

REGISTER

FIRST COAST

JUNE/JULY 2022

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The Beaches • St. Augustine • Amelia Island

BOATING ON THE FIRST COAST

A FIRST COAST
SUMMER

WINE & DINE
ON THE FIRST COAST

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.

Hugh Osteen, COO/VP

Susan Griffin, Publisher

Amber Anderson,
Page/Graphic Designer

Lisa Murphy, Ad Designer

Shaun Ryan, Editor

Anthony Richards, Staff Writer

Kristin Flanagan,
Account Executive

Adele McGraw,
Account Executive

Debbie Apple,
Account Executive

April Snyder, Sales Assistant

Joe Wilhelm,
Circulation Manager

Contributors:
Leigh Cort, Jennifer Logue

FIRST COAST REGISTER
1102 A1A N., Unit 108
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082
904.285.8831

ON THE COVER



The cover features Amelia Island Marina in Fernandina Beach, Florida.

Photo by Wayne Guest of WG .Photography

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East of A1A East of A1A with a sidewalk all the way to the beach, this 2 BR 2 BR, fully renovated unit is waiting for you. Kitchen is loaded with marble countertops, barn doors and updated bathrooms. Unit comes with garage and washer and dryer. Great investment property, use as a guest house or secure for your forever abode with ground level easy access. **2 Bedrooms, 2 Bathrooms \$340,000.**



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as told to
SHAUN RYAN

CAPT. GLEN DAVIS

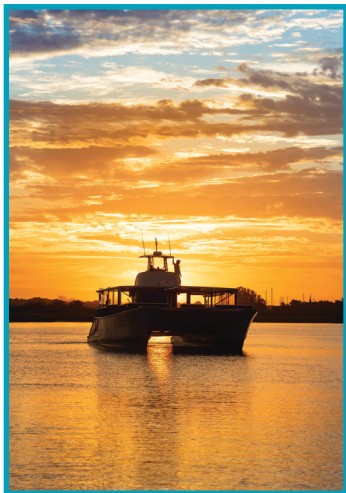
CAPT. GLEN DAVIS IS THE MAN AT THE HELM FOR CRUISES AND EXCURSIONS ABOARD SABRAGE, ONE OF THE POPULAR CHARTER BOATS IN ST. AUGUSTINE. HAVING SPENT HIS LIFE ON THE WATER, DAVIS KNOWS HOW TO OFFER HIS CUSTOMERS AN ENJOYABLE EXPERIENCE. SABRAGE CAN BE FOUND AT THE SHIPYARD DOCKS, 117 DOCKSIDE DRIVE.

Tell me about Sabrage Charters.

Sabrage is a custom, 63-foot Cooper catamaran. We offer a variety of trips for individuals and groups. We have regularly scheduled daily trips for sunset cruises and ecotours, and we do a lot of custom private charters, also. And we have a new lunch-and-swim cruise we're doing this summer.

Tell me about this new cruise.

We'll be starting it up soon. The information will all be on the website once we're ready. But it's a four-hour cruise. We do a nice little picnic lunch. About an hour or two at a location up on the back side of Vilano, a little beach area. We



It's another golden morning in Northeast Florida as Sabrage cruises placid waters.

anchor up there and set out some of those big lily pads, and we've got noodles galore; we get just real close to the beach there. People can play in the water for a couple of hours and then have a nice little cruise home.

What do you like best about what you do?

It's more like what don't I like! I like everything about it. I've been in the charter business for 40 years now. So, I've run a lot of different gigs in the Virgin Islands, primarily, and then Florida — the Keys. This model is really a bit spectacular. It's really comfortable. Great sound system on the boat. It's just super versatile, so the area that we operate in is really beautiful and, you know, it's year-round.

It's a really nice product, a nice formula for doing charters.

There's a lot of freedom to it. And my partners are really good. We have a lot of responsibilities, so it's kind of a nice balance of labor. It's a good team, you know? So, we all pitch in and get it done.

Who are your partners?

Jonathan Cordero and Ian Bartlett.

Do you divide up the duties?

I'm the captain, so I'm kind of in charge of the boat and all



PHOTOS BY MONARCH STUDIOS

Capt. Glen Davis is one of three business partners who offer cruises and events aboard Sabrage.

the back-of-the-house stuff. But the guys do a great job. They work the deck, and they work the bar.

Sometimes, guests will want to have something catered. They'll have caterers bring food on the boat. So, they do a great job taking care of the guests on the deck.

And then all the stuff nobody sees, all the maintenance and stocking and all that's stuff, they take good care of all that.

And then we all chip in on marketing and try to get the word out.

It's pretty much a seven-day-a-week thing.

Tell me a about your background.

I started, pretty much, right out of high school. I had an opportunity to go to a place in the Bahamas called AUTEK (the U.S. Navy's Atlantic Undersea Test and Evaluation Center). It was a civilian job, but it was on a naval base on Andros Island.

I went to Sea School first and got all my classwork done, but then I needed sea time. So, I just started working on boats, and I lived on Andros for six months. Worked on a torpedo, which is a pretty fun job.

It was great. Got to meet some cool people. Learned a lot. Did a lot of fishing there.

And then, I came back to the West Coast of Florida, Fort Myers Beach area, and started working on the fishing boats, and got my sea time.

When I was 20, I got my license and got my own boat and started doing little half-day fishing trips. Went from there to 27 years in the Virgin Islands with catamarans and came back here about eight years ago and was doing some other things.

Then, this opportunity came up a couple of years ago. It'll be two years in September that my partner Jon had been talking to some mutual friends down in St. Thomas about trying to get a boat like Sabrage up here.

Then, they brought me into the mix because I'm the boat guy. And it worked out. Really nice partnership. Fantastic boat. So, I couldn't be happier.

Life's full of chapters, and so I feel like I got really lucky with this chapter.

Tell me about the boat.

It's a purpose-built boat. It's built just for doing these day trips. It's got two restrooms on board. A really nice full-service bar. It's outfitted very nicely. A lot of comfortable cushion

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ■

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Edward Burr, founder of the Monique Burr Foundation for Children, speaks during 'A Night in the Vineyard.'



Monique Burr Foundation for Children President/CEO Lynn Layton speaks during 'A Night in the Vineyard.'

PHOTOS BY SUSAN GRIFFIN

'NIGHT IN THE VINEYARD' RAISES \$130K FOR MONIQUE BURR FOUNDATION

Benefit event celebrates 25 years of protecting children

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children Inc. (MBF) annual signature fundraising event, "A Night in the Vineyard" presented by River Bay Investments at SoNapa Grille, raised an event record \$130,000 for the foundation.

All proceeds from "A Night in the Vineyard" will help support the foundation's prevention education programs. These evidence-based/trauma-informed prevention education programs educate and empower youth with strategies to prevent, recognize and respond to child abuse, bullying, digital dangers, exploitation and human trafficking.

"We appreciate everyone who attended and supported 'A Night at the Vineyard,' raising vital funds that are essential for continuing our programs and initiatives," said foundation President/CEO Lynn Layton. "In 25 years, the foundation has experienced exponential growth while directly impacting



Nashville recording artist Colleen Orender sang during the event.

the safety of children. We are thankful to all of our supporters for championing MBF's mission to make a difference and improve the lives of children and families."

"A Night in the Vineyard" guests enjoyed fine wines, craft beer, delicious food, live and silent auctions, live music by Colleen Orender and Paris Winningham, and a live painting by artist Penelope Moore. Using vivid colors and texture, the artist painted the flavors she experienced while drinking a glass of Oceano wine during the event.

Rachel Martin, co-founder and vintner of Oceano Wines, and other wine mak-

ers from Napa Valley including Cufflinks, California Wine Co., Plank Walker, Gamba, Stellareese and Tarpon Cellars, attended the event.

Event sponsors included Casa Marina Hotel & Restaurant, Clockwork Marketing Services, Coastal Wine Market, Dennis and Becky Rosa, Drummond, Dream Finders Homes, The Fiorentino Group, Go Bright Marketing, GreenPointe Holdings, Hampton Golf, JAX Utilities Management, Kent and Lynn Shoemaker, Intuition Ale

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9 ■



MONIQUE BURR
FOUNDATION FOR CHILDREN
PREVENTION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Your Child's Safety Matters This Summer!



School may be out for summer, but learning about safety is always in!

Without school, homework, or after-school activities, children will inevitably spend more time on their digital devices, exploring new places, visiting friends and relatives, and making new friends during summer camps and programs. While these activities are great fun, it's important for adults and children alike to be aware of the various dangers that youth face online and in real life during the summer months.

At MBF, we believe safety is a team effort which is why we've created a free Summer Safety Guide with tips and conversation starters to help you keep the children in your life safe during all their adventures this summer!

Explore our Summer Safety Matters site to learn more about:

- MBF's 5 Safety Rules
- Caution Around Unfamiliar Faces
- Recognizing Safe and Unsafe Adults
- Awareness of Digital Dangers
- How to Identify Safe Places



Visit bit.ly/MBFSummerSafetyMatters



Is Your Child Participating in a Summer or After-School Program?

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children provides FREE prevention education programming to all Florida public schools and partnering organizations! MBF After-School Safety Matters (ASSM) was developed to help after-school programs, summer camps, child advocacy centers, and other youth-serving organizations educate, empower, and protect children in their communities.

ASSM teaches children and adults how to prevent, recognize, and respond appropriately to child abuse, bullying, cyberbullying, and digital dangers using an age- and developmentally-appropriate framework that is research based and trauma informed. The program topics are fun and engaging, incorporate art and activities, and don't require any technology to implement!

Learn more at www.mbfpreventioneducation.org



Every child deserves to be safe!

Want to bring MBF's Prevention Education Programs to your child's school or summer program? Contact us for more information.



This project is supported by Agreement No. K05187 through funds issued by the State of Florida, Office of the Attorney General.

Follow us on social
@MBFChildSafety



904.642.0210

info@mbfpreventioneducation.org

ONE OF US

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

seating. Three-quarters of the boat's got a hardtop on it, so there's a lot of shaded area there.

But we've got the Isinglass rollups on the sides, so you've got the fresh breeze flowing through. And then on the bow areas, it's wide open, so you can get up there and get some sun.

And we have a really high-end sound system on the boat with Bluetooth, so sometimes on the private charters the guests can play their own music. Whatever they like. We can customize all those private trips to a great degree. We've also got DJs on the boat.

Jon is a local musician, also, so we have a monthly concert series now. We get live music on the boat. Usually, they pretty much sell out every time.

So, the boat's just really

versatile. You can customize things and come up with creative events. It's a venue in a sense, too. It's gone beyond just being a charter boat; it's a real venue. We do a lot of wedding events. We've had about half a dozen ceremonies on the boat, so that was pretty cool.

That's one of the things I like about this operation. We can do so many different things with the model that we have.

The live music sounds pretty cool.

Yeah. And the guests, a lot of times, have an artist they want to have come on, and we're like, "Sure, bring them on."

If people are interested in contacting Sabrage Charters, how might they do so?

The best way is to send me an email. Go to our website. There's a contact button. It's real easy to send an email to us. It's charters@sabragestaugustine.com.



PHOTO BY MONARCH STUDIOS
Sabrage on the water at daybreak.

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

I've lived in different parts of Florida from the Keys to Southwest Florida and everything, and I grew up in the South, so this is, I feel, the most livable place I've been to in Florida.

You get a nice balance — you have good tourism, but it's also a nice place to live. The people are great. It's just a really comfortable place to live. I love it.

How do you like to spend your free time?

What free time? (Laughs) I like to spend time with my family. And I love to fish. I don't get to fish as much as I'd like to. But, visiting family — I've got family in Tallahassee and in North Carolina. So, they come see us, and we go see them.

But I just like being on the water. So, any chance my family and I have to get out. If we don't have a trip, sometimes we just take the boat out just to get out on a water.

And St. Augustine is such a cool city. I'm a big history buff, so I love the history and the architecture of St. Augustine. It's gotten to be such a cool town for so many great restaurants here and things to do and the beaches are fantastic. So, it checks all the boxes — whatever you like to do.



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■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

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For more information about the Monique Burr Foundation for Children, go to mbf-preventioneducation.org or call 904-642-0210.



Steve and Shaun Lourie enjoy the festivities at 'A Night in the Vineyard.'

PHOTOS BY SUSAN GRIFFINS



Kat Casey and Wendy Alexaitis



Artwork was among the various auction items during the fundraiser.

ABOUT THE FOUNDATION

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children is a nonprofit organization founded in 1997 by Edward E. Burr in honor of his late wife, Monique Burr, a devoted child advocate.

Its prevention education programs, including MBF Child Safety Matters for elementary schools, MBF Teen Safety Matters for middle and high schools, MBF Athlete Safety Matters for youth athletes and MBF After-School Safety Matters for afterschool and youth-serving organizations, are evidence-based/trauma-informed primary prevention programs.

They educate and empower children and adults with information and strategies to prevent, recognize and respond appropriately to abuse, bullying, cyberbullying, digital dangers, exploitation, and human trafficking.

More than 5,000 facilitators have delivered these programs to more than 8 million students throughout the U.S. and in six additional countries.



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Guiding Northeast Florida sellers and buyers through the maze that is today's real estate market, Clare Berry is committed to providing extraordinary buying and selling real estate experiences.

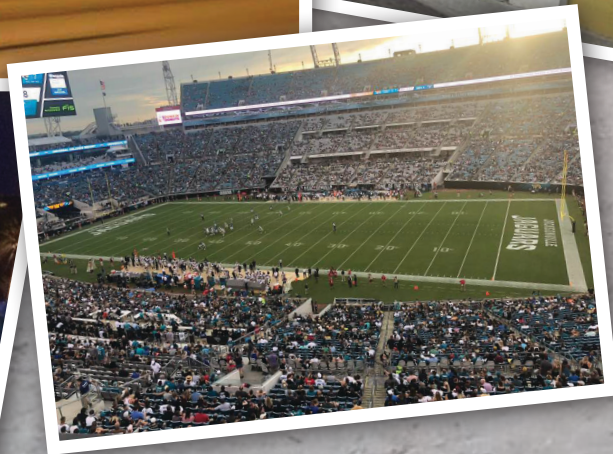
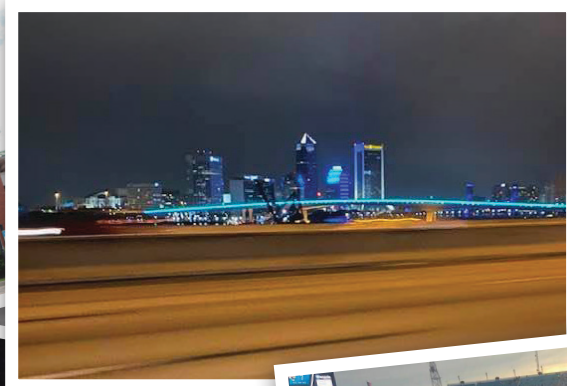
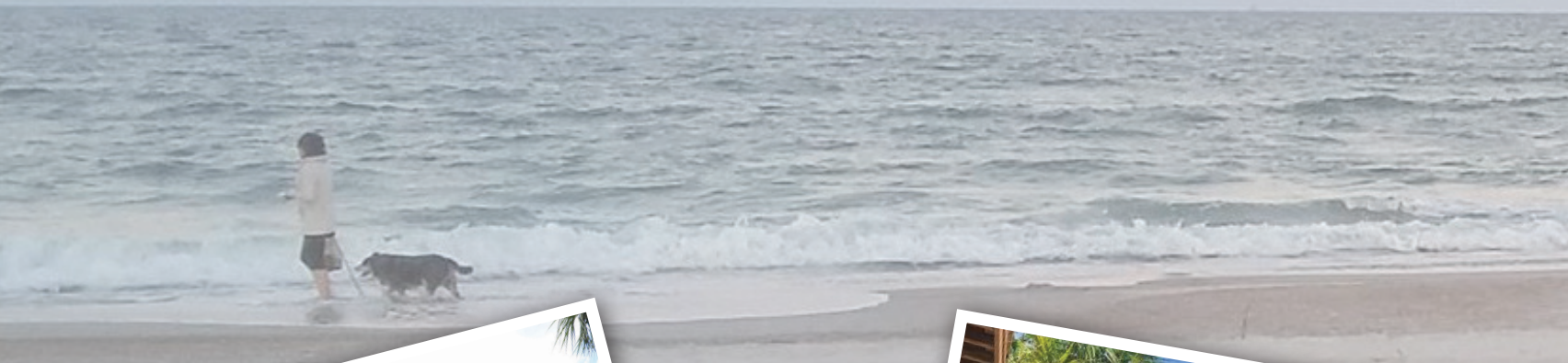
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FACES OF *The First Coast*



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.

If you would like to be featured in Faces of the First Coast, please contact us at (904) 285-8831.

**Paid advertisement*



Since December of 2016, Jonathan Gibbs has been the State Farm Agent in the Nocatee community of Ponte Vedra, Florida. Being able to represent a company such as State Farm - which just celebrated its 100th year - is something he considers an extreme honor! Since the 2016 opening of Jonathan Gibbs State Farm, Jonathan has grown his staff to a team of five, full-time “Good Neighbor” team members, ready to assist all customers, with the risks of everyday life and to help them best prepare for their financial future.

With the volatility of the insurance market in Florida, particularly near the coast, being able to represent a company with the financial strength of State Farm has been a real advantage. State Farm has been the number one auto insurer since 1942 and the number one homeowner’s insurer since 1964. This is a leadership position that is almost unprecedented when it comes to a company of this magnitude.

Jonathan and his office have been able to qualify for some of the most prestigious awards in State Farm, including Chairmen’s Circle, Senior Vice President’s Club and Ambassador Travel Club – as a result of his team’s tireless commitment to putting customer needs first and recommending products that help customers face their financial future with confidence. Being a local to the area, having been born and raised in Ponte Vedra, Jonathan takes great pride in being able to give back to a community that he considers so special. It’s a common sight to see Jonathan and his team at the Nocatee Farmer’s Markets on Saturdays handing out State Farm swag, candy and joyously mixing with current clients and meeting others in the friendly community.

Jonathan’s office has also been the primary sponsor of Nocatee-A-Glow, for the last three years -an honor he hopes to continue for many years to come. It’s encouraging to know that State Farm is uniquely positioned to grow responsibly in Florida now and in the future. Jonathan Gibbs State Farm is honored to be able to lead that charge in Ponte Vedra and Nocatee.

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Jim McCarthy is the president of North Florida Land Trust (NFLT) and has served in this role for the last seven years. The nonprofit has grown exponentially since Jim came on board, both in capacity and revenue. Just seven years ago, the local land trust was bringing in just shy of \$230,000 with 4 staff members but now has a budget of \$2.5 million and a staff of 12.

NFLT was founded in 1999 as a local land conservation 501(c)3 organization focused on preserving and enhancing our quality of life by protecting North Florida's irreplaceable natural environment. NFLT has a core service area of seven counties in North Florida and works on an as-needed basis throughout the state. NFLT has preserved tens of thousands of acres of land through the donation or purchase of land and conservation easements. NFLT is primarily funded by private and corporate contributions and works closely with willing landowners and public agencies at all levels of government, not-for-profit partners, and foundations.

North Florida's population continues to increase. But overwhelmingly, people relocate because of the environment. With that growth comes the challenge to protect why many of us came to North Florida and why so many stay.

With people moving to Florida at unprecedented rates, 75 people a day to the Jacksonville area alone, McCarthy understands the importance and urgency of preserving the area's natural lands.

McCarthy explains, "Our entire quality of life is affected by our environment. Protecting it is to protect ourselves. We depend on clean air to breathe and clean water to drink. We need places to exercise our minds and bodies. We need food to eat, whether fish, fowl, meat, or vegetable. And we need to protect our military installations from encroachment and our communities from noise and danger. Our environment provides all these ecosystem benefits."

In addition, Florida's economy is based on tourism and farming. Wildlife viewing alone is a \$4-billion-a-year business. Visitors come to visit the rivers, lakes, and beaches. Bio tourism is a growing industry in North Florida, and the proximity of places to recover and rehabilitate is critical to its success. Businesses and people are moving here for our natural resources and their arrival is putting pressure on the very reasons they are coming. In short, everything we do and everything we need comes from our environment. It provides an incredible number of benefits.

The time is now for North Florida to bring land conservation to the forefront. Please consider joining us in being the difference for Florida's future.





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*Rosanne
Hearn*

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Rosanne Hearn has been the owner of our team for the past five 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 the area with her clients.

The Hearn Group believes in stellar service. We strive to create intentional, personal relationships with every client who entrusts us when choosing to buy, sell, or invest in real estate. The Hearn Group seeks to continually exceed our client's expectations through collaborative communication and concierge-style offerings.

Our firm has over 100,000 luxury homes throughout the nation and is one-of-a-kind in its commitment to some of the most exclusive communities. Our focus lies in some of the most sought after and exclusive residential communities and our processes provide you the most efficient way to search through these exceptional properties throughout the United States.

Our team is continually trained to be experts in upcoming real estate and home marketing guidelines, providing you a first-class experience. Our unwavering dedication to customer satisfaction elevates The Hearn Group into a league of its own.

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Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082

Since 2006, Kathleen Floryan, Broker Associate with eXp Realty has been selling Oceanfront property in Northeast Florida primarily in the Ponte Vedra Beach, South Ponte Vedra Beach to Vilano Beach corridor. She specializes in the area because she lives in the area and beachfront has always been an attraction.

In a recently published article by Kathleen in Haute Residence she wrote of the joys and the hassles of oceanfront ownership. Purchasing a home on any waterfront includes a few other considerations that most people do not think about such as the coastal construction control line limiting what can be done with the property seaward of this imaginary line.

Environmental concerns including dune protection, sea turtle protection, dune mice and even bird nesting protection aren't always in a discussion about buying other residential properties in Northeast Florida. Erosion and beach renourishments are also big topics especially with regard to hurricane and nor'easter storms that rip through the coastline. And then there are the effects of mother nature on the construction and maintenance of oceanfront property including wind, sand, sea salt, and moisture. All of these must be monitored and corrected on a routine basis. For other waterfront properties, careful thought is also given to bulkhead conditions, flooding potential, and pest control (alligators/snakes).

In selling your oceanfront home, it is penny-wise to get a pre-inspection from a series of qualified professionals who know where to look for trouble spots. Get those taken care of to maximize your market value before putting the house on the market. Kathleen's expertise includes being a Certified Luxury Marketing Specialist since 2008. She has other designations and certifications she maintains to continue to service her clients so well. Social proof of her excellence in caring can be found in her 5 Star Reviews on Google, Zillow, Realtor.com and other sites. This social proof provides a level of confidence that you may have when searching for the best real estate professional to work with to sell your oceanfront, waterfront, and luxury home.

Kathleen joined eXp Realty in 2019 to allow her the flexibility to run her real estate business in a more flexible environment. eXp is one of the world's fastest-growing real estate brokerages. Founded in 2009, we are now in 14 countries around the world with a community of over 79,000 real estate professionals, all connected through our unique cloud-based platform, eXp World.

Because of eXp's extensive connectivity, Kathleen has been helping people with relocation needs around the world. Call Kathleen Floryan if you are considering selling your home to have a discussion on what your next steps should be to get you moving in the right direction. As a solo agent Kathleen has an extensive team to support your every need but you will always work directly with Kathleen. Call Kathleen at 904-687-5146 any day from 9am to 9pm. She will answer your call.

Email: kathleen@kathfloryan.com

Website: kathleenfloryan.exprealty.com





Wine & Dine

ON THE FIRST COAST

PAGES 15-20

TABLE TALK

Welcome to Amici 2022



by LEIGH CORT

Chefs/restaurateurs doesn't usually start by owning their own kitchens. Freddy Underhill, owner of Amici Restaurant in St. Augustine Beach, had a roller coaster journey long before he and his wife Jenn purchased this well-

known, family-owned establishment in March 2020. It wasn't the most opportune month in American history, but their incredible family and small staff gathered together to breathe life into his dream. Together they brought it back into focus by winter 2022.

Chef Freddy's philosophy of putting love into food began when he worked in a neighborhood pizzeria washing dishes as a 13-year-old in Newtown, Connecticut. Similar to an actor who "waits in the wings for that first break," he was given chores that built his character — learning how to



Chef Freddy Underhill behind the scenes at the restaurant.

crack eggs, take orders, do food prep, and finally, he was given the reins to make a great pizza himself.

Efficiency, quality ingredients, preparing food that people love and purveying local ingredients were some of the important tenets of his later teen years at the Center for Culinary Arts. His energy kept Freddy on course between schooling and working



Freddy and Jenn Underhill

PHOTOS BY LEIGH CORT

full-time, realizing "the more he learned, the more he respected the food."

There are many coincidental stories about Freddy Underhill's connections to St. Augustine, especially with his wife Jenn's family and his moving to Palm Coast.

Finally, they, too, landed in Northeast

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ■

AMICI

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

Florida with a string of great restaurant opportunities for this young, spirited and passionate chef. For 13 years, he worked at Sunset Grille, graduating from sous chef to executive chef. Early 2020, when Freddy and Jenn purchased Amici and enlisted the talents of many family members, the Amici team placed first or second in every category of the annual Chowder Debate with New England Clam Chowder, Minorcan Conch Chowder and the wildly distinctive Creamy Datil Celery Chowder.

No doubt that Amici was ready for Freddy's innovative dishes that reflect his go-getting personality. Instead of limiting himself to narrow traditions of Italian favorites, his menu features numerous signature cult dishes like Pancetta Candita (aka candied bacon + datil) with Maple Candy Glaze and Pineapple and Fresh Clams Simmered in Lemon Garlic Broth served with homemade bread. After years of hearing endless suppositions about Italian food and tossing them aside, what's left



Amici Antipasto

is his curated menu of classic dishes with an Italian "heart," plus Freddy's exploration of unique combinations and flavors. Hint: With 10,000 taste buds on our tongue, the Lemon Artichoke Scallops served over angel hair pasta topped with lemon cream and artichoke sauce might become my lifetime favorite.

Entering the much-anticipated 2022 Taste of St. Augustine, Freddy wowed the enormous foodie crowd with the Grand Prize for Best Upscale Dish: Pancetta Candita atop Plantain Pancake with Smoked Tomato Aioli, Grilled Pineapple and Citrus Gremolata.

The excitement at Amici doesn't stop with awards. The fresh in-house made



Scallops & Shrimp Lemon Artichoke Sauce

PHOTOS BY LEIGH CORT

pastas are wildly popular as guests create their own dishes by combining the shape of a pasta (from gluten-free fettuccine to bucatini), a sauce (Wodka Vodka sauce, garlic & oil, basil cream, Alfredo or meat sauce) then a topping (veal, chicken, sausage, Maine lobster, meatball or fresh catch) ... all made-from-scratch, obviously.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 ■

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AMICI

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

If you feel that you have a sharp sense of the meals you yearn for, if you want less ritual and more reward, you can meander to the menu selections that are chef's specialties — like the luscious Chicken Francese with a fresh lemon butter that makes you encourage everyone at the table to try it. Or the Lombardo Marsala Chicken or Veal that teases you with its rich aroma long before you start twirling the spaghetti! Freddy's food is relentlessly unfussy — with sauces that you just have to enjoy to the bottom of the plate. He doesn't hold back, counting on his guests to explore some of the nuances of what he's creating behind the scenes.

Don't be shy about journeying away from rich Italian favorites; if you're a ribeye fan, you might easily fall in love with the Grilled Prime Ribeye accompanied by Maine lobster tails, perfectly roasted potatoes and crispy green beans. It's an exciting dish that changes with the seasonality of a multitude of unique accompaniments.

And then if you must, Amici's pizzas are

what lure patrons to "take out" or "dine in" with Freddy's delicious combinations of handcrafted masterpieces. Whether it's topped with a profusion of locally sourced toppings or a wildly fun Chicken Pot Pie Pizza, this happy staff of servers and managers will guide you through many options to please your pizza mood of the day.

Jenn and Freddy are a great husband/wife team who care deeply about their staff as much as they care about their guests. Freddy's "girls" know exactly how to care for the guests from arrival through service, allowing Chef to take care of his kitchen and "back of the house" team. Giving people a chance to shine, whether in the kitchen, at the table or bar, is what the original Amici family believed in, too. Their well-appointed special event ballroom isn't just for weddings, family reunions, fundraisers or corporate meetings. The fun is attending a comedy night or murder mystery while enjoying one of Chef's themed buffet dinners.

The Underhills have narrowed the field this year for family-inspired Italian eateries. It's still about an old-world casual ambience, whether at the bar, in a booth or inside



Grilled Prime Ribeye & Maine Lobster

PHOTO BY LEIGH CORT

the arched wall dining room. Amici is a neighborhood institution; when you step inside it's like mid-century unpretentious relax! Have a glass of Italian vino or ask if Freddy's No. 1 mixologist Kelley Fitzsimmons has made his secret Limoncello for a happy ending!

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Variety of vendors showcased during festival's main event

PHOTOS BY SUSAN GRIFFIN



Geri Price and Felicia Cox



Alcoholic drinks were a staple of the St. Augustine Food & Wine Festival.



Trudy Toche and Jennifer Burnett



Cooking demonstrates took place during the event.

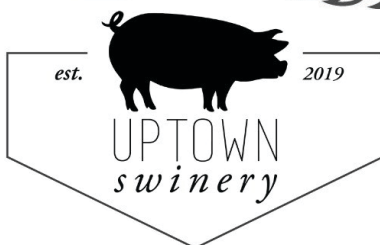
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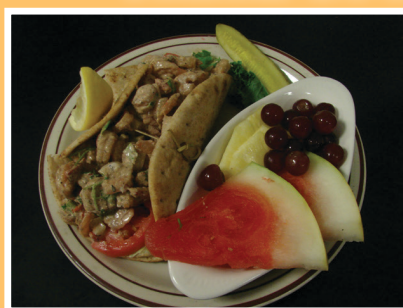
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— ST. AUGUSTINE FOOD + WINE FESTIVAL —

Smoke on the Walk event held at World Golf Village

PHOTOS BY SUSAN GRIFFIN



St. Augustine Distillery was set up at the St. Augustine's Food & Wine Festival's Smoke on the Walk May 6.



Guests visit vendor booths.

— ST. AUGUSTINE FOOD + WINE FESTIVAL —

Festival presents Mother's Day Jazz Brunch

PHOTOS BY SUSAN GRIFFIN



The St. Augustine Food & Wine Festival hosted a Mother's Day Jazz Brunch.



Guests were serenaded with music during the brunch.



Adventure Boat Tours in St. Augustine offers a shark adventure as the latest way to have fun on the water.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JIMMY HILL



Every shark caught on an excursion is tagged and released thanks to a unique partnership with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.



Up to six people can go on a shark adventure, but four is the ideal number.

Adventure Boat Tours offer unique shark excursion

by ANTHONY RICHARDS

There are a variety of ways to have fun on the Northeast Florida waterways, and they now include shark excursions, which are being offered as an option at Adventure Boat Tours in St. Augustine.

According to owner and captain Jimmy Hill, the shark adventure package lasts about two to three hours and boaters will get to experience fishing for sharks offshore.

“Reeling the shark in is what it’s all about,” Hill said. “When you hook a shark, it will make you think you’ve hooked a whale. It’s a heck of a fight, and you can get such an adrenaline rush from it.”

Proving that it is all about the fight is evident in that each shark caught during an excursion is tagged and released thanks to a unique partnership Adventure Boat Tours has developed with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Although Adventure Boat Tours still runs fishing charters, the shark adventure is something they are excited about introducing this summer.

“On the fishing side of things, we didn’t want to just keep

fishing for the sake of fishing,” Hill said. “If we are going out, we wanted our fishing to fill a need.”

The connection made with NOAA filled that void nicely with both parties benefiting from the partnership, as the boat tour offers passengers a once-in-a-lifetime experience and NOAA can further gather data for their research.

One way that the excursions look out for the best interest of both their passengers and the shark is by never bringing a shark into the boat.

Instead, they take photos of the shark in the water next to the boat before tagging and releasing it.

“We have experts on the boat to make sure we don’t overwork and do harm to the fish,” Hill said. “We always remember that it’s much more than just fishing.”

All the tackle and proper equipment needed for the trip is provided by the tour, including using specialty hooks that are designed for easy removal.

“One of the nice things about it is that you don’t have to go out for eight hours and get burnt,” Hill said. “We usually catch a shark, but at the end of the day, fishing is fishing and

there’s always the chance you won’t.”

However, even if the sharks elude a certain tour, there is still plenty of fun to be had just being out on the water and enjoying a relaxing time with friends or family.

Up to six people can go on a shark adventure, but four is the ideal number.

One of the most unique things about the shark tour is that any shark that is caught and tagged by a specific person will be noted and if that shark is caught again, the initial person that tagged the shark will be sent a report updating that person about the shark.

The shark adventure is just one option for the public to

choose from, including pontoon boats that can hold larger groups of up to 32 people.

“We offer all kinds of ways to have fun on the water,” Hill said. “It’s a great way to get out this summer.”

Tour guests are asked to bring coolers with food and drink and come equipped for the conditions, which usually means bringing the proper sun protection.

“We try to create a very convenient experience for everyone,” Hill said.

For more information about the shark adventure or other tours offered, go to adventureboat.tours for more details.



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SAFETY TIPS LEAD TO *fun times* WHEN BOATING



Operating a boat sober is the law.

PHOTO COURTESY OF NORTH FLORIDA MARINE ASSOCIATION

by ANTHONY RICHARDS

Before you go boating on the waterways this summer there are some important tips to remember to make it the safest and most fun experience it can be.

According to Erin Johnson, administrative director with the North Florida Marine Association, there is a list of seven things that that should always be on every boater's mind.

No. 1 on the list is to make sure there are enough life jackets for each person on

board in the case of an accident.

It is the law that all children 6 years old and younger should always have a life jacket on while a vessel 26 feet long or less is in operation.

According to Johnson, vessels that are more than 26 feet in length are considered a yacht and therefore fall under a different category of rules.

Another safety aspect the association heavily promotes is that all boaters take part in a boating safety class.

The classes often do not just focus on safety, but are also informative when it comes to navigation, tides and what to look for when monitoring whether patterns.

Remembering to check the weather forecast in the days leading up to a boating trip can go a long way in making sure the trip is an enjoyable one.

"If there are strong winds and rain coming, you probably don't want to be out three

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 ■



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SAFETY TIPS

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

on the water, because it's not going to be a fun time anyway," Johnson said. "There are so many apps, some that are designed with boaters and fishermen in mind."

Life jackets are not the only safety gear that is required to be onboard every boat.

A noise maker of some kind is needed that can be used to draw the attention of other boats in the event of an accident on the water.

Vessels 16-foot or longer are required to have a "throwable flotation device" to help in the rescue of a passenger that goes overboard.

However, there are certain new laws or initiatives that can change from year to year, and a newly implemented law this year is the need for all boaters to have an engine cut-off device.

"It is similar to a leash you would see when surfing," Johnson said. "It is a lanyard that is attached to the captain and around the helm of a boat, that way if the captain goes overboard the engine will immediately

cut off."

Johnson said there have been instances in the past where that situation occurred and the boat continues at its speed without anyone operating it, which can be dangerous for that boat and others around.

"It could be a fatal situation," Johnson said.

Another safety change that has been implemented is that fire extinguishers must now be changed out every 12 years, so she reminded all boaters to check their devices expiration dates before heading out.

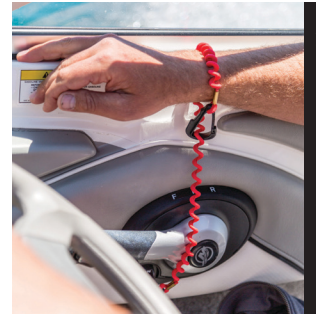
Electronic visual distress signals are also now allowed to be used on boats to go with or in place of flares, which had previously been the only option available.

If a long trek is planned for the boat, Johnson said that it is important give a "float plan" to others so that they have an idea of what part of the ocean you were planning to visit in case an emergency arises, and you do return as scheduled.

"It gives the Coast Guard a location where they pinpoint their search in the case of a search and rescue situation," Johnson said.



It is the law that all children 6 years old and younger should always wear life jacket while a vessel, 26 feet long or less, is in operation.



A newly implemented law this year is the need for all boaters to have an engine cut-off device, which is intended to stop the engine if the captain goes overboard.

The final safety tip to remember this summer is to remember to always operate a boat sober.

"Boats and alcohol just don't mix," Johnson said. "Make sure to have a designated captain and driver for the drive home once the boat gets back on the trailer."

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Mike Whisnant started shaping surfboards in 1989, which is also when he opened his shop in Atlantic Beach.



Derek Jackson joined Mike Whisnant about three years ago and took over the glassing procedure under his brand Useless Toys Glassing.

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY RICHARDS



CRAFTING THE PERFECT SURFBOARD

Atlantic Beach native has shaped boards for generations of surfers

by ANTHONY RICHARDS

Mike Whisnant has been building surfboards since 1973 and shaping them since 1989, the latter of which is also when he opened Whisnant Surfboards in his hometown of Atlantic Beach.

“I started with a buddy of mine in his backyard garage, which is pretty much the way everybody starts,” Whisnant said. “I started shaping in ’89 and that business just took off, and now here we are 33 years later.”

However, even after 33 years it is Whisnant’s passion for surfing and his continued search to one day build the perfect board that continues to drive him.

He moved with his family from Virginia to Atlantic Beach when he was 3 years old and was first introduced to the world of surfing when he was 13.

According to Whisnant, he remembers a friend in seventh grade taking him to the library to show him a copy of Surfer Magazine, and right away he knew that was something he wanted to try.

As soon as he hit the water he was hooked, and it has been a major part of his life ever since.

“I picked it up, and literally two years later I was building my own boards,” Whisnant said.

One of the surfboards still in Whisnant’s collection is the first board he ever shaped, which he enjoys having around because it reminds him of how far he has come over the years.

“I go back and look at it every once-in-a-while and it’s just so sad,” Whisnant chuckled.

One of the things he has seen firsthand over the years is the advancement in boards and the characteristics people are looking for from their surfboard.

“The boards we were building back in ’73 were so different because they were basic in terms of the shape,” Whisnant said. “Usually, the special thing about it was the color. It was a very unique time, but we were just looking to build the best with what we had.”

According to Whisnant, the introduction of Instagram has given people from around the world a platform to show off their creative side when it comes to surfboard design.

“It changed everything and made it to where you really have to pay attention and be on it,” Whisnant said. “You can see stuff and if you understand it, you can recreate it even though that board just showed up in the world. It could be super cool looking, but it’s also important to know if it works.”

After all the years, he still finds himself in awe when he spots his logo or one of his boards out in public and his first urge is to pinch himself to make sure he’s not dreaming.

“Even this long into it, it’s such a hard feeling for me to describe,” Whisnant said.

One of the things Whisnant prides himself in is his ability to listen to the customer and hash out what they are looking for from their surfboard.

“I’m a local business owner, so I have to take care of people because I won’t be in this for much longer if I don’t,” Whisnant said. “Customer service is very high on our list.”

The fact that people can have an idea and then see that idea come to fruition is what gives the authenticity to having a custom-built board.

“No board is the same,” Whisnant said.

His favorite part of the job is when he finishes a surfboard and presents it to its new owner for the first time and seeing the reaction on their face.

“When the board’s done and the person walks in, they just lose their mind, because I’ve taken what’s in their head and put it into foam and fiberglass,” Whisnant said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 ■

SURFBOARD

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

Up until about three years ago Whisnant did the entire process himself, that included shaping, airbrushing, glassing, putting the fins in and sanding and finishing.

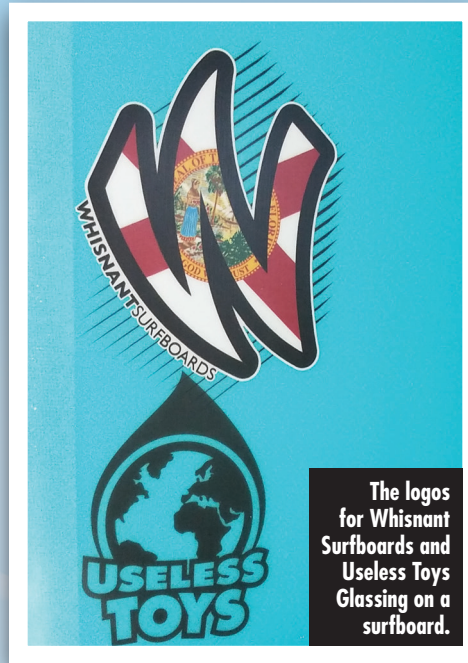
That is until he heard about his friend Derek Jackson, who had worked at some major surfboard labels in California, thinking of making the move to Florida to be close to family.

Whisnant offered for Jackson to take over his glass shop since it was already in place and functioning. The glass shop is now called Useless Toys Glassing.

“It’s so much nicer now, because if someone wants some crazy resin colors, he can do all that,” Whisnant said. “We do almost 20 boards a week here, which was about five when I was doing it myself. It’s a totally different animal now.”

Whisnant is a three-time Surf Expo shaping champion, having won the Florida Shape Off in 2011 and 2015, and the Master or Masters competition in 2016.

But despite all the accolades, being



The logos for Whisnant Surfboards and Useless Toys Glassing on a surfboard.

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY RICHARDS



A variety of boards both short and long are custom made at the shop.

alone in the shaping room with just him, the board he’s working on and his music cranked up offers him a tranquil setting that can only be matched when he’s out on the water.

“It’s so different and yet so the same,” Whisnant said. “There are a lot of times

when I know the waves are good, but I’ve got a shape in front of me that I’m really intrigued with and I’ll say to myself, ‘I’ll go surfing in a little bit, because I’ve got to get this done.’”

And just like that, the search to make the best surfboard continues.

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Summer PARTIES

JUST NEED GREAT GUESTS



by LEIGH CORT

The informality of entertaining at home today, with occasional guests from around the globe making reservations at your home to stay for a while and get the Florida sand in their shoes, creates a mood that is casual and inviting. Hosts can handle the entire event themselves or enlist the talents and creativity from professionals — whose “party businesses” are exactly what might take the stress away and also entertain the guests with their savoir faire. Whether it’s a late lunch for 12 or a cocktail reception for 50, your orchestration of the party begins with inviting the people who love to participate by being a great guest.

Summer entertaining often means serving food to be eaten with the fingers, sipping jug wine and taking off one’s shoes. Guests do enjoy helping themselves, although it is never careless party planning. With friends and family offering to bring something, it’s okay to decline their offer and let them know that a caterer is handling the details; all they need to do is show up!

Northeast Florida is an ethnic smorgasbord that has become our American table. It’s both intriguing and challenging because, in the course of the meal, you might travel from the Orient to Europe, to South America and the Mediterranean. And if a guest insists upon bringing something without having to be part of the event planning, a pot of fresh herbs might be a perfect finishing touch.

The catering options this season are endless. Here are a few that will take the worry out of making a wise choice.

CHEF CHRISS BROWN

Chef Chriss has been catering for 30 years — and knows how to make an event special. One of the premiere caterers who



Chriss Brown

has been working with the Jacksonville Jaguars, many Jacksonville area corporations and private clientele, she has the knowledge, culinary talent and experience to save clients time, money and headaches.

Well-known for her Route 90 Southern Smoked BBQ catering, she can even provide an entire menu directly from her traveling smoker that makes her clients yearn for more! With 50% of her catering in private homes, she recognizes that “people are going back to the safe choice of entertaining at home!”

ChefChriss.com

THE CHEF’S GARDEN

For more than 23 years, The Chef’s Garden has been creating memorable events throughout the Southeast. From block parties to engagements, Liz and Jen Earnest lead their team creatively from designing the menu to the party’s downbeat! They love transporting their guests to different ports o’ call through the food and experience, using their own specific décor for each theme along with a wide array of menu selections.

Summer luaus are especially popular at the beach and The Chef’s Garden has

created a luau “Par-Tini” — that is, a party package for smaller events that don’t require staffing. Delicious Coconut Crusted Chicken, Chili Garlic Salmon and Kahlua Roasted Pulled Pork ... a yummy do-it-yourself home gathering.

With The Chef’s Garden handling every detail, all you need to do is “pick up the phone and call them.” They are passionate about letting their clients be their inspiration!

cateringjacksonville.com



The Chef’s Garden

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LEIGH CORT

A TASTE OF LEBANON

From intimate cocktail receptions and dinner parties to elegant full-service catered events, Sherine Akl and Helen Attieh are excited to bring their authentic Lebanese cuisine and traditions to Northeast Florida’s entertaining world.

A Taste of Lebanon is prepared from their hearts, and the kitchen is Sherine’s “Happy Place.” Both partners grew up in a very hospitable culture learning recipe secrets and cooking skills that their guests find

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 ■

EARTH KINSHIP TAKES PEOPLE BACK TO NATURE

by SHAUN RYAN

There's a part of Florida that many visitors never see. It's been called the real Florida. The natural surroundings of the Sunshine State, apart from theme parks and touristy places.

For those who have long lived here, the so-called "secret spots" are no secret, but for others, they are difficult — some would say impossible — to find. That is, not without a guide.

AyoLane Halusky, owner of and lead guide for Earth Kinship, knows those places and how to get people there. The former park naturalist for the St. Johns County Department of Recreation and Parks has decades of experience exploring and learning from nature.

As a boy, he worked alongside his father, who launched

the Earth Stewardship Conference in the 1980s. Though the three-day conferences brought in some prominent speakers to address issues around protecting the Earth, young Halusky wasn't satisfied with that. He wanted to know: Where's the action?

After graduating from college, he went on to a career that answered that question. He held 31-day wilderness trips for kids through Outward Bound and then went on to work as a chief ranger at the University of North Florida. There, he enhanced the eco adventure program, which grew from 100 participating students to about 5,000 a semester.

He worked with Alpine Towers to design the first-ever rope course that went through a natural setting. Finally, he went to work for St. Johns County.

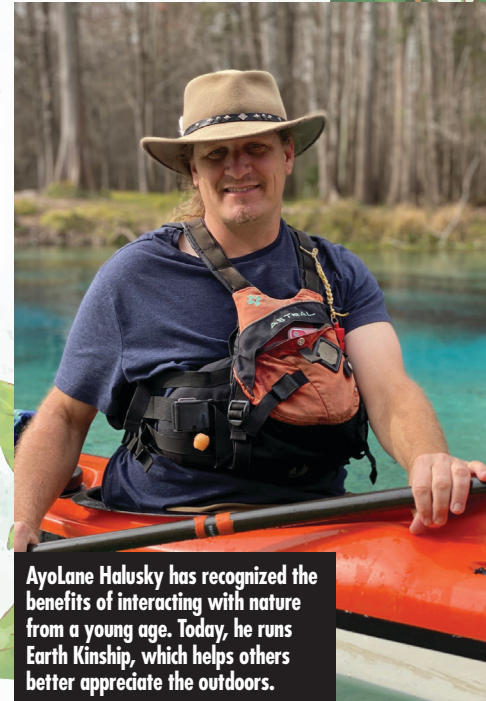
This year, the American Canoe Association-certified Florida Master Naturalist launched Earth Kinship.

He offers kayak and hiking tours, naturalist training and forest bathing, a type of guided meditation in the woods. He would also like to add special chats around the fire with local historians who can shine some light on often overlooked but important local historical figures.

Halusky touts the benefits of spending time in nature, benefits he has experienced himself.

Those interested in learning more can go to earthkinship.us. He can also be found on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO



AyoLane Halusky has recognized the benefits of interacting with nature from a young age. Today, he runs Earth Kinship, which helps others better appreciate the outdoors.

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SUMMER PARTIES

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 26

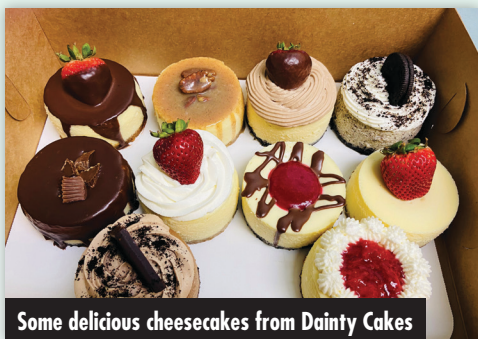
irresistible. Lebanese food brings to mind a kaleidoscope of sensory elements with aromatic herbs and spices, a mezza of hot and cold dishes and their mystical homemade pita bread. From traditional hummus and kebobs to colorful delicious “passables” (hors d’oeuvres), you’d be amazed at how many favors of baklava you can serve!

DAINTY CAKES

Sylvia Fitzgerald’s Dainty Cakes catering is about one virtuoso treat: cheesecakes! Feasting on her rich, beautifully designed cheesecakes means that we can’t resist the seduction of her tiny masterpieces. The three sizes of colorful dainty cakes are bite-sized (really three or four bites), Dainties are three inches round and perfect for sharing. Then, finally, the full-size, nine-inch cakes. Dainty Cakes might be a grand finale to any event, or they could enjoy the limelight of being the only catered item at a dessert party.

A sampling of the 11 flavors include Caramel Pecan, Peanut Butter Cup, Chocolate Raspberry Drizzle, Strawberries & Cream, Irish Cream and Chocolate Ganache.

DaintyCakes.com



Some delicious cheesecakes from Dainty Cakes

WHAT ABOUT BEVERAGES?

What delightfully fun beverage option is one of the cleverest new businesses of the year? Yes, it’s the Tap Truck! Melinda Wood and Greg are driving their restored 1940s truck around to parties throughout Northeast Florida and wowing guests as soon as they glimpse the big white vintage vehicle with beverages tapping out of the side of the truck.

Brought to you by the “Director of Happiness,” it’s a unique way to entertain your guests and keep the party lighthearted for the summer. The truck can be parked outside or driven into your garage, warehouse or party barn. Whether it’s a kids’ event

with lemonade, punch or flavored water or fine beer and wine, one client sums it up: “Tap Truck was an absolute hit at our dinner event, and the best part was the beer and wine that we chose to celebrate was all from local breweries and wineries.”

TapTruckNeFL.com



Tap Truck brings the beverages

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY LEIGH CORT

TAKING CARE OF THE DETAILS

In addition to caterers that might provide their own staffing to handle the infinite details of set-up, service throughout the event, clean-up and sundry event roles that pop up at the last minute, Hospitality Staff has many solutions. Launched in 1997, their servers, bartenders, cooks and all uniformed trained event employees are experienced in the art of hospitality.

Each Hospitality Staff member must work for one year in good standing before offering their services in private homes. Owner Ida Gardner stands behind every employee and guarantees that from arrival and set-up to clean-up and departure, they leave each home or party location exactly the way they found it — and sometimes even better!

hospitalitystaff.com

SETTING THE TEMPO

Even if you’ve been in love with hosting parties since you were a child, even if you loved following caterers around the mansion, even if your grandmother taught you everything you know about table settings, even if people and presents and trays were everywhere in sight at all of your family reunions — music is the heartbeat of almost every event!

Kelly Scott Music has been providing music at events since 1997 (celebrating its 25th anniversary is year) and was featured in the 2022 Jacksonville Jazz Festival as part of the “Hall of Fame” Inductee Allstars group on the Big Stage. Their musical repertoire is extensive, covering favorites from the Great American Songbook to pop jazz that is reminiscent of Michael Buble, Diana Krall, Frank Sinatra, Al Jarreau and

a songbook of great celebrity entertainers. Jazz blues, jazz funk, Bossa Nova, pop jazz and rhythms from New Orleans — they custom-design the band and musical tempo for every party.

The size of the event determines the representation of the band, which ranges from a duo of Lisa Kelly (vocals) and JB Scott (trumpet + quality music tracks) up to their 18-piece Big Band.

An eight-time Downbeat Magazine award winner for voice, composition and arranging, Lisa Kelly is known for her sophisticated stage presence and song styling. JB’s masterful style on trumpet and flugelhorn is sassy, grooving, fiery and beautifully sensitive. He spent years playing in New Orleans clubs of Bourbon Street as front man for the Dukes of Dixieland, in the Latin clubs of Miami, on tours in Japan, featured with symphonies and in the big band sections of the Jimmy Dorsey Orchestra!

KellyScottMusic.com



The Lisa Kelly-JB Scott Quintet is one iteration of performers from Kelly Scott Music. The number of performers can range in size from two to 18 to match the size of the festivities.

THE BARN AT PALM VALLEY

If you need to have your entertaining worries roll away, call Deb Chapin and have the entire party “off property” at Ponte Vedra Beach’s cleverly designed The Barn at Palm Valley. With the sweetness of summer that allows you an undemanding, pleasant designed-for-relaxation-and-conversation gathering, take time to pick a few wildflowers, pour yourself a glass of champagne and send out the invitations.

PalmValleyBarn.com



Shrine undergoes years of renovations

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Local builder helps transform Catholic landmark into world-class destination

by SHAUN RYAN

In the early 1600s, Spanish settlers of St. Augustine established the first Shrine to the Blessed Virgin Mary in the U.S. Today, an image of Our Lady of La Leche graces a small mission chapel in the heart of what is referred to as the “sacred acre.” Pilgrims come from all of the world to pray for fertility, the health of their children and safe delivery of those expecting.

With a colorful history dating back more than four centuries, the church’s property has undergone many transformations. Over the past 14 years, local builder J.C. Harward &



National Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche at Mission Nombre De Dios is a quiet, peaceful place to visit.

Associates has helped renovate this Catholic landmark into a world-class destination.

“Our company was very young back in 2008 when we were invited to bid on a project at the National Shrine,” explained John Harward, owner of J.C. Harward & Associates, a commercial, industrial and residential construction company located in Northeast Florida. “When we won the bid, this became

more than just a project, but a passion for our family and our company. In fact, we’ve now helped build or renovate more than 30 churches in the area.”

Over the past decade plus, J.C. Harward & Associates has worked on more than a dozen projects at the National Shrine of Our Lady

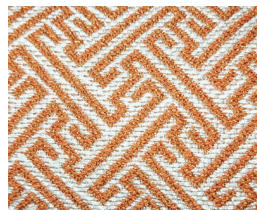
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MASTER MAGICIAN brings his act to St. Augustine

PHOTOS BY SHAUN RYAN
Magician Bill Abbott performs an illusion at his Magic Hideaway.

by SHAUN RYAN

Something magical is happening in St. Augustine. Literally.

On May 27, the Magic Hideaway, an intimate, upscale, adult-gearred experience opened at the Casa Monica Resort & Spa. The show is the creation of Bill Abbott, named Canadian Magician of the Year by the Canadian Association of Magicians, and his wife, Rebecca Abbott.

It's a two-hour program that has audiences alternately laughing and gasping in astonishment. That's because Abbott employs his comedic skills to put his audience at ease and misdirect their attention while setting up the unexpected reveal.

Recently, at the conclusion of a particularly puzzling illusion, one former skeptic declared: "I'm a believer."

One reason Abbott's approach is so effective is that he does close-up magic in a specially decorated room that seats only 22 people. It's impossible to dismiss his illusions as one might some distant stage show or television production, where all sorts of trickery might be possible.

"It's much more impactful," he said. "People are so close that they can't deny what's happening."

Not that Abbott can't do the other kind of magic. As a youth, he was acquainted with David Copperfield's illusion manager, from whom he bought several hand-made illusions. But he ultimately gravitated toward



Magician Bill Abbott surprises his audience with some pre-show sleight-of-hand tricks.



John Quick holds a smoking cocktail in the VIP area outside the Magic Hideaway.

the style he now prefers.

When guests arrive at the Casa Monica's Cobalt Lounge, they are admitted to a VIP area, where they can enjoy magic-themed cocktails — including The Magic Word, which releases a cloud of smoke when someone uses a small magic wand to pop a bubble atop the beverage.

Abbott mingles with the audience, performing a sleight-of-hand pre-show. House Manager Rebecca Abbott then

ushers attendees into the Magic Hideaway showroom, with its curtained walls, palms, ornate Moroccan chandelier and glowing crystal balls on the tables.

Then, Bill Abbott takes everyone on a journey filled with astounding illusions, frequently with a lot of audience participation.

It's easy to see why actor Samuel L. Jackson, who once hired Abbott to perform a show in Toronto, declared, "This man is incredible!"

Abbott has been interested in magic since he was 12 years old, the son of a concert pianist and an educator. He was paid to present shows at birthday parties when he was in high school and went on to supplement his college tuition by doing card tricks at night clubs and bars.

He earned a degree in social work and worked in the field for two years before being faced with a difficult choice.

"I had to made a decision," he said, "because I was actually getting more and more bookings. I had to make a decision whether or not to stay there or to go. I chose magic, which was life-altering — and scary."

In the early 2000s, the Abbotts launched Bill Abbott Magic, a company that supplies professional performers with props, routines and more. In 2010, they initiated their website and have gained customers from all

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31 ■

MAGICIAN

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

over the world.

It was about this time that the Abbotts took their sons on a trip from their home in Toronto to Walt Disney World. On the advice of a friend, they stopped in St. Augustine.

“We fell in love with it,” Bill Abbott said. “We were like: ‘This place is fantastic!’”

The family kept returning during vacations until finally making the decision to settle here.

They rented a space in the Nation’s Oldest City with plans to open a theater with servers and a champaign room and an ambiance similar to a jazz club in Canada where Bill Abbott had done a successful show for several years.

But just as they were about to open, COVID-19 hit. At first, they thought it would be all over in a week. But as the months passed with no way to bring in audiences, they realized there was nothing to do but give up their lease.

Eventually, things began to reopen.

People were going out again. And Bill Abbott wrote to Richard Kessler, chairman of CEO of The Kessler Enterprise, owner of the Casa Monica. He suggested the idea of bringing his magic show to the iconic hotel. Kessler agreed.

“He took a chance, and here we are,” said Abbott.

Abbott compared the process of inventing a new illusion to reverse-engineering.

“Magic is really problem-solving,” he said. “It’s like, we know what the end game is. How do I get there?”

And watching Abbott work, one realizes how much earlier in the show he sets up these endings.

After the show concludes, Abbott happily joins his audience back in the VIP area, where he patiently signs autographs and poses for photos with his fans.

The Magic Hideaway will be presented at 8:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, June 24 and 25. After that, shows will be offered at 6 and 8:30 p.m. each Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Tickets may be purchased at magichideaway.com/tickets.

Casa Monica Resort & Spa is located at 95 Cordova St. St. Augustine.



Rebecca and Bill Abbott moved their family to St. Augustine after years of visiting.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS



Magician Bill Abbott demonstrates his dexterity in shuffling a deck of cards.

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Sarah Stecker, CEO and founder of Travel Advisors Unlimited, enjoys some quite time at Crescent Beach, south of St. Augustine.



Sarah Stecker wears her Captain America shirt during a visit to Epcot.

PLANNING TO TRAVEL?

Why it's important to consult a travel adviser

by SARAH STECKER,
Travel Advisors Unlimited

Let's chat travel.

For the last 10 years the small business travel industry has taken a hit due to the "quick click" booking engines available on the internet.

Remember back-in-the-day when you could call or walk in to see your local travel adviser (an actual person), sit down, establish that personal relationship and create an amazing vacation you are still talking about today? Now, you are stressing about making sure you are putting in the correct dates and organizing your reservation numbers! Shall I bring up if you booked your transfers as well as insurance for those "just in case" situations?

Oh, and the most important: Do you have any idea — other than reviews — where the hotel is, if it is safe, will it accommodate all of your needs? Yep, I bet you are thinking you should have called your local travel adviser.

Let's chat about one of the latest travel trends we are seeing: the comeback of cruising!

Since the first no-sail order back at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, cruise lines have faced many challenges, including required halting of operations and dramatic loss of revenue. However, all of that appears to be turning around as passengers are excited and ready to cruise again! That, combined with the CDC dropping its advisory against cruise travel led to record cruise bookings in March of 2022.



Paddle boarding is in Mexico at the Fives Beach Resort.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SARAH STECKER

More ships are heading back out to sea, and many destinations from the Caribbean to Alaska are expecting to see a boom in cruise travel this year. Several cruise operators, including Royal Caribbean, Carnival and Disney Cruise Line, have even launched brand new ships following the pandemic.

In order to minimize risk and put passengers at ease, most cruise lines require proof of vaccination or pre-cruise COVID testing. Requirements vary by age and cruise operator and are consistently being updated based on the most recent CDC guidelines and government mandates. This is a major reason to consider utilizing the services of a travel agency for your upcoming adventures, including cruising. In addition to keeping you up to date on the latest policy changes, we are also receiving constant feedback regarding current cruise conditions, either by traveling ourselves or through feedback from our guests who are cruising. That allows us

to give our clients the latest tips for making the most of their experiences onboard and in port.

And why us? Travel Advisors Unlimited LLC is a local, full-service travel agency offering theme-park packages, all-inclusive Caribbean vacations, custom tours, destination wedding/honeymoon planning, domestic and international travel, and of course, cruises!

Based in St. Augustine, Sarah Stecker, CEO and founder, started the company after over a decade of working as a travel consultant with other agencies when she saw a major shift in the travel industry and a demand for personal client reassurance following the shake-up that occurred during the pandemic.

Travel advisers provide the support clients need in the event of an unexpected challenge, delay or cancellation before or during travel. They are there to help you navigate those situations that have the potential to ruin your vacation plans.

So, as you prepare for your next adventure — whether it is a cruise or any other type of travel, remember to reach out to your local travel advisers!



Sarah Stecker, CEO and founder of Travel Advisors Unlimited, is seen on a hiking trip in Canada, where she followed waterfall trails and camped under the stars.

SHRINE

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

of La Leche at Mission Nombre De Dios, located at 101 San Marco Ave., just north of downtown St. Augustine. This includes renovating the old church, Prince of Peace, with a complete interior remodel as well as spearheading stone memorial walls, walkway and other elements of the Rosary Garden.

Additional work also includes relocating the existing gift shop and adding storage and office space as well as renovations of the lagoon bridge and the addition of landscaping, irrigation, lighting, station markers, bulkheads, walkways and fencing around the property.

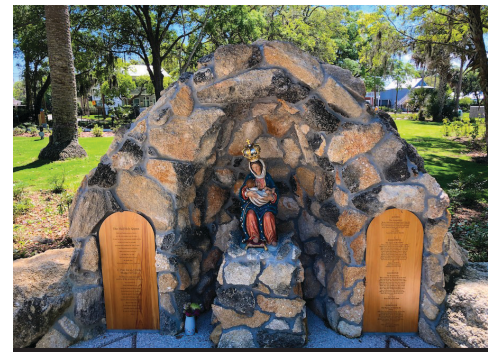
Most importantly, J.C. Harward worked on building, renovating and adding elements to The Great Cross, Pilgrim Retreat Center & Pavilion and Museum & Gift Shop.

“Portions of the property, including the gift shop, had flooded during Hurricanes Matthew and Irma,” Harward said. “All of the renovations and new structures that we built were constructed with flooding prevention in mind. We also worked on historic

preservation as many artifacts were found along with portions of the original church foundation. Archaeologists were called in to investigate and excavate. Over the past 14 years, working on more than a dozen projects at National Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche at Mission Nombre De Dios has been an incredible honor for both my company and my family.”



The bronze statue of Fr. Francisco López de Mendoza Grajales, thought to be the first parish priest in the United States, is seen on the grounds of Mission Nombre De Dios. The Great Cross is in the background.



A statue of Our Lady of La Leche is seen on the grounds of Mission Nombre De Dios in St. Augustine.



A foot bridge over the lagoon leads to the mission proper.

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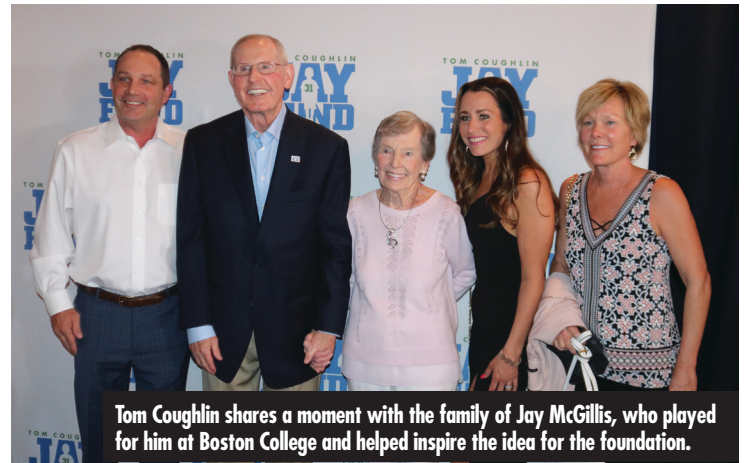


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Tom Coughlin started the Jay Fund years ago with the mission of helping families and children battling cancer.



Tom Coughlin shares a moment with the family of Jay McGillis, who played for him at Boston College and helped inspire the idea for the foundation.

Jay Fund continues mission with golf classic



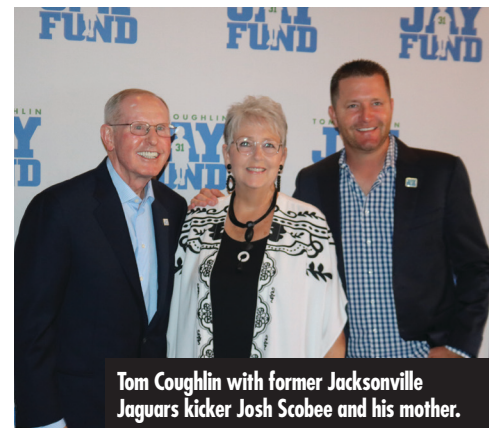
Tony and Angie Boselli

The Tom Coughlin Jay Fund held its annual Jay Fund Golf Classic May 16, which included a dinner and social May 15.

Current and former athletes from across the sports world took part in the event, as a sign of support for Super Bowl-winning coach Tom Coughlin, who spent years of his career as head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars.

This year's event raised a record \$849,000, which will be used to help families battling childhood cancer.

PHOTOS BY ANTHONY RICHARDS



Tom Coughlin with former Jacksonville Jaguars kicker Josh Scobee and his mother.



The Jay Fund Golf Classic dinner was held May 15 in the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse.



Dugan and Michelle Murphy



Thomas Durand, Carrie Durand and Phil Taylor



Nicole Smith, Jamie Csorna and Shannon Spalding



Scot and Lisa Langley



Cynthia and Martin VanTrieste



Chuck Ayers and Sally Ayers at the 1884 Giving Society event, which benefits Daniel.



Angi Palmieri, Stacey Starsiak, Janet Coulther, Mindy Sigle, ShiAnne O'Connor, Annie Cuneo and Stuart Ferber, all representing The Ferber Company, gather for a photo during the recent 1884 Giving Society event, which benefits Daniel.



Rick Powell and Kelly Kenne-Powell of Abentras, located in Ponte Vedra, during the 1884 Giving Society event, which benefits Daniel.



Bruce Brownell, Jan Brownell, Emily Smith and Scott Smith at the 1884 Giving Society event, which benefits Daniel.

1884 GIVING SOCIETY event benefits children on First Coast

Daniel, Florida's oldest child service agency, recently hosted its annual 1884 Giving Society event at its Belfort Road campus in Southpoint.

The outdoor event celebrated the generosity of the nonprofit's loyal donors and enabled them to see how their gifts are making a positive impact with opportunities to tour one of their newly renovated residential treatment cottages and to get a peek at the cottage currently under construction.

The organization, originally established as an orphanage, is today a multi-service agency that helps thousands of children, youth and families through a variety of programs.

Program services include a residential treatment/statewide inpatient psychiatric program, specialized therapeutic foster care, Project Prepare (a homeless youth program), case management and support, Daniel Academy School, school-based support, a school-based mental health program, a community adult mental health program, Daniel Memorial Institute and the Florida Adoption Information Center.

Daniel is named after James Jaquelin Daniel, the legendary Jacksonville community leader who dedicated his time, wealth and life to the betterment of children.

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Dr. Arun Gulani and Jorge Rivera at Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts.



St. Johns County Deputy County Administrator Joy Andrews talks with County Commissioner Christian Whitehurst.



Artist Eugene Quinn gives a live painting demonstration on the beach outside The Surf Club at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club during Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts on Sunday, May 15.



Entertainment was provided by Prince Pele's Polynesian Revue.



Guests were treated to an elegant dinner at The Surf Club at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club.

PHOTOS BY SHAUN RYAN

Area artists recognized at *annual celebration*

Beaches event raises money for First Coast Cultural Center

by SHAUN RYAN

The third annual Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts raised about \$85,000 for the First Coast Cultural Center while recognizing the accomplishments of local artists and supporters of the arts.

The sold-out benefit was held May 15 at The Surf Club at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club.

Attendees were treated to dinner, entertainment, a silent auction for exotic trips and live artist demonstrations.

Entertainment was provided by Prince Pele's Polynesian Revue, which featured authentic Pacific Island music and hula

dancing, as well as a fire dance and lots of humor.

Featured artist Eugene J. Quinn set up his easel on the sand in the back of the club, where he carried out a live painting of the ocean waves. The second featured artist, Piedad Camacho showed off her work, a unique style of creating an image using a natural fiber called fique, which is native to South America and is used in rope and packing.

Awards were presented in several categories:

- **Volunteer of the Year:** Charlotte Chastain
- **Chairman's Award:** Jorge Rivera.
- **Emerging Artist Award:** Claire Weaver. Other nominees: Teresa Cook, Joe Desiderio and Camacho.
- **Ron & Hilah Autrey Education & Advocacy Award:** Enrique Mora. Other nominees: Ellen Diamond, Kimberly Miller and Rivera.

• **The Art of Giving Award:** Steven G. "Jerry" Norton. Other nominees: Art With a Heart in Healthcare and the St. Johns Cultural Council.

• **Community Impact Award:** Art With a Heart in Healthcare. Other nominees: Miller, Norton and Rivera.

• **Irene Lazzara's Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts Award:** Ellen Diamond. Other nominees: Art With a Heart in Healthcare, Norton and Rivera.



Ellen Diamond, third from left, received Irene Lazzara's Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts Award.

PALATKA BLUE CRAB FESTIVAL RETURNS

Music, rides, good food and more draw crowds to waterfront

For nearly 30 years, the popular and family-friendly Palatka Blue Crab Festival has become an annual tradition, attracting thousands of guests to the scenic waterfront in downtown Palatka.

This year's festival was held May 27-29 and featured 34 musical acts spread across three stages.

Headliners included R&B singer Ginuwine, known for hits like "Pony" and "So Anxious," Grammy-nominated country music band Little Texas and reggae icons The Original Wailers, as well as Meachum L. Clarke & Company Gospel Choir, The Band Be Easy, Fortune Child, Papercutt, Chillula and more.

"The City of Palatka hired us this year to help them transform a hometown event into

a world-class festival that will attract people from all over," said Jeanetta Cebollero, co-owner of Ancient City Entertainment, which produced this year's event. "We chose musical acts that would appeal to a wide range of fans from country and classic rock to R&B and even a popular local '80s cover band. After the Palatka Blue Crab Festival had to be canceled a few years because of funding and the pandemic, we're excited to help bring this iconic, family-friendly festival back and make it bigger and better than ever."

The festival also featured dozens of vendors and food trucks, carnival rides, a kids' zone, petting zoo, Gatorland Water Ski Show, karate demonstration, full Gospel program on Sunday, fireworks, New Orleans-style brass band and, of course, plenty of blue crabs.

The blue crab, a highly sought-after shellfish, lives along the Atlantic Coast and in the Gulf of Mexico. It can be prepared dozens of ways, including steamed with Old Bay, marinated in a salad, added to a gumbo, or simply boiled with butter.



The Palatka Blue Crab Festival returned in May after a hiatus due in part to the pandemic.

PHOTOS BY SUSAN GRIFFIN

"Traditionally, this festival has been held along the riverfront in downtown Palatka to honor the members of the U.S. military who died while serving our country," said Cebollero. "It's an amazing opportunity to get to help grow this small-town festival, give remembrance to our military, and spend an amazing Memorial Day weekend with friends and family watching live music and feasting on fresh seafood."





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The sun rises on the Lads and Lassies Tournament.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

ANGLERS WIN BIG

AT WOLFSON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL BASS TOURNAMENT

Event raises more than \$435K

More than 1,000 anglers in 539 boats took to the water in Palatka in May to compete in the 33rd annual Wolfson Children's Hospital Bass Tournament, widely recognized as one of the largest bass fishing tournaments in Florida.

The three-day event featured different competitions each day, culminating in the main tournament on May 21. Wyatt Kinney of Bunnell and Austin Black of East Palatka won first place overall with a five-fish aggregate weight of 29.89 lbs. Second place went to Brett Bollinger and Justin Atkinson, both of Green Cove Springs, with a total weight of 24.57 lbs. Michael Hall of Yulee and Tracey Duckett of Lake City took home third place overall with a five-fish weight of 23.62 lbs.

The winners of Thursday's Lads and Lassies Tournament were Steve and Kirsten Bishop of DeLand, with a five-fish aggregate weight of 24.84 lbs.; followed by Wyatt Kinney and Alyssa Gross of Bunnell in second place; and Jason and Jasmin Phiel of Palatka in third.

During the VIP & Friends Tournament on May 20, Robin Shiver and Syler Prince of Palatka took home first with an aggregate weight of 19.15 lbs. Danny Inabnett and Randy Sievert of DeLeon came in second place; and Edwin Smith and Jace Stokes of Glen St. Mary came in third.

Winners took home more than \$48,000 in cash prizes.

This year's Bass Tournament raised more

than \$435,000 in donations, bringing the total contributed to Wolfson Children's Hospital in the event's 33-year history to more than \$6 million. All proceeds from this year's event benefit the Wolfson Children's C. Herman and Mary Virginia Terry Heart Institute, helping fund life-saving cardiology and heart surgery equipment and state-of-the-art technology.

"We look forward to this event every year because it brings in anglers from across the Southeast along with spectators from the local area, all to raise money for children who are fighting serious health battles," said Sam Dean, tournament co-chair and Baptist Health system director of plant facilities. "Everyone in Northeast Florida knows someone who has received care at Wolfson Children's, and it's an honor to be able to contribute to help make a difference in the lives of these children and families."

The Wolfson Children's Hospital Bass Tournament began in 1989, when the director of the plant facilities department of Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, along with several others, wanted to raise funds for technological advancements at Wolfson Children's Hospital.

Today, it is one of the largest tournaments in the state raising money for kids. Wolfson Children's Hospital, provides comprehensive medical and surgical care for sick and injured children across North Florida, South Georgia and beyond.

The 34th annual Wolfson Children's Hospital Bass Tournament is scheduled to take place May 18-20, 2023. Early bird registration is now open online.



Anglers seek winning catches during the Wolfson Children's Hospital Bass Tournament.



Wyatt Kinney of Bunnell and Austin Black of East Palatka won first place in the Wolfson Children's Hospital Bass Tournament.



Steve and Kirsten Bishop of DeLand were the winners in the Lads and Lassies Tournament.



Robin Shiver and Syler Prince of Palatka took home first place in the VIP & Friends Tournament.

Ximenez-Fatio House Museum awarded \$8K for restoration

The Ximenez-Fatio House Museum has been chosen as the recipient of a \$8,000 grant awarded by the Americana Corner Grant Program. The award will allow the museum to begin a major restoration and preservation project on the 1798 coquina and tabby building.

It is one of only 31 coquina buildings remaining in St. Augustine.

The project will begin by carefully removing mildew on the lower part of the coquina walls. The mildew needs to be carefully removed by hand as power washing methods would destroy the delicate coquina. When the removal process is complete, this will then allow for annual protective coatings of limewash on the building exterior.

“Through the generosity of the Americana Corner Grant Program, we will continue restoring and preserving this very special house museum building for future generations to come.” said Stefanie Kite, operations manager of the Ximenez-Fatio House Museum.

The Americana Corner Grant Program assists organizations focused on telling the

story of America from its founding era through its first century as a nation. Grant recipients include 67 organizations in 24 states. Learn more at americanacorner.com.

The Ximenez-Fatio House is a long-standing fixture of St. Augustine. It is located on Aviles Street, just south of the Plaza de la Constitucion.

Constructed in 1798 by Spanish merchant Andres Ximenez, the first floor of the home was originally used as a grocery store, tavern and billiards hall, while the second floor acted as a dwelling area for the family.

The property was kept in the Ximenez family following Andres’ death in 1806 but was purchased in 1830 by Margret Cook, who converted it into a boarding house. The home went on to be owned by two additional unmarried women, Sarah Petty Anderson and Louisa Fatio, over the next 50 years.

With the arrival of Henry Flagler and his luxury hotels in the 1880s, boarding houses were no longer fashionable, leading to the house being rented out as an artist retreat and various commercial businesses.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY THE XIMENEZ-FATIO HOUSE MUSEUM



The Ximenez-Fatio House is located on Aviles Street, just south of the Plaza de la Constitucion.

In 1939, the National Society of Colonial Dames of America In The State of Florida purchased, restored and furnished the home, opening it as a historic house museum for the first time on May 6, 1946.

The museum is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Guided and audio tours are available. Groups and field trips can reserve tours in advance, as well. Special programming is presented throughout the year.

For further information, go to XimenezFatioHouseMuseum.org or call 904-829-3575.

SHRIMP FESTIVAL ROCKS FERNANDINA BEACH



The Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival took place in Fernandina Beach Memorial Day weekend. The annual event has become a fixture on the Northeast Florida calendar and something area residents look forward to each year.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE ISLE OF EIGHT FLAGS SHRIMP FESTIVAL



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