

THE RECORDER

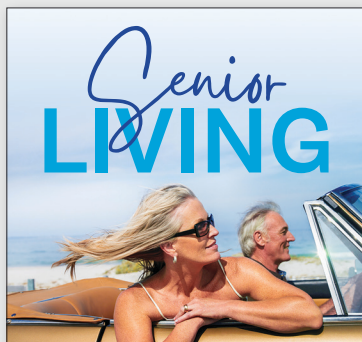


Happy
Mother's
day

May 11, 2023
Volume 54, No. 28
\$1.00

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PonteVedraRecorder.com



Senior Living
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Page 4



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

COMPOSER IN CLAY

Master sculptor Peter Rubino shows off a bust of Beethoven he created before a live audience during the Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts event Sunday night. For a story and photos from the event, turn to page 27.

PHOTO BY SHAUN RYAN

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Silent auction raises \$40K to help MS patients

For the 11th consecutive year beaches and Nocatee area residents rallied to support thousands of North Floridians impacted by multiple sclerosis.

Nearly 300 items valued at more than \$40,000 were sold at the recent annual MS Awareness silent auction, driven by volunteers and hosted by Mr. Chubby's Wings in Ponte Vedra Beach.

The event, started by the local Bike MS Big Banana team in 2003, has now generated \$225,000 to help provide programs and services for MS patients and their families. The volunteers also raise funds each December in Jacksonville Beach by giftwrapping holiday presents.

Since 2010, Big Bananas have raised more than \$1.6 million and earned the Society's prestigious Circle of Distinction Award.

All the items sold at the auction were donated by hundreds of area restaurants, hotels, service providers and business owners.

"The local support and generosity surrounding this event is amazing and grows every year," said silent auction co-chair Bruce Reid. "The awareness created gets us that much closer to finding a cure and living in a world free of MS."

The MS Society's largest fundraiser, Bike MS PGA TOUR Cycle to the Shore, is scheduled for Oct. 7-8; it's a one- or two-day multi-distance bicycle ride with more than 1,000 participants. Cyclists who pedal

from Ponte Vedra Beach to Daytona Beach and back will raise more than \$1 million.

For more information, go to www.bikeMS.org.

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GUEST COLUMN

Palm Valley history event soothes the troubled soul

By Scott A. Grant

People are angry. You see it every day on the internet and in the grocery store and most especially on the cluttered highways and byways of our proud country, where scowling faces hurtle white-knuckled down the road, an aggrieved fist just a heartbeat

away from sounding out a blaring horn of disgust. It's sad.

Where, we ask, can we get away from the madness? It turns out that for a few hours recently there was an escape. Hundreds gathered for a respite from the tensions of an angry world at the Palm Valley History


Festival. Set in the most unlikely of places, the bucolic environs of a World War II surplus barracks on Canal Boulevard deep inside old Palm Valley.

Love and smiling faces greeted those lucky enough to attend and for a few hours the frenetic pace of the outside world was forgotten. The casual attendee can be forgiven if they felt somehow they had wandered back in time to a gentler era with musicians playing in the open air and storytellers spinning their reminiscences. Nostalgia was palpable and moonshine

abounded as old and new gathered to honor the 75th Anniversary of the Palm Valley Community Association.

It is the kind of quirky good fun we have come to expect from a Standfast Asset Management event, and we were once again reminded that is agreeable to be a geek, even if only for a few hours. No doubt, Ernie Mickler and the others who came before us smiled happily from eternity.

The event was such a smashing success that one can only hope it will be repeated and each of us will be lucky enough to attend.



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This Oceanfront Estate is the epitome of luxurious coastal living. Spread across 1.67 acres of land, this grand estate sits upon a 33ft natural bluff and boasts 175ft of ocean frontage. Built by Benchmark Home in 1997 with masonry construction, features multi-level oceanfront Saturnina patios with pool and spa amply bolstered by an expansive sea wall. This property is one of 13 oceanfront homes with Geotubes installed to protect the dunes. The private drive, lush with Florida fauna, brings you to the motor court and two 2-car garages for ample parking. Upon entering, you will be greeted by an elegant foyer that leads to the spacious living room with grandiose floor-to-ceiling windows that offer panoramic ocean views. This estate features a total of 5 bedrooms and 5 full and 2 half bathrooms, with the palatial owner's suite on the 1st floor. Two guest bedrooms with ensuite baths, a wine room, large office and half bath are also on 1st level. Upstairs has an additional living space fully equipped with wet bar and dining nook, in addition to 2 guest bedrooms with ensuite baths. This Oceanfront Estate in Ponte Vedra Beach is a rare find, perfect for those looking for exclusive waterfront living, style, and tranquility. With its stylish design, endless list of features and prime location, this estate is a must-see for anyone searching for the ultimate coastal mansion.

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Celebrities, golf for a good cause

The Tom Coughlin Jay Fund Foundation hosted its 28th Annual Celebrity Golf Classic at TPC Sawgrass on May 7 and 8. The following photos are from the event's dinner and auction on May 7. The event serves as one of the foundation's marquee fundraisers of the year and featured a variety of current and former professional athletes and celebrities.

Photos by Anthony Richards



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Rabbi Dyme installed at Beth El

Photos by Shaun Ryan



Members of Beth El the Beaches Synagogue installation committee and board gather on the bimah prior to the installation of Rabbi Benjamin Dyme, standing at center.



Rabbi Benjamin Dyme was installed at Beth El the Beaches Synagogue on April 29. Seen with him in the sanctuary is Rabbi Paula Feldstein.

By Shaun Ryan

Ask members of Beth El the Beaches Synagogue to describe their new rabbi and you will hear again and again: He is kind.

In fact, kindness – in Hebrew, chesed – was the chosen theme for Rabbi Benjamin Dyme’s installation on April 29.

It’s one of the attributes of God, Dyme explained, and practicing it is one way people can emulate God.

It’s also a quality essential to the Golden Rule, which is expressed in chapter 19, verse 18 of the book of Leviticus, a passage Dyme said has special meaning for him and one he selected to be read during his installation: “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

It’s something synagogue members put into practice; newcomers to the rapidly growing congregation are quick

to say they have found Beth El to be a welcoming place.

Though Beth El has been served by a number of rabbis over its 30-plus years, the installation of Rabbi Dyme was an important event in the synagogue’s history: it was the congregation’s first.

Held immediately following the Saturday Shabbat service, the ceremony incorporated participation by Dyme’s family, as well as Rabbi Eric Polokoff (via Zoom) and Rabbi Paula Feldstein, who traveled from New York to attend. These rabbis played essential roles in Dyme’s formation.

Dyme graduated from the University of Michigan and worked for a while at Hillel International and then as a barista at Borders Books and Music.

“It was formative in that working behind the counter, I realized that certain

DYME continues on Page 10

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Amy West is an author who combined her passion for travel she developed as a child and her love for Jacksonville and the North Florida area to write a pair of books designed to showcase destinations that have made up Jacksonville's culture throughout the years. The second book is a scavenger hunt that she believes will be perfect for families around the area this summer.

Amy West

As told to Anthony Richards

Can you tell us about your background and where you are from?

I lived in Jacksonville Beach for 32 years, and although my family and I just recently moved to Tampa, my mother still calls Jacksonville home, and we have B&Bs that we own in town.

Ever since I can remember travel has always been a huge part of my life and something that I have always been fascinated with.

My dad worked with Delta, so the opportunities were definitely there and when my parents divorced I ended up flying back and forth from Florida to Kentucky a lot when I was just about 7 or 8 years old.

I was taking about 12 flights a year, and that's when I caught the "travel bug since." I was traveling abroad at 14 years old, and I haven't stopped since."

What led to you writing your two books?

I have had my own travel T.V. Show series and blogs over the years and writing has always been important to me, because journaling was always something I did since I was young, especially during my travels.

The idea to write the books was just another avenue for me to express my love for writing and travel while exploring Jacksonville, the place I grew up around and love more than anything.

Can you talk about your books and what they entail?

The first book was "100 things to do in Jacksonville before you die," and then I came out with "Jacksonville Scavenger: The ultimate search for Jacksonville's hidden treasures."

My hope is that the books help shed light and showcase the number of great destinations we have in Jacksonville.

There are more than 20 restaurants listed in the first book, as well as a variety of other destinations, such as greenspaces and historical markers.

"Jacksonville Scavenger" presents more of a challenge and prompts the reader to find clues and go out and find the many destinations out there.

There are 24 neighborhoods in Jacksonville included in the scavenger book and multiple clues and riddles are given for each one of them as well as a photo and an illustration.

There are over 340 clues throughout the book.

You don't need one book to figure out the other, but there are going to be some things that do cross over from one to the next.

They are each something that is truly Jacksonville and has a special place or plays a part in making the city's culture what it is.

What was the process like completing the books?

Just finishing the books is a huge accomplishment, because there is so much behind the scenes that goes into it to make them happen.

There's a lot of time spent alone that I spent in my home studio in front of a computer just typing away.

There's a lot of time also spent battling with yourself to get the right summarization of a business.

You want to capture the right words, but you also don't want to make the scavenger hunt too easy or too hard. It



Contributed photo

Amy West is an author who has written a pair of books highlighting cultural destinations around Jacksonville.

had to be a healthy balance.

It took me a solid six months to put "Jacksonville Scavenger" together.

The thing that took the longest was not the writing but going to each of the destination sites in the book myself to get a photo of it.

What are the most rewarding parts of writing the books?

It gives me a lot of joy to know that these books will

help people discover what it is that makes Jacksonville so great. It's a way of preserving.

I wanted people who have lived here forever to still find some things in the books that they didn't expect to find or know about.

If you are someone who likes adventure, "Jacksonville Scavenger" will take you on the biggest and most epic tour of Jax you'll ever be on.

Whether you are into nature, history or you are a foodie, Jacksonville has something for you.

Wine Women & Shoes Fundraiser set for May 18

Search for those stilettos and reach for those wedges — Episcopal Children’s Services will host the third annual Wine Women & Shoes event at Timuquana Country Club at 6 p.m. May 18.

A blend of fashion and compassion, Wine Women & Shoes events are about putting the “fun” in fundraiser. They give women and men the opportunity to dress to impress while enjoying varietals from top winemakers, all for a good cause. The Episcopal Children’s Services event will feature wines from exclusive wine partner Justin, a shoppable multi-designer marketplace with local and national clothing brands, shoe and accessory partners and Shoe Guys —serving up this season’s must-haves on silver platters.

In addition to shopping wedges and wine, guests will enjoy a marketplace with the latest trends and go-to finds, a luxe raffle named “Key to the Getaway,” a silent and live auction and a fabulously fun fashion show with a few familiar faces. Everyone is invited to bid on silent auction items to benefit Episcopal Children’s Services.

Tickets for the event are \$150 with all proceeds benefiting the Episcopal Chil-

dren’s Services. The agency’s mission is to create opportunity so that the children served can achieve their full potential.

“The Third Annual Wine Women & Shoes Jax event allows us to share our agency impact in the community and engage with supporters as well as those who are learning about our wonderful organization,” said ECS Chief Executive Officer Connie Stophel. “Episcopal Children’s Services is pleased to produce this event to raise money for our youngest citizens in North and Central Florida and help the children and families we serve build a strong foundation for life.”

To reserve your tickets, go to winewomenandshoes.com/jax.

Founded in Napa Valley in 2005, the fun and fashionable national event series lets women put their most generous foot forward, sip to their hearts’ content and enjoy an evening with friends. With events in more than 200 cities and counting, it has helped net more than \$90 million for various causes across the country.

Last year’s event, benefitting Episcopal Children’s Services, netted more than

\$90,000 for children and families in North and Central Florida.

Episcopal Children’s Services serves more than 27,000 children and their families in 14 counties in Florida. ECS offers School Readiness, Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Nassau, Putnam, St. Johns, Marion, Dixie,

Gilchrist, Lake, Levy, Citrus and Alachua counties.

ECS uses research and best practices to help families ensure their children enter school ready to learn. Talented, dedicated teachers and staff work proactively with children from birth to age 5 and their families to build a strong educational foundation.

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A few ideas for Mother's Day brunch

Nineteen

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Mother's Day Brunch

9 a.m. to 2 p.m. May 14

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Menu at: <https://tpc.com/sawgrass/dining/>

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Mother's Day Brunch

Treat Mom this upcoming Mother's Day with a brunch buffet at Vernon's First Coast Kitchen & Bar from 10am – 3pm EST. Brunch will feature a seafood station, salad options, buffet hot items, a carving station, and desserts. The buffet is priced at \$85 per adult and \$35 for children. The innovative dishes at Vernon's are always fresh, locally sourced ingredients that are thoughtfully made.

Reservations: <https://www.opentable.com/vernon-restaurant>

Wicked Barley Brewing Company

4100 Baymeadows Road, Jacksonville

Mother's Day Brunch & Spring Market

9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, May 14

Treat Mom to a delicious, from-scratch Sunday brunch, with live music and a variety of local vendors. Sip and shop with local vendors from 11 a.m. until 4 p.m.

No reservations taken.

Barbara Jean's On The Water

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Barbara Jean's On The Water is a favorite among locals and visitors alike, conveniently located in Ponte Vedra Beach and offering picturesque views of the Intracoastal Waterway.

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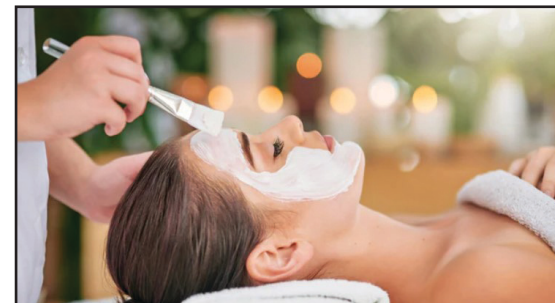
Make a reservation at [nonablue.com/locations/ponte-vedra-beach](https://www.nonablue.com/locations/ponte-vedra-beach).

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

Mother's Day gift-giving ideas



The Spa at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club is offering a Mother's Day gift card promotion and as an added incentive until May 14, anybody who purchases a \$200 gift card will also receive a \$15 voucher.



The Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa is offering a 50-minute spa service for guests staying at least a two-night stay throughout May and until July 31. A promotional code of SPE can be entered at purchase to claim the offer.



Underwood Jewelers offers a wide selection of diamond earrings that every mother would love. The earrings range from \$350 and up.

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Show features Mara Labell's unique jewelry

By Shaun Ryan

There is a lot of high quality, elegant jewelry out there, but perhaps none so unique as the pieces created by Mara Labell.

How unique? Consider: She has actually copyrighted the hand-stitched, glass bead latticework that backs some of her work.

Last weekend, Labell held a trunk show at the Grand Bohemian Gallery in St. Augustine, showing off her latest

creations and meeting local fans. Among the pieces on display were some of her biggest sellers, as well as her new 18-karat gold line, which she introduced in September.

The demand for these latest creations has been great, and Labell works diligently to keep up.

"It's just gone gangbusters!" she said.

Bracelet Breakthrough

Labell grew up surrounded by

art. Her mother, Trudy Labell, ran a contemporary, fine art gallery in Boston and relocated it to Naples, Florida, when her daughter was 8 years old.

In addition to years of exposure to great art, Mara Labell benefitted by her mother's insightful critiques.

"She has the most amazing critical eye," Labell said. "She was never the mom who said, 'Oh, honey, that's beautiful.' She was always very, like, 'I don't know; I think you could do better.' She always instilled this idea of universal beauty, and that there really is a 'best' — and that you can achieve that."

Labell, who said she has been making things throughout her life because she "sort of can't sit still," found herself inspired by some of the artisan jewelers her mother was representing.

"I made this crazy bracelet that stuck out in every single different direction,"

she said. "It was made with these tusk shells. I walked into the gallery — we were hosting a charity event that night — and Mom grabbed my arm and said, 'What is that? Where did you get that?'"

When Labell said she'd made the bracelet herself, her mother was silent.

"That was the best approval I could have ever gotten," Labell said. "I thought: I'm onto something. I think I can do this."

A photographer for the magazine covering the event took a picture of her bracelet. This new, unique style took off, and the Ritz-Carlton resort gallery in Naples began to carry her jewelry.

A little more than a year ago, Labell quit her day job and moved to Greenville, South Carolina, where she saw the Grand Bohemian Lodge,

JEWELRY continues on Page 23



Photo by Shaun Ryan

Jewelry artist Mara Labell, left, and Summer Hampton, corporate director of galleries and retail for the Kessler Collection, are seen at the recent trunk show at the Grand Bohemian Gallery in St. Augustine.

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Contributed photos



Members of Beth El the Beaches Synagogue installation committee and board gather during a reception for newly installed Rabbi Benjamin Dyme.



Rabbi Benjamin Dyme and the children of Beth El the Beaches Synagogue gather for a Mitzvah Day.

Dyme

Continued from 5

people treated you like you were behind the counter as opposed to treating you like a human being,” Dyme said.

That experience taught him to treat everyone he meets according to their human dignity and not like “somebody behind the counter.”

He went on to work for the next 11 years at the University of Pennsylva-

nia while also taking classes toward a master’s degree. Then, at age 38, he was officiating at weddings and everyone kept asking why he wasn’t a rabbi.

So, he dropped the courses he was taking and applied to rabbinical school. He was accepted at Hebrew Union College – Jewish Institute of Religion, the New York City campus, in 2016.

He was ordained in May 2022 and began to seek a position with the right synagogue.

At about this time, Beth El had

formed a search committee to find a rabbi following the retirement of Rabbi Michael Matuson, who had served the congregation for 13 years.

When they spoke with Dyme, they “really, really liked him,” according to longtime member Joy Shultz, the synagogue’s president-elect.

The new rabbi’s first service was July 1, a Friday. That meant hitting the ground running; he had to give a sermon on the day he started.

“A big part of being a rabbi is being

a teacher,” said Dyme. “I’m really looking forward to working with people and being able to teach and learn from them.”

Services begin at 10 a.m. every Saturday and are followed by some social time and then Torah study at noon.

EDITOR’S NOTE: This is an abridged version of the article. To read the entire story, please go to ponteverdarecorder.com.

Nominations begin May 19



The Ponte Vedra Recorder, celebrating 54 years of community news excellence, will launch our fifth annual **BEST OF THE BEST of Ponte Vedra, 32081 & 32082.**

YOU, our valued readers, now have the chance to nominate your favorite businesses in various categories online. Online voting begins June 12th after nominations are complete. **HURRY, last day to nominate is June 11th!**

[www.ponteverdarecorder.com/bestof2023/index.html#//](http://www.ponteverdarecorder.com/bestof2023/index.html#/)

Senior LIVING

RESIDENTS ENJOY LIFE AT PALMS AT PONTE VEDRA PAGE 12

PLANNING FOR THE COST OF LONG-TERM CARE PAGE 14

KEEP YOUR FEET FEELING YOUNG PAGE 17

TIPS FOR STAYING HEALTHY IN OUR SENIOR YEARS PAGE 18

STARLING AT NOCATEE RESIDENTS ENJOYED FUN-PACKED APRIL PAGE 19

PONTE VEDRA GARDENS HOLDS CARNIVAL PAGE 21

... AND MORE INSIDE!



THE RECORDER

THE RECORDER • THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2023

Jacksonville Senior Expo spring showcase set for May 17-18

By Anthony Richards

The 27th Semi-annual Jacksonville Senior Expo is set to take place May 17 and 18 at the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center in Jacksonville.

The convention center is located at 1000 Water St. in downtown Jacksonville and is free to the public with admission and parking offered at no cost, which is an important aspect and one that Expo Management President Bill Anderson is proud of.

Expo Management partners with the City of Jacksonville to put on the event,

which will take place from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. both days.

“It’s the second largest senior expo in the state of Florida,” Anderson said. “We’ll have more than 5,000 people attend over the two days.”

There will be 85 vendors in the convention center, varying from an array of topics but each pertaining to senior citizens.

The vendor content will range from investment opportunities to travel and retirement options, as well as health and

Photo courtesy of Expo Management



More than 5,000 people are expected to attend over the two days of 2023 Jacksonville Senior Expo May 17 and 18 at the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center.

EXPO continues on Page 15

Residents enjoy life at Palms at Ponte Vedra



Residents Guy Fraley and Pearl Levin make use of the exercise room at The Palms at Ponte Vedra.

By Shaun Ryan

Guy Fraley and his wife were living in New Smyrna Beach last year when their daughter, a resident of Ponte Vedra, said she wanted them to live closer. They began to look for a suitable retirement community and found what they wanted at The Palms at Ponte Vedra, an assisted

living and memory care community on Solana Road.

“We went to two other places, and I’ll tell you right up front: This is the place to be,” said Fraley. “They’re good. They take care of us ... I don’t want to be anywhere else.”

In fact, when his wife passed away a couple of months ago, Fraley’s daughter



Photos by Shaun Ryan

Resident Pearl Levin sits on a bench in the pool area at The Palms at Ponte Vedra.

offered to help him move into an apartment.

“I said, ‘No, I want to stay here,’” Fraley recalled.

He said residents of The Palms at Ponte Vedra were blessed to be there.

Another resident, Pearl Levin, echoed his sentiments.

“The people are just so friendly and loveable here — the staff and the residents,” she said, adding that she would recommend The Palms at Ponte Vedra to anyone who asks.

Like other residents, Levin and Fraley enjoy the many activities available to them.

“I do water aerobics and water therapy,” said Levin. “Sometimes I do chair therapy, and bingo and bridge and the movies and flower arranging.”

She occasionally goes out to lunch, and in her spare time she likes to make necklaces from the many different types of beads that she brought from her former Sawgrass home in 2022.

Fraley does physical therapy and he enjoys the three Happy Hours offered weekly, but one of the community’s amenities is his clear favorite.

“The exercise room is just perfect,” he said. “I have learned how to use most of

the machines.”

The popularity of the many activities is almost certainly due to the effective and enthusiastic management of Activity Director Brooklyn Santiago and her four-person team.

“We do activities all day,” she said. “We try to keep them real busy.”

She regularly takes residents out to lunch and shopping. They go to the beach, get ice cream and visit interesting places. They have motored down to St. Augustine, attended a Jacksonville Symphony performance, taken in a Christmas lights display and toured the library. Santiago is planning to take a group to MOSH, some wine tours and baseball games.

In addition, residents are able to take shuttles to church every Sunday.

To keep residents at the top of their game, the community holds exercise sessions every morning. On weekends there is tai chi and breathing meditation. Residents may receive physical and occupational therapy, and Santiago teaches an aquafit class.

Residents have a bridge club, poker club and book club, and movies are shown twice daily. There’s also a Parkin-

PALMS continues on Page 13

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SERVING CLIENTS IN PONTE VEDRA BEACH AND THE SURROUNDING AREA



Residents gather for dinner at The Palms at Ponte Vedra.

Contributed photo



Sous Chef Dhurata “Mama” Asllani prepares dinner at The Palms at Ponte Vedra.



A resident of The Palms at Ponte Vedra gets into the spirit of the Kentucky Derby.



Contributed photos

Activity Director Brooklyn Santiago and resident Pearl Levin celebrate Cinco de Mayo at The Palms at Ponte Vedra.

Palms

Continued from 12

son’s group, which was started by Levin.

“It’s a really great place,” said Santiago, a native of Upstate New York who has been at The Palms at Ponte Vedra for about eight months. “The staff is great. Our management team is the best management team I’ve ever worked with. Our executive director, Barbara Matteson, is the most involved executive director I’ve ever worked for. She genuinely cares about the residents and the staff.”

Another thing that enhances the lives of the residents is the culinary aspect.

Sous Chef Dhurata Asllani, known by residents as

“Mama,” has been with The Palms at Ponte Vedra for six years. Prior to that, she worked for 20 years at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa. She oversees the cooking for every meal and residents praise her contribution to their lifestyles.

“You need to live here just to come eat with Mama,” Fraley said.

“I love every single resident,” Asllani said.

This is more than just an idle statement. She meets with each new resident individually to learn what they like to eat.

“I tell them, ‘This is your house. So, whatever you guys need, tell us. We work for you. So, come to me, whatever you need,’” she said.

Her homemade lasagna and steak with baked potato are among her most popular dishes.

“My big thing is, I tell my chef, ‘Taste the food. If you don’t like it, don’t put it on a plate. If you wouldn’t eat it, don’t give it to my residents,’” she said.

She also serves a variety of salads and tries to encourage residents to eat healthy. In fact, she grows some of the vegetables and all of her herbs in a garden on the campus.

The Palms at Ponte Vedra is located at 405 Solana Road. To learn more, go to palmsatpontevedra.com.



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GUEST COLUMN

Planning for the cost of long-term care



By Emily Hicks

Most of my elderly clients have the same fears about aging and their families. They are concerned about paying for long-term care, they want to stay at home (age in place), and they don't want to burden their kids. In many instances, families can keep an aging parent at home and care for them. But what happens if there is a fall or serious condition?

That's when the reality sets in that an aging family member must go to a nursing home, because they can provide skilled nursing care that a family member or assisted living facility cannot provide.

In these cases, the family member usually has Medicare coverage and believes that their care will be covered. It's true that Medicare does cover the cost of a long-term nursing home stay, but only for the allowable maximum 100 days, which is usually a surprise. Beyond that point, Medicare does not cover the costs of long-term care. And that cost can be significant.

According to the annual Genworth cost of care study, and adjusting for inflation, in 2021, the annual median cost of a single room in a nursing home in our area was \$106,584.

What are the options for paying for long-term care?

There are three primary methods of paying for nursing homes or assisted living facilities:

- 1) Privately paying for care with one's own money or family's money;
- 2) Using long-term care insurance that covers some or all of the costs; or
- 3) Qualifying for Need-Based Gov-

ernment Benefits, i.e. VA Benefits and the Medicaid program.

Privately paying for care can often mean spending one's life savings or selling one's home to pay for their care. Because the cost of nursing homes in Northeast Florida ranges from about \$5,000 to \$12,000 per month, the costs add up quickly. Assisted living facilities are generally about half the cost of nursing homes, but unfortunately still cost too much for many to pay without outliving their savings. The sad reality is that many end up spending all of their savings to pay for long-term care and have nothing left.

Long-term care insurance can be a viable option, if you already have a plan in place. Those who need care but do not have long-term care insurance usually either cannot qualify for the policies or cannot afford the premiums. Long-term care insurance is therefore often not an option.

Our last options are qualifying for needs-based programs through the VA and/or the Medicaid program. In Florida, Medicaid pays for almost all nursing homes and increasingly covers assisted living facilities as well. But in order to

qualify for Medicaid, applicants must have a net worth of less than \$2,000 and monthly gross income below \$2,742 (2023 figures). These restrictions leave out the majority of the population except for the indigent.

This is where legal planning can make a big difference. Despite the restrictive rules, there are ways to ethically and legally convert countable assets to non-countable assets, so that you can keep some savings and still qualify for Medicaid. This is done not out of greed, but of necessity so that an elderly patient is not left penniless at the cost of long-term care. Before committing to paying out of pocket, find out about the ways you may be able to plan effectively for the costs of long-term care.

Emily Hicks Law PLLC, 822 A1A N., Suite 310, Ponte Vedra Beach, offers elder law and long-term care planning, as well as estate planning — wills, trusts, powers of attorney and health care documents. For further information, go to EmilyHicksLaw.com, call 904-280-6820 or email Emily@EmilyHicksLaw.com.


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Photo courtesy of Expo Management



Health testing and screenings will be included among the vendor content, as well as opportunities to travel and retirement options for senior citizens.

Expo

Continued from 11

fitness tips and ideas. Health testing and screenings will also be available.

“It’s good outreach and marketing for our vendors and great information for our attendees,” Anderson said. “It’s a win-win for all sides involved.”

According to Anderson, the expo is much more than just a room full of vendors and seminars but is two days of constant entertainment and activities on top of it, including hourly drawings and door prizes awarded.

“There will be all sorts of goodies handed out and a variety of musical acts,” Anderson said. “It’s an educational and entertainment forum.”

Part of the unique tradition of the event

is that the Senior Expo is held twice a year in town with a spring event in May and a fall event in November.

However, there is a change taking place this year, as in the past both expos were held at the convention center, but this year the fall showcase will be at the University of North Florida.

Having the expos in different venues as opposed to both at the convention center is something that Anderson believes has the potential to become the new approach moving forward, because it allows for senior citizens who live in other parts of town to have the ability to attend whichever one is more convenient for them.

“It’s all about helping to get the word out of the options that are out there for those in the area,” Anderson said.

The fall expo is scheduled for Nov. 28 and 29.

Area senior centers plan programs

There’s always something happening at the COA’s senior centers in St. Johns County. Here are some important, interesting and helpful events at three of the centers. For more information, contact the centers or go to coasjc.org.

THE PLAYERS COMMUNITY SENIOR CENTER

175 Landrum Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach
For information or to register for a program, call Suzanne Duvall at 904-209-3659.

- **Caregiver Support Group (free program):** Meets on the first Wednesday of each month. Register with the Alzheimer’s Association at 800-272-3900.

- **Monthly Birthday Bash:** Enjoy birthday cake and celebrate May birthdays and Mother’s Day! 11 a.m. to noon Thursday, May 11.

- **Community Hospice:** This educational talk will focus on engaging people with dementia. 11 a.m. to noon Tuesday,

May 16.

- **Stars Rehab:** Fall prevention presentation. 11 a.m. to noon Tuesday, May 23.

- **SJC Legal Aid:** Megan Wall, St. Johns County Legal Aid managing attorney, will speak on avoiding predatory lending. 11 a.m. to noon Thursday, May 25.

- **“Elvis” Movie with Home Instead:** Enjoy some popcorn and the “Elvis” movie. Sponsored by Home Instead. 10 a.m. Tuesday, May 30.

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- **Grief Support Group:** This group is for anyone dealing with grief from the loss of a loved one. Ann Martel MSW facilitates these meetings. 10:30 a.m.



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Busy summer months ahead at THE PLAYERS Senior Center

By Anthony Richards

THE PLAYERS Community Senior Center is preparing for a busy summer of events and celebrations over the next couple of months.

It all starts with the center's annual Centenarian luncheon, which is scheduled for Thursday, May 18 at 11:30 a.m. and does its part in honoring residents 95 years and older.

A free legal lecture focusing on how to avoid predatory lending will be

provided by Megan Wall, managing attorney with St. Johns County Legal Aid on Thursday, May 25 from 11 a.m. to noon.

A busy month of June includes Modified Independence Evaluations presenting the fall prevention film, "Saving Claire" Thursday, June 1, from 11 a.m. to noon, and the center's own tap dance group as they present their spring recital with an hour-long performance Thursday, June 8, beginning at 11 a.m.

The Red Cross will hold a presentation about hurricane preparedness on Thursday, June 22, from 11 a.m. to noon, and the center's monthly birthday celebration will be Thursday, June 29, from 11 a.m. to noon.

Cake will be on hand for the celebration and music will be provided by local favorite, James Cargill.

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GUEST COLUMN

Keep your feet feeling young

By Dr. Candice Kennedy

It's no secret that our feet are the foundation of our bodies. Whether you're walking up the stairs, getting into your car or simply strolling around your block, your feet provide the functionality you need for everyday life. In fact, the average person will walk about 115,000 miles throughout their lifetime — so it's incredibly important to take good care of your feet. Fortunately, there are several straightforward tips I recommend to patients — especially seniors — that make a huge difference in daily comfort and mobility.

Establish a Foot Care Routine

Begin by integrating foot care into your everyday routine by inspecting your legs and feet every morning or evening. You should look for anything visibly out of the ordinary and feel along your feet and ankles for any noticeable pain or discomfort. If you have mobility issues or back pain, it may be difficult to inspect your feet closely. If this is the case, consider placing a mirror on the floor and raising your foot up to it. If anything concerns you, contact a podiatrist.

People with diabetes, circulation issues (such as peripheral vascular or peripheral arterial disease), artificial joints or nerve damage — as well as those taking blood thinners — should see a podiatrist every two months for routine foot nail care. This is because these conditions greatly increase patients' risks when cutting their own nails. A podiatrist can safely care for toenails while ruling out any possible fungal infections with a nail biopsy. These regular visits also allow the podiatrist to care for corns, calluses and any other common issues so they don't progress.

Choose the Right Shoes

As you get older, your feet become a bit longer and wider, so it may be time to recheck your shoe size. As simple as it may sound, wearing the correct shoe size is vital — not only for comfort, but also for mobility.

There are three ingredients to a solid pair of shoes: a rigid heel counter, minimal torque and flexion in the toe box. In other words, you want a strong, thick heel counter to properly support your foot. Your feet should fit snugly in the shoe without wiggling or becoming loose,

which can cause injury. Finally, you want enough flexible space in the toe box of your shoe to give you mobility and control. Keep in mind, you may need shoes with a wider toe box if you have bunions or hammertoes.

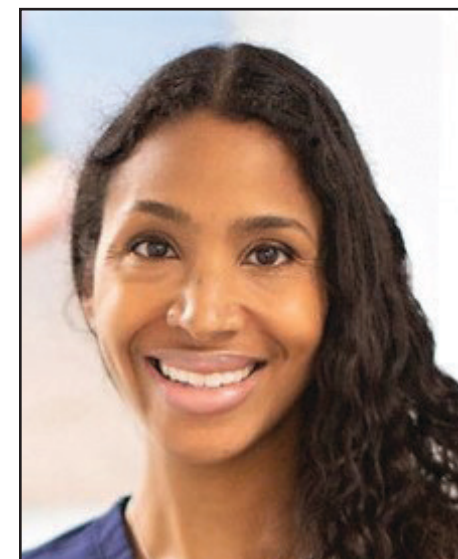
I also recommend custom-molded orthotics to insert into your shoes, as these help properly realign your legs and feet and effortlessly improve stability and support.

Hydrate and Protect Your Feet

The skin on your feet becomes drier and thinner as you age. It's important to regularly moisturize your feet with a lotion, such as Amerigel Care or similar brands.

Another often-overlooked foot care tip is to wear sunscreen on your feet — both top and bottom. Many don't realize that with sun exposure, your feet and legs are at risk for potential skin cancer. If you see a suspicious growth, discoloration or moles on your legs or feet, make an appointment with a podiatrist right away.

Your feet play a huge role in your overall health, yet they are often overlooked. By establishing a daily routine, seeking well-fitting shoes, and paying



extra attention to the skin on your feet, you can make a huge difference in your everyday comfort. Investing in better foot care can help enhance mobility for years to come — so hit the ground running and get started today!

Dr. Candice Kennedy is the founder and owner of Total Foot Care & Wellness Clinic, which operates eight locations throughout Jacksonville. The clinic's staff treats conditions such as injuries, bunions, corns and calluses, diabetic foot problems, plantar fasciitis and more. Total Foot Care providers also conduct house calls to individual homes and assisted living/nursing home facilities. To learn more or schedule an appointment, go to TheTFCClinic.com or call 904-323-0954.

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Tips for staying healthy in our senior years

By Shaun Ryan

As we age, staying fit becomes increasingly important.

Brian and Rita Sanders, owners of Seniors Helping Seniors Jacksonville, have each spent decades working in social services and have accumulated expertise in their field. Recently, they shared some advice on maintaining or improving physical and mental health in our golden years.

One of the biggest issues for seniors, according to Brian Sanders, is the risk of a fall. That's why it's important to work on leg strength, which means walking, whether it's around the block or just to get the mail.

"Any leg strength improvement helps to elevate your step, which reduces your trip hazard tremendously," Sanders said.

He also emphasized the importance of daily activity: get up, get moving and get your heart rate up.

"If you can only walk to the mailbox, walk to the mailbox and 10 feet further," Sanders said. "The next day, 10 feet further. Then, walk to your neighbor's mailbox."

Even those who are wheelchair-bound can do things to benefit their health. For instance, they can insist on propelling themselves as far as possible before al-



lowing someone else to push them.

Sanders cited studies showing that any aerobic activity or strength training done for as little as three hours a week provides a tremendous benefit to a person's physical health, reduces health risks and sharpens mental awareness.

Nutrition, too, is important. Sanders recommended avoiding empty calories — French fries, for instance. Instead of eating processed foods, he suggested fresh, lean cuts of meat, complex carbo-

hydrates, sweet potatoes rather than white potatoes, whole grain bread rather than white bread.

"Just before every meal, stop for about 30 seconds and think about what you're about to feed your body," he said. "Is that really what you want your body to thrive on, or do you want to make a little bit better choice?"

After doing this each day for a week, it will become a habit. A good habit.

"You will probably need some supple-

ments, too, because as you get older your body doesn't absorb vitamins, minerals, things of that nature so much," he said.

And because the body doesn't maintain calcium as well, it's a good idea to consume skim milk and other calcium-rich foods. Potassium, too, is important, and bananas are just one great source of it.

To improve mental acuity, Sanders suggested doing crossword puzzles, word games and Sudoku. Watching television, choose game shows that require you to think.

"When you're in a discussion, rely on your memory instead of whipping out Google," he said. "Like we did in the old days."

Social activity, he said, is also important. If you're short on companions, visit the nearest senior center or join Silver Sneakers at the YMCA.

And, said Rita Sanders, try to make fitness fun — and exercise with others.

For caregivers, Brian Sanders suggested strongly recommending outdoor activities: taking a walk, going to the mall, seeing a movie.

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SARA BETH FRAZIER



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Starling at Nocatee residents enjoyed fun-packed April

Starling at Nocatee Independent Living had several fun events for its residents during the month of April. Below are photos from the latest “chef’s chat” demonstration which featured how to make chicken egg rolls, a button dolls art class and some fun in the sun while searching for dolphins with Red Boat Water Tours.

Photos courtesy of Starling at Nocatee Independent Living



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Julep teamed up with V for Victory to host a Kentucky Derby party May 6 at its Palm Valley location.



Courtney Haymaker and Kat Wildblood show off their derby hats.

Photos by Anthony Richards

And they're off...to raise money

By Anthony Richards

Julep in Palm Valley hosted a Kentucky Derby party and fundraiser in partnership with V for Victory, which is a nonprofit organization that provides assistance for those battling cancer.

The event took place May 6 and resulted in a lively atmosphere as

attendees dressed in their best derby wear and enjoyed some food and good conversation in the hours leading up to the Kentucky Derby.

Brandon Hannon was on hand representing V for Victory, as there were several auction items that could be bid on by guests, including a signed British Open golf hole flag signed by last

year's winner Cameron Smith.

"We've seen a lot of good feedback as people are really starting to learn more about V for Victory and what the charity represents, which we love to see," Hannon said.

According to Hannon, it's the little things that make the biggest difference in a person's or a family's life while

faced with cancer.

"We're all about helping families with cancer with any everyday activities that they have. Whether its tires changed on your car or getting their grass cut. Those are things you don't really realize you need help with until you get affected by cancer."

Programs

Continued from 15

to noon on the first and third Tuesdays of every month. Register in advance by email to pbrunell@stjohnscoa.com or by calling 904-819-3234.

• **Caregiver Support Group:** All caregivers are welcome. 1-2 p.m. every Tuesday. There is a trained facilitator present

at every meeting to guide the group.

• **Widows and Widowers:** Social group meeting from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. Register in advance for one or both Tuesdays.

• **Open Art:** Bring your art or craft project to work on while socializing with new and old friends. 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. every Wednesday.

• **Ask the Pharmacist:** Do you have

questions or concerns about the prescription medications you take? Retired pharmacist Ray Lowe is here to help. Call or email to schedule a one-on-one appointment. Wednesday morning appointments available.

• **Mah Jongg Meet-up:** Open play for experienced players. 1-3 p.m. most Wednesdays, except 3-5 p.m. on May 17.

• **What is a Geriatric Care Manager:** We may need help managing a loved one

or our own care as we age. Attend this session to learn about another valuable resource from Brittany Shay, CDP and life care manager, from Palm Aging Life Management. 10-11 a.m. Wednesday, May 17.

• **Genealogy Group:** A genealogy expert will guide attendees in discovering their roots on the third Wednesday of each month. The next session is 1-2:30 p.m. Wednesday, May 17.

• **Intermediate Fasting:** The speaker will be Carla Powell, registered dietitian and health coach at Flagler Health+ Village at Nocatee. She will describe how to use meal timing for weight management. 3-4 p.m. Wednesday, May 24.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

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Ponte Vedra Gardens holds carnival



Ponte Vedra Gardens Alzheimer's Special Care Center, A Sinceri Senior Living Community, held its inaugural Ponte Vedra Gardens Carnival on April 5 for residents and their families. Attendees competed for prizes at the many games that were set up in the courtyard, with sponsors and volunteers from Mobile Medical, Concierge Care, Silver Rehab and Guardian Pharmacy all participating. Residents and their families enjoyed grilled hot dogs, chips, watermelon, Popsicles and fresh-squeezed lemonade. Mother Nature contributed beautiful weather. For more information on Ponte Vedra Gardens, go to sinceriseniorliving.com/ponte-vedra-gardens.



Contributed photos



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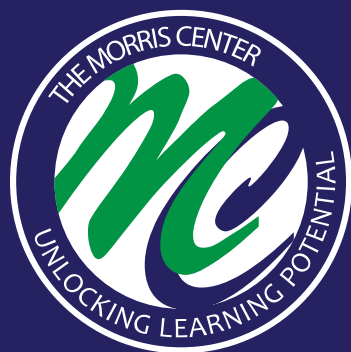
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Mara Labell's jewelry is unique and tasteful.



Thin, elegant pieces from Mara Labell's Your Daily Diamonds collection feature tiny diamonds in several colors.



Mara Labell's Dangerous Curves are popular creations from her collection.

Jewelry

Continued from 9

part of the Kessler Collection, under construction. She met with one of the company's gallery directors and began showing at various Grand Bohemian hotels.

"It's just been go go go since then," she said.

What to Wear

Labell's unique approach and exquisite use of precious materials all but guarantee that anyone wearing her jewelry at a social function will stand out.

Her Fleur pieces feature plated disks and Swarovski crystals attached to a hand-stitched lattice of tiny glass beads plated in 24-karat gold. At the recent trunk show, one woman remarked at how comfortable she found these pieces to wear. Each takes Labell about 15 hours to make.

Labell's Dare collection features some of her biggest sellers in St. Augustine. These feature precious Momo coral — also attached to Labell's signature hand-stitched lattice and often embellished with Swarovski crystals and dazzling



Pieces from Mara Labell's Fleur collection are very popular with local residents.

briolette elements.

Another collection features sparkling, skinny strands that are meant to be layered with other jewelry.

"They're tiny diamonds in all different colors," Labell explained. "They're called Your Daily Diamonds because you're really meant to just be wearing them all the time."

Your Daily Diamonds evoke delicacy yet have an indescribable impact.

Though the trunk show has concluded, the Grand Bohemian Gallery at 49 King

St. always carries Labell's jewelry.

In fact, if a desired piece is found on Labell's Instagram site and is not available locally, one may contact the gallery and have it shipped there so that it can be tried on and perhaps purchased.

"People need to be able to try on the jewelry," Labell said. "You need to see how it looks. It needs to make you feel beautiful."

For more information about Labell's jewelry, go to maralabell.com, where there is a link to her Instagram page.

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What a pleasure it was to work with my neighbors Margaret Ann and John Brown on the listing of their beautiful water to golf home in our neighborhood of Old Barn. It went quickly under contract and our sales price of 2,180,000.00, is the highest price per square feet of the most recent sales in Old Barn. Old Barn Island used to be Ponte Vedra Beach's best kept secret, but not any longer. Just minutes to the beach, golf, tennis and fitness center, you can experience vacation living year round on Old Barn Island, your private oasis in a country club setting!



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GUEST COLUMN

Why young savers should adopt a long-term mindset



Written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors

Four key considerations could help young adults create a mindset to succeed with saving and investing for the future.

Michelle Wan, Wells Fargo Investment Institute senior wealth investment solutions analyst, has met many younger clients who have had reservations about

investing. “Young investors may find themselves delaying investing for retirement because it seems so far in the future. Alternatively, they may enjoy trading volatile investment instruments for rapid profits,” she says. “They don’t realize how important it is to methodically develop planning and investing goals at a young age. Time is a young saver’s greatest ally.”

Here, Wan shares four key considerations for young savers when it comes to prioritizing long-term savings and investment plans.

1. Adopt a planning mindset

One key factor is having a planning mindset — a positive and proactive stance that could set savers on a path to positive financial outcomes. A planning mindset can provide a road map that can help strengthen a person’s financial future.

2. Start with small changes

Small changes in your financial behavior today could have a big impact on long-term success. Creating a budget, building healthy financial habits, and becoming more comfortable and familiar with investing could go a long way in contributing toward achieving long-term financial goals.

Some practices to consider:

- Automatically transferring part of your income into a savings account or an investment account

- Paying down student loans to avoid late fees and damage to credit scores

3. Begin saving and investing now

Start saving for retirement as soon as you can. The sooner you start, the more time every dollar saved has the potential to grow. If dollars saved early in your working years generate investment gains year after year, they can have a much bigger impact on the size of your account balance at retirement than you might think. Thanks to the power of compounding, as the dollars invested potentially earn returns, those reinvested returns can start earning returns, and so on — year after year.

“For younger investors, compounding returns become especially powerful given their longer time horizon, so an early start can make a dramatic difference in helping investors reach their financial goals,” says Wan.

4. Take full advantage of retirement savings plans

If your employer offers a 401(k) plan, be sure to participate — and max out any kind of matching-contribution offers. They are the equivalent of free money.

Roth IRAs — to which you contribute after-tax dollars — are also worth a

closer look because they offer tax-free growth potential. Investment earnings are also distributed tax-free in retirement if specific requirements are met.

“Another savings vehicle to consider is a Health Savings Account (HSA), which offers tax benefits to qualified investors,” Wan says.

A discussion with an investment professional about your investment goals can help you develop a long-term plan and strategies to potentially help you achieve those goals.

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New owner for chiropractic practice

Dr. David Slossberg is the new owner and treating chiropractic physician of Ponte Vedra Beach Chiropractic. He has been a chiropractic physician for more than 20 years.

After graduating from Florida State University and then Life University as a Doctor of Chiropractic, he opened and operated a multidisciplinary physical medicine clinic in South Florida that combined chiropractic, medical, physical therapy, nutrition and functional medicine for 15 years. In 2021,

he moved to the St. Augustine area, and then shortly after took over Ponte Vedra Beach Chiropractic.

He has been trained in multiple chiropractic and physical rehabilitation techniques. He also has extensive training in nutrition and functional medicine. He is soon to be certified through the Titleist Performance Institute as a golf medical professional with a focus on golf injuries and the golf swing.

The office is open 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 3-6 p.m. Monday-Thursday, and 9

a.m. to 1 p.m. Friday.

Ponte Vedra Beach Chiropractic accepts most health insurance plans and offers self-pay plans.

The office is located at 814 A1A N., Suite 102, Ponte Vedra Beach, to the right of Ruth Chris restaurant, next to Sawgrass.

For more information, go to PonteVedraBeachChiro.com or call 904-285-2243 or email PVBChiropractic@gmail.com.



Cay Wyatt, Jennifer Price and Trudy Toche

Night of glitz and glam serves as major fundraiser

The Ponte Vedra Woman's Club hosted one of its marquee annual fundraisers at Underwood Jewelers' Ponte Vedra Beach location May 4.

It is a partnership and an event that has been ongoing for roughly a decade now and is as strong as it ever has been.

"We like to do business with charities that are local and strive to give back to the people right here in the community we call home," Underwood Jewelers President Clayton Bromberg said. "This event is their event to hold here as long as they want to keep holding it."

Photos by Anthony Richards



Jetta Schantz, Nancy Johnson and Bailey Williams



Lesley McCormick and Ruth Murta



Jen and Donna Jawor



Debbie Farah was the winner of the necklace drawing at the Ponte Vedra Woman's Club fundraiser event hosted by Underwood Jewelers at its Ponte Vedra Beach location May 4.



Underwood Jewelers President Clayton Bromberg was on hand to help draw the prize winner.



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New Level Up Dance team already winning competitions

Enrollment blossoms for teen sisters' dance classes

By Shaun Ryan

Something unexpected happened in April when the Level Up Dance team took part in a major competition in Orlando.

Despite the team being brand new, despite the fact that not one of the team members had ever competed before this year, despite going up against some of the top dancers from across Florida, Level Up Dance members won first place in two events and placed in the top five in all the others.

"All the moms were crying and screaming, and the kids were crying," said Kim Hughes, whose teen daughters, Reilly and Madison, launched Level Up Dance less than a year prior to the Showstopper competition.

They knew the competition would be stiff, coming from well-established studios in places like Tampa and Miami. But it was to be a "learning experience," Hughes said, a chance to see great dancing firsthand.

"When our girls won, it was so exciting," said Reilly Hughes, "because they were competing against a lot of good dancers!"

It's a testament to the quality of instruction and coaching offered by Reilly and Madison. But technical proficiency is only part of the reason the team has become such a quick success.

"I think it's because we really believe in them," said Reilly, 17. "We make sure we always give them positive feedback and always tell them they're doing a great job."

"You have to encourage them to want to work harder and know that they can do it," said Madison, 15.

That approach harkens back to October 2021 when Reilly and Madison launched their first dance classes in Nocatee.

The Key to Success

With Kim Hughes as their "momager," the sisters approached the management of the link, a business incubator and community hub at 425 Town Plaza Ave., and proposed teaching dance classes there.

The girls had been dancing in competitions since they were 6 years old while living in North Carolina, but when they moved to Florida six years ago they didn't find the opportunities they were used to. So, they decided to launch their own studio.

It started small. They taught jazz and tumble and had five students. But it grew rapidly, especially since March 2022. Classes filled up and the sisters eventually added tap, ballet and hip hop at beginner, intermediate and advanced levels.

They also launched Level Up Dance, their competition team, and 25 girls auditioned for that.

Today, more than 90 students are enrolled in either the recreational classes or the dance team. Students in the recreational classes range in age from 4 to 12. Team members are between 8 and 12.

From the start, Reilly and Madison wanted their Level Up Dance team to be like a family.

"We're always making sure the girls are encouraging each other," said Reilly. "They're a team. They're not here to tear each other down. They're here to build each other up, always cheer for each other."

In competition, the Level Up dancers even cheer for the other teams.

"I always want us to be that studio that makes other people feel good about themselves," Reilly said.

In addition to their success in Orlando, the team performed well at a competition in Jacksonville. They won two first places, a third place, placed in the top 10 for all their group dances and had solos that placed as well.



Contributed photos

The Level Up Dance team are, front row, Avery, Julep, Tori, Maclyn, Charleigh, Reese, Abby and Veronica; second row, Scarlett, Autumn, Marian, Emma, Vivian, Chantilly and Abigail; and back row, teacher/owner Madison Hughes, Sadie, Lara, Sophie, Lola, Sydney, Jazzy and teacher/owner Reilly Hughes.

What's next

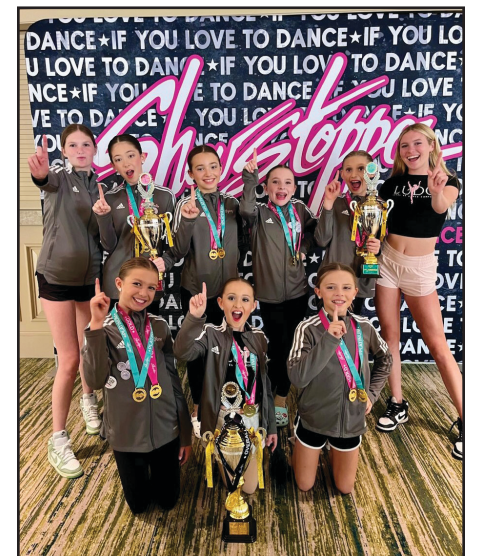
The Level Up Dance team will conduct auditions on Saturday, May 20. Tryouts for the new minis group (ages 5-6) will be held at 2 p.m. Tryouts for ages 7-10 will be held 2:30-3:30 p.m., and those for age 11 and older are set for 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Tryouts are free and open to both link members and nonmembers.

Team members will participate in dance intensives in July.

There will also be two dance-and-tumble summer camps open to children age 5 and older, both members and nonmembers. The first session on June 12-16 is already full, but the second, June 26-30, still has some open seats.

To learn more about the camps, the Level Up Dance team and classes, go to thelink.zone/getactive or download the app at thelink.zone/getapp.

The Level Up website is levelupdance-andtumble.com.



First Place Overall and Ninth Overall Junior Small Group winners in the Showstoppers competition in Orlando are pictured. Clockwise from top left: Madison Hughes, Sophie, Sydney, Sadie, Lola, Reilly Hughes, Reese, Avery and Abby.



Fifth and Sixth Place Overall Junior Large Group winners in the Showstoppers competition in Orlando are pictured. Front row: Charleigh, Autumn, Emma, Veronica, Scarlett and Julep; back row: Madison Hughes, Chantilly, Sophie, Abigail, Tori, Lara, Sadie, Jazzy, Vivian and Reilly Hughes.



First Place Overall Junior Super Group in the Showstoppers competition in Orlando are pictured: Abby, Vivian, Madison Hughes, Sydney, Emma, Lara, Sadie, Lola, Marian, Reese, Jazzy, Reilly Hughes, Sophie, Tori, Abigail, Autumn, Scarlett, Avery, Veronica, Chantilly, Julep, Charleigh and Maclyn.

In the Arts



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Photos by Shaun Ryan



Holly Blanton, Heather Blanton and Ron Autrey.



Former Miss Jacksonville 2022 Allison Reade, First Coast Cultural Center President and CEO Donna Guzzo and Nathan Shrader.



Award recipients Phili Bland and Juliana Koutouzakis.

Beaches event celebrates arts, artists in the community

By Shaun Ryan

As Beethoven's 5th Symphony built to its thunderous conclusion Sunday, May 7, during the fourth annual Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts, master sculptor Peter Rubino put the final touches on a large clay bust of the famous composer that he created live as attendees looked on.

The performance was the centerpiece

of the event, which also included a dinner, silent auction and award presentation. Each year, the First Coast Cultural Center presents the celebration to recognize individuals, businesses and organizations who have made a significant impact on the arts in the community.

In her comments during the program, President and CEO Donna Guzzo said the center had \$1.5 million in donations and pledges toward a downpayment on

its new home, a \$6.3 million property on Sawgrass Village Circle.

The Beaches honorary chair this year was Florida Secretary of State Cord Byrd, who reported that in the last five years, First Coast Cultural Center has received nearly \$193,000 in state grant funding.

Here's a look at this year's award winners:

The Art of Giving Award: Scott A. Grant. Presented to a business or individual committed to funding and /or sustaining arts and culture programs in the community.

Emerging Artist Award: Jax Bouc-Cake and Phili Bland. Presented to an emerging artist who has displayed great accomplishment with their fine art or craft medium.

The Ron and Hilah Autrey Arts Education and Advocacy Award: Holly Blanton and Heather Blanton. Presented to an artist or arts advocate with a track

record of advancing the arts and/or educating others on the fundamental value of the arts in the community.

Community Impact Award: Juliana Koutouzakis. Presented to an individual, business or organization that has demonstrated a tangible and measurable development of the arts and culture in the community.

Irene Lazara's Beaches, A Celebration of the Arts Award: Beaches Fine Arts Series — Lynn Radcliffe and Aida Ribera. Presented to an individual, business or organization dedicated to ensuring the arts and culture are ingrained in the everyday life of the community.

The emcee for the event was Jacksonville City Council Member and retired investigative reporter Ken Amaro.

EDITOR'S NOTE: For an expanded report on this event and more photos, please go to pontevedrarecorder.com.



First Coast Cultural Center President and CEO Donna Guzzo and Florida Secretary of State Cord Byrd and Esther Byrd.

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Sports



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Photo courtesy of Dipak Rajhansa

The Ponte Vedra High boys and girls track and field teams both won regional championships on the University of North Florida campus May 4.

THROWERS, DISTANCE EXCEL AS SHARKS TAKE BOYS, GIRLS REGION TITLES

By Dipak Rajhansa

On a beautiful afternoon and evening at the University of North Florida's Hodges Stadium, the Ponte Vedra High track and field teams won their first ever boys regional title and a back-to-back girls title.

The Sharks started their assault early with junior captain Bella Madaffari winning the javelin with a toss of 116 feet and 9 inches.

Newcomer Maya Richards had a 2-meter personal best, hitting 92 feet to finish fourth in the event.

In the boys shot put, Layne Swafford, Nathan Lebowitz and Jake Guarnera dominated the field as they went first, third and fourth respectively.

Success in the throwing events continued as junior Vincent Jackson continued his winning ways in the javelin, tossing the spear 173 feet 2 inches.

Last year's state runner-up Henry Gainer overcame injuries to place fourth with a throw of 151 feet and Zach Melvin placed seventh.

In the last throwing event of the day,

senior captain and last year's state champion Nathan Lebowitz showed why he is the best discus thrower in the state (regardless of classification) to win the same event, throwing 185 feet 8 inches.

In the girls high jump, Megan Grant placed fourth with a jump of 1.57m/5 feet 1.75 inches to secure her spot at the state meet, while in the boys pole vault, Landen Scott followed up his district win by placing first with a jump of 13 feet 9.25 inches. Gainer finished second in the event and junior Nick DeSanto placed fifth overall.

On the track, both the boys and girls 4 x 800m teams advanced to state as the girls overcame being tripped in the race as Hilaree Vega recovered after being knocked down by another runner to stay in the race before handing off to Daisy Ross, who passed five other teams to finish fourth overall.

The boys team broke the school record by nearly four seconds, placing third and advancing to state with a time of 8:04.44.

Sasha Crowe tied her personal best of 15.56 in the 100m hurdles to place fifth and

Adrienne Edwards finished sixth with a time of 15.87.

On the boys side, Jarrell Jimenez ran into a strong headwind to cross the line in 15.62 to finish sixth in the 110 meter hurdle race, and coming back from injury, state 1600-meter leader Lindy White won the race, hitting the tape at 5:09.49, while sophomore sensation Ross finished fourth with both athletes qualifying for the state competition.

In the 400 meters, Mia Chigounis and Richards went fifth and eighth as Chigounis broke the one-minute barrier, and in the girls 400-meter hurdles, Crowe broke her own school record and placed fifth to qualify for state.

In the boys intermediate hurdles, senior Wyatt Rogers ran a spectacular race, hitting a huge personal best of 55.79 and finished second overall.

In the 800 meters, senior Lily Darnell ran a great race to qualify for states running a personal best of 2:20.39 in a heated battle. In the boys race, junior Ricky Circelli finished seventh to qualify for state, and in

the 3200-meter event, White and Ross went came home second and third to advance to state and senior valedictorian Nico Fasanelli crossed the line in 9:33.73 to finish fourth and qualify for the state championship meet.

The girls title came down to the final race of the night, the 4 x 400-meter relay, with the Sharks trailing Leon High School by 1.5 points entering the event.

The girls team of Crowe, Darnell, Richards and Chigounis needed a win and got it to secure their second consecutive regional title.

As the boys stepped to the line, the regional title was already secured for them, but the team of Santana Starks, Charlie MacGilvray, Tariku Hammons and Rogers, finished fifth with a time of 3:26.07 and qualified for the state championship meet as well to put an exclamation point on the event.

In total, 29 athletes qualified for the state championship meet and both teams will vie for the school's first-ever state title on Friday, May 19, once again at Hodges Stadium.

Sharks win baseball district title in commanding fashion

By Anthony Richards

The Ponte Vedra Sharks baseball squad won the District 4-5A championship with a convincing 10-0 victory in six innings over Englewood High in front of the home faithful May 4.

The Sharks wasted little time as they jumped out to an early 2-0 lead with a couple of runs in the first inning and then continued to pile it on with two runs in the third, four in the fourth and a pair in the sixth.

Junior Caden Eidam had a stellar night at the plate going three-for-four with a triple, two RBIs and two runs scored. It was Eidam's fourth triple of the season, which is a new school record.

Sophomore Jack Ottesen also had two hits including a triple and drove in a team-high three of the Sharks' 10 runs in the contest.

The Sharks chewed up the basepaths all game long and finished with a third triple, as junior Nathaniel Wicker got in on the extra base action.

Junior Matt Hoag controlled things for the Sharks on the mound, as he allowed no runs and no hits in 5 1/3 innings, while just walking two batters and striking out 11.

Hoag set the school record during the contest with 87 strikeouts in a season.

Senior Eric Anderson came in and got the last two outs, both strikeouts to close the door on the win.

The Sharks' path to the district title included having a bye in the first round of the district tournament after enter-

ing as the No. 1 seed and then defeating Riverside High 17-2 in the semifinals May 2.

The Sharks outlit the Generals 12-4 in the game as Ottesen drove in three runs and sophomore Austin O'Hara had a perfect night with hits in all three of his plate appearances.

With the district championship, the Sharks clinched a spot in the state playoffs, however, they lost 12-6 to Ridgeview High on the road in the regional quarterfinal May 9.

Kochis, Murray earn runner-up finishes for Panthers

By Anthony Richards

The Nease Panthers girls tennis team left their mark on the 2023 state tennis tournament with a couple of memorable performances that went deep into the tournament.

Sophomore Kylie Kochis was at the center of all the excitement as she finished runner-up in Class 4A as an individual and teamed up with another young talent in freshman Blair Murray to finish as runner-up in the girls doubles competition.

Kochis was one of six players to have a bye in the first round and her first action came in the quarterfinals.

She showed great resilience despite being only near the end of her sophomore year, as she came back and used a tiebreaker to win in three sets in both the quarterfinals and semifinals.

Although she lost 6-2, 6-1 to Alyssa Novoa in the final, she learned what it takes to make it to that point in the tournament, which should serve her well next season.

In the doubles portion, Kochis and Murray proved to be quite the tandem on the court as they breezed to victory without losing a set in the quarterfinal and then won in straight sets again in the semifinals, 7-5, 7-5 despite facing increased pressure.

They lost the final match 7-5, 6-2, but just like Kochis had in the singles tournament, they showed that they were talented and unfazed by the bright lights of the big stage and that is a dangerous combination moving forward.



Photo courtesy of Nease Athletics

Kylie Kochis teamed up with Blair Murray to earn a runner-up finish in the Class 4A doubles tournament. Kochis was also individual tournament runner-up.

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60	61						62	63				64	
65							66					67	
68							69					70	

ACROSS

1. Midway between south and southeast
4. Fathers
9. Wine grape
14. Al Bundy's wife
15. Organic compound
16. Venezuelan state
17. Interest term
18. Experts
20. Central cores of stems
22. Smooth and glossy
23. One-time S. Korean city
24. One from Damascus
28. Short message at the end of an email
29. It cools your home
30. Oh, God!
31. Intestinal pouches
33. Men
37. Popular English soccer team (abbr.)
38. Former CIA
39. Arrange in steps
41. A baglike structure in a plant or animal
42. The Great Lake State
43. Dog-_: to mark a page
44. Stop moving
46. Ancient Dead Sea region
49. Of I
50. Clerical vestment
51. Songs sung to a lover
55. Charges
58. Popular design program manufacturer
59. Where to park a boat
60. One who values reason
64. Slang for cigarette
65. Sailboats
66. Actress Zellweger
67. Screen material
68. Country music legend Haggard
69. Puts together in time
70. When you hope to arrive

DOWN

2. Philly's rail service
3. Leaves a place
4. No longer be a part in
5. Guitar players use them
6. Cease to exist
7. General's assistant (abbr.)
8. Shaking of the earth
9. Strong winds
10. For each one
11. A bog
12. The creation of beautiful or significant things
13. Affirmative
19. Pie ___ mode
21. Nonclerical
24. Inspirational football player Hamlin
25. Learning environment
26. Khoikhoi peoples
27. Bring out or develop
31. Shows up
32. Theatrical device
34. Loads
35. Popular Hollywood alien
36. Distinguishes
40. College dorm worker
41. Secondary or explanatory title
45. Resembling wings
47. One who delivers a speech
48. In the middle
52. Loop with a running knot
53. Airborne (abbr.)
54. Beloveds
56. Ordain
57. Breed of small cattle
59. Very small period of time (abbr.)
60. Revolutions per minute
61. They ___
62. Longtime ESPN anchor Bob
63. A place to stay

SUDOKU

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

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. An involuntary and abnormal muscular contraction



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