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CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Ponte Vedra Beach Division

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2020 IN REVIEW

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RE-OPENING AND RECOVERY RESOURCE:



December 2020



ST. JOHNS
COUNTY
CHAMBER
OF COMMERCE

Ponte Vedra
Recorder

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO



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

While we were unable to gather to publicly recognize and thank our many volunteer leaders who power our Chamber of Commerce, we still recognized our outstanding Chamber leaders—albeit virtually.

We began our virtual presentation at the Dec. 4 Virtual Economic Development Breakfast. Mark Nighbor, the Chamber's 2019-2020 Chairman of the Board, presented the Chamber Member of the Year to Northrop Grumman and First Coast Technical College for their outstanding collaboration and efforts in workforce development. He also awarded Joy Andrews, deputy county administrator, St. Johns County, with the Chairman's Award for her outstanding leadership and support of St. Johns County businesses Through COVID-19. And, Mike Koppenhafer, chair, Executive Committee, Economic Development Council, 2019-2020, presented the Fred Schroeder Economic Development Council Member of the Year award

to Firehouse Subs for Outstanding Corporate Stewardship to St. Johns County, the First Coast, and the Nation Through COVID-19.

All 2020 award recipients were recognized on the Chamber's social media platforms. The other winners are: Small Business of the Year Award, St. Augustine Distillery; President's Award: Skip Marsh, Flagler Health +; Public Policy Member of the Year: Michael Scine, Scine CPA Advisors; Chamber Ambassador of the Year/ Gene Morse Award, David Permenter, N2 Publishing; and Ponte Vedra Beach Division Ambassador of the Year/ Grace Hayes Award: Kari Zerrahn, Anderson Agency of NE Florida. Also honored for their significant contributions: Past Chairman of the Board Mark Nighbor and Past Chairman, executive committee, Economic Development Council, Mike Koppenhafer.

I agree with Dr. Erika Hamer, the chairman of the board for 2020-2021, when she commented that the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce is poised to succeed due to the efforts of these awardees. "We have endured a challenging year," she said. "Our members are resilient and will continue thriving due to the incredible support shown by these volunteer leaders."

And in breaking news ... Congress officially passed a new COVID-19 stimulus bill over the holidays to help businesses, families and individuals cope with economic impacts from the coronavirus epidemic. We will be sending out relevant timely information as it becomes available on our website and via social media platforms. Information is also posted at www.uschamber.com. Click on New Relief Package.

Welcome to 2021!!!

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



Karen Everett
Director PVB Division,
St. Johns County
Chamber of Commerce

My End-of-Year message takes the form of a mix of useful resources and good wishes for a happ(ier) year in 2021.

EXHAUSTION, GRATITUDE & HOPE

Everyone I've talked to in the past few weeks is tired to the bone. I know you are, too. You've done such incredible work for your business, your fellow members and our community. While you may not have heard it often, THANK YOU for your creativeness, tenacity and commitment.

The entire Chamber team wishes you a wonderful holiday. I have a lot of hope and optimism for the future. While the road may not be easy, I know we will build even stronger in 2021.

I look forward to seeing you all (hopefully off the screen at some point) in 2021.

Isabelle Renault, the president and CEO, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, listed the annual awards members in her message. As many of you know, the Ponte Vedra Beach Division's Annual Membership Appreciation Event had to be cancelled in 2020, so we recognized the following at our marvelous Holiday Jingle and Mingle in early December. The Florida weather cooperated and we had a

lovely outdoors event at the Quadrille Model Home in Ponte Vedra Beach. Thanks again to our sponsors, especially those at AR Homes! The recipients of our awards were:

Going the Distance: Given to the member that travels far and wide to attend numerous events in BOTH the St. Augustine and Ponte Vedra areas. *ThompsonBaker Agency*

Crushing It: Given to the member that has shown great initiative in networking, recruiting new members, and has become a great asset to the division. *Trudy Toche, Mary Kay Consultant/Trainer*

Dedicated Service: Given to a member that goes the extra mile throughout the years. She is the true definition of dedication. *Jackie Smith, Rep. John Rutherford's Office*

Key Contributor: Given to the member that never says no and can be consistently depended on for all things happening at the Division. This person also is the recipient of 2020 PVB Division Ambassador of the YEAR! *Kari Zerrahn, Allstate Anderson Agencies*

Board Member of Year: Given to the board member that is dedicated to supporting chamber-wide initiatives and is committed to helping the division as a great community partner. *Pamela Bomba, Pivot CPAs.*

Jeff Jenkins Community Service Award: The Community Service Award recognizes the team's efforts to make our piece of paradise special. Their center tells our local story in an entertaining and visual manner, they provide families an outlet for adventurous hikes in the woods and along the beach or lake, and educate the public about local wildlife and plants and issues. The staff has also said YES to our requests for help to promote our area as a destination. *The Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve*

Pat Morgan Outstanding Member Award: Given to the member that goes above and beyond in their commitment to expanding and improving. Pat Morgan was involved in the establishment of the Ponte Vedra Beach Chamber in 1996. *Lippes Mathias Wexler Friedman LLP* is the recipient of our 2019-20 Pat Morgan Outstanding Member award!
See you in January 2021!!

Kari Zerrahn named Ambassador of the Year for Ponte Vedra Beach Division

Congratulations to Kari Zerrahn, Anderson Agency of NE Florida, for receiving the Ponte Vedra Beach Division Ambassador of the Year Award!

A long-time member and supporter of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and current vice-chair and leader of membership for the Ponte Vedra Beach group of ambassadors, Zerrahn is a consistent participant at Chamber events. She is the Key Contributor to the PVB Division.



Kari Zerrahn

UPCOMING EVENTS

JANUARY

PVB Division Chamber at Noon

Date: Wednesday, Jan. 27

Time: 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m.

Location: TPC Clubhouse (outdoor setting)

Info: Jared Rice, vice president PGA TOUR and executive director of THE PLAYERS Championship, will give the members an update on the 2021 edition of THE PLAYERS Championship.

Sponsor: Fields Auto Group

For more information or to register, go to www.sjcchamber.com, or call the Ponte Vedra Beach Division office at (904) 285-2004.



Corinne Howard, marketing director of Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery, talks with guests during a Before Hours event for the SJC Chamber-PVB Division on Jan. 15.

Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery-Nocatee hosts Before Hours

Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery-Nocatee hosted a Before Hours event for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce-PVB Division on Jan. 15.

Chamber members and guests enjoyed a little breakfast, networking and conversation before heading to work. Attendees also received \$25 off skincare services.

Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery-Nocatee is a state-of-the-art facility located in The Town Plaza Offices at Nocatee.

THE PLAYERS Championship has ‘something for everybody’

By Christine Rodenbaugh

Jared Rice, vice president PGA TOUR and executive director THE PLAYERS Championship, presented an update on the 2020 edition of THE PLAYERS Championship during the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division joint luncheon with the Jax Chamber Beaches Division on Jan. 22. The two Chamber groups combine meetings quarterly to network and share information. The January meeting was at the Casa Marina Hotel and Restaurant in Jacksonville Beach, sponsored by Fields Auto Group.

Rice said planning began 18 months ago for the 2020 tournament, scheduled March 12 to 15.

“Just 47 days to go,” he said at the luncheon. There is a convenient count-down clock on the tournament website at theplayers.com.

Some of the changes for the 2019 tournament were a new trophy, the new Jack Nicklaus boardwalk entry, new brand-specific theme music and the controversial move from May to March.

“The numbers show the move to March was a success,” Rice said.

Of the 200,000 Tuesday through Saturday tickets for the 2019 event, 67% were purchased outside the local five-county region. March 2019 was the all-time busi-



Photo by Christine Rodenbaugh

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division hosted a joint luncheon with the Jax Chamber Beaches Division on Jan. 22. Gracie Simendinger, BEAM; (from left) Karen Everett, SJC Chamber – PVB Division director; Tierney Anderson, Fields Auto Group; Gloria Don-gara, PVB Division board chair; Jared Rice, vice president PGA TOUR and executive director THE PLAYERS Championship; Jackie Smith, Jax Chamber Beaches Division board chair; Kathy Sutton, Jax Chamber Beaches Division; Isabelle Renault, SJC Chamber president and CEO.

est March for Jacksonville International Airport, and the area hotel occupancy rate averaged 88%. The goal is to be considered a “bucket list” destination.

Rice highlighted some of the 2020 tournament plans and improvements.

Fans can watch every shot live. The tournament has installed in-ground fiber optic cable around every hole and will double its videographer staff to stream every shot live. A new partnership with Discovery Networks will stream tour-

namment action to 86 foreign countries through subscription. Further, TPC on Jan. 22 announced a relationship with Facebook Watch.

There will be no printed tickets. All tickets will be mobile and all tickets will be day-specific.

“This is important from a service perspective,” Rice said. “We need to know when you’re coming.”

PLAYERS continues on Page 15

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Assistant Vice President,
Individual Health

904-461-1814
tdelany@mbaileygroup.com

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Photo by Susan Griffin

A ribbon-cutting celebration and Chamber After Hours event was held Jan. 29 at Aesthetix Plus Medical Spa.

Aesthetix Plus Medical Spa holds ribbon cutting, After Hours event

Aesthetix Plus Medical Spa held a ribbon-cutting celebration and hosted an After Hours event for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, PVB Division, on Jan. 29.

Attendees enjoyed the networking event and met other business owners in the area during the After Hours. Aesthetix Plus Medical Spa is located at 486 Town Plaza Ave., Suite 420, in Ponte Vedra.

Gloria Dongara (from left), Joy Andrews, Brad Bradley, Hunter Conrad and Andrew Holfinger attend a Before Hours event at Sentosa Beachwalk holds for Chamber members to network and enjoy breakfast Feb. 5.

Photo by Susan Griffin



Sentosa Beachwalk hosts Before Hours

Sentosa Beachwalk hosted a Before Hours event for the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 5.

The event provided local business professionals the chance to network with each other and enjoy breakfast and conversation before work.

Sentosa Beachwalk is a new luxury apartment community located at 64 Sentosa Drive in St. Johns.

Chamber at Noon focuses on helping businesses gain more attention

Jay Owen of Design Extensions Marketing Agency was the keynote speaker at the St. Johns County Chamber Ponte Vedra Beach Division's Chamber at Noon luncheon on Feb. 12 at Ruth's Chris Steak House in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Owen's topic of discussion was "Using Story to Get Attention and Acquire Customers," which explored ways of getting attention for your business in today's marketplace and "explore how the power of story can be used to capture attention, focus it on



Photo by Susan Griffin

John Rutkowski, Michael Schmitz and Ali Walker

the customers' needs, and convert them into a customers."

The Chamber at Noon event was sponsored by Fields Auto Group.

EDC Breakfast keynote topic focuses on Nocatee

PARC Group Community Development Director Maurice "Mo" Rudolph discussed the impact the Nocatee community has had upon St. Johns County and the Northeast Florida region at a St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Economic Development Council meeting Jan. 31.

Addressing a full ballroom at the Renaissance Resort at the World Golf Village, Rudolph shared his insights relating to the continued success of the Nocatee community and development throughout St. Johns County. The fourth best-selling community for the last decade, Nocatee has become a competitor in the national home market, Rudolph said. He contributed Nocatee's success to a strong collaboration between St. Johns County government, local builders, real estate agents, financial institutions and other related businesses.

Rudolph announced the PARC Group's plans to complete an extension of Pine Island Road connecting Nocatee

to U.S. 1 in the second quarter of 2021. A new K-8 school is also planned to be completed in the second quarter of 2021 and open for the 2021-2022 school year. He also discussed commercial development in the Nocatee community, including the new Park Place One at Nocatee office complex by VanTrust and a third office building on the west side of Nocatee Parkway.

Chamber President and CEO Isabelle Renault said, "Nocatee is changing at a rapid pace and it was time for the Chamber to provide an update to its members. Mo's presentation was informative and gave our members a good perspective on the continued growth in St. Johns County. His presentation was made available for review by our EDC members in the Member Information Center of our website under Resources."

To find out more about the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce or to become a member visit www.sjccchamber.com or call (904) 829-5681.



Photos by Susan Griffin

St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce President Isabelle Renault (from left), PARC Group Community Development Director Maurice "Mo" Rudolph, Advanced Disposal VP of Marketing and Communications Mark Nighbor, owner of Ponte Wellness Center Dr. Erika Hamer and U.S. Rep. John Rutherford.

The Morgan Company hosts Chamber After Hours event



Photo by Susan Griffin

Representatives of The Morgan Company pose for a photo during a Chamber After Hours event.

The Morgan Company hosted an "After Hours" event for the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce on Feb. 19.

Attendees networked among Chamber members and guests, as well as enjoyed beverages and snacks. The Morgan Company also held prize giveaways and had one of its top suppliers showcase top apparel and promo products.

Chamber holds After Hours at THE PLAYERS

More than 700 Northeast Florida business leaders attended After Hours at THE PLAYERS on March 5 at Stadium Village at THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass.

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, in partnership with the JAX Chamber, hosted members and guests for an evening of complimentary refreshments and networking.

The Ponte Vedra Recorder was a proud sponsor of the event.



Sawgrass events booth



Alyson Cannady and Tracey Pearson

Photos by Susan Griffin



Kelly Bost and Nancy Russell

PLAYERS

Continued from 13

The tournament draws capacity crowds on peak days. Daily Stadium Passes range from \$25 to \$70. All active duty, military retirees, military reserve, National Guard and military spouses, along with dependents, can claim complimentary tickets online. College students can purchase a discounted Thursday through Sunday pass for \$55. Admission for kids 15 and younger is free when accompanied by a properly credentialed adult.

“The spirit of this [youth admission] program is we want kids and families to come out and enjoy the sport,” Rice said.

To better serve guests, day-specific parking passes are also required. Four or more in one vehicle can still park for free, but only with a day-specific pass.

THE PLAYERS Championship is more than a sporting event that draws worldwide attention to Northeast Florida. In 2019 alone, the tournament had a \$9.25 million charitable impact. Since the tournament’s inception, more than \$100 million has directly supported nonprofit organizations in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties.

Rice encourages locals to attend the 2020 event and see improvements made to the fan experience during the last eight years, including ease of entry, more diverse food and beverage offerings and revamped spectator venues.

“There’s something for everybody, whether you’re a sports fan, foodie or a family,” Rice said.

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Photo by Chris Gillyard

Representatives of Sawgrass Pet Resort and the SJC Chamber Of Commerce, Ponte Vedra Beach Division hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony March 6.

Dog boarding and daycare facility opens in Sawgrass

By Amber Lake

The Sawgrass Pet Resort hosted an open house to a packed crowd on March 6 and 7. The 5,000 square-foot facility provides dog daycare, boarding and training, among other services.

Kate Wagner, owner of the Sawgrass Pet Resort, said she was excited to see so many Ponte Vedra Beach residents come out to show support for her new business.

“It’s so exciting because we are locals and we live here,” Wagner said. “Everyone has been texting and telling me they are so happy we are here. It’s been wild.”

Wagner founded the Sawgrass Pet Resort after seeing a lack of available boarding facilities in the area. Due to her work running the Grayter Good Weimaraner Rescue, Wagner has established rela-

tions with the Humane Society, S.A.F.E Pet Rescue and Florida Urgent Rescue (F.U.R.).

Wagner said that what she is most excited for is the ability to host organizations like these for charity and community events.

“We have a seasoned staff of professionals in the industry,” Wagner said. “I am going to focus on doing the altruistic stuff. Quarterly adoptions, football nights and Round Up for Rescues.”

In addition to providing boarding, hosting events, daycare and training, the resort will offer dog reiki and Pawsitively Delectable locally made, all-natural dog treats. Currently the facility is accepting registration for dog boarding and daycare. Visit sawgrasspetresort.com to fill out an online registration form or for more information.



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber, PVB Division

Dr. Megan N. Scott Carlton of Palm Valley Eye Care & Surgeons speaks to attendees.

Palm Valley Eye Care & Surgeons hosts Before Hours

Palm Valley Eye Care & Surgeons hosted a Before Hours event for the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce on March 4.

Attendees enjoyed a little breakfast

and conversation and networking before heading to work.

Palm Valley Eye Care & Surgeons provides comprehensive eye care and is located at 151 Sawgrass Corners Drive, Suite 208, in Ponte Vedra Beach.

PINSPIRATION HOLDS RIBBON CUTTING



Pinspiration owner Jen Schlechte (center) holds a ribbon-cutting ceremony with employees and Chamber members on June 6. Pinspiration is a DIY Craft Studio where people of all ages can come make the trendiest projects.

Photo provided by the SJC Chamber

Technology helping businesses to safely reopen

Flagler Health+ president and CEO offers COVID-19 update at EDC webinar

By Shaun Ryan

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and implementation of social distancing guidelines, St. Johns County businesses are looking for ways to protect employees, customers and work environments as they seek to reopen.

Thursday, June 11, local business leaders had an opportunity to learn how new technology is making that possible. Representatives of Healthfully, creators of a digital health platform, joined Flagler Health+ President and CEO Jason Barrett for a webinar on the local response to the coronavirus.

The webinar was presented by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and the county’s Economic Development Council.

The Healthfully app can be used by



Jason Barrett

businesses, colleges, schools and other institutions, according to company CEO Paul Viskovich. It helps employees and students monitor symptoms and seek guidance. It also

provides employers and administrators with a dashboard that displays data related to areas of concern.

The goal is to offer a comprehensive back-to-work solution.

“We cover everything from daily self-screening to having to consult with a physician virtually, getting the lab order results and then communicating that back to the employer, the employee, the provider and then providing the tools for employers to manage exposure in their work environments,” said Chief Operating Officer Mark Boudreau.

The dashboard ensures that employees are getting tested, pursuing care where

necessary and complying with workplace safety policies. In terms of managing exposure, employers can see whether employees may have come in contact with coworkers who have tested positive.

Boudreau said the company maintains “the highest privacy and security standards” and that the only health results shared with employers are those related to COVID-19.

Employers subscribe to the service, which can be billed to insurance. To learn more, go to healthfully.io.

“This is the continued innovation of medicine,” said Barrett. Flagler Health+, as the county’s largest private employer, has partnered with Healthfully.

Barrett offered an overview of the hospital’s response to the pandemic. The hospital, which began planning for an outbreak in January, saw its first case March 10.

Though the hospital had 98 dedicated COVID-19 beds, only about 20 coronavirus patients have required hospitalization.

“We were not overrun,” Barrett said.

In March and April, the hospital staffed a testing site at no cost to the community and saw more than 2,000 residents. It worked with St. Johns Care Connect to help more than 500 families get access to food and rental assistance and partnered with EPIC Behavioral Health to address a spike in mental health episodes.

Activity has bounced back in some areas. Inpatient treatment is at 92% of the pre-COVID-19 level. Outpatient heart procedures are at 96%, outpatient surgery is at 70%. Emergency care is at 61%, which is consistent with numbers nationally.

The hospital saw a financial impact of about \$15 million and has received federal funding to contend with that; much of it is a loan. Grant funding covered about 40% of lost revenue.

COVID-19 has not disrupted the hospital’s growth strategy. It is on track to open a health village in Nocatee in November, and groundbreaking on a Durbin Park health and wellness campus in partnership with UF Health is expected to be held in September.

AT&T Florida regional director discusses 5G technology at Chamber at Noon event

Pivoting to a virtual platform, the Ponte Vedra Beach Division hosted a Chamber at Noon online June 17 and Kevin Craig, Regional Director, External and Legislative Affairs, AT&T Florida, explained how the advent of 5G technology will be changing our world.



Kevin Craig

5G is the fifth generation of wireless technology and will be faster and more robust than our current wireless technology. That means faster downloads and upload speeds. Latency, or the time it takes devices to communicate with wireless networks, will also drastically

decrease. When is it arriving? Where will it be available? Which 5G smartphone should I buy and when? Craig addressed these and other questions. The deployment of 5G will interact with autonomous vehicles, public safety and infrastructure, remote device control, health care, and the Internet of Things (IoT).

Sponsored by The Fields Group, the Chamber luncheons provide relevant information and networking opportunities. All attendees received a copy of Kevin's slides and a list of attendees.



BURN BOOT CAMP OPENS

Burn Boot Camp opened its doors recently at the Nocatee Town Center. The camp focuses on challenging workouts to transform the lives of its members. While classes are conducted in a group setting, the camp is complying with recommendations set by the CDC. Franchise partner Jessica Melquist cut the ribbon to open her camp. Burn Boot Camp worked with the St. Johns Chamber of Commerce to get business back on track during the COVID-19 pandemic. Businesses with questions or needing help should contact the chamber at www.sjcchamber.com/business-continuity-recovery.

Photo by Lucia Miller, SJC Chamber

COVID-19 impacts hurricane preparations

By Shaun Ryan

Every year, county officials remind the public of the need to prepare for possible hurricanes. This year, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, some new elements have been added.

Kelly Wilson, the county's interim deputy director of emergency management, spoke on storm preparation Wednesday, July 15, during a virtual meeting of the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce. She led members on a tour of the go-to website for information vital to residents and businesses.

Perhaps the biggest changes this year have been brought about by the

ongoing need to remain safe from the coronavirus.

In addition to having an adequate supply of food and water for three to seven days, Wilson recommended residents have lots of soap, hand sanitizer and disposable masks.

Evacuation shelters will be taking extra precautions. They will have additional hand-sanitizing and cleaning and may ask people seeking shelter to wear a facial covering.

"We are taking steps regarding our sheltering to ensure social distancing," Wilson said. "In the past, we may have opened five or six shelters. Now, we have to cut capacity in half. We're going to have to open additional shelters so we have less people

in each shelter."

She pointed out that businesses can apply what they learned during the recent shutdown, when many employees had to work from home. Those same lessons can be adapted to help businesses function should a hurricane strike.

The greater portion of Wilson's presentation, however, was devoted to explaining features found on the county emergency management site.

Residents can find out if they are in an evacuation zone by clicking on the My Evacuation Zone tool. They can get information on the county's 15 shelters, including which ones are for people with special needs and which ones are pet-friendly.

Innovation, problem-solving focus of virtual Chamber event

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce PVB Division held a virtual Chamber at Noon event Aug. 12. Sara Frasca gave Chamber members a presentation about how to use fresh approaches to growth, creativity and transformation.

An innovation expert, Frasca honed her skills in senior leadership roles in both corporate America and the world of startups. Frasca now serves as an innovation consultant and helps leading organizations cultivate human imagination, build a culture of innovation and solve complex problems in creative ways. Frasca is the go-to resource for leaders seeking competitive advantage and sustainable success by harnessing innovation.

Frasca's talk at the Chamber at Noon was one of the monthly events sponsored by Fields Auto Group. Watch for news from the Chamber about the monthly events, usually held on the third Wednesday of the month.

New wellness center brings chiropractic care to Nocatee community

By Kassidy Lankford

For Dr. Ryan Heinz, chiropractic care is more than a few cracks to the back. When patients visit Heinz's new Nocatee practice, they receive far more than the five-minute, spine-snapping visit that many chiropractors offer. Nestled in the heart of the Nocatee Town Center, True Wellness Health Center is a haven for patients of all ages to receive a customized treatment plan for their health needs.

"I'm not selling my patients on 30-visit plan packages," said Heinz, explaining that chiropractic care is not one size fits all. "I come up with a treatment plan that is customized to the specific condition of the patient and we re-evaluate the progress at each visit."

Heinz said he likes to spend at least 30 minutes per visit (or even longer at the initial appointment) with patients to get a deeper feel for their health needs.

Heinz is a Jacksonville native who recently went back to his roots after living in New Jersey. As a college baseball player,



Dr. Ryan Heinz (center), with St. Johns County Chamber members, family and staff members, cuts the ribbon to celebrate the opening of True Wellness Health Center in the Nocatee Town Center on Thursday, Aug. 27.

Photo by Susan Griffin

Heinz suffered a stress fracture in his lower spine and was unable to find any relief. Medical professionals couldn't help him and he was at a loss, his quality of life and his sanity dwindling. It wasn't until he visited a chiropractor while he was at home on Christmas break that he finally found relief. It was then that Heinz decided to leave his baseball days in the rearview mirror and pursue a higher education in chiropractic care.

Heinz practiced in the New Jersey area

for a number of years, but when he felt it was time to open his own clinic he knew that returning to his roots was his best option. Around Thanksgiving 2019, Heinz packed his bags and began his journey to opening his chiropractic clinic in Nocatee.

"I love working with the Nocatee and Ponte Vedra community because everyone is so welcoming," Heinz said, noting New Jersey lacked the 'at-home' community feeling that is so prominently felt in the Ponte Vedra area. "I've gained a lot of busi-

ness through word-of-mouth, just because patients are sharing their experience here with the rest of the community."

Heinz shared his love for the Ponte Vedra area and said even the art on the walls of his clinic all comes from local Ponte Vedra and Jacksonville artists.

"Ponte Vedra has a very special, family feel," added Jennifer McLendon, office manager at True Wellness Health Center

For Heinz, providing chiropractic care to the Ponte Vedra community is not just a job — it is a passion. Helping patients improve their quality of life and reduce their pain is something that brings Heinz great joy.

Although True Wellness Health Center has only been open since June 2020, its business is already growing. It celebrated its opening with a ribbon cutting Aug. 27, and the team is excited to continue its journey providing care to the Ponte Vedra community.

"The most rewarding part of my job is watching a patient come in with pain and seeing their smile come back by the time they leave," Heinz said.

Northrop Grumman VP addresses Economic Development Council

By Shaun Ryan

After Randy Bradley took the helm at the local Northrop Grumman facility in January, he quickly found himself working to keep things running despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

As it turned out, there were no layoffs at the St. Augustine Aircraft Integration Center of Excellence where Bradley is vice president and site leader.

“I would say our company did a great job with getting me prepared,” he said in a presentation Friday, Aug. 28, during a virtual meeting of the Economic Development Council hosted by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce.

Indeed, before Bradley moved into his new position he had time to develop under his predecessor and came to the job with an extensive background, two things that no doubt contributed to his effectiveness.

The former U.S. Marine earned his degree at Southern Illinois University and joined Northrop Aircraft in 1990, four years before it merged with Grumman Aerospace. After a five-year stint with the Honeywell Corp., he returned to Northrop Grumman and worked in various capacities leading up to his current role.

He has been involved with a number of aircraft and spacecraft projects, including environmental control

systems for the International Space Station. In 2013, he came to St. Augustine where he has been involved in work on the Navy’s E-2D Advanced Hawkeye and other projects.

“If you look at the movie ‘Top Gun’ you will see a lot of Grumman products,” Bradley said. “A lot of those products were modified here in St. Augustine.”

The E-2D is the main focus at the local facility, which is one of the largest employers in the county. It’s a big job. The aircraft has tens of thousands of parts. In fact, during the process of assembling one, workers drill more than a million holes.

“The E2 is probably one of the longest running programs that the Navy has,” Bradley said. “It started in the ‘50s and here we are in 2020 still talking about E-2Ds. That goes to show the evolution and the growth of that product and the need for it.”

Another project the local plant has been working on is modifying aircraft to add air-refueling, which extends flying time.

“We’re very excited about that,” said Bradley.

This spring, the facility will start building conformal fuel tanks for the F-18, which extend the endurance of the aircraft.

Bradley said Northrop Grumman has a great relationship with the community and is involved with STEM



Photo provided by St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce
Northrop Grumman Vice President Randy Bradley (center) spoke during a virtual Economic Development Council meeting hosted by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce on Aug. 28. With Bradley are SJC Chamber President and CEO Isabelle Renault (left) and Mike Koppenhafer, chairman of the Chamber’s Economic Development Council.

classes at local high schools.

On a more personal note, he enjoys living in the Nation’s Oldest City.

“My wife and I really make this a home now,” he said. “We’ve gotten to love this community. We talk about it all the time. This is where we want to settle down — in St. Augustine.”

St. Johns County Chamber PVB Division holds Before Hours event at TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse

It was Chamber’s 1st face-to-face meeting since start of pandemic

By Cassidy Lankford

On Sept. 9, the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division held its long-awaited Chamber Before Hours meeting at the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse. The event was originally scheduled to take place prior to the onset of COVID-19 and was rescheduled twice during the summer before finally taking place in September.

The event was held at the luxurious 77,000-square-foot clubhouse at TPC Sawgrass. Guests gathered behind the clubhouse to mingle and enjoy breakfast with one another before breaking off into groups to tour the clubhouse facility.

Although the pandemic has brought many social events to a halt, TPC Sawgrass is doing everything it can to allow the Ponte Vedra Beach community to carry on with their lives — safely and responsibly. After implementing rigorous safety procedures, TPC Sawgrass has reopened its facilities for events.

“We’ve been 100% open for golf throughout the pandemic, but we have



Guests mingle at the St. Johns County Chamber PVB Division Before Hours event on Sept. 9 at TPC Sawgrass. It was the first in-person event for the Chamber since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

been hosting events again since the middle of summer and we are seeing even more events come up now,” said Peter verDorn, sales manager at TPC Sawgrass. “We have put several rigid safety measures into place to keep our guests safe.”

VerDorn said the team at TPC Sawgrass is adhering to CDC social distancing and

capacity guidelines, both during events and in the restaurant.

In addition to adhering to CDC guidelines, TPC Sawgrass has set up numerous sanitization stations throughout its facility, has implemented thorough cleaning procedures, installed plexiglass barriers at all of its food-serving stations and more.

Photos by Susan Griffin

Speakers address ways to heighten virtual presence at Chamber at Noon meeting

By Shaun Ryan

Last year, maintaining an effective virtual presence was a staple for most businesses. This year, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting financial impact, it has become even more important.

On Wednesday, Sept. 16, local businesses had an opportunity to learn more about how to best connect with customers online. Janice and Donald Jones of CycleHere Media gave a presentation on the topic during the Chamber at Noon virtual meeting of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division.

Founded in 2012 and based in St. Augustine, CycleHere Media provides video marketing, consulting and production services throughout Florida. It specializes in boosting public awareness, customer engagement and reputation value for government agencies, destinations and private businesses.

Janice Jones named three main components of a business's "virtual front door": the website, social platforms and email.

"Before COVID, we were all there – we were working on these; we were building them – that was part of just business these days, being out there virtually," said Donald Jones. "But it's obviously so much more important at this point to fine-tune that, focus it on what your message is."

Janice Jones said the public should always find something current on websites and social media. And when speaking to a client or customer via online conferencing, the speaker should always look directly into the camera — not at the screen showing the other party's image.

"Eye contact," said Donald Jones. "We think about that when we are in person."

When we're in a Chamber event or a meeting or we're sitting down face-to-face on a one-on-one client meeting, you're looking in their eye. But with computers and all the screens, it's natural for us to ... look a little bit off."

Janice Jones also suggested keeping distractions out of the background, putting some light on the speaker's face and using expressions while communicating.

She also emphasized thinking of the website as more than just an electronic flier.

"If you can share your process within your website, then you're taking that customer, that potential client, and you're walking them in the door," she said.

Likewise, social media is more than a commercial aired to a passive audience. There's a reason it's called "social."

One taco shop, for instance, intersperses humor and family news with photos of tacos and recipes. People are drawn to the site and hopefully get the urge to eat some tacos.

One tool the Joneses didn't want their audience to take for granted was email. Janice Jones cited a survey that found 86% of professionals prefer to use email when communicating for business purposes.

"So, I'm asking you: Could you be more personable through your emails?" she said.

The Joneses use a service called BombBomb, which allows them to send a video in an email, a different way to communicate visually.

"These are all ways that you can add value," said Janice Jones. "That's what we're hoping to do, to inspire you to add a little value in the ways and the means that you can from your desktop or your home or wherever you're working from right now."

The St. Johns County Chamber Ponte Vedra Beach Division held a Before Hours event to honor veterans Nov. 3 at Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa. Mike Linnington, CEO of the Wounded Warriors Project, was the featured speaker.

Photo by Susan Griffin



Before Hours event salutes veterans

The St. Johns County Chamber Ponte Vedra Beach Division held a Before Hours: Salute to Veterans event Tuesday, Nov. 3, at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa.

The event celebrated the men and women who served the country and featured special guest Mike Linnington, CEO of the Wounded Warrior Project. Linnington,

a retired U.S. Army lieutenant general, has 35 years of military experience. He oversees day-to-day operations and works with the executive team to set and implement WWP's strategic vision. He is responsible for ensuring WWP's free, direct programs and services continue to have the greatest possible impact on the warriors, caregivers and families it serves.



Ponte Vedra Wellness Center staff members Marcelo Sacedo (from left), owner Dr. Erika Hamer, Lisa Tromsdorff and Janine Parker celebrated the center's 16th anniversary with a fall festival and wellness expo. Photo by Susan Griffin

Ponte Vedra Wellness Center celebrates 16 years with fall festival, wellness expo

By Holly Tishfield

Dr. Erika Hamer opened the Ponte Vedra Wellness Center with a vision of creating a family practice, a place where patients felt happy and welcome every time they walked through the doors.

Sixteen years later, and Hamer has created just that. At the epicenter of health and well-being in the Ponte Vedra community, Hamer's practice has cultivated quite a name for itself.

"Ponte Vedra Beach is a very good community," Hamer said. "I still have so many patients that I have had for the last 10-to-15 years, but I get a lot of new people too. It's a mix."

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, staff at the Ponte Vedra Wellness Center have done everything in their power to keep a smile on patients' faces, even surprising a long-time guest with cupcakes and balloons on their birthday.

"There are so many things today that can make your world tough, but I want you to come in and just feel really good when you walk through the door," Hamer said.

When first opening her practice, Hamer wanted a patient's mental, physical and emotional well-being to be at the forefront of her teachings.

"Not just 'what I can do for you,'" she said, "but more 'how can I teach you the whole concept?'"

It may be common nowadays to see doctor's offices and yoga studios slap the word "wellness" onto their names, but when Hamer came up with her practice, it was genuine. To communicate that, the staff wanted their patients to be present and be well.

To adhere with new CDC guidelines, the Ponte Vedra Wellness Center spaces out its client appointments and practices safe social distancing, but Hamer said patients like to schedule appointments around one another, to chat and catch up after isolating the last seven-to-eight months.

"I love the warm environment I have been able to build with my practice," Hamer said, noting that even though the pandemic has made people lonelier than usually, she wanted her office staff to make patients smile.

At the celebration Thursday, Nov. 5, local guests and members from the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce came together to commemorate Hamer's successful impact on the Ponte Vedra community.

Attendees got their fill of charcuterie cups and Halloween-themed desserts, as well as games and chair massages.

Chamber holds in-person outdoor networking event

The St. Johns County Chamber held a "Business on the Move" in-person outdoor networking event Nov. 10.

The event, sponsored by Florida Power & Light, gave attendees the opportunity to create new business contacts, promote their business and build relationships while enjoying an authentic experience with a lakefront view at Ponte Vedra Beaches awarded "Best Happy Hour" location, Pusser's Bar & Grille.

Business on the Move is a special



Photo provided by the SJC Chamber
Trudy Toche, Lori Adams and Carol Everitt

networking opportunity offered to highlight local chamber businesses and bring members together. The event was a collaboration between the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and Pusser's Bar & Grille.

Ponte Vedra Auto Show attracts 200 cars, thousands of fans

By Don Coble

Jake Weisman almost seemed overwhelmed by the number of cars — and spectators — at the Ponte Vedra Car Show last Sunday.

He was part of a judging crew that had nearly 200 cars to examine. With more than 25 different categories to judge, the task was daunting.

“I’m not surprised, I’m enthused,” Weisman said. “No matter what’s going on. Car enthusiasts always love their cars.”

Thousands of fans attended the show near Spray Park at the Nocatee Event Field. While live music, vendor booths and food were popular, the real stars were the cars.

Weisman’s father, Larry, started the car show 18 years ago. The elder Weisman died in 2019 and the show’s biggest prize,

Best in Show, is named in his honor.

Andre BesMarais’ 1966 Ford GT 40 won the award — and \$500. The car also was selected for the Spirit in Racing award.

Other winners included: Mark Becker’s 1942 Chrysler Royal Business Coupe for Best Pre-War Vintage; Gary Corvino’s 1982 Mazda RX-7 for Asia Excellence Award; Dale Hickman’s 1976 Ford Bronco for Hagerty “People’s Choice Award,” William Cooper’s 1970 Iso Rivolta LeLe for Best Exotic; Dale Hickman’s 1976 Ford Bronco for Best Off Road; Lamar Fontaine’s 1971 Datsun 28-Z for Z Car 50th Anniversary Award; Kurt Hall’s 1998 Toyota Pickup for Best Custom Paint Job; and Matthew Bonin’s 1965 VW Bus for Best Custom Interior.

The show is run by Art ‘n Motion, a St. Augustine business that displays and sells rare cars.



Photo by Craig O’Neal

Andre BesMarais’ 1966 Ford GT 40 is awarded Best in Show in Honor of Larry Weisman during the Ponte Vedra Auto Show on Sunday, Nov. 15, at Nocatee Event Field.

Members of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division join First Coast Mortgage Funding Vice President Aaron Bacus (center, left) and President Jason Kindler (center, right) in a ribbon-cutting ceremony Nov. 19, in front of their office in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Photo by Susan Griffin



First Coast Mortgage Funding draws on long experience of founders

By Shaun Ryan

Two highly experienced mortgage professionals have joined forces to found a new business in Nocatee. Aaron Bacus is vice president and Jason Kindler is president of First Coast Mortgage Funding, located at 360 Town Plaza Ave. Suite 340.

Though the business has only been open since February and just had its ribbon-cutting ceremony this month, it has been performing well. Bacus said it has been averaging about 50 loans per month.

“It’s been spectacular,” he said.

That success may be due in part to each man’s extensive experience. Each has originated mortgages for thousands of clients, Kindler since 2001 and Bacus since 1997.

The two had long known each other, working together at a firm in Jacksonville and have built very good reputations in the industry. Finally, they decided to strike out on their own and form their own company focused on residential mortgages.

First Coast Mortgage Funding is a mortgage broker, which is different than a lender.

“We can survey lots of different lenders and choose what lender best fits our clients’ needs,” Bacus said.

This gives clients a choice, made possible in part by changing technology. In fact, the business’ website allows clients to submit a loan application or pre-qualify for a home loan. They may also evaluate their options by using the website’s interactive calculators.

Another thing First Coast Mortgage Funding has going for it is its focus on local properties and local partners.

“Our bread and butter, obviously, is North Florida and the Nocatee area,” said Bacus.

The business has Realtor partners throughout the area and also works with David Weekley Homes.

Of course, the increase in people moving into Northeast Florida has helped First Coast Mortgage Funding to find rapid success.

“The growth has been spectacular,” Bacus said. “Obviously, rates being so low doesn’t hurt, but people are just flocking here. It’s unbelievable. We’re really excited to be a part of it.”

Kindler and Bacus are also deeply involved in the community. They support the schools as well as the YMCA.

Go to firstcoastmortgagefunding.com for more information.

New dental office in Nocatee offers relaxing, spa-like atmosphere

By Holly Tishfield

Most people dread a trip to the dentist’s office. Between the stress of handling insurance coverage, booking an appointment and possibly needing work done, it is no wonder we do not normally associate the word “relaxing” with a dentist visit — but, for a new office in Nocatee, relaxing is exactly what they strive to be.

Dr. Pauline Le, a Jacksonville resident with a passion for health and wellness, opened her new dentist office/spa named Le Dental Spa at the end of September.

Le has a notable presence on social media, where she shares videos and photos of the procedures she offers in her office, as well as tips and tricks on the best ways to take care of your pearly whites. She enjoys having such a vast platform to help educate people on how dental health can impact more than just your mouth.

“It is not your typical dentist’s office. We have definitely honed in on making it feel more like a spa,” Le said. “We want to make our patients feel relaxed.”

Focusing on natural lighting and general coziness, Le and her team worked together to ensure that the office is a safe space for patients. There are TV’s mounted to the ceilings, candles lit around the room, the option of pillows, blankets and even a selection of beer and wines.

“I went into dentistry because I love building relationships with people,” Le said. “It is not just a one-time visit. I am going to see you for the rest of your life, if I am doing something right.”

For opening her first solo practice, Le knew that the Jacksonville/Nocatee



Photo provided by Pauline Le

Dr. Pauline Le recently opened Le Dental Spa in Nocatee.

area would be the perfect location to draw in like-minded patients.

“In Nocatee, people really care about their health and well-being,” Le said. “They like to take care of themselves, and at this point in my career, I like to be surrounded by people who think the same way I do.”

At the opening celebration back in September, Le’s office hosted guests in the parking lot of the office building, where it catered food and offered drinks. Guests were also lucky enough to receive an early tour of the office and meet staff members.

“It has been super rewarding treating people the way I want to treat them, the way they deserve to be treated, without any restrictions from insurance companies,” said Le.

Le Dental Spa is accepting new patients every day. Guests can choose from Le’s extensive list of fillers and botox treatments or visit the spa for cleanings, whitenings and other dental procedures. You can learn more about the Spa on its website at www.ledentalspa.com or find it on Instagram at @ledentalspa.

2021 legislative session subject for EDC Breakfast

By Shaun Ryan

Two of Florida's leading political journalists gave St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce members a look inside the coming legislative session Friday, Dec. 4.

Peter Schosch, publisher of the Florida Politics blog, and Matt Dixon, bureau chief for Politico Florida, spoke during the Economic Development Council Breakfast virtual broadcast.

Schosch is a political consultant to numerous elected officials, as well as some of the state's largest companies. Dixon has covered Florida politics and policy. Prior to that, he covered local government for The Villages Daily Sun and the Panama City News-Herald.

Both men agreed that there hasn't been a lot of activity on the part of the Legislature as it prepares for the 2021 session.

"It's been eerily quiet," said Schosch. "I think that is indicative of a session where we're not going to see a lot of movement on things."

Dixon suggested that state lawmakers could be occupied with any COVID-related federal funding issues originating in the Congress.

"The flow of federal money to the state and how that looks is going to be hugely important for setting the stage for the legislative session," he said.

With regards to member projects – those opportunities for legislators to bring funding back home for specific projects – Dixon had a suggestion.

"If you have something that you want to do as a member project, you would be smart to try to figure out a way to tie it to COVID," he said. "Those are probably the only things the lawmakers are going to listen to."

One area that could gain attention is anti-protest legislation proposed by Gov. Ron DeSantis. The idea was inspired by protests across the nation last summer, but there isn't a related bill in either the House or Senate yet.

"It's going to be a politically contentious bill that is going to get a lot of protests, a lot of attention, so that's a politically dicey situation," predicted Dixon.

One area where both Schosch and Dixon expected action is COVID liability protections.

Dixon said the Senate is looking at immunity for health care facilities and nursing homes that



Matt Dixon



Peter Schosch

would make the legal threshold for proving liability in a civil case related to COVID "gross negligence" – a high benchmark to hit.

"A deal is going to be reached," he predicted. "Something is going to be passed. The governor is going to sign something. There's too much pressure not to. But ultimately, what that looks like is going to be very interesting."

Schosch predicted that there will be attempts to extend legal liability protections to a growing number of businesses once people see the bill.

Concerning the passage of Amendment 2, which raises the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in a series of steps and then ties it to inflation, Schosch speculated that the Legislature may attempt to undermine it.

"I do think there will be an attempt, probably out of the House, to manipulate Amendment 2 or to implement it in a way that puts it off, delays it, makes it go through another vote or something like that," he said.

Chamber honors volunteer leaders

Awards recognize business leaders who make their mark

St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce announced the 2020 Leadership Awards will be presented virtually. Pre COVID-19, the Chamber held a signature event in the fall to recognize and thank the volunteer leaders for their donation of time and expertise.

The Chamber began its virtual presentation at the Dec. 4 virtual Economic Development Breakfast. Mark Nighbor, the Chamber's 2019-2020 Chairman of the Board, presented the Chamber Member of the Year to Northrop Grumman and First Coast Technical College for their Outstanding Collaboration and Efforts in Workforce Development. He also awarded Joy Andrews, deputy county administrator, St. Johns County, with the Chairman's Award for her outstanding leadership and support of St. Johns County businesses through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mike Koppenhafer, chair, executive committee, Economic Development Council, 2019-2020, presented the Fred Schroeder Economic Development Council Member of the Year award to Firehouse Subs for Outstanding Corporate Stewardship to St. Johns County, the First Coast and the nation through COVID-19.

All 2020 award recipients will be recognized on the Chamber's social media platforms. The other winners are: Small Business of the Year Award, St. Augustine Distillery; President's Award: Skip Marsh, Flagler Health +; Public Policy Member of the Year: Michael Scine, Scine CPA Advisors; Chamber Ambassador of the Year/ Gene Morse Award, David Permenter, N2 Publishing; and Ponte Vedra Beach Division Ambassador of the Year/Grace Hayes Award: Kari Zerrahn, Anderson Agency of NE Florida. Also honored for their significant contributions: Past Chairman of the Board, Mark Nighbor and Past Chairman, executive committee, Economic Development Council, Mike Koppenhafer.



Photos by Susan Griffin
Trudy Toche wins the Crushing It Award.



Tatum Theodore accepts the Jeff Jenkins Community Service Award.



Kari Zerrahn was presented the Key Contributor Award.



Shannon Peabody accepts the Pat Morgan Outstanding Member Award.

Chamber PVB Division holds annual Jingle and Mingle event

By Holly Tishfield

With Christmas and the holiday season just around the corner, the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. John's County Chamber of Commerce hosted its annual Jingle and Mingle Holiday Party last week at a stunning model home by Arthur Rutenberg Homes.

The event was not only a great chance to enjoy a classic holiday mixer, but to socialize with other members of the Chamber and business owners from the area.

"All chamber events have two purposes," said Karen Everett, director of the PVB Division. "One is for people to enjoy themselves, and two is to have a meaningful business networking opportunity."

Several local companies/business owners sponsored the holiday party, including Arthur Rutenberg Homes, Synovus Mortgage Corp., Berry & Co Real Estate, Iberia Bank, The Ponte Vedra Recorder, Keith E. Johnson, CPA, PA and FastSigns of St. Augustine.

Attendees enjoyed hors d'oeuvres from Biscotti's and desserts from Ruth's Chris Steakhouse while mingling and listening to live music from performer Samuel Sanders.

Upon entrance attendees were also given the opportunity to enter a raffle for a number of incredible prizes, such as a gift certificate to Spavia Day Spa, brunch for two at TPC Clubhouse, two tickets for the Jaguars vs. Bears football game and much more.

Everett said that events like the Jingle

and Mingle holiday party would not be possible without the help of passionate members and local business owners.

"We look for sponsorships and donations to help cover the expenses to put these events on," she said. "The chamber is very careful with its resources and tries to make membership investment stretch as far as it can."

Last week's holiday party was not only a way to celebrate the holiday season, but also to honor some of the Chamber's extraordinary members.

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