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ADOPT A PET

Reef

Hi, I'm Reef! I'm a 6-yearold male shepherd mix. My previous family could no longer care

for me, so



now I'm at the Pet Center looking for a new family to love. I'm house- and crate-trained and love to be around children. I am not fond of cats, so my new family needs to be dog people, but isn't everyone? If you are interested in meeting me, please contact the Pet Center to schedule an appointment for a meet and greet.

Oreo

Greetings and salutations! I'm
Oreo. I am a
3-year-old female domestic shorthair
– a black-and-white beauty, if I may say so. I came to the Pet Center as an owner surrender when my owner's life

situation changed and she was no longer able to care for me and my housemates. I am good with other cats, litter-trained, very affectionate and a little small for my age. What I lack in size I make up for in heart. Please stop by the shelter and meet me, I think you will see I am just what you are looking for.

St. Johns County Pet Center

Cat adoptions at the St. Johns County Pet Center are \$30 for males and \$40 for females. Dog adoptions are \$45 for males and \$60 for females. Adoption fees include microchipping, neutering/spaying, rabies vaccinations and shots. The pet center is located at 130 N. Stratton Rd., off US 1 between County Road 210 and International Golf Parkway. Business hours are Tuesday through Friday 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The center is closed to the public on Sunday. On Monday, the office is open by appointment only to claim a lost pet. For more information, please call the **St. Johns County Pet Center at (904) 209-6190**.

BRIEFS

Moody's upgrades St. Johns County's issuer and bond ratings

Citing St. Johns County's large and growing tax base, strong wealth and income levels and healthy financial position, Moody's Investor Services has upgraded St. Johns County's issuer, non-ad valorem revenue and sales tax bonds ratings, announced Board of County Commission Chairman Jeremiah Blocker and Clerk and Comptroller Brandon J. Patty.

The New York-based rating agency announced Sept. 21 it has upgraded St. Johns County's issuer rating to Aaa from Aa1. Obligations rated Aaa are judged to be of the highest quality and subject to the lowest level of credit risk.

Concurrently, Moody's upgraded the county's non-ad valorem revenue bond rating to Aa1 from Aa2 and its sales tax revenue bond rating to Aa3 from A1.

Local library system honored

The St. Johns County Public Library system has received recognition in a new awards program honoring libraries for their exceptional community impacts.

Unique Management Services, a library material recovery and patron communication services company, created three awards to celebrate high-impact libraries for providing vital services, protecting public assets and keeping patrons in good standing.

St. Johns County Public Library, which returned 971 patrons to good standing, received an honorable mention in the Back in the Fold Award category. This award honors libraries that have returned a high percentage of patrons to good standing to be able to continue using library services, supporting equity and accessibility in their communities.

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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





County Commission OKs 2021-22 budget, tax rate

By Shaun Ryan

By a vote of 3-2, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners ap-

proved a property tax rate slightly lower than that of last year.

Commissioners Jeb Smith and Paul Waldron voted against the motion.

The board OK'd a rate of \$6.8147 per \$1,000 of taxable



Jeb Smith

value at the second budget hearing on Sept. 21. Last year's rate was \$6.813.

The rolled-back rate was \$6.53. That is the rate that, if adopted, would generate the same amount of tax revenue as last year after being adjusted for fluctuations in property values.

Smith said he favored adopting the rolled-back rate rather than the proposed

"We're confronted with gross inflation, a federal government that is undisciplined in spending," said Smith. "We're facing historic levels of national debt and a very uncertain future. I care not to join the fray but choose to support a rolled-back rate. ... I just can't in good conscience vote

to increase taxes on our property owners

Commissioner Christian Whitehurst offered his reasons for supporting the

proposed rate.

"We heard a project in my district that had \$80 million in deficient roads," he said. "All year long, we've been addressed with hundreds of millions of dollars in capital improvement projects, and we don't have the money to address

Because the county has seen a 9.27% increase in property values since last year, it can expect to see a \$19 million increase in tax revenue in fiscal year 2021-22.

Of that, \$12.7 million would go to the general fund, which pays for most of the services residents associate with county

By a vote of 4-1 the board approved the budget for 2021-22. Smith voted against it. The total budget is \$1.3 billion.

Under the approved tax rate, the owner of a \$400,000 home with a \$50,000 homestead exemption could expect to see a tax bill of \$2,384.



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4 Bathrooms, Guest Suite: 1 Bedroom, 2 Baths. \$4,500,000



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Sheriff's Office not likely to renew MSD contract

By Anthony Richards

Representatives from the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office informed the Ponte Vedra Beach Municipal Service District board that they were not interested in renewing its contract of service during an MSD budget meeting Sept. 22.

"It is not our intent to move into another contract," Sheriff's Office general counsel Matt Cline said.

The current contract is in effect until Sept. 30 and was the basis of an agreement that the Sheriff's Office would provide four deputies to patrol the district in exchange for a monetary amount.

According to MSD chairman Brad Wester, the new contract agreed upon by the board includes increasing the amount paid from \$335,000 to \$435,000 and was something the group had been in talks with the Sheriff's Office about for months.

"St. Johns County is growing at an incredible rate, and we're down quite a few deputies," said Scott Beaver, Sheriff's Office director of patrol. "It was a hard decision."

Beaver explained that it was based on the Sheriff's Office wanting to provide an equal amount of public safety for the entire county.

He stated that the crime rate in the MSD



is much less than other parts of the county, and after re-evaluating the contract, the Sheriff's Office felt they could do a better job of utilizing their resources.

However, choosing to not renew the contract does not mean the MSD will not have the protection of the Sheriff's Office moving forward.

Beaver assured the board that three deputies will continue to patrol the Ponte Vedra Beach area and they will get the same law enforcement services that the rest of the county receives.

"Not one service that we provide will change," Beaver said. "If you call 911, we will be there."

It was mentioned that there had been some hard feelings expressed between members of the board and the Sheriff's Office during the recent negotiations, but Beaver acknowledged the outcome was a "business decision" and not based on personal reasons.

According to MSD chairman Brad Wester, it was a minority of the board that spoke negatively about the Sheriff's Office and the services it had provided.

MSD trustee Gary Jurenovich, who had been the board's liaison to the Sheriff' Office for the past 16 years, stated that he had been receiving emails from several residents concerned about not seeing the police presence in recent years that they had been accustomed to since the MSD first partnered with the Sheriff's Office in 1989.

"They give us excellent service, the extra we pay for is for the guys on the street," Jurenovich said. "It's all about the visual."

The district is made up of about 1,240 homes that pay roughly \$3.2 million to the county through ad valorem taxes. That amount does not include the additional \$350,000 they had been paying to the Sheriff's Office per the contract.

Despite the Sheriff's Office's stated intention to not renew, the MSD board put the contract proposal to a vote, and it passed 6-1, with John Cellucci as the lone trustee in opposition.

Cellucci opposed the contract because

he questioned its lack of accountability.

"The vote was a matter of principal," Wester said. "I made a promise to the sheriff last week that I would put it to a vote and send it signed back to him. I wanted him to know the majority approves of what the Sheriff's Office does."

According to Wester, if Sheriff Robert Hardwick does not agree to the contract, the next step would be for the MSD to hire off-duty deputies to provide extra patrol.

Jurenovich introduced the idea of Ponte Vedra Beach becoming its own city down the road.

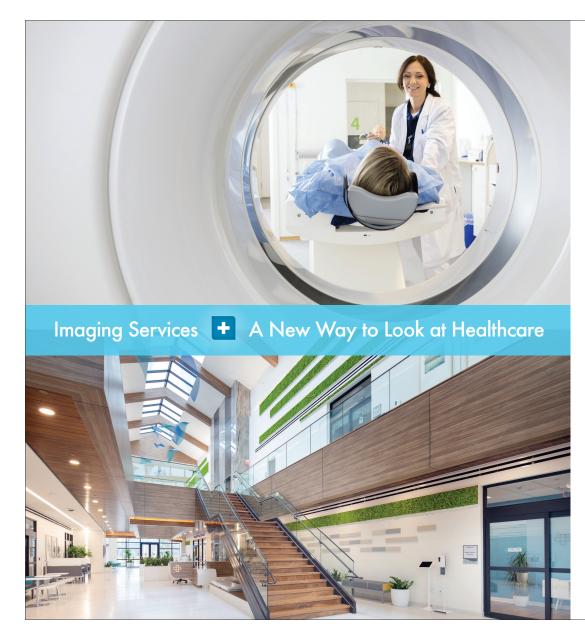
"If we get there, we will need a police force," Jurenovich said.

He proposed hiring a security detail and eventually they could make the transition to forming a police force.

The board agreed they will do research about the possibility of becoming a municipality and discuss it further at a future meeting.

The board also approved \$1,383,135 for its 2021-2022 budget, which will include \$853,577 in total revenues and a cash balance of \$529,558. Part of the total revenues is an ad valorem tax at a millage rate of .375.

Mack McCuller opposed the final budget.





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St. Johns School District gets another A grade

By Shaun Ryan

Once again, the St. Johns County School District has been awarded an A grade by the Florida Department of Education.

The grade is for the 2020-21 academic year. The district has unfailingly earned an A as far back as 2004. This year, the district placed second only to Lafayette County School District, which also had the highest graduation rate of 98%.

St. Johns County School District tied for second place with Seminole and Columbia districts with a graduation rate of 95%.

Within the district, only St. Johns Virtual School had a 100% graduation rate. Of high schools with on-campus instruction, the graduation rates were: Creekside 99%, Ponte Vedra and Bartram Trail 98%, Nease 97%, Pedro Menendez 89% and St. Augustine 88%.

The district had 39 schools in 2020-21. It adds two to that number this year, in-

cluding Pine Island Academy in Nocatee. Next year, the district is on track to add an additional high school.

The state recently released end-ofcourse and Florida Standards Assessments results, as well as school grades.

Schools receiving an A grade were:

Cunningham Creek, Durbin Creek, Hartley, Hickory Creek, R.B. Hunt, Julington Creek, Otis Mason, Ocean Palms, PV/PV Rawlings and Timberlin Creek elementary schools; K-8 schools: Liberty Pines Academy, Mill Creek Academy, Patriot Oaks Academy, Valley Ridge Academy, Palm Valley Academy and Freedom Crossing Academy; Fruit Cove, Landrum, Pacetti Bay and Switzerland Point middle schools; Bartram Trail, Creekside, Nease and Ponte Vedra high schools; and St. Johns Virtual School.

Schools receiving a B grade were:

Crookshank, Ketterlinus, Palencia, Osceola and Wards Creek elementary



schools; Gamble Rogers, Murray and Sebastian middle schools; St. Augustine High School; the Webster School; and St. Augustine Public Montessori School.

Schools receiving a C grade were:

Picolata Crossing and South Woods elementary schools; and Pedro Menendez High School.

St. Johns County School District had no failing schools.

The district schools scoring the highest in assessments were:

English language arts: St. Johns Virtual. Top on-campus schools were Ocean Palms and Timberlin Creek elementary schools. PV/PV Rawlings tied for second with Julington Creek Elementary.

Mathematics: Julington Creek Elementary. In second place, Landrum Middle School tied with Valley Ridge Academy and Durbin Creek Elementary.

Science: Creekside High School. Ponte Vedra High School ranked second.

Social studies: St. Johns Virtual. Patriot Oaks Academy ranked second. Among high schools, Ponte Vedra finished first. Among middle schools, Landrum was at the top.

If the state Legislature approves a proposal by Gov. Ron DeSantis, this will be the final year that the FSA will be administered.

A Bolles Education Offers the World.



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Raghu Misra, whose latest venture, the link, opened in July, is also the entrepreneur behind Wired2Perform, Sapna Foundation, ShipXpress and more. The link is a unique business incubator, co-working space, technological marvel and cultural hub in Nocatee Town Center. Misra has said the idea for the link stems from time lost while driving his son to martial arts classes and then waiting for him in the car. The centralized "learn-play-think-do"

facility, like so many of Misra's ideas, is a solution to a problem.

As told to Shaun Ryan

You have launched so many innovative businesses that you have been described as a "serial tech entrepreneur." Where do all these ideas come from?

Getting ideas, frankly, is not hard, because there is so much room for improvement everywhere. My favorite thing to say is: I'm lazy. And to me there is a positive aspect to being lazy. There are a lot of negative things, but there are a lot of positive things.

Bill Gates had one of my favorite quotes: "I choose a lazy person to do a hard job, because a lazy person will find an easy way to do it."

Because they look at things quite differently, and they're the ones trying to make things simpler, because they want simpler stuff for themselves.

So, to me, the whole reason why the link happened is because I'm lazy. I don't want to drive.

That tells you how I think. That's why every opportunity I get, I'm actually thinking: There has to be a better wav.

Everywhere you see, there's an opportunity to get better. The harder the problem, the bigger the opportunities. You see there's a problem and now you start figuring out: How many people are having the same problem I'm

Each of your ventures is unique. Is it difficult to get others to understand and appreciate your vision?

Yes. Like they say for the restaurant industry: Location, location, location. For the entrepreneur, it is timing.

I tend to be five to 10 years ahead of my time. So the issue is now going to be: Are you ready? Or, is the industry ready? Are customers ready?

Because inevitably, I find myself having to educate the community and the customer base about why they need something. Why they need the link. We've been open for a while, and people still don't understand what the link is all about.

That's a very common occurrence in my life. Partly because, like you said, almost everything I'm doing is so drastically different from something else.

Timing is a very, very important aspect. I don't think everybody will get it right all the time. To me this whole "Midas touch" that some people claim to have is just being lucky.

The link recently opened. What was it like to see this dream of yours become a reality?

Overwhelming, to be honest. Those three days of the opening ceremony, it's a big blur.

I was very pleasantly surprised with all the dignitaries that came by, all the number of people who came by who I didn't know.

What was very satisfying was the number of people who said, "Raghu, we moved to Nocatee because of the link."

Tell us about your background.

I started my first company when I was 17 years old. The moment I finished my high school, I started a



Raghu Misra

company. So, now that I had a company, why study? I thought: I don't need a degree.

Luckily, my father said, "Raghu, it doesn't matter to me what you do in life, but I want you to show me a degree."

So, thanks to him, I have a degree. I have a bachelor's degree in arts and a master's in economics.

People ask me, "Raghu, how did you start your technology career," because I was very poor at studies. I did not have to work hard for building computations and stuff. My first language that I learned was COBOL. It just came naturally to me, and on my first test I got over 90 out of 100.

So, that's when the first lightbulb lit up. I can do this. That changed my life.

I came to the U.S. in October '97. And the first six months, I was in Raleigh, North Carolina, for a subsidiary of CSX. And in '98, I came to Jacksonville for working for a start-up, and ShipXpress happened.

And everything is not hunky-dory, right? My definition of a serial entrepreneur is somebody who has a series of failures. Nobody openly talks about failures.

The other mark of – not just a serial entrepreneur, but any entrepreneur – is risk-tolerance levels. People think entrepreneurs are risk-takers. No. If I gave you a profile of an entrepreneur, their risk-tolerance levels are much higher. Because failures will happen.

What do you like best about your career?

What I like best is the number of industries that I'm able to disrupt - disrupt, as in getting to solve bigger

problems at a massive scale in different industries. To me, disruption is a step change.

Steve Jobs did not create a better Nokia. He completely changed the landscape.

And the same thing with how refrigerators happened. People did not come up with better ice factories. They just changed the whole thing; ice factories in your

It's the same thing with Ford. They did not come up with a better breed of horse. They just created an

To me that is skipping cycles. That is when disruption is happening. That is when true innovation is happen-

For me, disruption is a positive, is a good thing. When you are changing the way people think, the way people behave, the way people consume things.

What do you like to do in your free time?

Just talking to more entrepreneurs. A lot of people say that their job gets them out of the bed. So, to me I'm living that.

To me, entrepreneurship is very contagious. It's likeminded people hanging out together.

That is what I'm trying to create from a culture standpoint, where that energy is, everybody in the building is feeding off of each other's energy levels, and they're here

I wake up at 4 and start to work. I'm actually here at 7:30 because I want to be here. It's very exciting.



Photo provided by Lord of Life Lutheran Church

Every year, Lord of Life Lutheran Church members bring their pets to church for a special blessing.

Lord of Life Lutheran Church plans blessing of animals

It's not a typical church service when there is an abundance of four-legged family members in attendance.

Lord of Life Lutheran Church is unusual in that it welcomes well-behaved dogs any time at church, but its annual blessing of the animals usually brings out an abundance of wagging tails to this cheerful, casual service that honors St. Francis of

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Assisi, the patron saint of animals.

The service is scheduled for 9:45 a.m. Sunday, Oct. 3.

"We have held this blessing for about the past five years, and it's really lovely to see our beloved pets receive a blessing from our Pastor Kerry Hinkley," said Sheila Kolesaire, the church council president. "One day, one congregant just

for your whole family!

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brought her miniature dachshund with her to a regular service, and that sort of freed other members to start bringing their dogs to church. We even have a dog greeter named Traveler much of the time, when he isn't off on adventures with his owner. It's grown since then and we decided our pets were important to us, and that we should take this opportunity to bless them on this day."

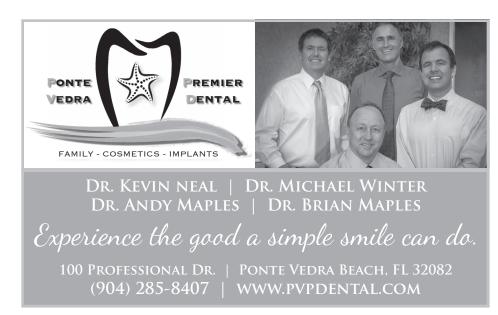
For the blessing of the animals, each pet comes up with its owner at the end of the service to be blessed with water by the pastor. There is usually a reading of the poem "The Rainbow Bridge" or another poem about animals, treats for the animals to eat and a giveaway for a few lucky own-

ers and a child.

St. Francis is the patron saint of the environment and animals because he loved all creatures and allegedly preached even to birds. The blessing is celebrated annually on Oct. 4 or on the Sunday closest to this day.

Lord of Life Lutheran Church worships in a former stable at 276 Roscoe Blvd. North. The church is part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, one of the largest Christian denominations in the United States with about 4 million members.

To learn more, go to https://lordofli-fepvb.org or on Facebook @lordoflifepontevedra or on Instagram @lordoflifepvb.



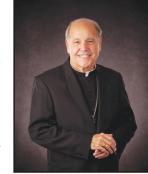




Pope Francis bestows honors on 18 local Catholics

Pope Francis has bestowed papal honors upon 18 people for their dedication and exceptional service to the Diocese of

St. Augustine over the last 10 years. The honors were conferred by Bishop Felipe J. Estévez on Sept. 19 at a Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine.



Bishop Felipe J. Estèvez

The honorees, including lay individuals,

couples, religious sisters and a permanent deacon, received their honors in three award categories.

Grand Cross of the Order of St. Gregory the Great

The Grand Cross of the Order of St. Gregory the Great, one of the five pontifical knightly orders, was founded by Pope Gregory XVI in 1831 to honor his sixthcentury predecessor.

In the nearly 200 years since that

Membership signifies recognition from the Holy Father for service already rendered and an invitation from him to continue a life of exemplary Christian witness.

time, sitting pontiffs have awarded it to diplomats, artists, scientists, world leaders and interfaith leaders from all walks of life who have shown by their service extraordinary love for Jesus Christ and his church.

Membership signifies recognition from the Holy Father for service already rendered and an invitation from him to continue a life of exemplary Christian witness.

The honorees are Gary Chartrand of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in Ponte Vedra Beach, Joe Helow of Holy Family Parish in Jacksonville, David and Mary Pat Kulik of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, Warren Powers of Holy Spirit Parish in Jacksonville and Alton Yates of Holy Rosary Parish in Jacksonville.

Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice

The Cross Pro Ecclesia et Pontifice, also known as the Cross of Honor, comes directly from the Holy See and is composed of a gold medal with the name of the honoree inscribed, as well as a scroll.

The honor was established in 1888 and is given to Catholics who have shown distinguished service to the church and the papal office.

The honorees are Ernest Bono of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish in Ponte Vedra Berach, Robert Hart of Our Lady Star of the Sea Parish, John Delaney of St. Paul Parish in Jacksonville Beach, Caridad Lee and James Stockman of Queen of Peace Parish in Gainesville and Gwendoline Yates of Holy Rosary Parish in Jacksonville.

Benemerenti Medal

The Benemerenti Medal was created by Pope Gregory XVI in 1832 and was first awarded to soldiers in the papal army. The medal was later extended to members of the clergy and laity for exceptional service to the Roman Catholic Church.

The honorees are Sisters of St. Joseph, Thomas Joseph McGoldrick and Elizabeth Kennedy of St. Augustine, Martha Lucia Alers-Alers of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Orange Park, Deacon Lowell Corky Hecht of St. Joseph Parish in Jacksonville, Gregory Montana of Assumption Parish in Jacksonville and Chau Thien Phan of Santa Maria del Mar Parish in Flagler Beach.





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National pageant winner speaks to Kindness Klub

By Anthony Richards

Miss National American Teen and Nease High senior Rylee Moore spoke to a group of middle school girls about the importance of being confident about themselves during Kindness Klub's Honeybee H.I.V.E. meeting Sept. 23 at Kookaburra Coffee in Nocatee.

Moore's message stressed self-worth and the understanding that it is all about how you feel about yourself and not about how others perceive you.

"It's hard growing up because everyone is worried about trying to fit in while not giving in to peer pressure," Moore said. "I want them to know that it's OK to not try and be somebody that they're not. Know what you stand for, so you won't have to

It was Moore's first speaking engagement since becoming Miss National American Teen.

"I love sharing my stories to try to help others," Moore said. "Being secure in yourself can relate to achieving your dreams and ultimately being the person you aspire to be."

She hopes that she can be a positive role model for the girls and someone they can relate to, especially with her being a

"I remember when I was their age and I looked up to girls," Moore said. "I know this is more than just a sash and crown."

Part of the discussion during the meeting was not just about being kind to those around, but it also focused on how the girls can handle the situation of someone being mean to them. Some of the approaches used included walking away and not reacting or responding to such remarks with words of kindness.

The Kindness Klub was started by Skyler McKinney and her friend Berkeley Lockhart four years ago when the two were in third grade at Ocean Palm

They began it with the hopes of adding kindness to the world, while also creating an outlet for middle school girls to socialize and make new friends.

"I love what they are doing with their mission," Moore said.

The two are now seventh graders at Palm Valley Academy in Nocatee, and



Miss National American Teen and Nease High senior Rylee Moore was the guest speaker at the Kindness Klub's Honeybee H.I.V.E. meeting Sept. 23 at Kookaburra Coffee in Nocatee. She spoke to the middle school girls club about the importance of having self-confidence.

the club recently added its 78th member overall, with about 35 of those considered active members.

Many of the members that are no longer active are due to them now being in high school.



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

Kathy's Gardening Guide

Fall Festive Decor

It's that time of year! Decorating for fall and all things spooky can be a fun way to change up your landscaping as well. There are many items on the market to enhance your yard during these festive

In Northeast Florida, our fall flower selection has to be able to tolerate some amount of sun and heat. Some of the most popular fall flowers to accent are crotons, marigolds and mums. Dusty miller, dianthus and pansies can also offer fall looks depending on color selection. In addition to fall flowers, pumpkins, hay bales and cornstalks are a great addition to the yard for decor. All of these items are natural, which is an added bonus. You can layer the flowers and decor to make a focal piece in a planter or near the front entrance of your home - or even sporadically through a flower bed to give a pop a fall color.

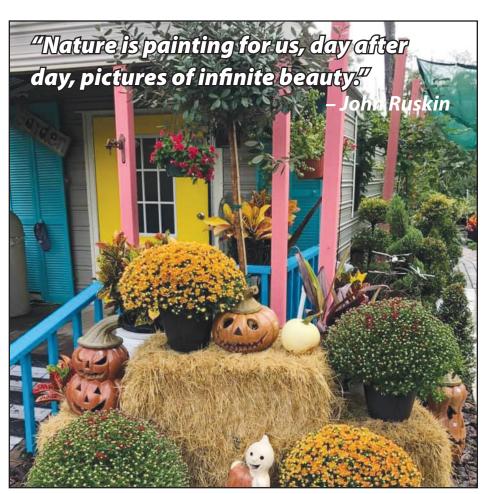
Stop by the Nursery this week to grab your fall flowers, hay bales and décor.

Email Kathy at kcg.pvr@gmail.com for any questions or gardening tips you would like to see in the future.

Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery is located at 196 N. Roscoe Blvd. The phone number is 904-655-7373.

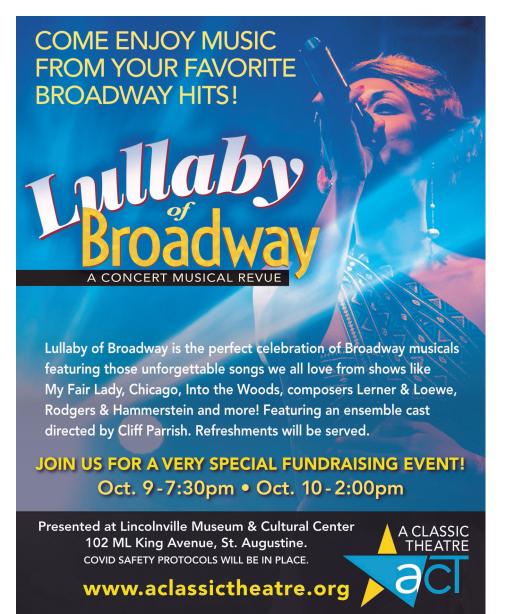


Marigolds



Photos provided by Kathy Esfahani

Popular fall flowers and other seasonal additions make a festive display near your home.





Speaker series to feature big names in professional football, space exploration and country music

Tickets are available now for a series featuring a Super Bowl champion, and astronaut and a country music star.

The Florida Forum Speaker Series, presented by The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital, raises funds to benefit Wolfson Children's Hospital of Jacksonville and support the creation of an expanded state-of-the-art neonatal

intensive care center.

This year, the series features four-time Super Bowl champion and broadcaster Terry Bradshaw on Oct. 26; Maj. Gen. Charles F. Bolden Jr., a retired Ma-

rine officer, astro-



naut and former NASA administrator, on Nov. 17; and singer/songwriter/actor Tim McGraw on Feb. 16.

The series will take place at the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts.

Subscriptions for the forum events start at \$225 each for general seating, \$300 for preferred seating, \$850 for two reserved

Bronze seating tickets, \$2,125 for two reserved Silver seating tickets and \$4,250 for two reserved Gold seating tickets.

The purchase of a Silver or Gold ticket package includes invitations to the private



reception honoring the speakers after the lecture. Patrons under the age of 30 may purchase Young Subscriber tickets for \$150 each.

The series is made possible by long-time partners and sponsors Wells Fargo, Florida Blue and Landstar. The moderators are Jeff Lageman, Capt. Mark T. Gould MD, USN (ret) and Jennifer Candelino. The



Tim McGraw

2021 Florida Forum Speaker Series co-

chairs are Jan Kirby and Frances Hutto.

Since 1992, The Florida Forum has hosted renowned speakers from around the world offering insights and discussions on a broad range of issues. In addition to enriching Jacksonville's intellectual and cultural life, the forum

has contributed more than \$9.2 million to Wolfson Children's Hospital of Jackson-

To purchase tickets or for additional information, go to www.thefloridaforum. com, call 904-202-2886 or email womensboard@bmcjax.com.

Lighthouse receives state appropriation for restoration

The St. Augustine Lighthouse & Maritime Museum has been awarded an appropriation by the State of Florida to restore majority of the work will be completed in 2022.

Division of Historical Resources and the State of Florida and will involve painting the inside of the tower and restoring original metalwork.

Donations from friends of the museum, the St. Augustine community, the Florida Lighthouse Association and others will fund the painting of the tower's exterior as well as other restoration needs.

While preventative maintenance is board of trustees.

Recent hurricanes Matthew and Irma have sped up the timeline for restoration, forcing water and salt into the masonry

able due to restoration of the stairs. Future tower closures will be announced as they

are scheduled. The museum offers a number of other activities and exhibits to visit during closures at the tower.

"We take pride in our tower and count on private support to preserve the historical site," said Kathy Shetler, the board of trustees chair. "We appreciate the extreme generosity of the state of Florida as well as private donors who help keep the light shining for future generations to come.

Donations may be made at https://store. staugustinelighthouse.org/MakeDonation. aspx?skuid=1001059 or by contacting Tanya Rhodes at trhodes@stagustinelighthouse.org or by calling 904-829-0745 ext.

and preserve the interior of its tower. The The internal restoration project is sponsored in part by the Department of State,

ongoing, major tower restoration is needed every five to six years on average. The original restoration of the tower and Keepers' House began in 1980 when 16 volunteers from the Junior Service League of St. Augustine turned back bulldozers from destroying the burned-out structure. Many of those women are still involved with the museum today as members of its

and onto the cast iron. Currently, the tower is partially unavail-

Cost: \$115 per class (members receive a 10% discount)

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Teresa Cook, born and raised in Jacksonville, is an Abstract Architectural Watercolor artist. Graduating from UNF in 2012, she has travelled around the world finding pleasure in landscapes and buildings. Her paintings are meant to capture a moment in time without the interruption of people. In her words: "Come learn watercolor with me--I am so excited to paint with you!"



For more information: contact Jill Titcomb at jtitcomb@firstcoastculturalcenter.org or call 904-280-0614 ex 1206

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Baptist Health Jacksonville named one of Florida's best employers

Forbes magazine has named Baptist Health Jacksonville one of Florida's best employers. In its annual "America's Best Employers by State 2021" list, Baptist Health is ranked No. 1 among all ranked employers in Jacksonville in any industry, and No. 10 among all 100 ranked companies in Florida.

Further, Baptist Health ranked No. 3 among all ranked health care providers in the state and was the only North Florida health care provider among the top three.

The award methodology was based

on surveys of Americans working for businesses with at least 500 employees who were asked to rate their employers on various criteria, including workplace safety, competitive compensation, advancement opportunities and openness to telecommuting.

Surveys were anonymous, allowing participants to respond freely. The final list ranked 1,328 employers who received the greatest number of recommendations in each of the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Then it was broken down into the top 100 companies in each state and the District of Columbia.

Business For MORE business news. go to facebook.com/ ThePVRecorder PAGE 13 THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 30, 2021



The housing market is heating up in St. Johns County.

www.PonteVedraRecorder.com

Berkshire Hathaway Realtors receive Circle Diamond Awards

Conference honors top-producing Realtors in the company

Four Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty Realtors have achieved the Chairman's Circle Diamond Award, which recognizes the top half of 1% among all agents in the company's global network.

The Northeast Florida Chairman's Circle Diamond award winners are:

Elizabeth Hudgins of the Ponte Vedra/ Nocatee branch office

Anita Vining of the San Marco branch

Stefanie Bernstein of the St. Augustine branch office

Allison Steilberg of the Avondale branch office

These Realtors and other top-performing agents were recently celebrated at the company's Summit Conference in Coronado, California. Conference invitations were extended exclusively to top producers who rank among the top 10% of associates companywide in the Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices network.

More than 100 Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty

Realtors were celebrated during the event. Other honors include the Chairman's Circle Platinum award (top 1%), Chairman's Circle Gold award (top 2%), President's Circle award (top 6%) and Leading Edge Society (top 10%).

"We are extremely proud of our top producers, who are constantly raising the bar and achieving the highest level of performance and service," said Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty President Ann King. "Their talent and dedication to their clients and to the real estate industry is inspiring."

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

Top: Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty's top producers recently celebrated their success at the Summit Conference in Coronado, California.

Botttom: Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty Realtors connect with the Navy Seals during a special event at the Summit Conference.





hotos provided by Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty

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Home sales: Prices up, availability down

By Shaun Ryan

The housing market in Northeast Florida continued to heat up in August, the most recent month for which there are figures.

Historically high sales prices and a shortage of available housing have forced many potential buyers to rent, which in turn is driving up rental rates. In fact, the cost of leasing often exceeds the cost of securing a home mortgage.

It's no secret that people are moving into Florida at a high rate.

The population of St. Johns County was 254,267 in 2019, according to the state's Office of Economic & Demographic Research. In 2020, that number rose to 261,762, a 3% increase.

And that means an increase in demand for housing. In August, new listings in Northeast Florida rose to 3,787, a 5.7% increase from the same month last year. At the same time, pending sales dipped 2%, inventory levels fell 37.2% and the average number of days a home is on the market was down 50%.

What is not down is price. The average sales price was at \$362,699. Yet, 41% of the properties on the market sold for more than the asking amount.



The housing affordability index for August showed that homes on the First Coast were 13.2% less affordable than one

Prices in much of St. Johns County exceed the regional figure.

In August, the average price of a home in the northeastern part of the county was \$585,000, up by 66.5% over August 2020. In Ponte Vedra Beach, South Ponte Vedra Beach, Vilano Beach and Palm Valley, the average price was \$635,000. In Nocatee, it was \$525,000.

In those local markets, the percentage of the list price received and the percentage of the properties sold over the list price were up. The number of days on the market and inventory of available homes for sale were significantly down.

Skyrocketing rent

Many sellers taking advantage of escalating sales prices have discovered the downside of the hot real-estate market. Unable to find available homes for sale, many have been forced to rent. Between the number of people unable to find available housing and these former homeowners, the demand for rental units has sent rates soaring.

The average monthly rent for August in St. Johns County is \$1,623 for a 1,034-square-foot apartment, a 6% increase compared to a year ago, according to RentCafe.com.

"As challenging as it is for buyers to secure a home that fits their lifestyle and budget, renters who are seeking affordable accommodations are watching their options become less available and affordable," said Missi Howell, president of the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors. "The best way to protect inflationary housing increases is to own your own home. Homeownership is built-in 'rent control,' which is one of the reasons buying a home is a person's first step into wealth building."

Construction woes

The solution to the shortage of homes appears to be construction of more, but even that isn't as simple as it seems.

Housing starts nationwide declined by 7% in August, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce. Single-family home construction was down by 4.5% and multi-family home construction fell by

Builders have blamed labor shortages, rising material costs and supply-chain disruptions. In fact, the rising cost and decreasing availability of materials have forced many construction projects to be paused.





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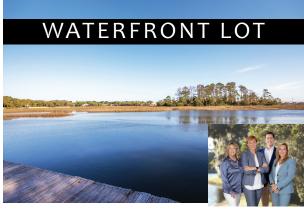
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The BookMark in Neptune Beach will host a virtual event with children's author Chris Haughton at 9 a.m. Saturday, Oct. 2.

The BookMark continues virtual events, grows interest

By Anthony Richards

Virtual events and story times have become a regular occurrence at The Book-Mark in Neptune Beach since the COV-ID-19 pandemic began, and the latest the reader scheduled is children's author and illustrator Chris Haughton.

Haughton is scheduled to be part of a virtual event beginning at 9 a.m. Saturday,

Some of Haughton's acclaimed children's books includes Don't Worry, Little Crab and Shh! We Have a Plan.

The BookMark is a staple for book lovers in Neptune Beach, having hosted events for 31 years at its location at 220 First Street, according to owner Rona Brinlee.

The pandemic has made people rethink how they do certain things, and for book lovers, the next best thing other than reading books, is talking about them.

"The authors and publishers are working with bookstores to find a way to promote new books in a safe way," Brinlee said. "This has meant a growing number of virtual author events. In addition to making these more accessible to people who may not be able to attend in person, it's also given us the opportunity to host authors that may not have been travelling to Florida."

The push to have events received big support after The BookMark received a grant from James Patterson in 2014 to be used to encourage children to read.

"We proposed and implemented a regular in-store "Story Time with Miss Pat" scheduled the second Saturday of each month," Brinlee said. "This has

"We proposed and implemented a regular in-store "Story Time with Miss Pat" scheduled the second Saturday of each month. This has been wildly successful. Because of the pandemic, we are unable to do this, so we decided to go virtual with Miss Pat."

- Rona Brinlee

been wildly successful. Because of the pandemic, we are unable to do this, so we decided to go virtual with Miss Pat."

The virtual events have proven to be a big hit, especially among the younger generations of readers.

"The good part about these events (via Crowdcast) is that they are available to watch and/or re-watch after the live happening," Brinlee said. "In fact, the number of viewers grows dramatically over time, often doubling or more."

The schedule of upcoming virtual events and story times can be found by going to www.bookmarkbeach.com. The list includes a variety of bestselling authors of fiction, non-fiction and children's

Baptist Health partners with PXG Women's Match Play Championship

Community support for the inaugural PXG Women's Match Play Championship continues to build as the tournament has now teamed up with Baptist Health to be one of its founding partners.

The two-week match play event is being touted as an opportunity for women golfers to make a name for themselves and take a step in achieving their dream of one day playing on the LPGA Tour.

The tournament will be played Oct. 26 to Nov. 4 at World Golf Village.

Baptist becomes the fourth and final founding partner and will be the tournament's official health care provider.

"Baptist has taken a leadership role with every major sports initiative in this market, and we are proud to support these women as they embark on their professional journeys," said Michael Mayo, president and CEO of Baptist Health in Jacksonville. "We are particularly interested in supporting athletes at all levels in achieving their highest level of performance."

It is not just the game of golf that the championship is promoting. Leading the women's development mission of the tournament is Generation W, a women's leadership organization based in Jacksonville, that will host the Links to Leadership Summit, which will include a half day of leadership programs Oct. 29.

"Links to Leadership will be energizing, informative and inspirational," Generation W founder and CEO Donna Orender said. "It is designed to create the opportunity for the players and guests to learn from each other and develop personal leadership and connection skills.

The emphasis on growing the game and the world around it is something that caught the attention of Baptist Health.

"The Generation W component of the PXGWMPC is as important to us as is the golf tournament," Mayo said. "Baptist Health values women and the leadership role they play in all aspects of our community." The tournament is an official event on the Women's All Pro Tour, which is one of three US women's golf developmental tours and the only one that provides a pathway into the Symetra Tour, the LPGA's official entry point. While sanctioned by the WAPT, the PXG Match Play Championship is open to all professional players who are not LPGA players. "This is a pretty significant distinction as a professional event," tournament founder Mark Berman said. "We are very intentional in providing opportunities for the up-andcoming professional female players."



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In the Arts

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THURSDAY, September 30, 2021 • PAGE 18

Dinner and a spook

Alhambra Theatre to host Halloween-themed double feature

By Anthony Richards

Alhambra Theatre and Dining in Jacksonville has been putting on shows for 54 years, but they continue to look for new productions and unique ways to keep audiences entertained.

The latest of which will be the productions of "Young Frankenstein The Musical" and "The Rocky Horror Show" that will be hitting the stage throughout October.

"It's fun because both shows are brand new at the Alhambra," Alhambra production manager Shain Stroff said. "Our audiences really want to see new material."

"Young Frankenstein The Musical" is based on the 1974 film directed by Mel Brooks. It is scheduled to begin Thursday, Sept. 30, and will run through Nov. 7, starting at 7:50 p.m. with additional 1 p.m. matinees on weekends.

"Mel Brooks shows are known to be very musical and funny," Stroff said. "Any Mel Brooks show is going to be really big."

"The Rocky Horror Show" will serve as a double feature for audiences craving a taste of Halloween and will be performed Oct. 15-16, Oct. 22-23 and Oct. 28-30 with all shows beginning at 11 p.m.

It derives from the 1975 film, and the stage production will also include the fan-involved elements that made the film so iconic.

The interaction will be more than most musical, and Stroff had that in mind when he was auditioning and choosing a cast for the play.

"Everybody I've hired has been trained

with improvisation," Stroff said. "You're going to have to roll with the punches."

Although both "Young Frankenstein The Musical" and "The Rocky Horror Show" will be shown on certain nights, they require separate ticket purchases to attend.

Tickets for "Young Frankenstein The Musical" are \$48 and will include the traditional three-course meal the Alhambra has become famous for, as well as complimentary parking.

According to Stroff, "The Rocky Horror Show" sold out within 48 hours of being available to the public.

"There's been a high demand," Stroff

Two casts will be used for "Young Frankenstein" and the same will be in place for "The Rocky Horror Show."

However, 18 performers will make up the "Young Frankenstein" production, while 10 will be used for "The Rocky Horror Show," with several performing in both shows.

Preparing for a double feature is a



Photo courtesy of Alhambra Theatre and Dining

Alhambra Theatre and Dining in Jacksonville will host a double feature of "Young Frankenstein The Musical" and "The Rocky Horror Show" at various times throughout October.

unique and challenging venture, as they only had five days to learn each show's script and choreography.

Stroff and all those involved have embraced the challenges of producing and performing two shows in such a short period of time as a great opportunity.

"A lot of us have been pulling about 16-hour days (during rehearsals)," Stroff said

Much of the talent was chosen from the local area, which Stroff believes is the way it should be.

"For me, as a production manager, it's very important to scout and use the talent locally," Stroff said.



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Cultural Center fall season filled with programs, classes, workshops

\$40K matching grant challenge under way

First Coast Cultural Center is launching its fall season with new programs to support the nonprofit, including youth and adult arts and music programs and classes for novice and professional students.

Matching grant

According to Donna Guzzo, president and executive director, the nonprofit was recently awarded a \$40,000 matching grant from the Persbacker-Wyman Family Foundation Matching Gift Challenge



"A Walk In The Park" by master artist Ellen Diamond reveals her unique style.

for the center's Sound Connections Music Therapy program. Funds must be met by Nov. 1.

Diamond classes

Fall courses at the center feature virtual classes with master artist Ellen Diamond.

Diamond's classes are greatly sought-after by the local arts community, students and others. She is a renowned and highly collected landscape artist working in contemporary impressionistic and abstract style.

She resides in Jacksonville and holds her virtual classes exclusively with First Coast Cultural Center.

Music lessons

Virtual private piano, violin and cello lessons with Sabrina Krisberg are also popular for young and adult students at the center. Krisberg has been an instructor at the center for more than eight years. She has been playing the cello for more than 25 years and performs locally.

Arts continues on Page 20



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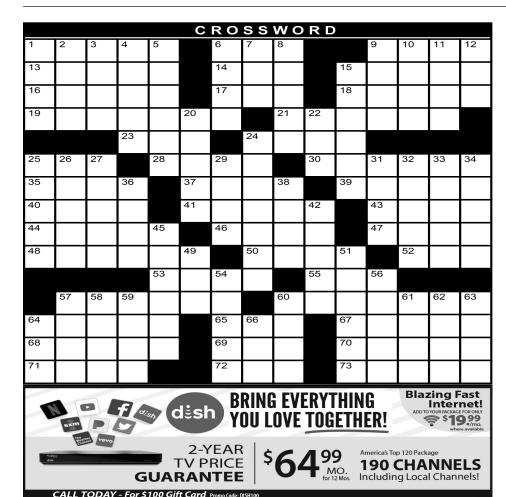
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- 18. Kind of committee, two words 19. *Hedge maze, dull boy, redrum,
- 21. *Pretend girlfriend, surgery, body
- 23. Monkey ____, monkey do
- 24. Post-it message
- 25. It makes a guitar louder
- 28. Royal Indian
- 30. Perfumes 35. Glorify
- 37. Freeway exit
- 39. Like today's cell phones?
- 40. Keen on
- 41. Like a confection
- 43. At any time
- 44. One of the large keys on the right 46. Greek portico
- 47. Common workday start 48. Former President of Egypt
- 50. Ancient eternal life symbol
- 52. *Bathtub, hacksaws, Jigsaw
- 53. Euphemism for "darn"
- 55. *Blind violinist, transplant surgery,
- sees ghosts, with The 57. *Hotel, mother, shower
- 60, *Count, bite, cross
- 64 Hot winter drink
- 65. Aye's opposite
- 67. Financial benefactor
- 68. Seize a throne
- 69. Headquartered in Langley
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- 2. Crosby, Stills, & Young
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- 4 Actor Jeremy
- Xerox machine
- 6. *Videotape, stone well, seven days,
- with The 7. Paleozoic one
- 8. Tropical smoothie flavor
- 9. Make over
- 10. Hawaiian island
- 11. Ragtime turkey dance
- 12. And so on, abbr. 15. Bias crime perpetrators
- 20. Closes in on
- 22. Pilot's announcement, acr.
- 24. ID badge, two words 25. *Sigourney Weaver, outer space
- 26. Old Testament miracle food
- 27. Hits while on the green
- 29. *Beachgoers, police chief, need for
- bigger boat

31. *Boy, shadows in photographs, three

dish

- sixes, with The
- 32. "Transylvania" daughter
- 33. Entertainment complex 34 Scatter
- It Better 36. "Nobody
- 38. Low-ranking worker
- 42. One who accepts the offer
- 45. Porter's head gear
- 49. U Rah _
- 51. Seven daughters of Atlas
- 54. Present
- 56. Food-borne bacteria 57. One in a pocketful, according to
- Mother Goose 58. Fish a.k.a. porgy
- 59. Bygone era
- 60. Two of a kind
- 61. Type of operating system
- 62. Prospector's mother?
- 63. God of war, son of Zeus
- 64. Director's cry



Arts

Continued from 19

Her student, Dr. Roya Rouhani of Jacksonville, has benefitted from membership at the center. Rouhani has played at several events at the center including gallery openings and benefit events.

Rouhani plans to continue her adult arts and music interests with painting classes and workshops.

"I have had a love and passion for the arts and music all my life, grew up as a child playing the piano, but my dream always was playing the cello, as I felt drawn to its beautiful sound," said Rouhani. "I started taking lessons with Sabrina about five years ago, all the way from the beginning when I didn't even know how to hold the cello or the bow. Sabrina understands these challenges and helps make the learning process fun and nonintimidating. She is an amazing teacher, being flexible in her schedule and teaching style to what best suits the student, and she understands the difference in approach to teaching adults and children."

Other highlights

Additional classes and workshops this fall season include "Classical Oil Still Life Painting" with Marisela Quiros; "Animals and Acrylics" with Nikole Cooney; "Basics in Watercolors" with Teresa Cook; "Arts + Medicine: Group Art Clinic, Sculpting Animals in Paperclay and Epoxy Clay" with Nikole Cooney; "Techniques of the Masters in Water and Skies Workshop" with David Dunlop; "In Nature's Garden Workshop"



Photos provided by First Coast Cultural Center Dr. Roya Rouhani has played cello at many

events.

with master artist David Dunlop; artist lecture with master artist David Dunlop: "Flowers, Cactus, and Plants Workshop" with Teresa Cook; "Total Sculpture in Clay" with Peter Rubino; "Christmas Card Watercolor Workshop" with Teresa Cook; virtual private voice lessons with Stephanie Bennie; virtual private piano lessons with Stephanie Bennie; and a variety of resin classes, workshops and events.

First Coast Cultural Center also offers community studio and practice techniques space for participants who are required to bring supplies and materials in the open studio.

Individual, family, artist and patron memberships are required for enrollment and review of program policies.

For more information about programs, workshops, costs, dates and times, call Jill Titcomb at 904-280-0614, ext. 1206, or go to firstcoastculturalcenter.org.

Hours are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday, with after-hour appointments available. First Coast Cultural Center is located at 3972 3rd St. South, Jacksonville Beach.

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Photos provided by Moses Campaan

Moses Campaan of Jacksonville lines up a putt on the practice green prior to competing in a round at the 2021 AJGA Junior PLAYERS Championship at the TPC Sawgrass Stadium Course earlier this month. He finished tied for 24th at 7-over.

Campaan caps successful year with Junior PLAYERS appearance

By Anthony Richards

Moses Campaan of Jacksonville has had a great year of junior golf and he was rewarded for his stellar play with an opportunity to compete at the AJGA Junior PLAYERS Championship earlier this month.

Although there were several North Florida Junior Golf Foundation members that played in the event, Campaan was the one who earned his spot based on his performance in the local qualifying series.

He won multiple tournaments in the past year and finished better than 119 golfers in the final local standings.

Campaan had never played in a AJGA competition prior to the Junior PLAY-FRS

"It lived up to everything that I expected it to be," Campaan said. "Everything was very well run, from the range balls to breakfast and the communication with the players."

According to Campaan, he had played THE PLAYERS Stadium Course at TPC Sawgrass in past events, but the level of

difficulty in the course preparation took a step up, especially in the quickness of the greens.

"It expressed all the weaknesses in my game, but it helped with my mental side of the game," Campaan said. "I learned you've got to have your game at 100%, but it was fun to play against the best kids in the world."

After a slow start that saw him tied for 35th in a field of 78 players following the first two days, he was able to get on track and made a push on the final day to finish tied for 24th at 7-over.

"I'm generally a pretty accurate driver of the golf ball," Campaan said. "When the competition is better, that's when I usually tend to thrive."

Although he found it tough to pick a favorite hole on the course, because there was something he loved about each one, he stated he enjoyed playing the 470-yard par four No. 15, the 393-yard par four No. 6 and even the difficult 462-yard par four No. 18.

Golf has been a part of Campaan's life ever since he can remember, as he was

first introduced to the game when he was one year old.

He just played for fun with his family, until entering his first tournament when he was 11 years old.

He is now 19 and one of the best junior golfers in the area.

"They (family) didn't mean for me to pick it up like I did," Campaan said. "I just wanted to go out and hit balls with them. It led to a lot of positive memories growing up."

One of those memories included a tradition of playing with his dad every Monday for the first 10 years of his life, usually at Bent Creek Golf Course in Jacksonville.

Campaan will not be able to play junior golf once he turns 20 years old, but he plans to continue playing at the amateur level.

He has been invited to play in the South Beach International Amateur Tournament at Miami Beach in December.

"I'm comfortable with how my game can travel at the various courses throughout the state," Campaan said.

FOOTBALL PREVIEW Ponte Vedra, Nease bring winning streaks back home

By Anthony Richards

Do not look now, but both Ponte Vedra and Nease are riding high and carrying their share of the momentum as part of their current winning streaks headed into week six.

The week six slate of games includes the Sharks (3-2, 1-1) hosting Fleming Island, while the Panthers (4-1, 2-0) welcome in First Coast. Both games are scheduled for 7 p.m. Friday, Oct. 1

It has been two weeks since the "shark tank" and "the jungle" have had fans in the stands for some Friday night lights action, so expect there to be a raucous atmosphere created by both teams' fans.

The Golden Eagles (2-3, 0-1) of Fleming Island have been a tough team to read all season, as they have had their share of inconsistent moments.

From bouncing back from an opening loss to Clay by beating Lake Minneola of Daytona Beach 6-0, to getting shut out themselves the very next week by Creekside.

One thing that stands out right away when looking at their play this season is the fact that they have struggled to score points.

Prior to putting 43 on the scoreboard against Ridgeview last week, the Golden Eagles were only averaged 8.5 points per game.

That may prove to be the difference in the game against a Sharks' defense that has been flying to the ball all season and is fresh off their second shutout this year.

Unlike the Sharks and the Golden Eagles, which has the makings of a defensive slugfest, the Panthers battle against the Buccaneers of First Coast and will look to its offensive productivity.

This year's version of the Buccaneers (0-5, 0-1) has not been what people have become accustomed to over the years, as they still search for their first win of the season.

The Panthers do not look like the team that will offer them that opportunity, as with every week that passes, they look to become more of a complete team with both sides of the ball making big plays and at crucial moments in games.

The Buccaneers have one loss in district 3-7A already, and that came a couple of weeks ago at the hands of Ponte Vedra, 27-7.

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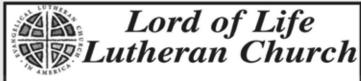
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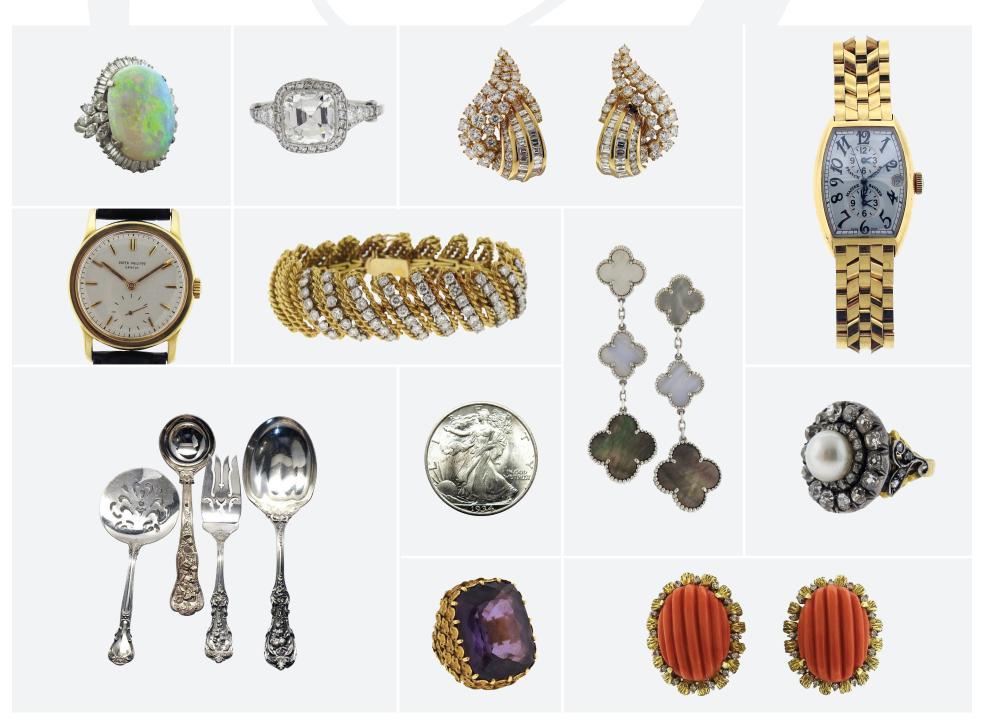
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