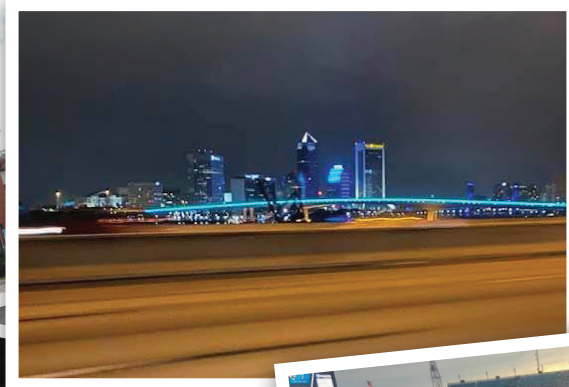
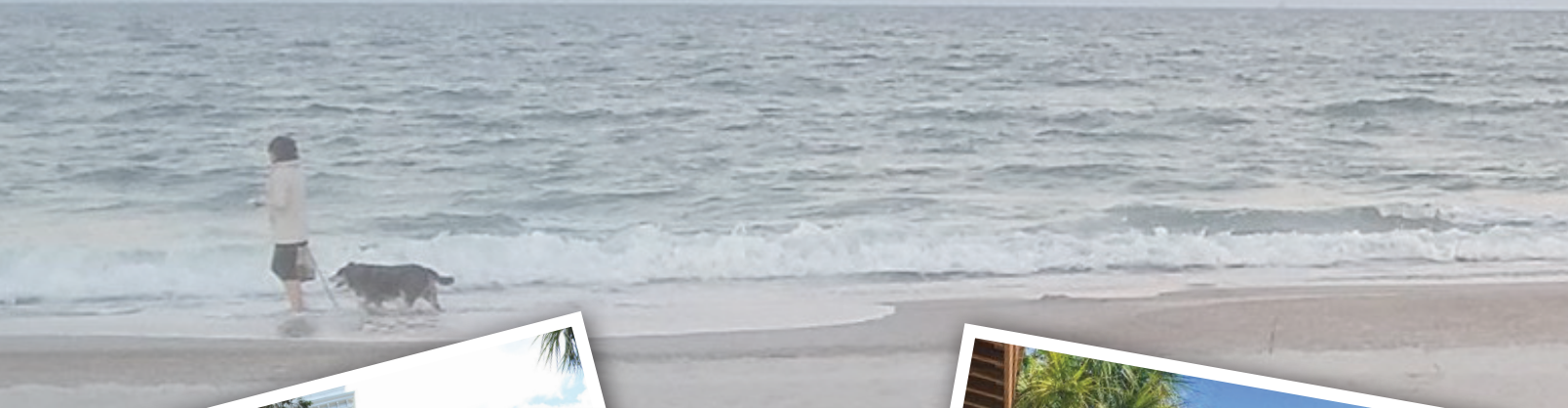


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Faces Of The First Coast is an exclusive feature for First Coast Register readers to get to know prominent business leaders in Northeast Florida's coastal communities.

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Wells

daniel

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www.danielkids.org

Lesley Wells is the CEO of Daniel, Florida's oldest child-service agency. Her story is one of dedication and adaptability as she's served the nonprofit throughout her career in a variety of roles. She began in 1987 as a counselor, working directly with children in crisis, then rose through the ranks, holding several leadership positions before she became CEO in 2018.

Daniel was founded as an orphanage in 1884. The agency now serves an average of 3,500 kids and high-risk families each day, connecting children with caring foster or adoptive families, and offering homeless teens shelter and support. Yet, what Daniel is likely best-known for is providing counseling for abused and troubled children on its 10-acre Southside campus.

Rejuvenating that 48-year-old facility has been Wells' primary focus during the past two years.

"Since 1968, this campus has been essential for Daniel's team of professionals in helping kids who've dealt with unbelievable hardships," Wells said. "Although our capabilities have evolved since then, the infrastructure here has not kept pace."

That's why Wells and her development team have worked diligently to raise funds to renovate the campus building-by-building, starting with the cottages where Daniel kids reside. She said an enhanced environment that allows for today's best treatment practices is essential in the children's healing. And, Wells' team is committed to making that happen. Daniel recently celebrated the grand re-opening of the Haynes Cottage, and expects to celebrate the completed renovations on the Creekside/Cedarwood Cottage next spring.

"Community support was key in accomplishing these goals," Wells said. "It's still needed to continue moving forward. I hope, when people consider their end-of-year gifts, they'll think of Daniel and help us improve our young clients' surroundings or support the proven programs that assist them."

Thanks to the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, online donations made to Daniel by December 31, 2021 are automatically matched for double the impact.





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Rosanne Hearn has been the owner of our team for the past four years and has extensive knowledge of the real estate process when listing or buying a home. She has also lived in North East Florida for over twenty years with her family and loves sharing her love for there with her clients.

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Tell me about your career.

I've had a long career in the nonprofit world, 30-plus years with a combination of finance, education and fundraising/development background. I've spoken at many, many conferences around the world, most noticeable Harvard University, Providence University in Taichung, Taiwan, The United Nations in NYC and Geneva and most recently at The Vatican. My next speaking engagement may be in the Dominican Republic.

What do you like most about living here on the First Coast?

Ponte Vedra Beach is where I've lived the longest in my life. I enjoy reading and walking at the beaches, the seafood and the people.

How do you like to spend your free time?

I'm way behind on any TV shows. I've never liked sitting in front of the TV unless I'm watching a British program like "Miss Fischer" with my dear husband. I'm a multitasker, so I never sit still. I read mystery books, my Rotarian magazine or The Week in which I'm either making notes, trying to solve the mystery or applying an idea to something going on in my life. I get immersed in the stories! I read the Bible almost every day; it is my source of energy and push to make it a great day every day. I meditate and try to find that alone time once a week. I enjoy collecting crystals and reading about their minerals and formations. I've done this since age 10.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Success is imminent!

BEAM OF LIGHT BEACH BALL HELPS THOSE IN NEED



BEAM supporters enjoy the evening at TPC Sawgrass.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY BEAM

More than 250 supporters attended the BEAM of Light Beach Ball presented by Publix Super Markets Charities on Oct. 23 at TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse.

In excess of \$210,000 was raised, and net proceeds from the event go to support BEAM's mission to provide emergency assistance and a path to economic stability within the Beaches communities.

"It's been a hard two years, but this event and the people who have supported us throughout it all are the reason so many people remained hopeful for the future," said BEAM Executive Director Lori Richards. "As the demand for our basic needs services skyrocketed, our community rose to the occasion to help our neighbors in need. We can't thank you enough."



Attendees listen as auctioneer Aaron Bean and Executive Director Lori Richards give their remarks at the BEAM of Light Beach Ball.

BEAM is a community-based organization serving low-income residents in Jacksonville's beaches communities, and it relies heavily on community support to assist people in need.

In 2020, according to the organization's website, \$1,061,581 was spent on covering overdue rent and utility bills for families in need; 1,468 households were helped with financial assistance; 978,238 meals were distributed; and 5,617 visits were scheduled at the organization's food pantries.



Michael and Linda Lanier, Nicole Hamm, Melinda Powers, Robert Devers, Georgette Dumont and George Candler, Darin and Jennifer Stockman, from left, gather at the BEAM of Light Beach Ball on Oct. 23.

To learn more about BEAM and how you can help, go to jaxbeam.org.

THE **RANDY MARTIN** TEAM

VETERAN REALTOR MARTIN AND TEAM MAKES MOVE TO COMPASS

by ANTHONY RICHARDS

Randy Martin and his team of realtors recently made the move to Compass after 19 years with Watson.

After being in one place for so long, it was not an easy decision and was one that Martin put a lot of thought into before making his choice and officially becoming a member of Compass in August and bringing Dan Schmidt and Lisa Verrino with him to be part of his team.

At the end of the day, it was a leap of faith that led him to Compass, and it is what continues to guide him and his team moving forward.

"It was not an easy decision at all," Martin said. "All three of us are Christians and we prayed about this after every time we met to make absolutely sure that God was the one opening that door for us to make the move."

Martin has been in the real estate business long enough that he has established relationships within the market. However, he also understands that surrounding himself with a great group of people is the best way to make sure the new venture has the best chance to succeed.

Martin worked with both Verrino and Schmidt at Watson, and that previous relationship made it easier for all sides to want to make the move together.

"I can't say enough good things about Watson, but there just comes a point where it's time to



PHOTO COURTESY OF FELICIA V. PHOTOGRAPHY

Dan Schmidt, Randy Martin and Lisa Verrino thought and prayed about making the move to Compass for months before choosing to do so.

move on," Verrino said. "They are just a different business structure."

It was Martin's experience in the market and knowledge of the area that helped convince Schmidt.

"He's the brand in the area, but the challenge for us is now establishing that as Randy Martin with Compass," Schmidt said.

According to Martin, the transition has been interesting, but has also reassured him that the right decision was made.

"I'm still glad that I made the move," Martin said. "The biggest challenge has been learning all the new systems."

One of the primary reasons that stood out to him when comparing Compass and Watson and the process in which they do business and the things they offer in terms of technology.

According to Martin, that comes from Compass being both a real estate and a technology company.

"What I've found to be the best, is that they (Compass) have more support staff that is willing at any time of the day to stop and answer questions," Verrino said. "It's been helpful to know that you can have somebody right there by your side within a few minutes to help with whatever you're working on."

The fact that they specialize in both is something Martin believes customers will see as a benefit as well on their end.

"In addition to offering us a lot, they are also offering that to our customers, which is one of the reasons we really wanted



PHOTO BY ANTHONY RICHARDS
The group's new location at 6022 San Jose Blvd., Suite 300 in Jacksonville.



Lisa Verrino with Compass Realty.



Randy Martin with Compass Realty.



Dan Schmidt with Compass Realty.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF FELICIA V. PHOTOGRAPHY

to come in this direction,” Martin said. “They are forward thinking and the largest independently-owned real estate company in the nation.”

Other than the technological advances, Compass also offers referrals with the company’s broad scope, which means any Compass branch can receive referrals from other Compass agents throughout the nation.

“If someone’s an agent up in Brooklyn (New York) and their relatives move to Florida, we have a better shot at that than the other company,” Schmidt said.

Preserving customer relationships has always been something Martin has been proud of throughout his time as a realtor, so it should be no surprise that he wants to reflect that in the mission of the new company.

“There’s a good trust level here,” Schmidt said. “We work well together and there’s not a lot of egos involved. We’re just trying to do that best we can and be good servants.”

Not only did Martin factor in the short term, but he also had long term goals in mind when considering the move.

“Eventually I want to retire and let these two run the business,” Martin said.

The first year Martin was in the business he came up with the tag line “Keep the movers handy when you buy or sell with Randy,” and it has become synonymous with Martin in the real estate business throughout the years and will continue to be a major part of his marketing at Compass.



PENDING

Rivertown - One of St Johns County premiere neighborhoods! This home is a 10+ The most appealing upgrades were chosen for this beautiful home! Upgraded gourmet kitchen with stainless steel appliances, granite counter tops with designer colors. Gorgeous Luxury Vinyl Plank floors in the kitchen, dining and family room! The Wales floor plan is one of Mattamy’s most desirable plans. Interior upgrades too numerous to list - you must see this one for yourself! You will have a private preserve lot for your evening cookouts with family and friends. Why wait to build when you can have your new home now! Don’t miss out on this one!

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PHOTO BY ANTHONY RICHARDS



PENDING

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COMPASS

Gift Guide

PAGES 26-28

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GIFT GUIDE

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■ SAFARI, LTD.



Curated by theme, Safari Ltd has put together easy-to-shop, discounted bundles for the holiday season. Find something for the Farm Baby, Dinosaur lover, "Mermazing" Mermaid and more at SafariLtd.com. Mermazing Mermaid Bundle is \$50 with free shipping.

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LUXGIFTS

Continued from 8

climate in northeast Florida. What is not to love about the whole strand of sand from Fernandina Beach to St. Augustine? I never get tired of exploring! As for my company, we are everywhere as we are pure e-commerce shipping our offerings from manufacturer direct to our individual and corporate customers within the U.S.

FCR: What is your hope for 2022?

LuxGiftsnGoods.com: I wish all to normalize in pricing, shipping and currency exchange. I am always on the lookout for unique, reliable, well-crafted and innovative products and hope to continue to find them as technology advances and supply chains normalize. As for myself and my company LuxGiftsnGoods.com, we want to make it through the next years and beyond with greater sales while winning many new friends and customers and raving fans along the way.

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ST. AUGUSTINE COMMUNITY CHORUS TO PRESENT 'WE NEED A LITTLE CHRISTMAS!'

The St Augustine Community Chorus will present its holiday performance, "We Need a Little Christmas!" at 7:30 p.m. Dec. 11 and 2 p.m. Dec. 12 at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine, 38 Cathedral Place, St. Augustine.

The performance will offer some very familiar tunes with some new musical surprises. The title song comes from the Broadway musical "Mame," and it is fitting at this time when, in fact, so many of us do need some Christmas.

The St. Augustine Youth Chorus will share the program, along with the new chamber choir, Cantabile, and the small group, Nonet! Several favorite choruses from "The Messiah" will close the concert.

For tickets, go to staugustinecommunitychorus.org and click the appropriate link.



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Contact Jill Titcomb - jtitcomb@firstcoastculturalcenter.org or 904-280-0614 x1206

Golden Pineapple Awards

CELEBRATE WOMEN, SUCCESS



by LEIGH CORT

The Womens Food Alliance (WFA) has a well-defined mission of cultivating and advancing education, collaboration and networking for women in the culinary and hospitality industry throughout Florida and Southeast Georgia. When it was launched in 2013 by founder Leigh Cort, she realized that the hospitality industry was exploding with talented, creative and passionate women in careers that revolved in and around

food, beverage, events and travel. The original goals of this escalating organization still prevail with the addition of another dimension: The Golden Pineapple Hospitality Award.

Why the 'Golden Pineapple'?

Over centuries, the pineapple has predominantly been used as a symbol of hospitality. There are several other symbolic meanings associated with the succulent fruit. In early European society, pineapples were a symbol of status, since they couldn't be grown on European soil. So only the affluent could afford to import them — and also use the beautiful fruit as decorative elements in dinner parties that reflected the host's wealth. They were also hung on doorways as a symbol of friendship.

As the WFA has been exploring different cultural cuisines, attending new product food tastings, gathering for distinctive dinners and luncheons to meet noted culinary celebrities and enjoying culinary competitions, the growing excitement has included the first and second annual Golden Pineapple Hospitality Award Dinners.

Today, the Womens Food Alliance is a high-energy group of women all with a common interest — possessing a strong belief in how they can support and help each other. The monthly events are a gathering place to engage, relax and unwind, while keeping up with members' businesses and gathering information for their own careers. The surprise event in the past two years has been the announcement of the Golden Pineapple winners.

At the second annual Award Dinner that took place at Deerwood Country Club, each of the 10 winners were introduced by a poem that was read about each nominee.



Golden Pineapple jewelry.



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY THE WOMENS FOOD ALLIANCE

Pictured from left: Liz Earnest, Cindy Stavely, Amy Morales, Dee Ann Hobbs, Aine Culhane, Dawn Hutchins, Sharlay Smith, Nicole Chapman, Lauren Titus and Kelly Mabry — all winners.

Enjoy learning about a few ladies and their businesses!

WINNER: Sharlay Smith

The creator of 'The Lentil House' garnered her the Creative Business Architect prize:

The humble tiny lentil has finally found its way — to be honored & eaten with gusto every day

Sharlay Smith's Lentil House shares her story — Nat'l recognition gives each lentil the glory.

Winning the Good Food Award as an alternative snack — it's easy to tuck away in any back pack.

We cheer you Sharlay for flavors like rosemary, smoked paprika and lime — Let's eat healthier — one little lentil at a time.

WINNER: Liz Earnest

The founder of The Chef's Garden Catering, received the Hospitality Lifetime Legend prize:

A lifetime of stunning parties can thank their lucky star — Liz Earnest has been catering since she created how to raise the bar

Her avocation of food and events went quickly into serious — Chef's Garden Catering must have made her delirious

Winning prominence in Jacksonville for decades at a time — creative, gracious catering with a sprinkling of sublime.

Daughter Jen shares the stage making new dreams come true — WFA is honored to call you friend and have a member like you!

WINNER: Aine Culhane

The partner in Culhane's Irish Pub and recipient of Legendary Restaurant Pioneer:

With her Irish sisters she's hard to tame — at the Culhane's bar, well that's another game.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 32 ■



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DECEMBER 1: TOYS FOR TOTS DONATIONS & HOLIDAY SPA SPECIALS BEGIN

DECEMBER 4: ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING EVENT, 5PM

DECEMBER 5: UGLY SWEATER-THEMED BRUNCH, 11:30AM

DECEMBER 8: FESTIVE TRIVIA, 7PM

DECEMBER 9: HOLIDAY HAPPY HOUR, 5PM & TOYS FOR TOTS PICK-UP

DECEMBER 10: "SPA-LIDAY PARTY" HOLIDAY SPA EVENT, 5:30PM

DECEMBER 11: "ELF" VIEWING, 5PM

DECEMBER 12: HOLIDAY MOVIE-THEMED BRUNCH, 11:30AM

DECEMBER 15: FESTIVE TRIVIA, 7PM

DECEMBER 17: "THE GRINCH" VIEWING, 5PM

DECEMBER 19: BRUNCH WITH SANTA, 11:30AM

DECEMBER 25: HOLIDAY BUFFET, 12PM; DINNER SPECIAL, 5PM

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PINEAPPLE

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

Coming to America to launch and keep it going — Aine Culhane's expertise is in the knowing

Her resilience and warmth with guests she's SO engaging — big sport parties she's adept at staging

This Irish Goddess full of lilt and laughter — her beauty and 'sass' you'll never forget — long after!

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The knowledge, hard work, respect and fellowship that members share leads everyone to believe that more women in the industry could benefit from and contribute to the Womens Food Alliance. WFA plans at least 12-18 programs each year that take place in inspiring locations throughout the area, showcasing members' venues.

The Spirituality of Pineapple

Somehow, many of the Womens Food Alliance members have a spiritual connection to the pineapple, a symbol of prosperity — which is always accompanied by cheers and celebrations.

To the Native Americans, it's a sign that the land will yield more produce — and great abundance will come soon. As a symbol of luxury, nobility and wealth throughout Europe, a single pineapple could fetch a fortune. Thus, the host who was able to present freshly cut pineapple to guests — was the one with money, power and connections.

It's so appropriate that the pineapple, an object of wisdom, helps one to get wiser — showing how to navigate the way through seemingly impossible situations and circumstances. Without question, the relationships born out of participation in Womens Food Alliance reflect many of the tenets that make the Golden Pineapple more meaningful than just the award dinner. It's now become the WFA mantra!

Learn more at womensfoodalliance.com.



The 2022 WFA Advisory Council, pictured from left, are Kelly Mabry, Cindy Stavely, Amy Morales, Nancy Guarnieri, Terri Sherman, Nancy Slatky, Leigh Cort, Faye Lance and Betsi Hill.



Callie Johnson, Donna Guzzo, Hilah Autrey, Ron Autrey and Delinda Fogel.



Dr. Roya Rouhani plays music during the event.



Johan Mejia with Peruvian Accent and Aimee Boggs.

FESTIVE TIME FOUND AT *Holiday Shoppes*

The following photos are from the 2021 Holiday Shoppes Preview and Cocktail Reception at Marsh Landing Country Club Nov. 11. It was the 31st annual event and included a cocktail reception with hors d'oeuvres and a VIP preview of some of many local businesses as vendors on display. The event was hosted by the First Coast Cultural Center, which strives to be a place in the community that people can create, understand, and experience the arts through exhibitions of local, regional and national artists in a variety of forms.

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY RICHARDS



Susan Kelly and Katie Kelly.



Milena Centeno and Maria Castillo.



Dr. Carla Rodrigues and Donna Guzzo.

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HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS

Here's a look at some of the events being held this holiday season. Many events are free to attend; for those that are not, fees for admission or registration are noted.

CHRISTMAS ON THE FARM AT SYKES FAMILY FARMS

When: 6-11 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, Nov. 26-Dec. 18.

Where: 5995 Brough Road, Elkton

Admission: \$15

Enjoy a hayride through this ¾-mile drive-through Christmas light display. Bring the family, sip on hot chocolate or apple cider while roasting s'mores over the large fire pit. Mr. and Mrs. Claus are visiting from the North Pole, so be sure to get some great pictures.

Go to sycofarms.com/christmas-on-the-farm

DAZZLING NIGHTS

When: 5:30-9 p.m. through Jan. 9

Where: Jacksonville Arboretum & Botanical Gardens, 1445 Millcoia Road, Jacksonville

Admission: \$22 weekdays, \$25 weekends. Tickets must be purchased for a specific time and date. Arrive 20-30 minutes before your scheduled entry time.

There will be lite bites, hot chocolate, beer, and wine available for purchase.

Limited, on-site parking can be reserved in advance for a small fee. Complimentary off-site parking and a shuttle will be provided at The Regency Square Mall, Arlington Expressway, Jacksonville.

Tickets available at memoir.ticketspice.com/dazzling-nights-jacksonville.

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING

When: 2-6 p.m. Nov. 27

Where: Marina Parking Lot, downtown Fernandina Beach

The annual Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony will feature food, merchandise, a bounce house and music.

JACKSONVILLE LIGHT BOAT PARADE

When: Nov. 27

Where: Gather along the north and south riverbanks in downtown Jacksonville. The Jacksonville Light Boat Parade has been a holiday tradition for more than 30 years.

Vessels of all shapes and sizes adorn their hulls with festive decorations as they float along the north and south banks of the St. Johns River. This year, the Light Boat Parade will feature 904 Pop Up. The 904 Pop Up will curate Jacksonville's largest Small Business Saturday event featuring over 200 local creatives, makers, artists and more.

LUMINARY NIGHT

When: 6-9 p.m. Dec. 1

Where: 100 Red Cox Road, St. Augustine. This annual tradition is hosted by the St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum. More than 2,000 luminaries are displayed throughout the grounds and on the streets surrounding this historic landmark, creating a magical holiday experience. Lights and holiday décor also adorn the 1876 Keepers' House and other historic buildings on the property. For a special treat, guests can climb the tower for sparkling views of Nights of Lights from the top of the St. Augustine Lighthouse.

Go to staugustinelighthouse.org.

15TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY HOME TOUR

When: 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Dec. 3-4

Where: Between 4th and 10th streets, Fernandina Beach

Located in the beautiful historic downtown district of Fernandina Beach, the Holiday Home Tour features five Victorian homes not normally open to the public, each tastefully decorated for the holiday season. To minimize touch points and monitor capacity in each of the holiday homes, all visitors must purchase tickets online. Tickets are for sale by entry time for \$7 per house. The Amelia Island Museum of History will not be providing shuttle service between houses this year, so be sure to keep travel time between houses in mind when booking multiple houses.

Go to ameliamuseum.org/hht-purchase-ticket.

THE DANCE COMPANY'S ST. AUGUSTINE WINTER SPECTACULAR

When: 7 p.m. Dec. 4, 2 p.m. Dec. 5

Where: Lewis Auditorium, 14 Granada St., St. Augustine

Admission: \$15-30

The show features a dance-based storyline that follows a young girl's journey during the holidays with kicklines, ballerinas, tap dancers, acrobats and musical theater numbers. This original production will entertain all ages with its talented cast, dazzling costuming and a wide array of eye-catching scenery and quality live entertainment.

Go to staugustinewinterspectacular.com

CHRISTMAS PARADE

When: 9-11 a.m. Dec. 4

Where: The parade starts by the Mission Nombre de Dios off San Marco Avenue and continues through the downtown streets of historic St. Augustine.

CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING CEREMONY AND GINGERBREAD VILLAGE REVEAL

When: 5-8 p.m. Dec. 4

Where: Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa, 1000 TPC Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach. Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa kicks off the holiday season with their annual tree lighting ceremony and reveal of this year's gingerbread village, created by the children of Cabana Beach Club.

PALM VALLEY BOAT PARADE

When: 6-8 p.m. Dec. 4

Where: Palm Valley Bridge, South Roscoe Boulevard, Ponte Vedra

Enjoy this annual tradition of lighted boats to celebrate the holiday season in Ponte Vedra Beach. The parade route is seven miles of the Intracoastal and starts one mile south of the Palm Valley Bridge and travels north. Go to palmvalleyboatparade.com

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46 ■



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LIGHTHOUSE ILLUMINATIONS FEATURES 21 UNIQUELY DECORATED TREES AND MORE



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum is hosting its inaugural Lighthouse Illuminations event on select days now through January 21.

The St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum is hosting its inaugural Lighthouse Illuminations event on select days now through January 21.

Daytime general admission tickets get visitors in the door to enjoy decorated grounds and buildings during this winter season of Tides, Tidings and Trees. Then, as the sun goes down, they can purchase after-hours Lighthouse Illumination tickets for an extraordinary experience.

Visitors will find the Keepers' house and grounds illuminated by lights and garlands.

There are 21 uniquely decorated trees, each with a distinct theme such as Shells from the Sea, Keepsake Ornaments, Old Florida, Lighthouses of America and Nautical Adventures. The latter is a perfect way to display donations made to the St. Augustine

Lighthouse & Maritime Museum by members and other people from across the nation.

Tickets must be purchased for a specific date to visit. They are available online at store.staugustinelighthouse.org/SelectEvent.aspx?eventid=1000137. Tickets are \$19.95 for adults, \$17.95 for children 12 and younger.

The lighthouse has been a unique landmark of St. Augustine for over 147 years. Through interactive exhibits, guided tours and maritime research, the museum is on a mission to discover, preserve, present and keep alive the stories of the Nation's Oldest Port. It keeps the light shining as a private aid-to-navigation. The museum is the parent organization to the Lighthouse Archaeological Maritime Program (LAMP), and the two nonprofits are an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution.



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Holiday RECIPES



PARMESAN CRUSTED SALMON RECIPE A WINNER

Try this recipe from Chef DeJuan Roy of Alhambra Theatre & Dining.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Chef DeJuan Roy of Alhambra Theatre & Dining cooks up a great recipe to try at home.

PARMESAN CRUSTED SALMON

Serves 6
 2 lb. salmon filets skinless boneless
 ¼ cup sour cream
 ¼ cup shredded parmesan cheese
 ¼ cup lemon juice
 2 tbs. mayo
 Salt and pepper to taste

Cut your salmon into 6 portions
 Mix your remaining ingredients together and chill in the refrigerator for 20 minutes
 Top your salmon with a generous amount of crust topping about 3 oz. on each portion.
 Place on slightly oiled baking sheet and bake at 350 degrees for 15 minutes or until the crust is golden brown. Enjoy!

A KEEPER FOR HOLIDAY DESSERT TRAYS

The holiday season is a time when families across the globe look forward to the traditions they've passed down from generation to generation. Holiday baking is one such tradition in many families. From cookies and pies to brittles and fudge, there's no shortage of sweet treats come the holiday season. But who's recipe collection couldn't benefit from another delicious addition? That's just what can be found in 'Toffee Cheesecake Bars' from "Taste of Home Healthy Cooking Cookbook" (RDA Enthusiast Brands) by the Taste of Home/Reader's Digest Kitchens.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 39 ■

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UPTOWN SWINERY PRESENTS SPECIAL DRINK RECIPES

To help celebrate millions of twinkling lights illuminating the Nation's Oldest City during St. Augustine's Nights of Lights, Uptown Swinery has created a specialty cocktail menu that will run throughout the holidays. Here are five cocktails from that menu.

Cocktails were created by Cooper Ball, bar manager at Uptown Swinery, a locally-owned Southern-inspired, American-fare restaurant located at 45 San Marco Ave. in St. Augustine.



BLESS YOUR HEART

1.5 oz Titos's Vodka
1 oz PAMA Pomegranate Liqueur
.25 oz simple syrup
.5 oz lemon juice

Combine all ingredients in cocktail shaker with ice, shake vigorously and double strain into chilled martini glass, garnish with orange twist.



HOLD YOUR HORSES

2 oz Belle Meade Bourbon
.5 oz brown sugar simple syrup
.25 oz vanilla syrup
2 dashes black walnut bitters

In mixing glass, combine all ingredients. Add ice, stir vigorously with bar spoon. Strain into rocks glass over large ice cube and garnish with a Luxardo cherry.



PRETTY AS A PEACH

2 oz Gray Whale Gin
1 oz peach puree
.25 oz rosemary syrup
.25 oz lemon juice
3 dashes Fee Foam

In cocktail shaker, combine all ingredients with ice. Shake vigorously and double strain over short martini glass with large ice cube. Garnish with fresh rosemary sprig.



FANCY PANTS

1.5 oz D'Usse Cognac
.5 oz Luxardo cherry juice
4 oz Prosecco

In mixing glass, combine D'Usse Cognac and cherry juice. Stir well with a few ice cubes. Pour directly into snifter and top with Prosecco. Garnish with a fresh orange peel.



GIMME SOME SUGAR

1.5 oz Ole Smoky Apple Pie Moonshine
.5 oz Fireball Cinnamon Whisky
.25 oz vanilla syrup
.25 oz lemon juice
Cinnamon sugar for rim

In cocktail shaker, combine all ingredients except cinnamon sugar. Shake vigorously with ice, and pour directly into cinnamon sugar rimmed rocks glass. Garnish with cinnamon stick.

DESSERT

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 38

TOFFEE CHEESECAKE BARS

Makes 2 1/2 dozen

1 cup all-purpose flour
3/4 cup confectioners' sugar
1/3 cup baking cocoa
1/2 cup cold butter
1 8-ounce package reduced-fat cream cheese
1 14-ounce can sweetened condensed milk
2 eggs, lightly beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 1/4 cups milk chocolate English toffee bits, divided

1. In a small bowl, combine the flour, confectioners' sugar, cocoa and baking soda. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Press in the bottom of an ungreased 13-inch x 9-inch baking dish. Bake at 350 F for 12 to 15 minutes or until set.
2. In a large bowl, beat cream cheese until fluffy. Add the milk, eggs and vanilla; beat until smooth. Stir in 3/4 cup toffee bits. Pour over crust. Bake 18 to 22 minutes longer or until center is almost set.
3. Cool on a wire rack for 15 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining toffee bits; cool completely. Cover and refrigerate for 8 hours overnight.

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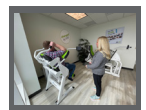
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Deck The Chairs

FEATURES NEW ATTRACTION

Jacksonville Beach's popular Deck The Chairs holiday celebration kicks off Nov. 24 and runs through Jan. 1. The annual event features decorated lifeguard chairs accompanied by holiday lights and sounds set against an ocean backdrop.

Last year, Deck The Chairs attracted an estimated 90,000 visitors over its 42 days.

This year, visitors will find a return of their favorite attractions, including the Beaches Go Green Octopus Garden, moonlight movies, a visit from Santa, A Christmas Eve service, weekly children's dance programming and a Gator Bowl Pep Rally, which is scheduled for Dec. 30.

New this year is a special \$40,000 interactive installation, "SeaSongs Musical Light Show," presented by 95.1 WAPE. This custom-fabricated display of 10 lifeguard chairs features large-scale musical instruments in the shape of whimsical sea creatures. The instruments are motion-activated, providing visitors a sound-and-light interaction experience.

As always, 45 chairs will be decorated throughout the park, and there will be weekend stage programming and holiday concessions. Admission to Deck The Chairs is free. The display is handicap-



accessible and pet-friendly. Lights will be on from 5 p.m. to 1 a.m. nightly, and musical light shows will be held at 6, 7, 8 and 9 p.m. Concessions will be available on weekends and scheduled holiday nights.

Deck The Chairs promotes the arts and art education. The event is held in Jacksonville Beach's Latham Plaza at the corner of First Avenue North and Second Street North and in the adjacent Seawalk Pavilion area.

For more information and to see the schedule of events, go to deckthechairs.com.

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Nights of Lights returns for 28th year

by SHAUN RYAN

St. Augustine is aglow with holiday magic again, from the ground to the rooftops. The annual holiday tradition, Nights of Lights, is in full swing for its 28th year.

Listed among the top 10 holiday light displays in the world by National Geographic, Night of Lights features millions of tiny white lights brightening the historic city every evening starting at dusk.

The show will be presented through Jan. 31.

The city will once again offer a free park-and-ride shuttle on peak dates, Friday and Saturday of Thanksgiving weekend (Nov. 26-27) and every Saturday through December – except Christmas. The shuttle will also be available on Dec. 26 through Dec. 30.

In consideration of the Christmas Parade on Dec. 4, shuttle operations will begin at 8 a.m. With that exception, the shuttle will operate from 1 to 11 p.m. from three



FILE PHOTO

locations outside the historic district: St. Johns County Health Department, 200 San Sebastian View; San Marco lot at 301 San Marco Ave.; and Brody's lot (corner of U.S. 1 and West King Street), 212 W. King St.

Drop off and pickup will be at the Visitor Information Center, 10 S. Castillo Drive.

Visitors can easily view the lights by simply driving or strolling through the city's "downtown," but that isn't the only option.

Old Town Trolley offers its Famous Nights of Lights Tour, which begins at 6 p.m. nightly, leaving from the Visitor Information

Center. Santa's Red Express Tours begin at Ripley's Believe It or Not! Museum.

The lights can be seen from the water, as well. Several companies offer Nights of Lights cruises. To find links to these alternatives, go to floridashistoriccoast.com/nights-lights.

Some visitors choose to take in the whole display from atop the St. Augustine Lighthouse or get a bird's-eye view aboard Old City Helicopters.

There are old-fashioned horse-drawn carriage rides, some with complementary wine, and Roadster Rides with the Grinch. St. Augustine Land & Sea Tours offers a luxury eight-seat golf cart tour.

Ancient City Tours offers guided walking tours where participants can learn about the city's history.

Whatever means people choose to see the dazzling display, Nights of Lights remains a not-to-be-missed holiday tradition for thousands of local residents and visitors.



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Gordon Coutts painted this scene, titled "Late Afternoon," in oil in 1920. The painting is part of the "Picturing a Nation: American Art from the Lightner Museum" exhibit.



"City Gate, St. Augustine" by William Staples Drown painted this iconic scene in oil in 1890. It is part of the "Picturing a Nation: American Art from the Lightner Museum" exhibit.

Lightner exhibits reveal the dreams, observations of long ago

by SHAUN RYAN

The Lightner Museum's open house on Oct. 28 featured a first look at two new exhibitions that offer insight into the past.

"Tom Schifanella: Faces of the Alcazar" presents a compelling insight into the lives of working-class employees at Henry Flagler's Alcazar Hotel.

Meanwhile, "Picturing a Nation: American Art from the Lightner Museum" presents a vibrant vision of the country on a local and national scale through late 19th- and early 20th-century American art.

Schifanella's photography has been published in National Geographic, Southern Living and The Washington Post. He has been selected by National Geographic as one of 25 photographers for an international photo exhibition, "Planet or Plastic?"

His exhibit, "Faces of the Alcazar," is the culmination of two years of work. He was granted access to parts of the museum not open to the public, the onetime quarters of immigrant staff who lived and worked at Flagler's hotel more than a century ago.

There, Schifanella found fragmentary clippings from motion picture magazines of the silent film era pasted to the walls. He photographed them and made large-format prints of the images.

The museum's executive director, David Bagnall, asked Schifanella to put together the exhibit.

It is nearly impossible to accurately date the clippings, though Schifanella said

they were from the late 1910s through the early 1920s. It was a time of great interest in movies, as there was a budding film industry in North Florida.

But who are the people depicted in the fragments?

"We can guess at the names, but unfortunately, there's no record of any of these," Schifanella said. "These obviously came from old film magazines, or they might have been from press photos, but we can't definitively identify any of them."

Alas, time and the elements have left only these fragments to testify to the dreams and aspirations of the working-class employees of Flagler's enterprise.

"For them, these stars were kind of like something that they could aspire to," Schifanella said. "Just like we do today. We look at celebrities on Instagram. In those days, it was these magazines with the stars

that they looked up to."

He said the reception by the public has been positive, and that "it's fantastic" to see people experiencing his work.

"Faces of the Alcazar" will be on display through March 7 and is supported by a grant from the Dr. JoAnn Crisp-Ellert Fund at the Community Foundation for Northeast Florida.

The other exhibit, "Picturing a Nation: American Art from the Lightner Museum," is a major reinstallation of American paintings and sculpture from the museum's permanent collection. Visitors will recognize the artists' names and get a look at how they portrayed the Nation's Oldest City – among other places – in the post-Civil War era.

These works will be on display until Sept 30. The exhibit is supported by a grant from the St. Johns County Tourist Development Council.



Fragments of pictures from silent movie magazines were photographed and made into large prints for "Tom Schifanella: Faces of the Alcazar." They are on exhibit now at the Lightner Museum.



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PHOTOS BY SHAUN RYAN

A group of dancers in colorful costumes demonstrates a traditional dance at the Hispanic Festival.

Hispanic Festival celebrates Spanish-speaking cultures

by SHAUN RYAN

Local Hispanic Heritage Month events concluded Oct. 15 with a cultural celebration at the link in Nocatee. The Hispanic Festival celebrated the diversity and traditions of the Spanish-speaking population with good food, lively dancing and rousing music.

The event, organized by the First Coast

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and hosted by the link, was well-attended. Couples took to the dance floor as Javier Pérez & Ventura Band provided live music. Adults enjoyed sangria and Mexican beer. Dancers in colorful costumes entertained attendees with demonstrations of traditional dances.

And some took the opportunity to virtually travel to Spanish-speaking


countries around the world inside the link's unique 360-degree Flagler Health+ Immersive Studio.

Mambos Cuban Café provided attendees with tasty cuisine from Cuba, while Delicias Colombianas served delicious food from

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45 ■

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FESTIVAL

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 44

Colombia.

According to Monica Hernandez, president and CEO of the First Coast Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the event highlights the diversity of Spanish-speaking countries. Many people tend to classify Hispanic people as a single group, but in fact, each nation has its own cultural legacy.

“For me, it’s very important to be able to showcase that diversity,” Hernandez said.

“Mexico’s very different than Colombia. Colombia is very different than Cuba. Cuba’s very different than Puerto Rico.”

The Hispanic community is the second-fastest growing minority in the United States. Latin Americans comprise 26% of the population in Florida. In St. Johns County, the Hispanic population has nearly doubled since 2010 and is currently at 7.7%. In Duval County, Hispanics make up 11.3% of the population.

To learn more about the organization, go to fchcc.com, call 904-346-1118 or email fchcc@fchcc.com.



Festivalgoers were able to sample tasty cuisine from Cuba and Colombia.

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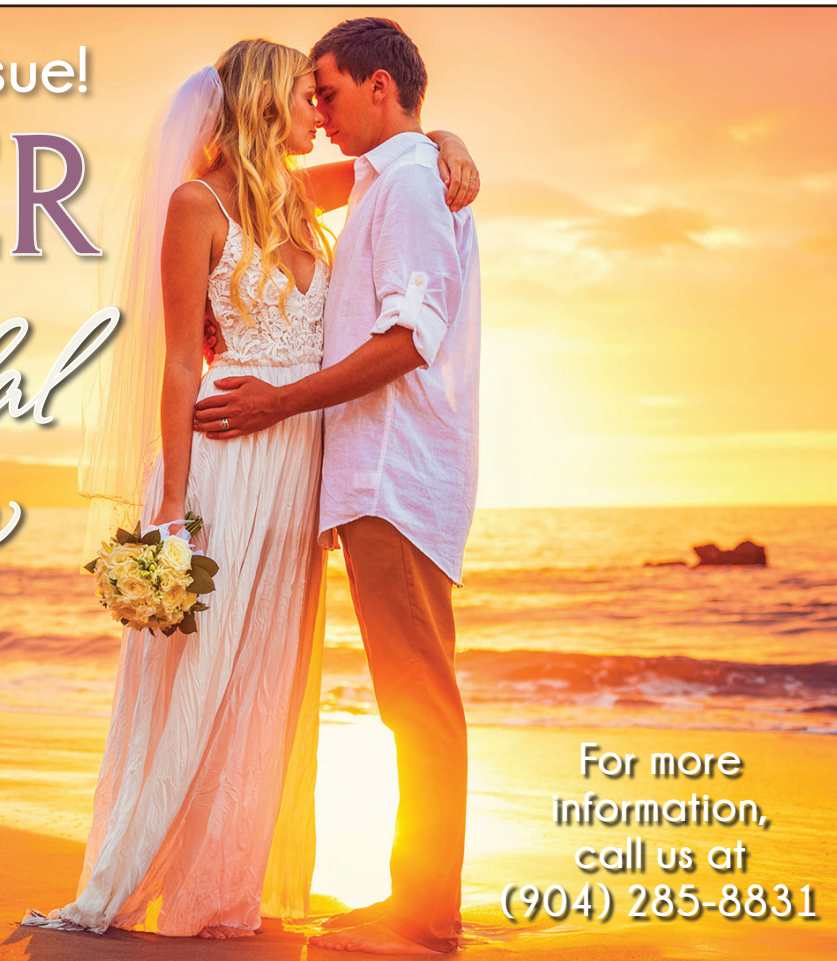
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HOLIDAY

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

SANDY CLAUS FULL MARATHON, HALF MARATHON AND 10K

When: 6:30-11 a.m. Dec. 5

Where: Nocatee Station Field, 400 Nocatee Center Way, Ponte Vedra

Registration: \$15-\$70

Lace up your sneakers for the second annual Sandy Claus Marathon, Half Marathon and 10K. This time-chipped event starts at 6:30 a.m. for the full marathon, 7 a.m. for the half marathon and 10K.

Go to runsignup.com/Race/FL/PonteVedra/SandyClauseHalfMarathon

BEACHES NORTH POLE EXPRESS

When: 3-6 p.m. Dec. 10, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. Dec. 11

Where: Beaches Museum, 381 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville Beach

Admission: Free to museum members, suggested \$5 donation from non-members. Pre-registration is required. Pre-register at interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E352392&id=49.

Meet Santa and the Conductor and celebrate the holiday season. Visitors are invited to write a letter to Santa, take pictures with Santa, make crafts and enjoy other festivities in the History Park.

Contact the museum at 904-241-5657 for further information.

DICKENS ON CENTRE

When: 10 a.m.-9 p.m. Dec. 10-11

Where: Fernandina Beach Main Street, 309½ Centre St., Fernandina Beach

Dickens on Centre is a Victorian holiday festival that transforms downtown Fernandina Beach into the time of Charles Dickens, themed after his popular novel, "A Christmas Carol." Visit St. Nick in his workshop within Tiny Tim's Kid Zone or shop for unique holiday gifts while wandering through the Artist Alley or strolling Peddlers Village. Enjoy a bite to eat in the Festival Courtyard or a fizzy beverage at Fizziwig's. There will also be a variety of period performances on multiple stages and in the streets throughout the festival.

REGATTA OF LIGHTS

When: 6-8 p.m. Dec. 11

Where: St. Augustine Bayfront, Avenida Menendez, St. Augustine

Gather on the bayfront north of the Bridge of Lions for the annual Regatta of Lights boat parade. Watch the displays of brightly lit

boats pass by, decorated in everything from whimsical to patriotic themes.

RIVERSIDE AVONDALE LUMINARIA

When: Dec. 12 at dusk.

Where: The Riverside Avondale historic district

To participate, purchase a luminaria kit or starter pack from Riverside Avondale Preservation. Luminaria kits are \$7 and include six white bags, six 10-hour votive candles and a quart of sand for weight and support. Each kit is built by a volunteer. A starter pack includes four kits and a firestick for \$35. For \$50, volunteers will deliver the starter pack to a home or porch in a custom 2021 luminaria tote bag.

Go to secure.riversideavondale.org/np/clients/riversideavondale/giftstore.jsp?forwardedFromSecureDomain=1.

Contact-free delivery is new this year, but pickup is still happening. Stop by the RAP office between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Dec. 11 or 12 at the Buckland House, 2623 Herschel St., for all pickup orders.

HOLIDAY POPS CONCERT

When: 7:30-9:30 p.m. Dec. 15

Where: Lewis Auditorium, 14 Granada St., St. Augustine

Admission: \$55

Enjoy the Gainesville Symphony Orchestra — Holiday Pops Concert presented by the EMMA Concert Association at Lewis Auditorium at Flagler College.

Go to emmaconcerts.com

CHRISTMAS AT THE CABIN

When: 5-8 p.m. Dec. 16

Where: The Beaches Museum's 1873 Oesterreicher-McCormick Cabin, 503 Beach Blvd. Jacksonville Beach

Admission for museum members is free, a \$5 donation is asked from non-members. Pre-registration is required.

Please pre-register at interland3.donorperfect.net/weblink/weblink.aspx?name=E352392&id=50.

Enjoy a festive evening under the twinkling lights as the sound of Christmas carols fills the courtyard. Live entertainment begins at 5:30pm and will include dancers from First Coast Dance, St. Paul's Contemporary Choir, Rhythm Theory Dance Ensemble and Community Presbyterian Bell Choir. To further the fun, guests can roast marshmallows amid the period decor that will adorn the Cabin.

Go to beachesmuseum.org or call 904-241-5657 for more information.

SAINT AUGUSTINE BALLET PRESENTS THE NUTCRACKER

When: 1:30 p.m. and 7 p.m. Dec. 18, 2 p.m. Dec. 19

Where: Lewis Auditorium, 14 Granada St., St. Augustine

Tickets: \$35, \$40, \$50

The Sugar Plum Fairy, the Mouse King, Clara, Uncle Drosselmeyer and all the Nutcracker characters will return to the St. Augustine stage this holiday season. Saint Augustine Ballet presents the 13th Annual Nutcracker — a timeless classic featuring professional ballet dancers and dance students from St. Augustine and surrounding areas.

Go to saintaugustineballet.org



FIREWORKS & BEACH BLVD. BLOCK PARTY

When: Dec. 31

Where: A1A Beach Boulevard, 2200 A1A South, St. Augustine

Enjoy the fireworks from multiple locations at this year's Fireworks & Beach Blvd. Block Party. Stay the weekend or enjoy a night out with the family or friends. The block party takes place all day at businesses along A1A Beach Boulevard. There will be discounts, live music and other specials. Fireworks start at 8:30 p.m. Parking is limited, so participants are encouraged to carpool. Limited parking is available at St. Johns Ocean Pier Park or any of the designated parking areas along 16th Street. Go to staugbch.com/events/page/sab-events.

NEW YEAR'S EVE CELEBRATION

When: Midnight, Dec. 31/Jan. 1

Where: The waterfront of the St. Johns River

Say goodbye to 2021 and welcome in the new year at the annual New Year's Eve Fireworks. The waterfront and skyline will serve as a backdrop for this amazing display over the St. Johns River. Fireworks will be launched from a barge on the St. Johns River between the Hyatt and DoubleTree hotels and high above the St. Johns River from the Acosta Bridge. The show will begin at exactly midnight.



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