

THE RECORDER

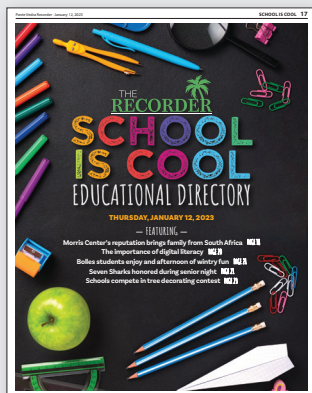


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January 12, 2023
Volume 54, No. 11
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Serving Ponte Vedra, St. Augustine, The Beaches and Greater St. Johns County

PonteVedraRecorder.com



School is Cool
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Looking & Feeling Good 2023
Page 25



INSIDE: CHECK IT OUT!
The Recorder's Entertainment EXTRA featuring TV listings, streaming information, puzzles and more!



Photo by Anthony Richards

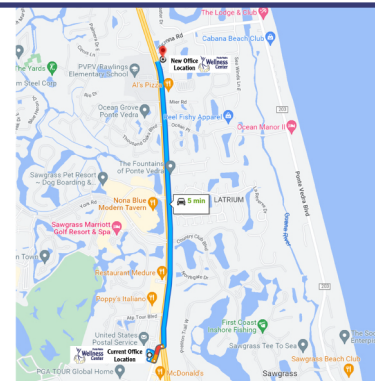
The Ponte Vedra High boys soccer team honored its current class of seniors with a special senior night ceremony during halftime of the Sharks game against Bishop Kenny High School on Jan. 5. The Sharks capped the night in grand fashion with a 5-1 win over the Crusaders. See photos from the senior night festivities on page 22 and a recap of the game on page 37.

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New Office Location in Ponte Vedra Beach

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Send us your news

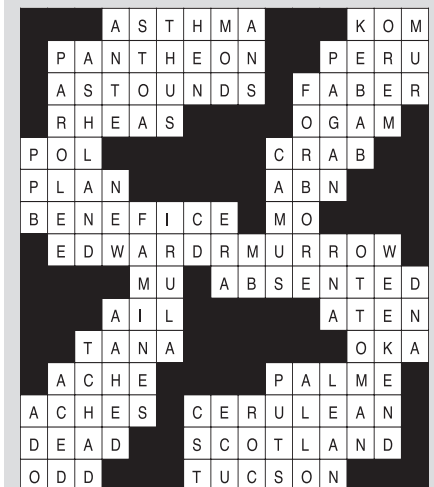
We welcome submissions of photos, stories, columns and letters to the editor. Let us know what's happening. If you have hard copies of photos you want us to feature, feel free to bring them to our office — we'll scan them and hand them right back. E-mail submissions to news@pontevedrarecorder.com or bring them by our office at **1102 A1A N., Unit 108, Ponte Vedra Beach.**



Visit our new website at www.pontevedrarecorder.com

Plus, find the Recorder on Facebook at www.facebook.com/ThePVRecorder

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS



7	9	5	2	4	8	3	1	6
2	3	4	1	6	5	9	8	7
8	6	1	3	7	9	5	4	2
5	7	2	8	1	4	6	9	3
4	8	3	6	9	2	7	5	1
6	1	9	5	3	7	8	2	4
9	2	7	4	8	6	1	3	5
1	5	8	7	2	3	4	6	9
3	4	6	9	5	1	2	7	8



Hugh Osteen

COO/VP
hugh@osteenmediagroup.com
(904) 285-8831

Susan Griffin

Publisher
susan@pontevedrarecorder.com
(904) 686-3938

Shaun Ryan

Editor
shaun@pontevedrarecorder.com
(904) 285-8831, ext. 1202

Anthony Richards

Reporter
anthony@pontevedrarecorder.com
(904) 285-8831, ext. 1207

Don Coble

Contributor
don@claytodayonline.com

Amber Anderson

Page/Graphic Designer
amber@pontevedrarecorder.com

April Snyder

Sales Assistant
april@pontevedrarecorder.com
(904) 285-8831, ext. 1204

Kristin Flanagan

Account Executive
kristin@pontevedrarecorder.com
(904) 285-8831, ext. 1206

Adele McGraw

Account Executive
adele@pontevedrarecorder.com
(904) 285-8831, ext. 1208

Debbie Apple

Account Executive
debbie@osteenmediagroup.com
(904) 285-8831

Christina Donato

Account Executive
christina@pontevedrarecorder.com
(904) 285-8831

Joe Wilhelm

Circulation Manager
joe@osteenmediagroup.com
(904) 300-5374

Subscription Rates, Bulk Mail:

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BRIEFS

Martin Luther King Jr. celebration is Jan. 14

The Beaches Martin Luther King Jr. Day Celebration will be held at 11 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 14, in Jacksonville Beach at the SeaWalk Pavilion, 75 First St. North.

Presented by the Rhoda L. Martin Cultural Heritage Center in Jacksonville Beach, the event will be an occasion of remembering and rejoicing around the theme, "Together we can be the dream."

The speaker is Jacksonville City Council member Rory Diamond. No ticket is required.

For information, email mislil1230@gmail.com.

Mega Open House Weekend is Jan. 14-15

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty's Mega Open House Weekend returns on Saturday and Sunday, Jan. 14-15.

The Mega Open House Weekend features open house viewings of the company's listings of available homes. The listings encompass homes in a wide range of prices, styles and neighborhoods in Northeast Florida. In addition to the in-person open houses, the Mega Open House event features virtual open houses on social media to ensure maximum reach and engagement.

Go to OpenHouseNEFlorida.com for a list of open houses. To view the homes virtually during the event, go to facebook.com/FloridaNetworkRealty or instagram.com/FloridaNetworkRealty.

For more information about Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty, go to FloridaNetworkRealty.com.

Bereavement support group to meet

Grieving the death of a loved one is never easy, but support from others and sharing your loss can lessen the burden. Community Hospice & Palliative Care conducts open bereavement support groups throughout the year.

These support groups create a safe and comfortable environment where you can share with others who are grieving. Led by trained bereavement counselors, these sessions are ongoing and available to anyone who has experienced a loss.

Open support group participants do not need to contact Community Hospice & Palliative Care before attending a session. Contact the Bereavement Department at 904-407-7001 to

attend.

The next meeting is noon to 1 p.m. Jan. 24 at Stephen R. Chapman Family Community Campus

1355 U.S. 1 South, St. Augustine.

Matching personality to career subject of workshop

Margaret MacNaughton, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) qualified practitioner, will present a free in-person workshop, "Do What You Are: Connecting Personality Types to Careers Using MBTI," from 10 a.m. to noon Jan. 26. Sign-in and networking begin at 9:45 a.m. at Christ Church, 400 San Juan Drive, Ponte Vedra Beach, in Room 106 of the Formation + Arts Building.

The MBTI helps job seekers recognize their strengths and identify careers that are good matches for their personality type.

To register, email Pam Ottesen at pottesen66@gmail.com. You will receive a confirmation email upon reserving your seat.

This meeting is part of the Savvy Job Hunters Ministry of Christ Episcopal Church.

Palm Valley Market every Tuesday

The Palm Valley Market is held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Tuesday inside the Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Road. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, local honey, tea, seasonal treats, soap, jewelry, plants and more.

RV MegaShow set for Feb. 9-12

The 2023 Jacksonville RV MegaShow will be held Feb. 9-12 at the Jacksonville Equestrian Center, 13611 Normandy Blvd. Show hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday.

Regular admission is \$10 for adults, and children 12 years or younger are admitted free. All active and retired military and first responders who attend will receive half-off the regular admission price throughout the show. On Feb. 9, seniors will receive half-price admission. Tickets are sold at the gate.

Hundreds of new recreational vehicles of all types, including motor homes, travel trailers, fifth wheels and truck campers will be on display.

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Briefs

Continued from 2

The event is hosted by Florida RV Trade Association members in Northeast Florida, with participating dealers, including Campers Inn of Jacksonville, D&H Truck Emporium, General RV Center and RV One.

Also, the association will host a “What Can You Tow” booth, where visitors can get recommendations on the towing capacity of their existing cars and trucks for the various travel trailers, fifth wheels and toy haulers on the market today.

For more information, contact the Florida RV Trade Association at 813-741-0488 or go to frvta.org.

Registration open for Gate River Run

The Gate River Run is registering runners for the March 4 event, to be held in the Jacksonville Sports Complex area. The race starts in four different waves based on expected finish time or pace.

- Gate River Run 15K waves start at 8 a.m. Moisture wicking shirts will be available for all entrants. Medals to all finishers. Pick up packets at Neotein Runner’s Expo.

- Synovus 5K for Charity starts at 8:45 a.m. Moisture wicking shirts will be available for all entrants. Medals to all finishers. Pick up packets at Neotein Runner’s Expo.

- Brooks Rehabilitation Challenge Mile starts at 10 a.m. This free, one-mile run for challenged athletes starts at the corner of Duval and Randolph in front of the Jacksonville Fairgrounds. Shirts to all entrants and medals to all finishers. Pick up packets on race morning near starting line.

- JTC Running Junior River Run wave starts at 11 a.m. This free, one-mile run for children age 13 and younger starts at the corner of Duval and Randolph in front of the Jacksonville Fairgrounds.

The Neotein Runners’ Expo will be held noon to 6 p.m. March 2, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. March 3 and 8:30 a.m. to noon March 4 in the Jacksonville Fairgrounds exhibit halls, 510 Fairgrounds Place, Jacksonville. 15K and 5K participants must pick up packets at the expo. Out-of-town participants may pick up packets on race morning by paying a \$5 fee for this option.

The Publix post-race celebration will be held at the Jacksonville Fairgrounds. There will be a live band, 120 kegs of beer, free food and drink from Publix, exhibitors and a National Championship Awards Ceremony.

Register for the race at: raceroster.com/events/2023/64688/gate-river-run-2023?mc_cid=25b0b851b2&mc_eid=66de7522d3.

Wine and Chocolate Run registration opens

Registration is now open for the Wine and Chocolate Run, to be held at 5 p.m.

April 8 at San Marco Square, Jacksonville.

The Wine and Chocolate Run is a 5K through historic San Marco to raise funds for the continued beautification of San Marco Square. After the run, everyone is encouraged to stick around and enjoy the wine and chocolate party. There will be red and white wine, and bubbly to choose from. There will also be lots of chocolate treats from Peterbrooke.

To register, go to 1stplacesports.com/races/wine5k/?mc_cid=1a53fc1876&mc_eid=66de7522d3.

North Florida Land Trust annual meeting set

On March 5, the North Florida Land

Trust will conduct its 2023 annual meeting, where more than 100 dedicated donors, supporters and business partners will hear about the trust’s 2022 achievements and goals for the new year. The event will be held from noon to 3 p.m. at The Barn, 531 N. Wilderness Trail, Palm Valley, and will include mimosas and networking, brunch and the program.

Those wanting to learn how their organizations can be a part of this event can contact Sarah Hande at shande@nftt.org.

For more information, go to nftt.org/2022/12/15/2023-annual-meeting-march-5.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

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OBITUARIES

**Jenna (Umlauf) Withington**

Jenna (Umlauf) Withington passed away unexpectedly on Dec. 30, 2022. She was born on Oct. 4, 1989 in Farmington Hills, Michigan and

grew up in Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida. She graduated from Nease High School and attended Santa Fe College in Gainesville. Jenna was kind, compassionate and generous and was a loving mother to her adored daughter, Blake. She will be greatly missed by those fortunate enough to have known her and her family is deeply saddened by her sudden passing. Jenna is survived by her loving family, J.K. and Blake Withington; her parents, John and Charron Umlauf; sisters and brothers-in-law, Lindsey and David Stahl, Courtney and Chris Beatty; nieces and nephews, Madison, Jacob, Carter, Brooks and Kyler; grandmother, NoraLee Bolduc and many aunts, uncles and cousins. She was predeceased by her beloved grandparents, Roy Bolduc and Tom and Gwen Umlauf. A celebration of her life is being planned and will be scheduled at a later date.

DEATH NOTICES

Fernelly Calderon

Fernelly Calderon, 80, of Jacksonville, Florida, died Jan. 2, 2023. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

Zoey Azalea Fink

Zoey Azalea Fink, of St. Augustine, Florida, died Jan. 6, 2023. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. www.quinn-shalz.com. 904-249-1100

Michael Howard

Michael Howard, 66, of Jacksonville, Florida, died Jan. 6, 2023. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

Bryan McKnight

Bryan McKnight, 20, of Saint Johns, Florida, died Dec. 30, 2022. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

John F. Reda

John F. Reda, 100, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Jan. 5, 2023. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

John H. Soderlund

John H. Soderlund, 88, of Jacksonville, Florida, died Jan. 5, 2023. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – www.pontevedravally.com

Charity golf tournament raises \$87,350 for Rethreaded

The Northeast Florida Division of PulteGroup, one of the nation's leading home builders, has announced that the company's "Building Hope Charity Golf Tournament" at The Palencia Club raised \$87,350 for Rethreaded, a Jacksonville-based nonprofit organization that renews hope, reignites dreams and provides career opportunities to survivors of human trafficking.

"We enjoyed a fantastic day of golf, and we are thrilled to support Rethreaded, which is helping survivors of human trafficking heal and thrive in our community," said Tony Nason, president of PulteGroup's Northeast Florida Division. "We appreciate the support of all of our players and event sponsors to make our first annual charity golf tournament a success."

Vallencourt Construction was the event's exclusive platinum sponsor. Gold sponsors included Brightview Landscape, Rosen Materials, Innovative Construction Group of North Florida and Tier 1. Half Associates, Inc. and



Contributed photo

PulteGroup's Northeast Florida Division hosted the Building Hope Charity Golf Tournament at The Palencia Club to benefit Rethreaded. Pictured from left, Tony Nason, division president, PulteGroup Northeast Florida; Kristin Keen, founder and CEO, Rethreaded; Priscilla Jones, director of development, Rethreaded; and Stephanie Patton, assistant director of development, Rethreaded

FirstService Residential were the event's silver sponsors.

For more information about PulteGroup's Northeast Florida Division, go to pulte.com/jacksonville.

Roaring '20s event to help fight hunger

Spectacular Speakeasy Casino Night, a benefit for Epic-Cure, will be held 5-8 p.m. Sunday, Feb. 19, at the historic Treasury on Plaza located downtown St. Augustine. The event will help the local community and position Epic-Cure to continue its mission.

Tickets are \$95 apiece and can be purchased at eventbrite.com/e/spectacular-speakeasy-casino-night-a-benefit-for-epic-cure-tickets-494457524767. Tickets are limited. First come, first served.

There will be blackjack tables, roulette, craps, a raffle, live music, a silent auction, cocktails, beer and wine and hors d'oeuvres.

Dress code: Black tie or Roaring '20s-themed attire. Sponsorships available. Contact Sunny at support@epic-cure.org.

Epic-Cure Inc. was founded in 2018 in



Contributed photo

The event will be held in Treasury on Plaza.

response to the staggering amount of food waste in the county at a time when one in six Americans were facing hunger. Since opening the doors to its first warehouse, the organization has rescued and distributed more than 10 million pounds of food and provided an average of 62 pounds of food more than 162,000 times to families experiencing need or food insecurity.

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OPTION 2

Tuesday February 14th • 11:00am

Ponte Vedra Beach Library
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<http://learndbs.com/1497>

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Marsh Landing Country Club

Elegantly appointed 1-story ranch home with water to preserve views. Sought-after Marsh Landing Country Club. Fully equipped with open floorplan, the flow of the home is comfortable and easy. Spacious screened porch off of formal living room provides nice space for casual entertaining and perfect spot to watch the wildlife in the backyard lagoon sanctuary.

5 Bedrooms, 4 Bathrooms
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Oceanfront Home on Ponte Vedra Blvd.

This oceanfront home on Ponte Vedra Blvd. with 110 ft. of ocean frontage sold for lot value only at \$10,500,000.



Amazing Vistas in Deercreek Country Club

Spacious living with pool/spa and lake-to-preserve views in Deercreek CC, making it ideal for easy commutes. Owner's suite is located on 1st floor along with living room, dining room, kitchen, butler's pantry, powder room, family room and office. Upstairs are 3 additional and spacious bedrooms, 2 full baths plus a flex space/theatre room. Sellers have many updates including fully renovated kitchen and bathrooms. Don't miss this one!!

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Sarah Alexander, REALTOR®
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Elizabeth Hudgins, REALTOR®
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Sara Wilson is an advanced registered nurse practitioner at Amara Med Spa's Ponte Vedra Beach location. She is a Jacksonville native and is happy to still call the First Coast home years later with her husband and five children now living in Vilano Beach. Family has always had a major influence in Wilson's life, as it was her grandmother that inspired her to become a nurse.

Sara Wilson

As told to Anthony Richards

Tell us a little about yourself and your background.

I was born into a Navy family in Jacksonville, which probably comes as no surprise. As a kid I spent a handful of years in Maryland with my family, but we moved back to Jacksonville, and I have lived in the area ever since.

What led you to choosing a career in the medical field?

My grandmother was a nurse, so she really spurred my interest in it. I was a bedside nurse for 10 years working in the ICU (Intensive Care Unit). I continued my education and got my master's degree in family medicine and have been specializing in plastic/reconstructive surgery and aesthetic medicine since 2016.

What was it like going from the ICU to aesthetic medicine?

It was a transition for sure, because I was used to death and dying in the ICU, while aesthetic and plastic surgery is on the other side of things and deals with much more positive outcomes.

What do you enjoy most about your job at Amara Med Spa?

I pride myself in being able to make natural and subtle enhancements that allow for a patient's beauty to be seen. It's all about helping them find that look they are looking for that works for them.

I love that it's a new day every day, and I'm not just injecting faces all the time, I get to work in so many aspects of the job, including working with lasers.

It's been awesome to see how fast Amara has grown all the offices that we have opened up across town now. It does help that as a staff we've all been doing this for years now, so the experience in the field is there.

What are some of the challenges that you are faced with?

Being able to say "no" to patients is something that can be very helpful to them finding the look that works for them.

People look at all that's out there online and they see all the fillers people are using. It seems like everyone wants to look like the Kardashians, but that is usually not the right path for them.

It is a real issue that people are confronted with out there.



Photo courtesy of Amara Med Spa

Sara Wilson is an advanced registered nurse practitioner at Amara Med Spa's Ponte Vedra Beach location.

I know you mentioned your grandmother as a child, but where do you find your support currently?

I love spending time with my five children, and it also helps that my husband works from home.

It's always so important to remember to put family first, and I feel that if you

do that, you and everything from there is headed down the right path.

What do you love most about living in the local area?

We live in Vilano Beach, and it is just breathtaking every day. Another thing I love most is that there are just

such good people in this community. Jacksonville is definitely the biggest smallest city, and I wouldn't have it any other way.

We are also season ticket holders for the Jaguars and enjoy going to games as a family.

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Girl brightens holidays for K9 units

The Jolly Old Elf had a special helper this year, delivering holiday cheer to the First Coast's canine crime fighters.

Eleven-year-old Emma Johnson, daughter of K9s United's founder Debbie Johnson, spent her seventh holiday season delivering more than 40 dog toys to seven area law enforcement agencies to share with their K9 members.

Emma spent 2022 raising money and saving her allowance for the cause. Each year, Emma hosts two fundraisers, a bake sale and Emma's Family Fun Day. To date, she has raised more than \$10,000.

The following sheriff's offices benefited from Emma's generosity: St. John's County, Jacksonville, Clay County, Nassau County, Putnam County, Flagler

County and Baker County.

Due to budget constraints, many law enforcement agencies don't have adequate funding to provide K-9 units with the vital resources they need, including advanced training, active equipment and kennels, vehicle heat alarms and door poppers and canine health expenses.

K9s United helps to fill that void and aid law enforcement agencies to ensure their K-9 units have the programs and supplies these dogs need most.

Every dollar raised by K9s United supports their mission to educate, train and provide vital equipment and services to K-9s who serve in the field.

To learn more, go to www.K9sUnited.org.



Contributed photo

Emma Johnson, center, celebrates the holidays with local K9 units.

Final March for Life in St. Augustine is Saturday

For the 17th year, pro-life advocates from around Florida and Georgia will assemble in St. Augustine on Jan. 13-14 for the annual March for Life. The theme for the event is "We choose to love them both!"

It will be the last opportunity to participate in the St. Augustine event. Next year, the March will be in Tallahassee, said May Oliver, director of the Office of Human Life and Dignity for the Diocese of St. Augustine. The 1973 U.S. Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion nationwide was overturned by the court in June in the in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* ruling.

"Now that *Roe v. Wade* has been overturned, states are being encouraged

to move their marches to their capitols to be a presence for their legislatures," Oliver said. "That doesn't mean we won't be doing rallies or other events in St. Augustine in years to come."

The March for Life events begin Friday at the National Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche at Mission Nombre de Dios, 101 San Marco Ave. A college leadership workshop will be from 2 to 4 p.m. Andy Secola, Florida regional coordinator for Students for Life of America, and Pam Stenzel, senior regional clinic director for community pregnancy clinics in Central and Southwest Florida, will speak at the workshop.

Adoration and music will be at 5 p.m. The Rev. Clay Ludwig will celebrate

Mass at 6 p.m., followed by the illuminated living rosary at 6:45 p.m. The praise and worship concert begins at 7:30 p.m. Food trucks will be on site.

On Saturday, Bishop Erik Pohlmeier will celebrate Mass at 9 a.m. at the shrine outdoors (weather permitting). The march begins at 10:30 a.m. Speaker presentations at the Plaza de la Constitución in front of the Basilica Cathedral of St. Augustine on Cathedral Place begin at 11:30 a.m.

Board-certified obstetrician-gynecologist Dr. Jason Phillips will talk about the emotional and physical trauma that results from the abortion pill. Oliver said about 56% of all abortions in Florida are by the pill, and that number could go as high as 80% in a year.

Melissa Coles is the birth mother of the documentary "I Lived on Parker Ave." and the recently released movie and book "Lifemark." She became pregnant at 18 and was on the table awaiting an abortion when she changed her mind and walked out. A couple who were un-

able to have children adopted the boy. Nineteen years later, the families had an emotional reunion. Coles now works with women struggling with unplanned pregnancies.

"According to Melissa, culture says, 'choice, choice, choice' but thwarts information from getting to people about alternatives," Oliver said. "Adoption is such a viable and loving option."

Wayne Friday, who volunteers outside an abortion clinic, will share his testimony about changing the mind of a woman seeking an abortion.

Oliver said about 3,000 people are expected at the Saturday event.

"We are grateful for the participation of our parishes," she said. "We have all denominations coming. It's not just a Catholic event. We're going to celebrate the end of *Roe v. Wade* in a spirit of gratitude and brainstorm about all the things that need to be done and how we're going to do it."

Additional info can be found at march-for-lifestaugustine.com.

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Melissa Coles will speak at this year's march.

Contributed photo

MSD remains consistent with chairman, vice chairman in 2023

By Anthony Richards

The Ponte Vedra Municipal Service District held its first meeting of the year and it included voting on the officers on its board during 2023.

Al Hollon was unanimously voted as chairman of the MSD for a second straight year after initially nominated by fellow trustee John Cellucci.

“Brad (Wester) proved what a great job can be done with a second as chairman,” Cellucci said.

According to Wester, continuing with the same chairman and vice chairman for consecutive years is key to maintaining consistency, and that includes when it comes to how the trustee reports are sorted out, which will take place at the next meeting scheduled for Feb. 13 at 5:30 p.m. at the Ponte Vedra Public Library.

Kitty Switkes was also once again named to the position of vice chairman

for a consecutive year, while newcomer Rick Brown was voted treasurer.

Brown takes over as treasurer having had 38 years in the mortgage industry and dealing with finances.

In other news from the meeting, Hollon and the board discussed the possibility of looking into providing more street lights at the school bus stops, because of recent complaints by residents pertaining to how dark it can get in the mornings during certain times of the year.

The board will look into the best way of approaching this further.

Hollon also provided police reports from the MSD’s extra off-duty officers, which included 58 citations and 182 traffic stops given during the month of December 2022.

Some of the reports included helping with parking complaints and issues along San Juan Drive. Hollon said that the con-

struction along that stretch of road causing the issues is hoping to wrap up soon.

An air-conditioned unit at A1A Storage was rented by Cellucci for between \$90 to \$100 with taxes included to store 182 American flags and holiday paraphernalia.

According Cellucci, after attending the most recent Ponte Vedra/Palm Valley Citizens Traffic Task Force board meeting, the CTF made clear that they opposed the recent plan discussed to install lights to the ball fields behind the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall, stating added traffic and lack of parking space as the major reasons why.

Wester informed the board that after speaking with Nathan Otter, environmental technician beach lightning officer with St. Johns County, that all beach walkover repairs have been completed that occurred during the recent hurricane season.

He also stated that last year the United

States Army Corps of Engineers changed their policy last year when it comes to selecting dredging projects, and it is something the MSD will have to watch and stay on top of moving forward.

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The Recorder's garden columnist Kathy Esfahani of Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery shares her tips for growing gorgeous gardens in Northeast Florida.

KATHY'S GARDENING GUIDE

Winter Landscaping

"The beauty of the natural world lies in the details." — Natalie Angier

By Kathy Esfahani



Kathy Esfahani

The landscape can seem a bit less colorful this time of year. Many of our favorite blooms are dormant or not available during the cooler months. But there are flowers that will brighten your yard and tasks that prepare for the spring warmup!

Winter flowers will add color to wake up your landscape. Look for annuals such as pansies, violas, petunias, snapdragons and Dusty Miller. These plants are available in many colors and look great in garden beds or planters. Most importantly, they are tough enough to withstand the cold temperatures we may experience. Camellias are also a popular choice at this time of year as they are the only perennial



Dusty Miller with winter flowers in a planter.

that blooms in winter. These evergreen shrubs produce flowers in white, pink and red. Use camellias as an anchor for a landscape bed or a hedge in your yard. These shrubs are low maintenance and will produce stunning blooms for years to come.

January is also a great time to tend to your landscape ahead of warmer spring temperatures. Several tasks are important this month:

- Protect your plants from frost and cold temperatures! Tropical plants are especially sensitive to temperatures below 40 degrees and should be covered with

frost cloth ahead of freezes. These plants include crotons, Hawaiian ti, arbutus, ginger, bird of paradise, hibiscus, Roebellini palms, Adonidia palms, lady palms, bougainvillea, mandevilla, gold mound, sea grapes, stromatha, tibouchina, philodendron, xanadoo, crown of thorns, kalanchoe and sunpatiens. Also, be sure to cover more sensitive plants below 32 degrees (blue daze, pentas, geraniums, bush daisies, gold dust, sedum and salvia) and cover citrus trees below 30 degrees.

- Monitor your irrigation system. Although less water is needed than during the hot summer months, you should still water your landscape, especially if rainfall is low and temperatures are higher than normal. Be careful not to water within 48 hours of an upcoming freeze and turn off your irrigation system for those events.

- January is a good time to prune shrubs and trees that do not bloom in the spring. Make sure not to prune once new buds have appeared! When pruning, remove dead or injured branches but keep the cutting to a minimum. Hedges can be

Photos provided by Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery

Flower of the Week



A row of Dusty Miller.

shaped and thinned. Trim the top of the hedges more narrowly than the bottom to allow sunlight to reach all the leaves.

- Finally, winter is a good time to spread new mulch in your garden beds. This new layer will help keep roots warm during cold temperatures and freshen the look of your landscape.

Take advantage of sunny days to give your landscape a little TLC!

Flower of the Week: Dusty Miller

Please email Kathy at kcg.pvr@gmail.com for any questions or gardening tips you would like to see in the future. For more information & ideas, visit Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery, 196 N. Roscoe Blvd. The phone number is 904-655-7373.

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Residents encouraged to make preferences known on future parks

By Shaun Ryan

About 40 people attended an open house Monday evening to learn more about regional parks being considered in the northern part of the county. The meeting was held at THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center.

“The major focus of tonight is to get community input of what you would want at four parcels that the county owns that have been identified to be future parks at some point in time,” said St. Johns County Director of Parks and Recreation Ryan Kane.

Joining Kane were representatives of the design team: Bruce Hall, landscape architect for Catalyst Design Group, and Dan Kelbach, sports field design specialist for OSPORTS architectural firm.

The parks under consideration are: Nocatee Park, with 50 acres; Northwest Park, with 63 acres; Silverleaf Park, with 40 acres; and Shearwater Park, with 10 acres. The latter two would border the property of future K-8 school NN.

Kane said about \$14.5 million has been



Photo by Shaun Ryan

Bruce Hall, landscape architect for Catalyst Design Group, right, offers guidance to open house attendees as they indicate what attributes they want to see at future parks.

approved through the county’s budgeting process for development of these parks.

“We are using some of that for the design and planning and for the early

engineering,” he said.

Actual work on the parks is still away off as there are a number of steps to be taken prior to the beginning of construc-

tion, but Kane said the project would be accomplished in a phased approach, with cost estimates associated with each phase.

Those in attendance were asked to signify which attributes they would like to see — or not see — at these parks. Options were displayed on large cards set up on easels. Ideas and comments could also be handwritten on large paper tablets.

The results will be included in the planning process.

County residents who were unable to attend the meeting can still make their preferences known by going to ppd.mysocialpinpoint.com/st-johns-county-four-county-parks, where they will find a survey.

Also, at that site, residents can learn more about each of the proposed park sites and follow the progress of the project.

The four projects are among several happening across the county. Currently, Treaty Park, located off Wildwood Drive (which is off State Road 207 south of St. Augustine), is undergoing a \$1.4 million renovation.



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“I Lived Here, As Well — Together” combines two previous Black history tour programs.



Black history tour actors are seen in the kitchen of the Ximenez-Fatio House Museum.

Black history tours offered at the Ximenez-Fatio House Museum

The Ximenez-Fatio House Museum, a long-standing fixture of historic Aviles Street, will re-launch “I Lived Here, As Well” Black history tours.

“I Lived Here, As Well — Together” will run Jan. 19 through Feb. 25, at 10 a.m. Thursday, Friday and Saturday

mornings. The tour is open to the public, led by costumed historical actors, and lasts approximately 60 minutes. Admission is \$22 per person and tickets must be purchased in advance at ximenezfatiohouse.org/ILHAW.

At the Ximenez-Fatio House Museum,

guests are invited to step into a 225-year-old boarding house and experience, firsthand, the stories of the people that lived within it.

The “I Lived Here, As Well” program is a series of interpretive Black history tours in which the tour guides are actors who portray several characters from St. Augustine’s past. Some of these characters are people who lived in the historic house, like Louisa Williams, a previously enslaved woman who was freed by Union troops in St. Augustine in 1862. Other characters were crafted to represent enslaved and freed people who were documented as working in the house, but whose names were never recorded.

The museum’s latest installment of the series combines the 2022 and 2021 programs into a single performance titled: “I Lived Here, As Well — Together.” In the past two years, the series has presented, individually, the perspective of a male enslaved person and a female enslaved person, but never together.

In the 2023 edition, guests will be joined by two actors portraying each viewpoint to witness the harsh conditions of slavery, and life afterward. The program will include stories and accounts not heard during the traditional museum tour, along with full access to the house museum’s three floors of exhibition space.

The Ximenez-Fatio House Museum has stood on Aviles Street for 225 years and has been owned by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in the State of Florida since 1939.

“I Lived Here, As Well – Together” is presented by the museum with support from the St. Johns Cultural Council and the Tourist Development Council.

The Ximenez-Fatio House is located at 20 Aviles St. in historic St. Augustine. It’s on the National Register of Historic



Contributed photos

An actress portrays Louisa Williams doing laundry.



An actor portrays a onetime resident of the Ximenez-Fatio House.

Places and a Florida Heritage Landmark. Regular hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday-Saturday, with special tours available on select dates. The Fig Tree Gift Shop is also on site, and the property and grounds can be reserved as an event venue.

Go to ximenezfatiohouse.org or call 904-829-3575 for further information.

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GUEST COLUMN

5 heart-healthy habits to start in the new year



By Anthony Magnano, M.D.,
Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside

This new year, make it your resolution to take care of your heart. According to the CDC, heart disease is the leading cause of death for both men and women, but many cardiac events are preventable. Follow these tips to take control of your heart health in 2023.

Tip 1: Know and Monitor Your Heart Health

Start developing healthy habits by knowing where you stand with your heart health. Schedule your regular physical exam with your doctor and monitor your weight, BMI, blood pressure, cholesterol, heart rate and other factors that could contribute to heart problems. Then, keep a log of these factors, your physical

activity and diet to stay informed on your progress and hold yourself accountable. This way, you can set healthy goals for yourself and treat issues as they arise.

Tip 2: Avoid Excessive Stress

Stress is a normal part of life. But too much stress, prolonged and unchecked, can contribute to heart problems. It can contribute to constriction of blood vessels, high blood pressure and increased risk of a heart attack and stroke. One significant way to reduce stress is to exercise regularly. Cardiovascular conditioning, strength, flexibility and balance are all important to maintain optimal health. Whether a brisk walk, yoga or a fitness class, exercise is proven to enhance both heart health and mental health. Other outlets for stress relief include gardening, reading, meditation or listening to music.

Tip 3: Focus on Moderation

Alcohol consumption is often linked to heart problems and has been specifically shown to increase the risk of a common irregular heart rhythm called atrial fibrillation (or AFib). An observational study published in the European Heart Journal found that drinking even just one glass of wine or beer per day led to a 16% higher risk of developing AFib (compared to not drinking). This is concerning, because AFib increases risk for stroke, heart failure and cardiac arrest. That's not to say you can't enjoy a glass of wine at the end of a long day, but remember — everything in moderation. In general, less alcohol intake is better for cardiovascular health, particularly if you have underlying medical issues, and exceeding two drinks in a day is never heart healthy.



Tip 4: Stick to Healthy Eating Habits

Try to limit foods that are too salty, such as canned or processed foods. Also limit high-fat foods, such as red meat, cheese and baked goods. When it comes to a heart-healthy diet, the important thing is to maintain balance. A Mediterranean-style diet high in vegetables, fruits, lean proteins and whole grains has been shown to promote weight loss and reduce heart disease risk.

Tip 4: See a Doctor Regularly

Scheduling regular visits with your primary care doctor and any specialists you see can help catch problems sooner rather than later, which can be lifesaving in some cases. Especially if you experience high blood pressure or high cholesterol, make doctor's visits a priority to keep a close eye on your heart health. At Ascension St. Vincent's, our teams of primary

care doctors and cardiologists, including those at our new hospital in St. Johns County, can provide you with the most effective screening methods to check for heart disease and other conditions.

Tip 5: Make a Plan You Can Keep

A new year brings a great opportunity to reprioritize your health, but remember, there are no quick fixes. Make sure to work with your doctor to create a plan you can stick to. Here's to a happy and healthy 2023!

Dr. Anthony Magnano is a Ponte Vedra resident and Chief of Cardiology at Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside. For more information on Dr. Magnano and his specialty in treating Atrial fibrillation, go to [Healthcare.ascension.org](https://www.healthcare.ascension.org) or call 904-388-1820.



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Feeding Northeast Florida to develop new food bank facility

Feeding Northeast Florida, the area's largest community food bank serving an eight-county area in Northeast Florida, has announced its purchase and redevelopment plans for a 121,000-square-foot warehouse complex located on a 12-acre site at 5245 Old Kings Road.

The nonprofit organization plans to renovate the buildings and surrounding property, creating a campus environment to serve as its primary warehouse, logistics, distribution and operations center — more than doubling its current space. Construction is anticipated to be completed by the end of the year.

The food bank currently operates out of two smaller warehouses for the collection, inspection and distribution of

food throughout its service area. It has conducted operations from its original Edgewood Avenue location since 2014. In that time, it has expanded its network to more than 325 partner organizations and programs, facilitated food distributions that reach an estimated 85,000 people per day and implemented innovative new initiatives, including the Corner Markets and Prescriptive Nutrition programs.

The need for charitable food has increased exponentially since the onset of COVID-19. The food bank is reporting the need at 25% higher now than during the height of the pandemic. Approximately 30% of individuals seeking food assistance have never sought charity food before. This facility and warehouse, and

its forthcoming renovation, will help the organization grow to meet the increased needs of the community.

Consolidation of the organization's two current facilities will increase efficiency and reduce costs, which have risen 58% in the past 18 months. Upon completion, this renovation will provide additional storage and operations space, enabling the food bank to bring its team together and create new efficiencies within the organization. Additionally, the new space will support the expansion of food assistance programs such as nutritional education programming, additional space for partner agency training and community-building and expanded volunteer opportunities.

"Getting healthy, nutritious food into

the hands of those in need is our top priority at Feeding Northeast Florida," said Susan King, president and CEO of Feeding Northeast Florida. "This new campus will allow us to expand both the depth and breadth of our services. We are so grateful for the support of our community in helping us continue our mission to end hunger here at home."

The purchase closed on Dec. 21, 2021. The general contractor is The Conlan Companies. Thomas Duke Architect and Micamy Design Studio are the design team for the project.

For more information, to make a donation or sign up to volunteer, go to feedingnefl.org. For every \$1 donated, six meals are provided.

McFarlane-Boddie honored with DAISY Award

Melissa McFarlane-Boddie, RN, has been honored as the Flagler Health+ DAISY Award recipient for the final quarter of 2022. She was honored for going above and beyond for a patient in order to get him home without delay.

The DAISY Award is an international program that rewards and celebrates the extraordinary compassion and skill nurses give daily. McFarlane-Boddie, a nurse in the Cardiovascular Care Unit (CVU) at Flagler Hospital, was nominated by a patient who was able to be home with his loved ones earlier than expected due to her exemplary care and above-and-beyond assistance.

"My nursing care at the CVU after arterial bypass surgery... was uniformly compassionate and knowledgeable. Of all the nurses taking care of me during that time, one stands out for going far above the call," wrote Robert "Bob" Porter Jr. in his nomination letter. "Labor

Day weekend, with pharmacies either closing or already closed for the holiday weekend, [McFarlane-Boddie] tracked down a pharmacy that was open and filled my prescriptions ... so that I could be discharged to my home instead of staying in the hospital for two more days.

"Not only did she thoroughly vet every drug prescribed to me each day, but on Sunday, she personally arranged my discharge. The care and determination she showed is reflective of the entire CVU nursing staff at Flagler Health+ and why I nominated her for a Daisy Award. Melissa is a credit to her profession and Flagler Health+ is lucky to have dedicated nurses like Melissa who go the extra mile for their patients."

"I always try to make a difference in the lives of all my patients," said McFarlane-Boddie. "My mom is my world, and I treat our patients like I

would like someone to treat my mom. I was heartbroken with the recent passing of a patient, so this honor is really an affirmation of what we do as nurses."

"Melissa truly exhibited the 'Power of Plus' through her dedication to meeting the needs of her patient," said Carlton DeVooght, president and CEO of Flagler Health+. "She is a well-deserved recipient of the DAISY Award. Her willingness to go the extra mile represents our core values and made a tremendous difference to this patient. Through her efforts, he was able to go home where he was most comfortable."

In recognition of this honor, McFarlane-Boddie received a stone-carved "Healers Touch" trophy, a DAISY winner's pin, a gift basket and a \$200 bonus. McFarlane-Boddie's nomination was among 67 recognitions that were submitted in the fourth quarter of 2022 by patients, their families and Flagler Health+ team members.

The DAISY Award for Extraordinary Nurses is part of The DAISY Foundation's program to recognize the superhuman efforts nurses make every day. The not-for-profit DAISY Foundation,



Melissa McFarlane-Boddie

based in Glen Ellen, Calif., was established by J. Mark Barnes and his family in memory of his son J. Patrick Barnes who died at the age of 33 in 1999 from complications of Idiopathic Thrombocytopenic Purpura (ITP), a little-known autoimmune disease. The nursing care he and his family received while he was ill inspired this unique means of thanking nurses for making a profound difference in the lives of their patients and families.

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AT THE LINK

Technology company making buildings smarter

By Shaun Ryan

From the beginning, the link has been a unique addition to the Nocatee community. A co-working space and business incubator that offers a desirable work-life balance and numerous activities for members and nonmembers alike, the link defies facile classification.

One of the things that sets it apart is the facility itself: It's a smart building, the key component being its use of smartengine technology from wtec. This fine mesh sensor network delivers data in real time to user-oriented applications. Its energy-efficient approach saves money and is easily upgraded according to evolving needs.

Nowhere is its impact more apparent than in the way it delivers lighting to the link. Artificial lights automatically adapt to ambient levels, keeping the illumination in constant balance and complementary to natural light admitted by the facility's large windows. That usually means slight variations from fixture to fixture and would not be possible with traditional lighting methods.

The windows and adaptive lighting translate into an estimated 70% reduction in the cost when compared to traditional systems. And while light levels can be adjusted for special occasions, such as a large-screen video presentation, daily usage is based on one-time calibration. It's basically "set it and forget it."

But smartengine technology addresses more than just lighting.

"We're a tech company that does lighting, not a lighting company that does tech," said wtec Chief Commercial Officer Tim Miscovich.

Initially, wtec was brought in to manage the lighting, but it has added space analytics and is working on indoor air quality. The latter is especially of interest to anyone who wants to minimize the impact of another COVID-19 scenario.

And if lighting that relies on data integrated into the building management system saves money, even bigger savings are possible by addressing a building's HVAC. Sensors designated for specific areas allow the system to adapt to current conditions.

"Is it just you and I sitting in a 10-person meeting room or is it a full meeting room?" said Miscovich. "Do the fans need to rev up to get more fresh air flowing through there? That's where VOC (volatile organic compound) and CO2 ppm (parts per million) measurements can come in and can feed that back."

Because these sensors provide more data points, the result is more appropriate than simply having a thermostat that may be parked behind a pole or in direct sunlight or even having the system kick on and off at predetermined times. Sensors detect motion, brightness, temperature and power consumption and deliver this data to the smartengine in real time.

"Buildings should work automatically," said Miscovich. "You shouldn't have to manually do everything as in the past. It should just be: When you walk in, the



Photo by Shaun Ryan

wtec Chief Commercial Officer Tim Miscovich is seen at the link in front of the smart building's technical center.

lights turn on. When you leave, the lights turn off. When you come in, the HVAC should optimize."

In the case of a new building, such as the link, the system can be installed from the start so that upgrades and added tasks are possible with minimal effort. In a traditional building, an upgrade might require a major structural disruption to install pipes, conduits, lines, etc.

Wtec is a global company that does business in about 30 countries and has completed about 700 projects since 2010. Among its customers are several Fortune

100 Blue Chips.

Miscovich, who often works out of the link, has been with wtec for more than five years. He joined the company after working several years in Germany, first as an American football player and then on the trade desk of a large American bank.

Darling, Howington join Betty Griffin Center board

Cory Darling and Lauren Howington are the newest members elected to the Betty Griffin Center Board of Directors.

Darling currently serves as the administrator for Ascension St. Vincent's St. Johns County. In this role, he has administrative oversight of hospital operations for the new facility, which opened in July 2022.

He has more than 16 years of experience in various health care industry leadership roles. Prior to Ascension, Darling held multiple executive-level positions, including overseeing the development of a new specialty hospital division for an orthopedic value-based care organization, as well as serving as chief operating officer for various hospitals within a large, national hospital system.

Howington, a native of St. Augustine, is an account executive at Herbie Wiles Insurance. Now focusing on employee benefits, she has more than 15 years of experience in multiple lines of insurance/risk management and is a licensed health and property insurance agent. She holds



Cory Darling

both the Certified Professional Insurance Agent (CPIA) and Associate in Insurance Account Management (AIAM) certifications.

Howington is a graduate of the St. Johns County class of 2021 Leadership Program and previously served as a St. Johns County Chamber Ambassador



Lauren Howington

board member from 2013 to 2018.

"Both Cory and Lauren have some strong skill sets and experience that will serve our board well in guiding our growth and development during their tenure," said Betty Griffin Center CEO Kelly Franklin.

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GUEST COLUMN

Florida — Home of Con Men and Scammers

By Vic DiGenti

“Man, we’re going to be rich. Rolling in dough, I tell you.”

The breathless voice on the other end of the phone belonged to my brother-in-law, Woody, who with his wife Wanda Sue recently moved from Tifton, Georgia, to Minneola, Florida, to raise alpacas.

“You mean the alpaca business is already paying off?” It had been less than a year since they started their alpaca business, and I suspected the alpacas would leave them rolling in something other than dough.

“No, not the alpacas, although those darling little critters will pay off for sure. We won a big prize from Publishers Clearing House. Can you believe that?”

“That is unbelievable,” I replied. “Congratulations to you both. Is this one of those money-for-life things I’ve seen on TV?”

He hesitated and I could hear paper rustling.

“I’m not exactly sure. See, we got this letter in the mail from the PCH people — that’s how they refer to themselves, don’t you know? PCH. Anywho, it says

we’re a winner of at least 10 million dollars.”

The paper rustled again, and I heard Woody clear his throat before continuing with his good luck story. “We’ll find out exactly how much we’ve won and all the details of the payoff after we wire them \$6,500 to cover taxes and fees. Wanda Sue is at the bank now withdrawing the money. Between you and me, that’s about all we have left in our savings, but hey, we’ll be depositing millions soon enough.”

Loud warning bells were blasting in my head, and I said, “I’m pretty sure PCH doesn’t send letters, Woody. They show up at your door. Have you checked with Publishers Clearing House to be sure this is legitimate?”

I heard a series of stuttering sounds before he answered, “Well, no, but this letter looks awful official. It has the PCH logo on top and the correct address. I checked that on the Google.”

“Woody, I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but along with sunshine and hurricanes, Florida is known as the epicenter for con men and scammers. And I’m afraid that the lottery scam is one of the

most popular scams, along with inheritance scams, bank examiner scams and dozens of others. I was even part of one a few years back.”

“What, you tried to scam someone?” I knew Woody didn’t have the highest opinion of me since I didn’t drive a pick-up truck, but that really hurt.

“I wasn’t doing the scamming, Woody. Someone must have hacked my address book because I began hearing from friends asking if I was okay. Apparently, they had received messages purportedly from me, saying I had been in an accident while traveling overseas and had lost my wallet. The message said I needed several thousand dollars to pay my hospital bill and buy a plane ticket to return home.”

“Wow, I don’t remember that. Did they send you the money? We would have been glad to help if you asked us.”

“No one sent money because I wasn’t hurt — or traveling. It was a scam. And I’m afraid that letter is, too. If I’m not mistaken, I believe all PCH prizes are tax free. Do me a favor and before you wire that \$6,500, check it out. I’d hate for you to lose all your money.”

The line went silent for a long minute before he said, “I better call Wanda Sue and tell her to leave the money in the bank.”

“At least you didn’t invest in that cryptocurrency scam,” I added, hoping to make him feel better.

“What?” Woody said before abruptly ending the call. I was sorry my brother-in-law had been scammed and I started thinking about how the state I’ve lived in for most of my life had a long history of corruption. Like Woody, I turned to the Google, and began scanning for scammers. Here’s what I found:

In the early 1800s, a con man from New York named Warner Thompson got rich selling Florida swamp land to gullible people, telling them they could find gold and gems on the property. Along with the Miami Dolphins and frequent flooding, the South Florida region is well known for its many cons. Novelist Carl Hiaasen, a former investigative report and columnist for The Miami Herald, once said, “The Florida in my novels is not as seedy as the real Florida. It’s hard to stay ahead of the curve. Ev-

ery time I write a scene that I think is the sickest thing I have ever dreamed up; it is surpassed by something that happens in real life.”

I was surprised to learn from my on-line research that one of the world’s biggest swindlers lived in Jacksonville for a short time. He was an Italian named Carlo Pietro Giovanni Guglielmo Tebaldo Ponzi. Yes, that very same Charles Ponzi, father of the infamous pyramid scheme later made even more infamous by Bernie Madoff. Ponzi’s scheme was eventually discovered, and he was charged with 86 counts of mail fraud but served only three-and-a-half years. The state of Massachusetts later convicted him of larceny, and he was sentenced to seven to 10 years, but he was out again after serving only two years.

Ponzi was afraid of another indictment and decided to migrate to a friendlier environment where his talents would be appreciated. So, of course, he came to Florida. In 1925, he set up shop in the Springfield section of Jacksonville where he launched the Charpon Land Syndicate selling tiny tracts of swamp land in Columbia County. He promised investors a 200% return in 60 days. Ponzi was soon indicted by a Duval County grand jury, tried and sentenced to a year in prison, but he posted a \$1,500 bond and skipped town. He fled to Texas where he tried to leave the country disguised as a crewman on a merchant ship, but he was caught and returned to Massachusetts where he served seven more years in prison before being deported to Italy.

The government never learned what happened to the millions of dollars he had bilked from the investors in his various schemes. Perhaps someone living in Springfield will be surprised one day while renovating one of those old homes. But I suspect there’s as much chance of that happening as winning \$5,000 a week for life from Publishers Clearing House.

Vic DiGenti, aka Parker Francis, is an author, ghostwriter, editor and publisher with 14 books to his credit. He lives and works in Ponte Vedra Beach. Visit him at www.parkerfrancis.com.

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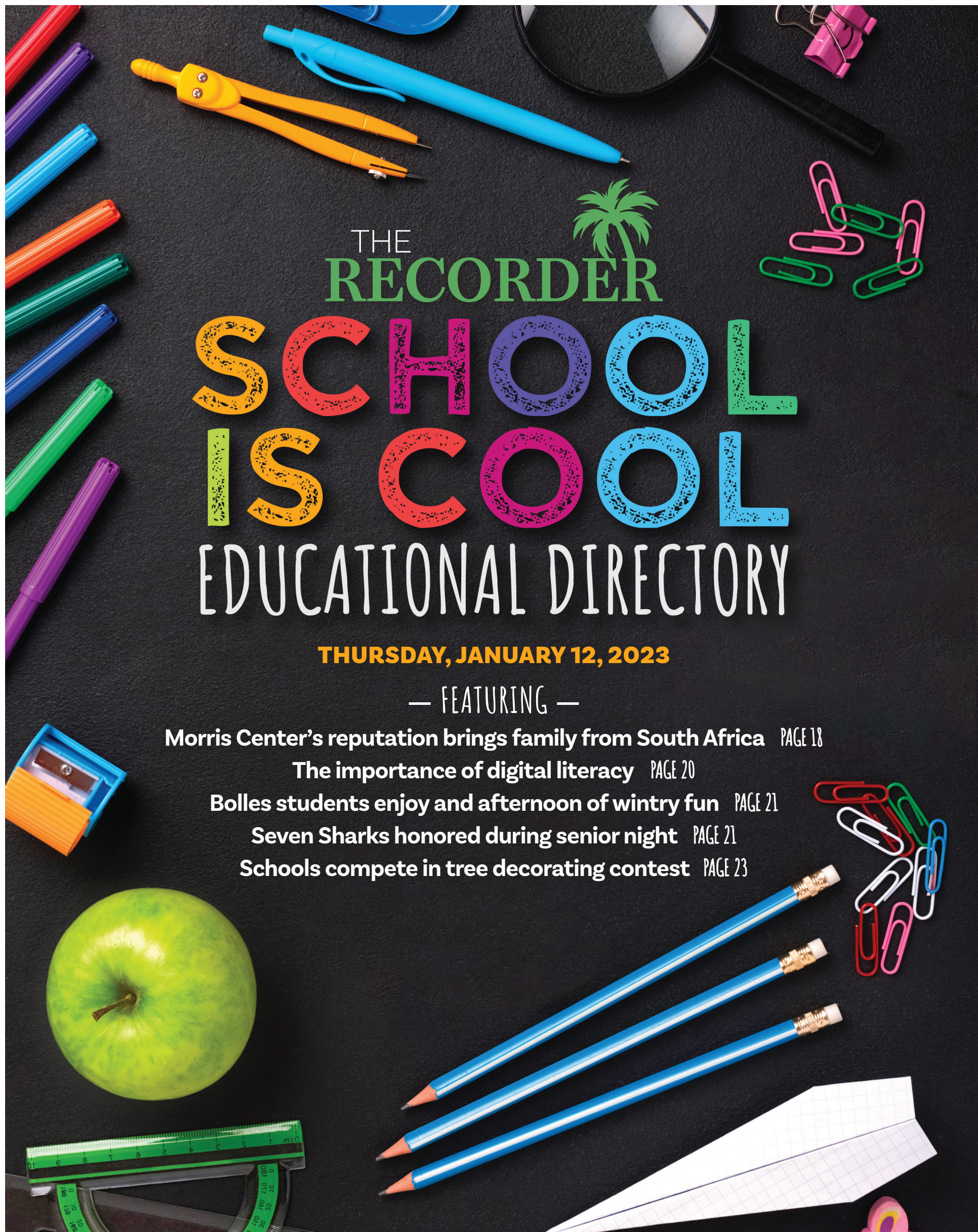
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— FEATURING —

Morris Center's reputation brings family from South Africa PAGE 18

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Bolles students enjoy and afternoon of wintry fun PAGE 21

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Schools compete in tree decorating contest PAGE 23

Morris Center's reputation brings family from South Africa

Local team helps boy overcome dyslexia

By Shaun Ryan

Ever since he was in the first or second grade, Quinn Rees has struggled in school — despite being a very bright boy. That's because Quinn, like an estimated 700 million other people around the globe, suffers from dyslexia, a learning disorder that makes reading difficult.

His parents, Nicola and Christian Rees, tried unsuccessfully to find a solution in South Africa, where they lived.

"All the interventions we tried, they just didn't go anywhere," said Nicola Rees.

At the same time, Quinn was missing opportunities at school. He was passed over for a part in a play because of his difficulty reading — even though he

was actually very good at remembering lines.

"I couldn't watch him struggle any longer when I knew he was capable of so much more," his mother said.

Eventually, she discovered some posts written by members of a dyslexia group on Facebook that mentioned The Morris Center, which is located in Ponte Vedra Beach. The center includes a clinic that addresses neurodevelopmental disorders, such as dyslexia.

The Facebook posts were all complimentary, and Nicola Rees saw the wisdom in enrolling her son in an intensive program like the one offered by The Morris Center. She reached out and learned that the clinic could work with Quinn online, but she thought it best to actually bring him to the First Coast so that he could interact directly with the clinic's founder, Dr. Tim Conway, and the therapists.

Still, it would mean traveling thousands of miles — no small consider-

ation. But as Nicola Rees said, "All the heavens seemed to align, so we decided to take him out of school for six months and bring him here."

So, in July, Quinn — now 12 years old and in the sixth grade — his parents and younger brother, Zac, arrived in Northeast Florida. It turned out to be the right decision.

"There just isn't anything in South Africa like this," Nicola Rees said.

Quinn was enrolled in four programs, which build on one another, and soon he was showing real progress. At first, he was instructed in the formation of sounds.

"The child has to look at your face and see the shape that your mouth is making," his mother said.

This was an important step, as he generally didn't look at people when they spoke. He couldn't necessarily tell, for instance, if they ended words in a T or a D.

"He's much more aware of that now,

so that will change his spelling," Nicola Rees said.

He progressed to a place where he was asked to describe images in his mind when he heard a sentence, such as "The cat sat on the mat."

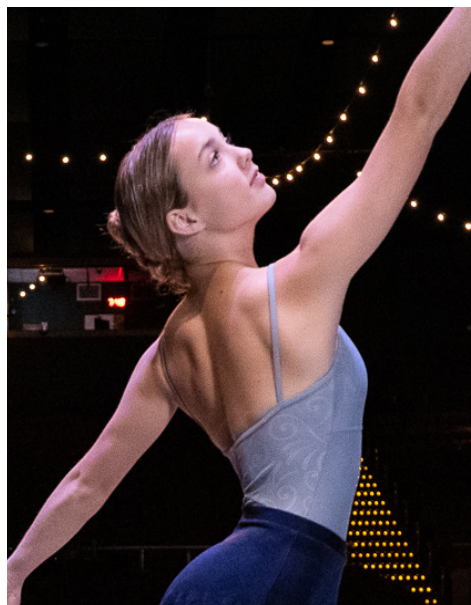
"This was something he never did before," his mother said. "Whenever I said to him, 'Can't you see it in your mind?' he said, 'No, I can't see anything.'"

The boy was taught to create a mental image, and soon he could read an entire page out of a book. From there, he progressed to grammar and writing and is now finishing up a program on math.

"He was able to do math before, but now he's incredible at it," his mother said. She added that a behavioral therapist at the center meets with her son weekly, encouraging him.

"They care about making a difference in a child's life," she said. "Other

MORRIS continues on Page 19



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Morris

Continued from 18

places we've been or things we've done, they test the child, and they write a nice, fancy report and then, that's it. They leave you to it."

Before finishing up on Jan. 27, Quinn will be retested to measure his progress, and the family will return to South Africa. But support from the team at The Morris Center doesn't end there. They will continue to follow up with both the school and with the family.

"They'll see (Quinn) three times a week for an hour, helping with his homework, helping him integrate everything that he's learned here, apply it to his regular life," Nicola Rees said.

In addition, the family can call whenever they have questions.

"I felt supported here," Quinn's mother said. "We felt that the people who work here really understand our children, which we hadn't felt before."



The Rees family of Durban, South Africa, from left: Zac, Nicola, Christian and Quinn.

Photo courtesy of Nicola Rees



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The importance of digital literacy

By Ryan Clark

Digital literacy refers to our ability to understand technologies and how to use them. While we are not all software developers or programmers, nor do we need to be, digital literacy is important to each of us. Whether you're a banker trying to manage millions of transactions every minute, a doctor creating the future of virtual health solutions, a programmer creating software or a parent trying to manage your child's screen time, technology impacts everyone every day.

Why should you care about digital literacy?

Indeed.com, a job search site, states that digital literacy is one of the 13 most important skills for job seekers to develop¹. Historically, new technologies have brought about dramatic improvement in the quality of our lives. Lamplighters were replaced by electrical power, horse and buggy with the automobile, video rental with digital streaming. Within the palm of your hands, your smart phone fulfills the imagination of 1960 science fiction shows. Technology is the critical factor producing faster and more efficient modes of transportation, improving energy management, creating instantaneous

access to your money digitally and the ability to collaborate with people in real time across the world.

We are geographically positioned to take advantage of the next innovation revolution. Major health care providers, fintech companies, startups and innovation hubs are actively expanding and relocating to the First Coast. To connect the First Coast with the Space Coast, the burgeoning commercial space industry needs top talent in engineering, information technology and aviation. We need to maintain our edge and further develop the skills and talents to support these forward-looking industries.

What can you do?

Making investments and dedicating time in both your and your children's ability to learn to code and exploring technologies will help increase digital literacy. Getting started early helps build an understanding of technology that will ready you for future innovations. Exploring programs offered at organizations like Code Ninjas can help develop digital literacy skills.

To be digitally literate, do you need to know how to write the code? Maybe not, but you absolutely need to know



how the code works. Do you wonder why Facebook or Google is able to present an advertisement for something that you are interested in and may have even just mentioned within a conversation? Someone wrote the algorithm that shapes the content you see on your screen but, without digital literacy, how do you know if you should trust this information?

The more comfortable we get with technology, the better we understand it and can influence positive change. Exposure to coding can provide the foundation to build your digital literacy. Today, you will hear buzzwords like artificial intelligence, augmented reality, robotics, internet of things (IoT) and other intangible concepts that may ultimately drive the future of our existence. Will you haphazardly chase the next shiny object, or will you have the digital literacy to understand the nuance value proposition of

a technology, which can help focus your efforts and your business' priority.

In closing, our ability to develop our community's digital literacy will shape the future we live in. Investing in your digital literacy will help prepare you for the future. From a community perspective, your and your children's digital literacy will result in the continued expansion of these career opportunities, providing a healthy economy and further improvement in our quality of life. Will you be ready?

¹ <https://in.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/skills-of-the-future>, Jan 8, 2023

Ryan Clark is the owner of Code Coast Consulting DBA Code Ninjas Fleming Island | Ponte Vedra | World Golf Village.

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A group of boys built this snowman at the school's Winter Fest.



A group of girls built this snowman at the school's Winter Fest.



Two snowmen take shape at the school's Winter Fest. Photos by Shaun Ryan

Bolles students enjoy an afternoon of wintry fun

By Shaun Ryan

Winter returned to The Bolles Lower School Ponte Vedra Beach Campus on Friday, complete with snow.

The weather was perfect for the school's annual Winter Fest, a popular event where students run, play and laugh. There was a bounce house, train ride, pie throw, field games, snacks, snowball-making activity and more. But

the snow was clearly a favorite.

A crew of professional snowmakers crushed bags of ice in a machine and sprayed it over a large play area in the form of snow. A group of boys built one snowman, while a group of girls built another.

Stacey Hendershot, head of the Lower School, said the students could hardly wait for the end of the day and the start of the festival.

"They were excited all day," she said. "It's a little bit of magic in the middle of our Florida winter."

The fifth-graders made bracelets to sell as a fundraiser at the festival. Each year, the class contributes something to the campus.

"In the past, we've gotten buddy benches," Hendershot recalled. "We've gotten a fountain in our butterfly garden. It depends on the year, but they'll use

that to bring something unique to the campus."

The festival is presented each year by the Bolles Parent Association.

"It's a great community event," Hendershot said. "The kids love it. The parents love it. And we love it, too."

Students in pre-kindergarten through grade five attend the school, which has an enrollment of 243.




The students enjoyed a ride around the campus on a special train.



Stacey Hendershot, head of the Bolles Lower School Ponte Vedra Beach Campus, does some face painting.



A table was set up to sell bracelets and snacks.




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Seven Sharks honored during senior night

The following photos are of the Ponte Vedra High's boys soccer senior night festivities. Below are seniors Ryen Theisen (No. 5), Mark Romano (No. 10), Andres Villasana (No. 13), Will Sheehan (No. 0), Jack Lopez (No. 12), Matthew McConnell (No. 2) and Ethan Riutort (No. 6).

Photos by Anthony Richards



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Schools compete in tree decorating contest

Contributed photos



Pine Island Academy was the first-place winner in the tiny Christmas tree contest.

Old Town Trolley Tours of St. Augustine and Investing in Kids (INK!) have announced the winners of the 4th Annual Holiday Tree Contest at Old Town Trolley Tours in St. Augustine. The two local organizations are continuing to challenge public schools in St. Johns County to participate in the tiny tree decorating event.

During early December, teachers, students and volunteers from more than 20 schools embellished three-foot trees with themes representing the spirit, personality and creativity of each school. The decorated trees were displayed at the Old Town Trolley Depot, 167 San Marco



Hickory Creek Elementary School was the second-place winner in the tiny Christmas tree contest.

Ave., in St. Augustine. Participating schools collected votes on Old Town Trolley's local website, voteholiday-trees.com. Members of the public, school communities and visitors were invited to vote on each tree.

The three schools with the highest number of votes received custom holiday tree trophies and grant awards with funds donated by Old Town Trolley Tours.

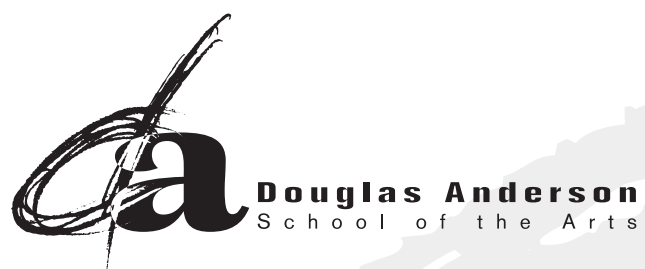
With 1,025 votes, Pine Island Academy won first place and a \$1,000 grant award. Hickory Creek Elementary School received 882 votes and the second-place grant award for \$500. Pacetti Bay Middle School won third



Pacetti Bay Middle School was the third-place winner in the tiny Christmas tree contest.

place and \$250 in grant funds with 860 votes. A live, social media broadcast to online viewers announced the winners on Dec. 20.

"Great fun was had by all during the recent competition," said Old Town Trolley Tours General Manager Dave Chatterton. "Old Town Trolley Tours is proud to collaborate with INK! and St. Johns County School District for the holiday tree program. We place great importance on supporting the education of our young people and continue to help teachers and schools through this and many activities for these commendable organizations."



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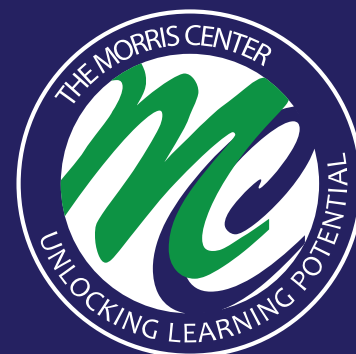
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BODY20 seeks to change perception of workouts

Building stronger bodies, saving time with approach

By Anthony Richards

There are several unique ways for people to get their fitness in nowadays, but not many as unique as BODY20, which opened its Ponte Vedra Beach location at 240 A1A North a couple of years ago.

What makes their approach stand out is the fact that they state that a 20-minute workout is equivalent to three to five hours at other gyms.

“It’s a very effective and efficient for sure,” Ponte Vedra Beach franchise owner Amy Hearne said.

What makes it so effective in such a short amount of time is that each participant wears a suit designed to use electro muscular stimulation throughout a workout.

According to Hearne, the EMS suit



The BODY20's Ponte Vedra Beach location is located at 240 A1A North.

used as part of the workouts is an FDA-approved physical medical device.

Each session is one-on-one, and a workout can be customized to depending on a specific person’s needs or goals, as the suit can be set to focus on certain muscle groups over others.

“The workouts have no impact on joints and has been very good at strengthening a person’s core, improving posture and helping relieve back pain,” Hearne said.

According to Hearne, this means anyone can take part in the workouts, whether they are an elite athlete or an 80-year-old who is just looking to stay active.

“We have our trainers who can modify it to fit a person’s specific goals,” Hearne said.

By raising a person’s metabolic rate through stimulation, Hearne said that it has also helped people lose weight.

“We offer an in-body analysis, which goes a couple of steps further than just measuring your height and weight,” Hearne said. “Instead, it also measures your visceral fat, which is the fat around the organs, and body mass to help give a better understanding. We then use this data in intervals to help track a person’s progress.”

The fact that every session is one-on-one is also different and something that Hearne believes is a vital part of what they do, because it allows their members to get the true assistance needed to reach their desired fitness goals.

“We are very customer oriented,”

Hearne said. “We want to do everything we can to have that workout be the best 20 minutes of their day.”

The fact that the workout only takes 20 minutes is one of the most popular things that people have told Hearne they appreciate most about the workouts.

It is an approach that she believes is very favorable, especially nowadays when so many people are living busy lives with jobs and families that they are also balancing.

“There are so many people that don’t like working out, but even they can offer up 20 minutes,” Hearne said. “It allows them the opportunity to have more time to live their lives.”

Another way where people can save

BODY20 continues on Page 27



Photos courtesy of BODY20

BODY20 offers the equivalent to a two-to-three-hour workout in 20 minutes.



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Photos by Shaun Ryan

John DiPatre is the owner of New Meridian Fitness.

New Meridian Fitness celebrates expansion

By Shaun Ryan

New Meridian Fitness celebrated its “grand re-opening” Saturday, Jan. 7, to mark a 1,300-square-foot expansion. The addition brings the gym’s total space to 3,600 square feet.

Owner John DiPatre took over the existing facility in August 2021, remodeled, painted and revamped it and added new equipment. As social restrictions due to the pandemic eased, people began to get out more and DiPatre saw his business grow quickly.

In addition to the standard cardio equipment, selectorized machines, free weights and Smith machine, New Meridian offered personal training, massage, acupuncture, needling and cupping. It quickly became apparent that more space was needed.

“We had the need to expand, because when we’re busy, especially in the morning when all the trainers are here, we were stepping all over each other,” said DiPatre.

Fortunately, an adjoining space became available.

It required a lot of renovation: removing portions of the wall, constructing an office area, installation of AstroTurf in one area, building a counter and shelves and more. All of that work was completed in just three weeks, and it was all the work of one man: Robert English, also known as the “Gym Whisperer” due to his gym-design and maintenance skills.

“All of my family are carpenters and mechanics and stuff like that,” English said. “I grew up knowing how to do that stuff.”

DiPatre is pleased with the result.

“It would not have happened without him,” DiPatre said of English. “He is awesome.”

Another key person in the gym’s success has been Angela Richmond, DiPatre’s girlfriend. Richmond, a nurse who earned her personal trainer certification in 2018, has always been an athlete and helped DiPatre get his business rolling during its first year. With the addition of personal trainers Caroline Jenney, Matt and Lindsey Hendrick and Bruce

MERIDIAN continues on Page 27



Some of the new equipment in the New Meridian Fitness expansion area.



New Meridian Fitness held a ‘New Year New You Party’ to celebrate the expanded area.

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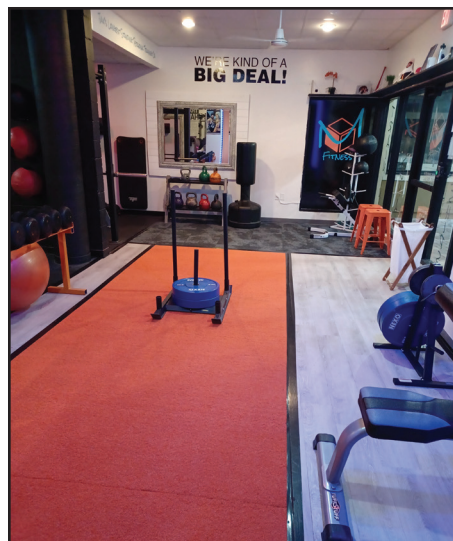
Meridian

Continued from 26

Jackson, she has been able to step back a bit, though she is thinking about offering classes at the gym in the near future.

Saturday, she joined DiPatre in welcoming visitors to the celebration.

“It’s very exciting,” she said. “I feel



An area of the expanded gym has an orange Astroturf area.



Robert English did the entire renovation himself.

like it fits in with Ponte Vedra. It’s very modern, upscale, boutique-style. It’s very welcoming when you walk in.”

The expansion has allowed the addition of a second shower and bathroom, a protein supplement bar, new cardio equipment, a sled, a preacher curl bench, more dumbbells, Olympic plates and a big-screen TV. There’s more room for athletic training, stretching and working on abs.

In addition, New Meridian has a one-on-one yoga instructor. David Brown is the massage therapist. And chiropractor Alexis Piarulli has a practice at the facility.

New Meridian Fitness is open 24 hours a day. It is located at 820 State Road A1A North, suites W20 and W21, Ponte Vedra. That’s at the north end of the courtyard inside The Veranda office complex.

For further information, go to thenewmeridianfitness.com.



Photos by Shaun Ryan

John DiPatre and Angela Richmond at the New Meridian Fitness ‘grand re-opening.’

BODY20

Continued from 25

time is by no longer having to worry about doing specific workout days focused on strengthening arms or legs.

According to Hearne, the use of the EMS suit allows for a true “whole body” workout, which means that a person’s arms and legs are getting stronger at the

same time.

Because the approach is so different than what most people are used to, free complimentary demo sessions are offered so that they can get a feel of what a typical workout would be like.

“Most people are amazed at the level of workout they get,” Hearne said. “It’s always fun to see their reaction after experiencing it for the first time.”



Photo courtesy of BODY20

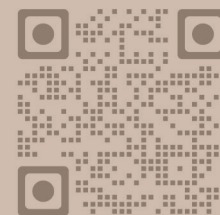
BODY20’s approach to workouts includes having people wear a suit that uses electro muscular stimulation.

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Setting ourselves up for success: Things to consider

By Marie Merritt

Health is more than just the absence of disease. It involves the whole of the human being. Physical, emotional, environmental, social, existential and mental health, all together, create our health. Personal health is both a consequence of and an influence on the quality of our lives. The way we view our health and the things we are capable of impact and influence the decisions we make. These decisions either add to or take away from our health.

It is an unpopular opinion at the beginning of the year, but health is more than our workouts and dietary habits.

The beginning of every year marks the ritual of defining all the things we do as “good” or “bad” and setting a goal or “resolution” to do all the things right all the time. This kind of mindset is all or nothing, there is no room for error, and most fail. When we cannot achieve perfection and do the impossible, we feel bad for not being able to accomplish the task we set for ourselves. Continuous failure, even when our goals are unrealistic, creates a cycle of shame, blame and regret that goes on and on until the following year rolls around, and we want to give it another try.

As a health coach and a gym owner, I



Marie Merritt

advocate for moving our bodies with intention, overcoming challenges and nourishing our bodies with high-quality food. I also understand that there is more to life than meal prepping and lifting weights. Here are some things to consider when making lifestyle changes that should lead to improved health and happiness.

1. What does a healthy life look like to you?

2. What activities do you enjoy?
3. What freedom do you want to have in your life?

I like to ask people these questions at the beginning of our coaching journey because it helps them understand the things they value in life, and sometimes the simplest things are the most important.

4. What skills does the future version of you have that you do not currently possess?

Investigating your current skills versus the skills of the person you want to become is an excellent exercise because it is a way of working backward. Knowing that your lifestyle change may be within reach can also be motivating.

5. What actions can you take daily to build the skills necessary to be the healthier version of yourself?

6. What are you ready, willing and able to do?

Sometimes the goals we think we should make don't align with what we are ready, willing or able to do. That means it is time to reevaluate the goal and set ourselves up for success rather than disappointment. Instead of striving to be perfect, aim for small actions you can consistently make. Once an action item feels almost as easy as breathing, add another one. Actions accumulate and build

skills over time that create long-lasting and meaningful change.

I heard someone say that we eat an elephant one bite at a time, and making behavior changes is precisely the same. When setting goals, be specific, realistic and intentional. Set specific days and times that fit into your life to move your body, read a book, or take other actions that align with your goals. Be 90% confident that you will stick to the action items you set for yourself and create an accountability system. Goals should be measurable so you can see your progress. Remember that life happens. Sometimes we cannot accomplish our daily tasks, so having a backup plan for another day or time is okay to fit in your action items. Never give up; only adjust.

As you move through your journey, seek guidance when necessary. Ask your friends and family for support because it takes a village. Surround yourself with people who support your growth. Remember, progress is cumulative, not linear. Some days you may not feel as great as you do on others, so learn to capitalize on the days that give you more.

Marie Merritt, Momentum Fit Incorporated, 5150 Palm Valley Rd STE 103, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082 904-504-9894

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HOTWORX cranks up the heat with infrared sessions

Sessions include three people at a time and last 15 to 30 minutes

By Anthony Richards

It has been a year since HOTWORX opened its St. Johns location and the response has been just what Jamie Thibodeaux and her husband Aaron had hoped for from the community they now call home.

The concept behind HOTWORX is that it is a 24-hour fitness studio that uses infrared techniques as part of the workout process.

According to Thibodeaux, infrared is easy on the joints, which is one of the reasons she has found so many people have gravitated to the infrared approach since they started the location at 45 Durbin Pavilion Drive, Suite 104 in St. Johns.

HOTWORX is a virtually instructed exercise program that uses between a 30-minute isometric workout or a 15-minute higher intensity training session.

Although a workout takes only 30 to 15 minutes during a session, there are a number of benefits that come from using infrared, including allowing the

infrared approach to penetrate a person's body causing them to sweat and remove unwanted toxins from their body and muscles.

Not only is Thibodeaux a franchise owner, but she is also a CEO and a mother of two children, Cecelia and Liam, while also working toward her MBA in entrepreneurship.

"We have dabbled in ideas for a similar business model in the fitness realm in the community, and it finally seem like a perfect time to make it happen by opening a HOTWORX," Thibodeaux said. "My husband was from New Orleans, and we had moved here as a family to the area six years ago, and it just seemed the right time. Bringing our love for HOTWORX to our home community means a lot to us."

Another way that HOTWORX stands apart from other fitness models out there is that it is different by only allowing groups of three people at a time to take part in a certain workout session.

According to Thibodeaux, making sure to keep the workout sessions small allows to better achieve a person's fitness goals.

"Sleeping better and improving sleep habits is something that many people have talked about since they joined HOTWORX," Thibodeaux said.

Specific isometric workouts offered



Photo courtesy by Heather Reaves

Jamie Thibodeaux and her husband Aaron is joined by their children Cecelia and Liam. Together, the couple opened HOTWORX a year ago in St. Johns.

include hot yoga, hot isometric compressions postures such as hot Pilates, hot warrior, hot core, hot buns, hot bands, and hot barre none, while the high intensity training includes the likes of hot cycle and hot row.

The Ponte Vedra Beach also has a more traditional gym atmosphere environment in the back part of the location's building,

so that people can take advantage of as well as the HOTWORX approach.

"We would love to expand our franchise in the future," Thibodeaux said. "I'm interested to see what's in store for us down the road. We love being part of our community and partnering with other local businesses and those that are family-oriented within the area."

7 fitness resolutions that are easy to keep

Resolutions to get in shape, exercise more and eat healthier foods are popular each January. Optimism reigns when making resolutions, but for many, the difficulty lies in keeping them. Individuals looking to get healthier in the year ahead can try these strategies to stay the course.

- Wake up earlier. Waking up a half hour earlier each day can have a substantial impact. That small amount of extra time can be devoted to meditation, deep breathing exercises or even some yoga stretches.

- Move around more frequently. Many people with office jobs spend hours sitting in front of computers. A sedentary lifestyle can have an adverse effect on overall health. Set a timer or use a reminder on a fitness tracker to remind you to get up and move around for a little bit every hour.

- Eat more vegetables. Vague goals like "eating better" are difficult to maintain because there is no specific goal to achieve. Rather, a resolution like eating a fruit or vegetable each day at every meal is something measurable. Vegetables can be hidden in favorite foods, such as desserts. Swap pasta noodles for spiralized zucchini as another easy fix.

- Stand straighter. Posture tends to decline with age, advises AARP. This can cause the spine to lose flexibility. Stretches to maintain posture can help anyone stand straighter and improve long-term health.

- Add "bursts" to your walk. Researchers at the Mayo Clinic tout the benefits of interval training. While high-impact workouts may not be appropriate for everyone, adding little speed bursts to a daily walk can provide significant health benefits. Aim for 30 to 60 seconds of rapid walking at regular intervals to shake up the workout.

- Drink more water. Increasing water intake can help you feel fuller, thus reducing the likelihood that you will overeat. Gradually increase your water intake by adding a few ounces each day until drinking water becomes rote.

- Take a workout outside. Switch up your normal routine by making use of the great outdoors to exercise. Instead of three miles on the treadmill or elliptical machine at the gym, opt for three miles on a local hiking trail.

Healthy resolutions are easier to keep when you have firm ideas and choose reasonable goals.

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PAGE 30 THURSDAY, JANUARY 12, 2023



The Ponte Vedra Tap Room held a ribbon cutting recently to become a member of the St. Johns County Chamber.



Part of the offerings of the Ponte Vedra Tap Room will be a wider selection of beers on tap and cocktails to choose from.

Ponte Vedra Tap Room creates new vibe, franchise opportunities

By Anthony Richards

The newest bar in town is the Ponte Vedra Tap Room, but despite being new it is also very familiar to those in the Ponte Vedra Beach community.

Ponte Vedra Tap Room is the latest upgrade of Trasca & Co. Eatery, which took its bar and rebranded it while also expanding its space and giving it an all-new vibe.

“That part of our space used to be a sort of transitioning area where people would come in and order,” owner Sara Frasca said. “But now, it is all its own.”

According to Frasca, the creation of the Ponte Vedra Tap Room is also the first step in achieving the plans the company has for the near future.

“We are working on having franchises all over,” Frasca said. “This will allow for people to buy in through the bar model.”

Frasca hopes to have franchise process begin to go into effect as early as March.

The Ponte Vedra Tap Room held its grand opening for the public on Dec. 29 and an official ribbon cutting as part of joining the St. Johns County Chamber on Jan. 4.

It remains in the space next to Trasca & Co. Eatery as part of the Sawgrass Village Shopping Center off of A1A.

Part of the upgrade was not just making a larger space full of new furniture, but also includes adding to the number of cocktails and draft beer selections available on tap.

“We definitely wanted to offer a good variety to folks, with many craft beers available as well,” Frasca said. “There are definitely many seasonal selections that will come into play.”

Prosecco will even be offered on tap. “The team that did the remodel did a remarkable job,” Frasca said. “We are really striving to create a comfortable setting that you can come as you are.”

She believes the Ponte Vedra Tap Room has all the makings to be a true neighborhood bar that can become a place where anybody can come and feel welcome in the environment, even families.

One of the ways they look that neighborhood bar culture is by bringing in live music and letting the community know it is a place to be within the local scene.

According to Frasca, she considers herself and her family to be “foodies,” and have a certain passion for food and drink, and she believes that is reflective in both their decisions they make and how they choose to run their businesses.



Photos by Susan Griffin


The Ponte Vedra Tap Room is looking into franchising as early as March.

That passion is exactly what she hopes to convey to interested franchise owners in the hopes that they will discover it for themselves.

“We hope to have a broader reach not Jacksonville and beyond in the area,” Frasca said.

Since Trasca & Co. Eatery opened in 1976, they have been known for their paninos, which is their own version of a wrap with various ingredients wrapped up in dough made from a secret family recipe.

“It’s time, and we want to share the panino with the rest of the world,” Frasca said. “I had never really anticipated franchising, but it really just came about. To have this incredible creation out there for everyone else to possibly enjoy would be such an honor.”




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Bubbles ABA plans to begin in-home therapy in February

By Anthony Richards

Madison Przydzial Culbertson, moved to the Ponte Vedra area about two years ago from Chicago and is on the verge of starting Bubbles ABA, as a certified behavioral analyst.

Applied behavioral analysis is an evidence-based approach to help manage autism with a focus on behavior change and behavior intervention through promoting communication in general.

“I had always kind of been from the Midwest, but at the beginning of the pandemic, just kind of had the opportunity to come this way,” Przydzial Culbertson said. “I had been working in Jacksonville for the past two years, but have now decided to branch out on my own.”

Currently she is still in the process of finalizing the credentialing requirements to begin her therapy practice, but she plans to begin providing just in-home appointments as early as February.

She would love to get to the point where she can one day expand and open an on-site clinic to accompany her in-home visits.

“That is the ultimate goal, and I’m not sure how long, but hopefully in the next couple of years,” Przydzial Culbertson said.

She will specialize in children from 18 months to 6 years old, as 18 months



Bubbles ABA will offer in-home therapy for autistic children 18 months to 6 years old.

has been the earliest some doctors have begun to diagnose autism.

By working with such a young age group, the focus will concentrate on achieving early milestones and helping the child adapt to social settings to get them ready for school.

“The in-home aspect is something that is very important for the children and their families, because it allows for a real hands-on training in a comfortable environment that the kids are used to,” Przydzial Culbertson said. “This way the parents really know the techniques that are being used and it is a true team effort.”



Photos courtesy of Bubbles ABA

Madison Przydzial Culbertson is preparing to start Bubbles ABA in February to serve the Ponte Vedra Beach area.

According to Przydzial Culbertson, the training being done is often times not just pertaining to the children, even though they are the primary focus, but much of the process also deals with making sure parents are properly trained so that they understand what signs to look for and how to best help their child when a situation arises.

Throughout her schooling at Purdue University and her time working in the

field, she has realized that in order to properly treat children, it is important for all those involved to understand that not all children are the same and therefore certain measures that work for some may not be the solution for others.

“We work on a lot of functional communication, because increase communication for the kids is huge,” Przydzial Culbertson said. “It’s all about reducing maladaptive behaviors that may be impeding their learning. That can look different in any kiddo, because I’ve worked with kids who are not really able to produce sounds or echo you in a certain way, so we may work through a picture exchange communication system in that case. Some kids even use tablets as communication device, so there’s just so many different avenues to explore.”

Because of these differing methods of approach, treatments can really be individualized to help hone in on the needs of each specific child.

“It all comes down to seeing the world and teaching differently,” Przydzial Culbertson said. “You have to be willing to adjust, and if you can do that and understand the best route they’re taking in their mind, you can really start to see the jump in their progress and help them to move forward. There’s no better feeling than that.”

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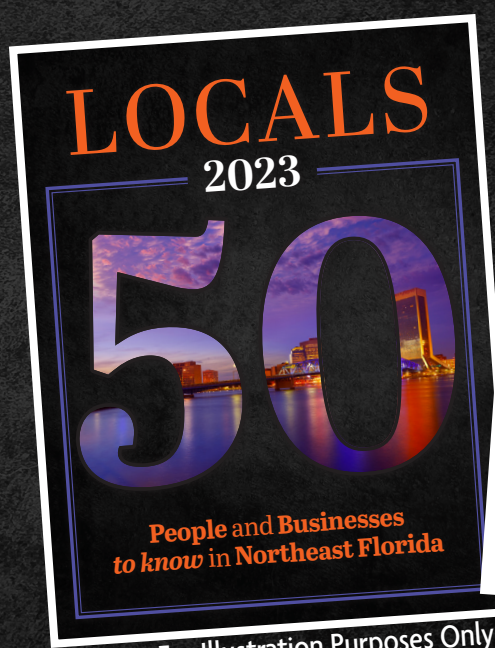
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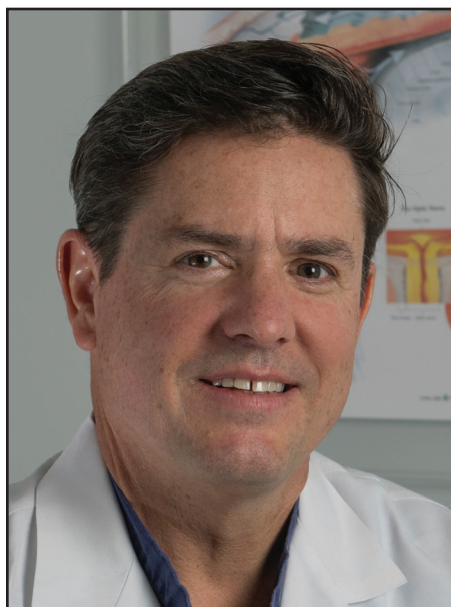
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Sample Page

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Barnhorst Eye Associates, Florida Eye Specialists partner to improve specialty eye care



Dr. Donald A. Barnhorst Jr.

By Donald A. Barnhorst Jr. MD
Florida Eye Specialists

As an ophthalmologist, I've served Northeast Florida for nearly 25 years. My goal has always been to help patients maintain high-quality vision through the latest advanced treatments and specialty eye care they need. That's why Barnhorst Eye Associates recently partnered with Florida Eye Specialists,

the largest multi-specialty ophthalmology practice in the region. The partnership will increase access to fellowship-trained surgeons in premium cataract surgery, refractive (LASIK), glaucoma and cornea treatments across St. Johns County.

Now that our specialized eye care services are more accessible than ever, we look forward to serving all our patients across Northeast Florida, from Ponte Vedra, Nocatee, St. Augustine and beyond.

Addressing a Growing Patient Base

As Barnhorst Eye Associates, we opened our Nocatee office in the spring of 2019. It is the first and only specialty ophthalmology practice in Nocatee. But much has changed over the last four years. The St. Johns County population has boomed since the COVID-19 pandemic as more people from across the region have moved to this beautiful area. Now that we serve an even broader patient base, it's more important than ever to provide patients access to the specialty eye care they need.

Since joining with Florida Eye Specialists, not only do I have fellow corneal specialists I can work with on cases, I can refer patients to my colleagues for complicated glaucoma problems, eyelid

problems, retinal issues and more. I have a whole team of super specialists to partner with to help patients with a broader range of eye care needs than ever.

Specialty Eye Care Services in St. Johns County

Our Nocatee office is joining a network of 13 Florida Eye Specialists locations across Northeast Florida, including Ponte Vedra Beach and St. Augustine. Now patients have the choice to visit the clinic that's closest to them and receive the latest technology and advanced treatments. At the Nocatee office specifically, we offer state-of-the-art diagnostic machines, custom treatment for laser-assisted cataract surgery and laser glaucoma treatment. To me, it's exciting that there are so many options available for patient treatments.

A Personal Approach to Patient Eye Care

While I'm grateful for access to remarkable advances in eye care technology, the best part about my practice is still getting to know my patients. It's that personal approach I believe makes all the difference. I take the time with my patients to learn their symptoms, what past treatments they've tried, and really

get to the bottom of their eye issues. For me and my colleagues at Florida Eye Specialists, eye care isn't about checking a box. I want my patients to know I'm focused on them and assure them we'll find the right personalized treatment plan that works.

Prioritize Your Eye Health in 2023

The best part about working in ophthalmology is making such a difference in patients' lives. It's one area of medicine where you can see tremendous results with just a short procedure. People with eye issues often don't realize how much better their sight can be. We have so many advanced treatment options now, and it's rewarding to help patients improve and protect their vision.

We are fortunate in North Florida to have access to some of the premier eye specialists in the state. This year, prioritize your eye health and make an appointment today.

Donald A. Barnhorst, Jr., M.D., is a Ponte Vedra resident and board-certified ophthalmologist at Florida Eye Specialists. For more information on Dr. Barnhorst, visit FloridaEyeSpecialists.com or call 904-564-2020.

NAI Hallmark brokers the sale of Magnolia Point Apartments

NAI Hallmark has announced the sale of Magnolia Point Apartments at a price of \$37.65 million. The 227-unit multifamily property is located at 7507 Beach Blvd. in the Southside submarket of Jacksonville. Senior Vice President John Rutherford and Vice President Luke McCann brokered the transaction on behalf of Simplicity Capital, the Seller and Fincapital Investments, the buyer.

"NAI Hallmark is pleased to have represented the seller and buyer in the transaction of Magnolia Point Apartments. The sale represents continued demand for value-add opportunities in Jacksonville due its strong market fundamentals," said Rutherford.

Situated on 15.36 acres, the multifamily asset was built in 1973 and consists of 227 units in 30 two-story buildings comprised of one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. Residents at Magnolia Point enjoy amenities such as a swimming pool, playground, sports court and on-site clothes care facility.

For more information regarding the sale of Magnolia Point Apartments or any questions relating to multifamily investment assets, contact Rutherford at jr@naihallmark.com.



Magnolia Point Apartments at 7507 Beach Blvd.

Contributed photo



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Catch 27 celebrates its 10th anniversary in St. Augustine

On Jan. 24, Catch 27 will officially celebrate 10 years in business, which customers can help celebrate by trying the restaurant's new seasonal menu, including shareable plates, entrees with a Southern twist, over a half-dozen specialty cocktails and mouthwatering desserts.

The locally owned and operated restaurant has been serving St. Augustine since 2013, inviting guests to experience local flavor with an emphasis on fresh seafood and seasonal fare inspired by the 27th state.

"We're so excited to launch this new menu," said Stephen Hutson, who owns Catch 27 along with his wife, Lindsey. "We pride ourselves on serving high-quality, seasonal fare, so our menus adapt with the seasons to highlight fresh and flavorful ingredients year-round while enhancing the quality of the meals. As a truly local business, we aim to source locally as often as possible, and our fish, shrimp and clams are caught in Florida waters — providing guests the chance to taste the local flavor. The fact that this menu comes out



Contributed photo

Catch 27 owners Stephen and Lindsey Hutson and family.

just in time for our 10th anniversary is icing on the cake."

The menu features such offerings as butternut squash bisque, deviled egg BLT with southern fried oyster, grilled salmon and lobster gnoc-

chi, and Florida shrimp and chorizo paella.

Since opening in 2013, Catch 27 has become a community staple for locals and tourists alike. Longtime St. Augustine chef Josh Smith has been with the restaurant for more than seven years, bringing along a passion for crafting innovative dishes from scratch using seasonal ingredients and local produce.

The restaurant also has an expansion in the works for 2023.

"I created Catch 27 to provide the community I love with the food I love," said Hutson. "I worked in many family restaurants before finally deciding to open my own. I knew I wanted to create a restaurant that showcased the delicious and fantastic seafood we have right here in the 27th state."

Catch 27 is located at 40 Charlotte St. in the heart of downtown St. Augustine and is open 5-9 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 4-10 p.m. Friday and 3-10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

Learn more at catchtwentyseven.com or call 904-217-3542.



Golden Rose

1.5 oz bourbon
0.5 oz lemon juice
0.5 oz pineapple juice
0.5 oz honey syrup (1:1 honey and hot water)
0.5 oz ginger syrup (or sub ginger beer)

Ginger Syrup

1-part fresh juiced ginger
1-part lemon juice
2-parts lime juice
2-parts rich simple syrup (1-part hot water, 2-parts sugar)

Directions: Combine ingredients in a shaker with ice, shake to chill, and strain over fresh ice.

— Recipe courtesy of Catch 27



Vanilla Bean Bread Pudding

1 cup milk
1 quart heavy cream
8 egg yolks
1 1/3 cups sugar
1 vanilla bean
1/2 loaf white bread, cut into cubes

Directions: Cut the vanilla bean in half long ways and scrape out the seeds inside of the bean with a small paring knife. Place the sugar and egg yolks in a medium mixing bowl and whisk for 60 seconds. Add all of the other ingredients and mix well. Add the bread cubes to the cream/egg mixture. Toss gently. You

can add more bread if the mixture is too runny. Spray a small glass baking dish with non-stick spray and fill with the bread pudding mixture (you can add chocolate chips, nuts or a cinnamon/sugar mixture to the top at this point for different variations). Bake the bread pudding at 325 degrees for 30-35 minutes or until the top is lightly browned and no liquid can be seen when carefully using a spoon to peek in the middle of the pudding. Let cool slightly and cut into squares. Top with ice cream, whipped cream, caramel sauce, chocolate sauce or fresh berries. Enjoy!

— Recipe courtesy of Catch 27

Shrimp & Grits

Sherry Cream Sauce (serves four)

1/2 cup sherry wine
2/3 cups heavy cream
2/3 cups whole milk
2 tbsp shallots, minced
1 tbsp garlic, minced
1 tbsp tomato paste
1 tsp kosher salt
1/4 tsp black pepper
2 tsp cornstarch
1/2 cup water
1/2 tsp paprika

Directions: Heat a few tablespoons of oil in a medium sauce pot over medium heat. Add the garlic and shallots and cook for 2 minutes. Stir in the tomato paste and cook for 1 minute. Add the sherry and reduce by half (around 2-3 minutes). When the sherry mixture is reduced by half, add the cream, milk, salt, pepper and paprika. Bring to a light boil. Mix the cornstarch and water together in a mixing bowl. Add the cornstarch "slurry" mixture to the boiling liquid and stir well. Simmer for 3-4 minutes or until thickened.



Grit Cakes

1 cup grits, ground fine



3 cups whole milk
1 1/2 cups water
1/2 pound bacon, medium diced
1 cup cheddar cheese, grated
1/2 cup green onions, chopped
1 tsp kosher salt
1/4 tsp black pepper

Directions: Cook the bacon in a medium sauce pot over medium/high heat until crispy — stirring often. Add the milk, water, salt and pepper. Bring to a boil and whisk in the ground grits. Cook the grits over low heat until thickened (around 5-10 minutes). Stir in the cheese and green onions and remove from heat. Spray a small baking sheet tray with pan spray and pour the grits

onto the sheet tray. Place the pan into the fridge to cool completely. After the grits are cooled, cut them into squares. To finish the dish, season 20-30 peeled shrimp with creole blackening seasoning and sauté in a large sauté pan with a small amount of oil. They can also be grilled. Cook the shrimp for 4-5 minutes or until the center of the shrimp are no longer translucent. Heat another non-stick pan over medium heat with a small amount of oil and add the grit "cakes." Sear on each side for 3 minutes or until golden brown. Top the grit cakes with the shrimp and the hot sherry sauce over the top of the shrimp. Enjoy!

— Recipe courtesy of Catch 27

In the Arts

Send your arts news to
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www.PonteVedraRecorder.com

'Diary of Anne Frank' on stage in St. Augustine and Jacksonville

Apex Theatre Studio will present "The Diary of Anne Frank" during the month of January at various venues in the Northeast Florida area.

Performances will take place Jan. 13-15 at The Waterworks in St. Augustine and Jan. 21-31 at St. John's Cathedral (Taliaferro Hall) in Jacksonville. The performance will also stop over at various schools in Duval and St. Johns counties.

"With the rising increase in anti-Semitism in this area, we felt an urgency to bring this story to local audiences, especially students," said Ian Mairs, managing director.

"The Diary of Anne Frank" is one of the most famous and haunting stories to emerge from the 20th century. The memoirs of this young Jewish girl, forced to hide for nearly two years to escape Nazi persecution, are an essential part of how people remember one of the darkest periods of human history. Every generation encounters the text and has the same reaction. In the face of such inhumanity, the human spirit still perseveres.

The production is under the direction of guest artist George Judy, professor of theater at Louisiana State University. It features a mix-ture of students and profession-

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presents
THE DIARY OF ANNE FRANK
by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett
directed by George Judy



al teaching artists. The role of Anne Frank will be played by Eva Gassert, a sophomore at Nease High School.

Tickets are \$20 for adults and \$15 for students. Reservations and more information can be found at apextheatrejax.com.

Performances at The Waterworks are sponsored by the St. Johns County Tourist Development Council. Use of The Waterworks is possible through generosity of the City of St. Augustine and St. Johns Cultural Council.

Established in 2013, Apex Theatre Studio Inc. is a training facility in Northeast Florida for intermediate- and advanced-level young theater artists. The studio combines a robust performance schedule (10 productions a year), interaction with nationally recognized guest artists and an experienced teaching staff to provide a dynamic learning environment.

IF YOU GO

Show: "The Diary of Anne Frank"

Venues: The Waterworks (Jan. 13-15), 184 San Marco Ave., St. Augustine
St. John's Cathedral (Jan. 20-21), 256 East Church St., Jacksonville.

Ticket price: \$20 (General Admission), \$15 (Students)

Event details: www.apextheatrejax.com/events

Local contact: Ian Mairs, ianamairs@gmail.com, (904) 476-5582

Filmmaker's topic at writers' meeting is screenwriting

Writing for film is a specialized art that many writers hope to learn. This month, the FWA Ponte Vedra Writers group hosts an award-winning filmmaker and screenwriter to guide area writers through the full process of crafting a screenplay. Franklin Ritch will present "Writing for Film," at 2 p.m. Saturday, Jan. 14, at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library.

In his workshop, Ritch will take writers from the conception of an idea to the execution on paper. He'll focus on theme, structure and pacing, while discussing the broad spectrum of storytelling.

Ritch is an independent filmmaker on the rise — writing, directing and editing with a passion for unique ideas and sharp storytelling. Collaborating with Emmy-winning cinematographer, Britt McTammany, Ritch's early short, "Bed-ridden" (Fantastic Fest, 2018), kicked off a marathon of short film productions that included "Still Life" (Sleeping Giant Fest 2019), "Powerful" (SERFF 2019), "The 27 Deaths" (Fantastic Fest 2021) and many more.

In 2018, Ritch was awarded the Rising Star Award by the mayor of his hometown, Jacksonville. In 2022, Ritch premiered his debut feature film, "The Artifice Girl," starring sci-fi legend Lance Henriksen, to a packed theater at Fantasia



Franklin Ritch

International Film Festival in Montreal, where the film won the Golden Audience Award and later took top prize at its European premiere in Trieste, Italy.

Ritch has been named one of the "25 New Faces of Independent Film" by Filmmaker Magazine.

The Ponte Vedra Writers group is part of the Florida Writers Association, a statewide membership organization dedicated to the support of both aspiring and published writers in any genre. The Jan. 14 meeting is free and open to members and nonmembers alike.

For information on FWA, go to floridawriters.org.

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'A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline' on stage at Alhambra

Gail Bliss has begun her official final year starring in "A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline." Bliss has been playing Patsy Cline for more than 30 years. Featuring more than 20 of Cline's most beloved songs, "A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline" will run at the Alhambra Theatre through Feb. 5.

"A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline" traces the late star's footsteps from her early honky-tonk days and radio fame through her rise at the Grand Ole Opry followed by her triumphs at Carnegie Hall and in Las Vegas.

Written and conceived by Dean Regan in 1991, the musical reveals the emotional depth and range of a singer

who defined the term "crossover hit" by dominating country, blues, pop and gospel charts simultaneously in the 1950s and early '60s.

In the early 1960s, Cline's life began settling down — just as her career began to pick up. Two children, a dream home and a stack of hit records were finally hers, but she would not be able to enjoy them long. Patsy Cline died in an airplane crash March 5, 1963, while hurrying back to her family after a benefit concert in Kansas City.

Cline's enduring musical legacy is witnessed by the fact that she is the number one jukebox play in the world. Her greatest hits album has sold more

than 9 million copies and has been in first place for more than 200 weeks of her 700 weeks on Billboard's "Top Country Catalog Albums."

A show that appeals to all ages, "A Closer Walk" provides a blend of theater and music into a magical evening.

Twenty of Cline's best-known songs, played by a live band, make this show a treat for the young and old alike. The songs are performed in their entirety with arrangements, back-up vocals and a band structure all providing an accurate re-creation of the Patsy Cline sound. A full band accompanies Bliss. All accomplished musicians in their own right, members of the "Closer

Walk" band have played with recording artists such as Leon Russell, Willie Nelson and Travis Tritt and have won several music industry awards.

"A Closer Walk with Patsy Cline" runs through Feb. 5. The Alhambra Theatre & Dining is located at 12000 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville. Tickets start at \$45 and include a three-course meal that changes for each show, a Broadway-style performance and complimentary parking.

Tickets can be purchased online at alhambrajax.com or by calling 904-641-1212.

Gershwin, Mendelssohn works to be performed

Florida Chamber Music Project will perform pieces by George Geršwin and Felix Mendelssohn at 3 p.m. Jan. 15 at the Beaches Museum Chapel, which is part of the Beaches Museum at 505 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville Beach. Both pieces were written by the composers during their teen years.

Geršwin's "Lullaby" was composed in 1919 when he was a student. It

wasn't performed in public until 1967. The music was a basis for Geršwin's opera, "Blue Monday."

Mendelssohn's Octet in E-flat Major, Op. 20 was written in 1825 when Mendelssohn was 16. The piece features four violins, two violas and two cellos. It was dedicated as a birthday present to Mendelssohn's violin teacher, Eduard Rietsz. Joining the Florida Cham-

ber Music Project for this piece will be Ingang Han, violin, Romona Merritt, viola, and Brian Magnus, cello.

"The Mendelssohn octet is one of the most joyful, energetic and energizing pieces in classical music," said Susan Pardue, artistic director. "It is a great way to kick off the New Year or beat the January blues."

Season flex passes for Florida Cham-

ber Music Project concerts are now available at a price of \$75. With the purchase of a \$75 flex pass, attendees get three concerts and can choose which of the four remaining concerts to attend. Season passes are also available for the four remaining concerts at \$100 per pass, a savings over regular price of \$27 per concert. Tickets to this concert will be available at the door as will \$10 student tickets.

Concert attendees are invited to meet the musicians and enjoy light refreshments after the performance.

Beaches Museum Chapel is wheelchair accessible and has free parking along Pablo Avenue near 4th Street North of Beach Boulevard.

The Florida Chamber Music Project was founded 10 years ago by violist Susan Pardue. Joining her are violinists Patrice Evans, Siyu Zhang and Ann Hertler and cellist Laurie Casseday. All are members of the Jacksonville Symphony.

For advance tickets online, go to flchambermusic.org.

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Sports



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Sharks hammer Crusaders with five-goal senior night

By Anthony Richards

It was a memorable night all around for the Ponte Vedra boys soccer team, who not only honored its senior class against the Bishop Kenny High School, but also added to the festivities by beating the Crusaders 5-1.

Many seniors made their influence known in the game, especially senior captain Andres Villasana, who scored a couple of early goals, one that showed his range from far out and the other on a penalty kick that put the Sharks up 2-1 with 6:21 to play in the first half.

It was the first game back for the Sharks since the winter break.

“After a long break, I was expecting us to be a little flat, but we came out flying, and it was great to see,” Villasana said. “Last year we really wanted to win for all the seniors, and this year it was our turn.”

Villasana, along with the rest of the seniors have become leaders on the team, and it is a role they have embraced with open arms since the start of the season.

However, the Sharks added another goal in the blink of an eye as junior Jeffrey Tillman slipped in behind the defense and wound up one-on-one with the Crusaders’ goalie for a goal, a battle in which he won, for a goal of his own less than a minute later, and the Sharks led 3-1 at halftime.

“We were connecting passes and getting the ball behind to score goals, which is always sweet,” Romano said.

Not only were the Sharks up by two scores and feeling good about their

performance to that point, but they also honored the seven seniors that are on this year’s varsity roster, including Ryen Theisen, Mark Romano, Villasana, Will Sheehan, Jack Lopez, Matthew McConn and Ethan Riutort.

“The environment and the fans out here tonight was good, and it led to some great times,” Lopez said. “It’s so hyped and fun to be a part of.”

Sheehan started in goal and made a diving stop to his right in the first half to keep the Crusaders at one goal and he and the defense shutdown the opposing offense in the second half as well, while the Sharks continued to control possession and capitalize on their opportunities.

Lopez was another senior who joined in on the goal parade for the Sharks, which proved to be an emotional moment for him, as it was also the first goal of his high school career.

He started playing soccer when he was 4 years old, including stints in travel soccer, however this was the first year he has played for his school soccer program.

“I decided to play my senior year, because I realized that you only get to do it once, and I’m just loving it,” Lopez said.

Joey Stephens put the exclamation point on the offensive landslide as he was one of several Sharks’ players that converged on the net and finished off a prime scoring chance with the confident swing of his right foot for the fifth and final goal of the night for Sharks.

“Being out there on nights like this just feel great, because every player on our



Photos by Anthony Richards

Joey Stephens turns to celebrate with his teammates immediately after scoring a goal against Bishop Kenny Jan. 5.



Jack Lopez (No. 12) and Jeffrey Tillman (No. 11) work to gain possession against Bishop Kenny.



Ponte Vedra's Andres Villasana strikes a penalty kick for the team's second goal of the contest.

team is capable of producing something, and I’m confident in giving any player the ball,” Villasana said.

According to Romano, the Sharks are a team to look out for down the final

stretch of the season.

“At first it was all about getting used to each other, but now it’s really been starting to come together,” Romano said. “I’m feeling like this team’s going far.”

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CROSSWORD

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ACROSS

1. Respiratory disorder
7. Bulgarian mountain peak
10. Group of important people
12. South American nation
13. Amazes
14. ___-Castell, makers of pens
15. Perlman and Seehorn are two
16. Early medieval alphabet
17. Legislator (slang)
18. Tasty crustacean
19. Course of action
21. Airborne (abbr.)
22. Permanent church appointment
27. Larry and Curly's pal
28. Famed American journalist
33. 12th letter of Greek alphabet
34. In a way, vanished
36. Afflict in mind or body
37. Egyptian Sun god
38. Source of the Blue Nile
39. Egyptian unit of weight
40. Be the source of pain
41. Esteemed award ___ d'Or
44. Partner to pains
45. Deep blue
48. No longer living
49. Country in the UK
50. Not even
51. Arizona city

5. A type of "Squad"
6. Autonomic nervous system
7. Dish with food on a stick
8. City northwest of Provo
9. C. European river
10. One out of jail
11. Henry Clay estate
12. Heathen
14. Refrained
17. Parts per billion (abbr.)
18. "The Stranger" author
20. Not old
23. Periods of starvation
24. Language of tribe in India
25. Savings account
26. Pitching stat

29. Megabyte
30. Ribonucleic acid
31. A place to put your feet
32. The fun part of a week
35. We all have our own
36. Partner to "oohed"
38. African nation
40. Breezed through
41. Sets out
42. Other
43. Not fattening
44. "Much ___ about nothing"
45. Central Time
46. Former EU monetary unit
47. Charles S. Dutton sitcom

SUDOKU

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Level: Beginner

Here's How It Works:

Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

DOWN

1. Wager
2. Classical portico
3. As a result
4. Bird

PV alum Polian wins Gator Bowl



Photo by Anthony Richards

It was an excellent homecoming for Ponte Vedra High alum and sophomore Notre Dame wide receiver Jack Polian, who returned to the First Coast and won the 78th Annual Gator Bowl on Dec. 30, as the Fighting Irish beat the South Carolina Gamecocks 45-38.

JAGA First Coast Amateur returns to Hidden Hills Jan. 14-16

For the seventh year in a row, the Jacksonville Area Golf Association's First Coast Amateur Golf Tournament will serve as one of the nation's leading kickoff events to the 2023 amateur golf season.

A field of 96 elite amateur golfers from 12 countries, 22 states and a tournament-high 37 colleges and universities will descend on Hidden Hills Golf Club in Jacksonville over Martin Luther King Jr. holiday weekend, Jan. 14-16, eager to get a head start on their 2023 competitive golf seasons.

With the return of the First Coast Amateur to Jacksonville from Palm Coast, an important development for the 2023 championship was the fall announcement that the City of Jacksonville, through its sports and entertainment division, would sponsor the event.

Demand to land a spot in the tournament remains strong. Entries arrived in large numbers right after registration opened on Nov. 1, with exempt players having priority over those who were non-exempt. By the end of November, entries had exceeded 100.

In addition to the 96 players who currently have spots in the field, another 46 are on the waiting list, hoping to get a call that they have been selected to fill an opening due to a tournament withdrawal.

Twenty-two of the 96 available play-

ing spots were allocated based on seven exemption categories.

An additional 10 committee picks were awarded Dec. 23 to round out the field.

This year's event will have 22 players ranked inside the top 2000 in the World Amateur Golf Ranking, and 23 players who list a Northeast Florida city or town as their hometown or current residence will represent the greater Jacksonville area.

The University of North Florida will have four golfers in the field, including the reigning JAGA Jacksonville Amateur champion Jason Duff of Elkton and 2020 winner Cody Carroll of Jacksonville.

Others who will be traveling from within the state to compete are members from state schools Central Florida, Flagler, Florida Southern, Palm Beach Atlantic, and South Florida.

They will be joined by others who play college golf at schools such as Augusta, East Tennessee State, Indiana, Miami of Ohio, Mississippi State, Ohio State, Purdue, SMU, the Universities of Cincinnati, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Notre Dame, Tennessee and West Virginia.

The North Florida Junior Golf Tour will once again be represented by two of its leading players based on tournament play as well.

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