

THE RECORDER



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March 23, 2023
Volume 54, No. 21
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Serving Ponte Vedra, St. Augustine, The Beaches and Greater St. Johns County

PonteVedraRecorder.com



Fit & Healthy
Page 14



Business Weekly
Featuring Tribute to
Realtors & Builders
Page 21



NINE YEARS AND COUNTING

Contributed photo

The Nease NJROTC Unarmed Exhibition Drill Team competes under the watchful eye of a Marine Corps judge during the Area 12 Championships on March 4 in Douglas, Georgia. The unit claimed first place in this event. Nease Navy JROTC won the championship for the ninth consecutive year. For more about this successful program's latest victory, see page 9.

entertainment **EXTRA!**

Jet Set Pets offers dogs 'home away from home'

the link

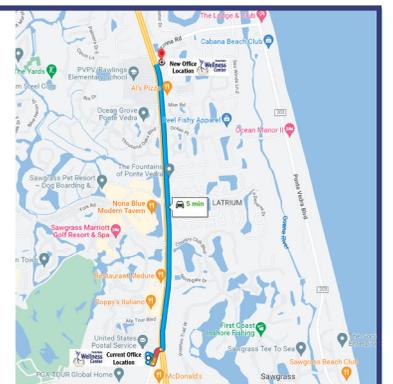
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INSIDE: CHECK IT OUT!
The Recorder's Entertainment EXTRA featuring TV listings, streaming information, puzzles and more!

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One of Us

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Sports

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Send us your news

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



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BRIEFS

Garden Center Day is today at Ribault Garden Club

Ribault Garden Club welcomes the public to Garden Center Day from 10 a.m. to noon Thursday, March 23, to learn about the native vegetation effects within one of the largest park systems in North America.

Guest speaker Jolie Friedrich is a park naturalist for the City of Jacksonville. One of her passions is sharing her hands-on wildlife conservation fieldwork with the public.

Huguenot Memorial Park offers a naturalist-guided beach walk, led a long portions of the Great Florida Birding Trail where you can see and learn about wildlife and birds. At Jacksonville's parks, you can enjoy a wide range of exciting and engaging experiences.

There are traditional neighborhood and regional parks as well as 22 community centers conveniently located throughout the city.

The event will be held at Ribault Garden Club, 705 Second Ave. N., Jacksonville Beach. Admission is free. There will be refreshments, door prize and a raffle.

Tides and Tails benefits Jacksonville Humane Society

The Jacksonville Humane Society is hosting its first Tides and Tails fundraising event of the year. Tides and Tails is an upscale "yappy hour" for people and their pets. The event will include food, beer, wine and whiskey tastings; activities and treats for people and pets, an auction and more.

Tides and Tails is a fundraiser that supports the mission of Jacksonville Humane Society. All proceeds from ticket sales will benefit its programs and help the organization continue to provide compassionate care to pets and people who love them in our community.

The event is 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, March 29, at One Ocean Resort & Spa, 1 Ocean Blvd., Atlantic Beach.

Attendees are welcome to bring a pet to this event, limit one per person. Pets require their own tickets in addition to the attendee's ticket. For tickets go to jaxhumane.org/tails. For information, go to jaxhumane.org.

Southern Living names St. Augustine top small town in South

Dotdash Meredith's Southern Living announces the winners of its seventh annual South's Best Awards, recognizing readers' favorite Southern destinations and experiences.

St. Augustine was ranked number one Small Town in the South and is featured on the periodical's flip cover.

Hike planned at Matanzas Inlet

A guided interpretive hike on March 28 around the Matanzas Inlet will be presented by Guana Tolomato Matanzas National Estuarine Research Reserve and the U.S. National Park Service. Participants will explore the ever-changing shoreline, tidal flats, beaches, dunes, dune vegetation, birds and wildlife there.

Participants are asked to wear comfortable closed-toe shoes. Hat, insect repellent, water and sunscreen are recommended. Hikers are encouraged to bring cameras and binoculars to record and observe a variety of birds, plants and animals. The event is free but online registration is required.

Go to gtmnerr.org/visit/events and click on Matanzas Inlet Hike.

The Matanzas Inlet parking lot is at 8655 A1A South, St. Augustine.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

Psychology professor to be Coastal Friends speaker

Coastal Friends will present guest speaker Dr. Tracy Alloway, a nationally known, award-winning professor of psychology at University of North Florida, at the April 5 luncheon. The luncheon will be held from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at Marsh Landing Country Club, 25655 Marsh Landing Parkway, Ponte Vedra Beach.

Alloway will address "The Five Senses of Memory to Help With The Aging Memory Process."

Alloway has appeared on numerous national

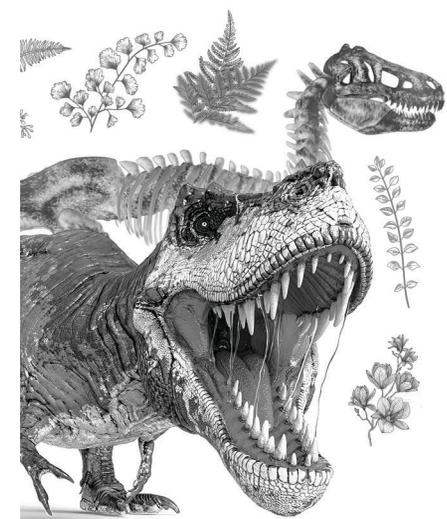
television programs, is a TEDx speaker and has published more than 15 books. She also participates on News4JAX, a local TV station, in a program every week to share her psychology expertise with the viewers.

The luncheon is open to the community, members and guests. The cost to attend is \$25. Reservations must be made in advance to reserve a seat by contacting the luncheon chair-

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March 25 walk helps prevent veteran suicides

American Legion Post 129's third-annual Challenge 22 Walk is set for Saturday, March 25 – with event net proceeds used to fund veteran suicide prevention programs and services in the beaches communities.

Walkers can pre-register at give.floridalegion.org/ch22jax. The cost is \$22 per walker and \$35 for registration and an event T-shirt.

Locally, American Legion 129 has 30 coalition partners and 10 strategic partners that receive funding to provide veteran prevention services in Northeast Florida.

“Through Challenge 22, we’re not only raising funds to help prevent suicide among

our veterans, but also to raise awareness about veteran suicide in our beaches communities,” said Post 129 Commander Joe Maichle. “A survey conducted by the United States Department of Veteran Affairs showed that roughly 22 veterans are dying by suicide each day in our country.”

Here Tomorrow, a suicide prevention organization in Neptune Beach, is the presenting sponsor of Challenge 22. VyStar Credit Union is also a “brigade” sponsor for the event.

For sponsorship information and a sponsor form, go to give.floridalegion.org/

challenge22jax or contact Legion Post 129 Treasurer Jim Wineland at jwineland840@gmail.com.

Post 129 hopes to raise \$10,000 through the event, which will be distributed among suicide-prevention groups, treatment providers and nonprofits that help veterans in need of mental health assistance — including the American Legion Department of Florida's Project VetRelief.

On-site registration starts at 9 a.m. Saturday, March 25, at the Jacksonville Beach Seawalk Pavilion, 75 First St. North. The program and walk begin at 10 a.m. with

a 2.2-mile walk to Oceanfront Park, 429 First St. South. Silent auctions, raffles and other activities are planned after the event at Legion Post 129 in Jacksonville Beach from 4 to 8 p.m.

Challenge 22 is part of The 22 Project, which supports underserved war veterans who have traumatic brain injuries and are at risk for depression or suicide. In collaboration with physicians, therapists and health care workers, veterans receive advanced medical treatments including care and evaluation by highly trained, board-certified physicians at no cost to the veteran.



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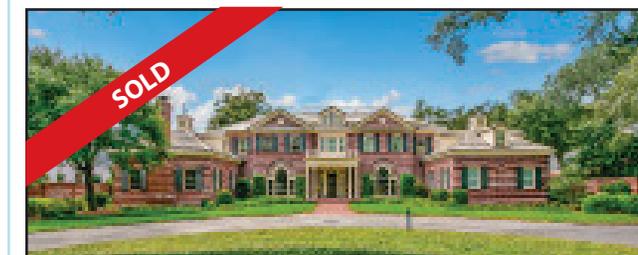


Mandarin Riverfront Estate

Stunning 5.81 acre riverfront estate in Mandarin with 159ft of water frontage offering expansive views of the St Johns River.

The neo-classical designed home, with identical front and rear elevations, offers elegant finishes throughout.

3 Bedrooms, 3 Bathrooms, 2 Half Bathrooms \$2,200,000



San Jose Riverfront Estate

Incredible doesn't begin to describe this gorgeous 3 story all brick riverfront estate home. Current owners custom built in 2003. Designed by well known Architect Richard Skinner. Gorgeous live oaks and lush landscape drape the more than 3 acres situated on a high bluff lot spanning 190' of St. Johns River Frontage

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Oceanfront Home on Ponte Vedra Blvd.

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



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Speaker

Continued from 2

man at bartshar@comcast.net as soon as possible. The deadline to sign up and get your check in is Friday morning, March 31. Lunch will consist of spinach salad, pan-seared salmon with beurre blanc with risotto and asparagus, and seasonal dessert of bread pudding with vanilla glaze.

Coastal Friends (formerly known as Newcomers Alumnae) is a social group of women who live in Ponte Vedra Beach, Nocatee, Jacksonville, Jacksonville Beach, St. Augustine, Neptune Beach, Atlantic Beach and the surrounding area. It was formed in 1988. Some of the activities offered are adventures and outings, book club, bunco, canasta and canasta lessons, happy hour, lunch in, lunch out, mahjongg and wine socials. Luncheons are held on the first Wednesday of every month except for July and August. New members are welcome throughout the year.

For more information on how to join, contact brookemeister@msn.com.

OBITUARIES



Ann Condon Thomson

Ann Condon Thomson age 68 of Ponte Vedra Beach, FL passed away on February 28, 2023 at her home. Ann was born on March 12, 1954 in Waco, TX. She was the younger daughter of the late Arthur Milner Condon Jr. and Amy Marie McGowan Condon. Ann was predeceased by her older sister Jane E. Condon of Fernandina Beach, FL.

As a child and teenager, Ann's family lived in several cities across the United States, including Jekyll Island, GA, Wilmington, DE, and Alexandria, VA.

Ann attended Concord High School in Wilmington where she was captain of the

varsity cheerleading squad and an active member of the class of 1972. In her junior year of high school Ann's family moved to Alexandria, VA, where she attended and graduated from Thomas Jefferson High School and later attended Northern Virginia Community College while working at the Veterans Administration Headquarters in Washington, D.C. Ann returned to Wilmington, Delaware to work at the VA hospital in nearby Elsmere, DE and married her high school sweetheart, Bruce Alexander Thomson. Ann and her husband lived in the Forty Acres and the Bellefonte areas of Wilmington where they had two sons (Brett and Bryan). Ann later worked as an administrative assistant for the FBI, in their Wilmington field office, and for Brooks Armored Car Service all while raising her two boys and being the most incredible loving, caring mother and wife a family could ever ask for! Her greatest love and pleasure in life were her two boys and husband.

In 1998 Ann and her family relocated to their present home located in Ponte Vedra Beach, FL. After successfully completing the move and getting her family settled in their new home. Ann worked as the membership director at the Oak Bridge Golf & Tennis Club and the administrative assistant to the General Manager at The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach, FL. Ann worked at The Plantation for 16 years, until retiring in

2017. After retiring Ann and Bruce traveled throughout the United States and Canada; as well as various countries in Europe. While Ann enjoyed traveling with her husband, her greatest joy and passion was spending time with her family and friends.

Ann is survived by her husband of 46 years Bruce Alexander Thomson, her two sons Brett Condon Thomson, Bryan Alexander Thomson, her granddaughter Lorelei Pearl Thomson all of the Ponte Vedra Beach, FL area. A sister-in-law Susan Elaine Thomson of Alexandria, VA; a brother-in-law James "Big Guy" Warren, a nephew Trey Warren (Inga) of Fernandina Beach, FL, a niece Amy Lynn French (John) of Fairhope, AL and three great nieces and two great nephews (Emma Jane Warren, Sullivan Marie Warren and James Arnold Warren IV of Fernandina Beach, FL; JaneTillery French, John Warren French) of Fairhope, AL.

A memorial service will be held at First Christian Church of the Beaches, 2125 Ocean Front, Neptune Beach, FL 32266, on Friday, March 31, 2023 at 11 a.m. Final disposition will be private.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be sent to the Community Hospice & Palliative Care, attn. Foundation Dept., 4266 Sunbeam Road, Jacksonville, FL 32257 or the First Christian Church of the Beaches at the address indicated above.



MARCH 30–APRIL 9, 2023

2023 ENTERTAINMENT SCHEDULE

- 3/30 Charlotte Sands, X Ambassadors
- 3/31 Cooper Alan, Niko Moon
- 4/1 Shane Profitt, Chris Janson
- 4/2 Tracy Lawrence, Cumberland
- 4/3 Casting Crowns, We Are Messengers, Ben Fuller
- 4/4 Lily Rose, Ashley McBryde
- 4/5 Concert 2pm: Jimmy Fortune, Bradley Walker, Mike Rogers & Ben Isaacs
- 4/7 Silent Disco Goat Party 8pm
- 4/8 Tractor Pulls 8pm
- 4/9 Tractor Pulls 3pm

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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

Landscape styles: Tropical, Coastal, Mediterranean

"Spring makes its own statement, so loud and clear that the gardener seems to be only one of the instruments, not the composer." — Geoffrey B. Charlesworth



Kathy Esfahani

By Kathy Esfahani

Spring is officially here! Flowers are in bloom, and landscape work is in full swing. Are you considering a full landscape redesign or just a refresh for your yard? Here in Northeast

Florida, many homes feature landscaping in the Tropical, Coastal and Mediterranean styles.

A Tropical landscape design is reminiscent of an island paradise — full of lush plants and lots of color. Most plants in a Tropical landscape love the heat. For this reason, our Northeast Florida home is one of the most northern climates in which the Tropical landscape style can be successful.

Tropical landscapes display plants and

flowers overlapping and free-flowing. They include abundant varieties of green plants featuring various sizes and types of leaves as well as pops of vibrant color. Many designers add a water feature in a Tropical landscape to further enhance the serene, oasis-like environment.

When creating a Tropical landscape, look for Sylvester palms, queen palms, and Roebellini palms. Consider surrounding the trunks with coquina shell or lava rocks. Add both variety and color with hibiscus, caladiums, Hawaiian ti, arboricola, variegated ginger, foxtail fern, white and orange birds of paradise, apostle iris, crotons, flax lily, agapanthus, allamanda, and bamboo.

Landscaping in the Coastal style creates a relaxed, beachy atmosphere. Coastal landscaping takes an organic approach to landscaping with plants "blowing in the breeze." Clusters of grasses such as muhly grass or fountain grass give a whimsical look and add movement in the landscape.

A Coastal design often includes plants and flowers in whites, greens, blues and splashes of pink. This landscape may also

feature climbing vines such as confederate jasmine on a trellis or pergola. In place of mulch, use coquina shell and plant blue agave; complement the combination with foxtail fern and blue daze. To develop a coastal landscape, use a mixture of the following: Sylvester palms, queen palms, Bismarck palms, ribbon palms, muhly grass, fountain grass, blue agave, gaillardia, gaura, dune sunflower, dwarf fakahatchee, foxtail fern, blue daze and confederate jasmine.

Mediterranean-style landscaping involves a lavish mix of palm trees and clean-cut plants. The style displays a sculpted, maintained look and frequently features roses. A Mediterranean landscape design often incorporates "gardens within gardens."

Pathways within the landscaping can lead to secluded areas of the garden, water features or arbors. The Mediterranean style also includes climbing plants such as creeping fig on a trellis or on the side of the house. Use canary date palms, medjool date palms, and Sylvester palms as well as boxwood, podacarpus, Asiatic jasmine,

Photo provided by Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery

Flower of the Week



Agapanthus

roses, creeping fig and crotons to accentuate your Mediterranean look.

With all landscape designs, be sure to identify the sun-versus-shade ratios in your yard. Note the amount of sunlight needed for your selected plants and trees in order to place them in appropriate areas of the landscape. Finally, add annuals to any landscape for seasonal color within your design.

Happy spring!

Flower of the Week: Agapanthus

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

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Sarah Hedden's photography stands out for its unique style. Each image is a work of art that her customers are proud to exhibit in their homes. Originally from the Tampa area, she has resided in Jacksonville for more than 20 years and has a studio in the San Marco neighborhood.

Sarah Hedden

As told to Shaun Ryan

Tell me about your work. What kinds of photography do you do?

I am a professional fine-art maternity, newborn, wedding and portrait photographer based in Jacksonville. I have a luxury photography studio in the heart of San Marco near downtown.

Are there some subjects you especially enjoy photographing?

I enjoy the fine-art couture maternity sessions in the studio. There's just something about capturing the glow and beauty of motherhood. I have a couture closet full of huge dresses and clothing for my clients. We dance and play dress up for a few hours. It's so much fun! I'm just there to hype you up so much that you leave my studio conceited. Ha! But for real. I get told all the time by potential clients that they are "not models" like what I post or what's on my website. My answer is, "That's exactly what the client in the picture said before her session. Now, let's make some magic."

What do you think is the most important thing for people to consider when hiring a photographer?

That's a great question! Because most people only look at the photographer's style and that's a great start. But no matter if you're hiring a wedding or a portrait photographer, you need to make sure you are comfortable with them! It allows you to show real emotion and it changes the dynamic from a stranger taking your picture to a best friend documenting your moment.

Your work has a strong artistic element to it. This seems to elevate your portrait photography to an art form. Can you tell me a bit about your approach?

That is the nicest thing you could say! Thank you so much. I am always out to separate myself and elevate my work. That comes during the session and afterward while editing. Sometimes I spend hours editing one picture. I want to make sure it's perfect. My goal during every session is for clients to have a work of art that they can not only appreciate online but print and hang on their walls to see every day! Seriously, how often do you look at digital images if you aren't on social media? So, print your images, people! When you go to your grandparent's home, most have older prints on their walls for everyone to appreciate. That's what I want people to have now. You can walk by it daily and think, "Dang, I am gorgeous!" Who can have a bad day after that?

What is your background? When did you first realize that you wanted to pursue this line of work?

I've always been the one with a camera. Whether it was with my family or friends, I've always tried to capture life moments when they happen! It was about 13 years ago that I realized I wanted better equipment and wanted to learn the true art of editing pictures to bring the best out of every shot. I can remember the moment I realized what professional pictures can mean to people.

There was a young lady I loved named Catie; she was 15 years old and was battling cancer. Well, Catie and I had an impromptu photo shoot one day in my backyard. A few months later, Catie lost her battle with cancer. Those pictures meant so much to me and her family. I knew I had to keep furthering my career in photography and continue to give back to families facing such difficult situations.

After working in medical device sales for 13 years, I went full-time into photography in 2016. Since then, I have been named the Best Photographer in Jax for the past four years. I have a luxury studio in San Marco, and I'm so honored to continue capturing the essence of people and documenting their lives in the most loving, joyful, authentic and creative way.

If people are interested in learning more about your work or in contacting you about having some photographs taken, how would they do so?

They can check out my website: sarahhedden.com or find me under Sarah Hedden Photography on Instagram and Facebook.

Are you from this area or did you move here from somewhere else? What do you like best about living on The First Coast?

I moved here in 2002. I can't believe it's been over 20 years! I grew up north of Tampa in Brooksville. I went to college at the University of Florida. Jacksonville has been very good to me. My life is very diverse and I'm so thankful that I'm able to bring that representation into my business and represent Jacksonville in that way.

What do I think is the best thing about living on the First Coast? I live downtown on the river, so even though the beach is amazing, there's something about the Main Street bridge skyline on the St. Johns that everyone who ever visits Jacksonville remembers most.

How do you like to spend your free time?

Free time? What's that? Ha! I enjoy learning new things, especially regarding my photography. I also love to travel and visit other countries and cultures. I have many pins on my travel map, and I can't wait to get back out there after being home for the past few years.



Photos courtesy of Sarah Hedden

Sarah Hedden works from her studio in the San Marco area of Jacksonville.



Sarah Hedden's fine-art maternity photographs are dramatic and captivating.

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Great St. Johns River Cleanup hits St. Johns County this weekend

By Anthony Richards

This weekend will mark St. Johns County's turn to get involved in the Great St. Johns River Cleanup initiative on March 26.

Through a collaboration nearly 50 cleanups will be organized in St. Johns, Duval, Putnam, Seminole and Volusia Counties, in which the St. Johns RIVERKEEPER is a partner and beneficiary of this year's efforts.

According to the St. Johns RIVERKEEPER, the St. Johns River is the longest river in Florida, stretching 310 miles north from its headwaters at Blue Cypress Lake in Indian River County to its mouth, where it empties into the Atlantic Ocean in Duval County. The river's watershed covers nearly 9,000 square miles.

The goal of the collaboration is to increase awareness and participation of the cleanups and the importance of keeping local waterways clean, while also hoping to get as much trash out of the St. Johns River and its tributaries as possible.

The St. Johns River is something that connects each of the five counties taking part, which makes it only fitting that they

were able to collaborate for such a cause.

"St. Johns RIVERKEEPER is excited to launch the Great St. Johns River Cleanup with our county and business partners to coordinate and expand our cleanup efforts and make an even greater impact this year and into the future," said Meredith Jespersen, development director for St. Johns RIVERKEEPER. "We are beyond grateful to the Bronco Wild Fund for making this work possible."

Included in its partnership with the effort, Bronco Wild Fund and local Ford dealers are presenting each participant a chance to win \$1,000 if they share their cleanup experience on social media.

Anyone taking part can post a photo along with #StJohnsRiverCleanUp and tag @sjriverkeeper and @yoursfd to be entered into the contest.

One of the unique cleanups being offered in St. Johns County is being offered by Earth Kinship Kayak Tours & Nature Education.

The outfit will be offering a kayak tour and cleanup of Deep Creek from 9 to 11 a.m. March 26.

Volunteers can find event dates and



Contributed photo

Earth Kinship Kayak Tours & Nature Education will be offering kayak tours and cleanup of Deep Creek from 9 to 11 a.m. March 26.

available cleanup locations for each county involved by going to stjohnsrivercleanup.com.

New locations will continue to be added to the website's page and each county's individual website as the events approach.

However, even if the dates or sites do not work with someone's schedule this

weekend, there are still plenty of ways that residents can get involved and make a difference.

According to the St. Johns RIVERKEEPER, picking up trash in their own neighborhood or at a local park are other ways that a person can help the cause, and it is something that can be at any time and every day of the year.

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Contributed photos



The Nease 40-cadet drill team in front of Kings Bay Naval Station for a field trip on the way to the Area 12 Drill Championship on March 5 in Douglas, Georgia.



The Nease drill team celebrates their ninth consecutive overall win of the annual Area 12 Drill Championship.

Nease JROTC best in Northern Florida, Georgia

Nease Navy JROTC won the Area 12 Drill Championships on March 4 in Douglas, Georgia — winning this championship for the ninth consecutive year and earning a trip to the National Championships.

Nease competed against the top 16 Navy high school JROTC drill teams in Area 12, which includes all of Northern Florida and the state of Georgia. Sixty-one NJROTC programs competed at local drill meets during the fall and winter with the top 16 advancing to the Area

Championships. Nease earned its berth by winning first place at South Effingham High School, Mandarin High School and Terry Parker High School drill competitions earlier.

In addition to winning the overall drill meet championship, Nease claimed first place in overall drill, unarmed exhibition, unarmed basic, armed basic, color guard, overall athletics, pushups, situps and 16 x 100 relay; second place in personnel inspection; third place in armed exhibition and academics.

Several cadets also earned individual medals and awards for achievement, including: Paul Rukab, second place, individual drill; Samuel Lewis, (147) pushups; Hailey Pitches, (68) pushups; Emily Chang, (66) pushups; MaCayla Cole-Banner, (160) situps; and Zachary Servello in academics.

“The cadets really buckled down hard in practice leading up to the championship,” said naval science instructor Master Chief Petty Officer Duane Spears. “Teamwork makes the dream work.”

Nease will now travel to the Navy National Drill Championships in Pensacola, March 29 to April 1. This highly successful NJROTC program is also traveling to Nationals for orienteering, regionals in drone and brain brawl.

Those who would like to contribute to help offset these travel expenses for this program or become a community partner with this No. 1 ranked program in the country may contact Sabra Sanchez at Pres@NeaseNJROTC.com for more details.

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Ponte Vedra residents, from left, Johnny Mac, Molly Hunt, Jim Hunt and Scott Kinode.



Pictured from left are Navy veteran Heather McMaster Press, Michele McManamon, KC Padget, Ashley Szczukowski, Mary Brady and Tia Jordan.



Pictured from left are Operation New Uniform CEO and founder Michele McManamon, Cindy Cooper and seventh annual Veterans Cup chair KC Padget.

Operation New Uniform Veterans Cup event set for April 28

The Operation New Uniform seventh annual Veterans Cup event promises a memorable afternoon of competitive shooting that will benefit the Jacksonville-based nonprofit organization.

The event will take place April 28 at Jacksonville Clay Target Sports, 12125 New Berlin Road. Registration, lunch and silent auction preview start at noon, to be followed by a 1:30 p.m. shotgun start with teams participating on a state-of-the-art, 15-station sporting clay course. An awards ceremony, silent auction and cocktail reception will follow.

“We are incredibly excited about this year’s Veterans Cup as we are introducing some fun, new sponsorship levels and experiences, and have moved the event from the morning to mid-afternoon with an early evening awards ceremony and cocktail reception,” said Operation New Uniform CEO Michele McManamon. “Participants will be outfitted with survival kits and special commemorative event shirts, and cigar lovers can enjoy a good smoke and beverage at our designated Doc Holiday Sip and Smoke Saloon.”

“Meyer Najem Construction participated in the Veterans Cup last year, and clay shooting has become



Pictured from left are Derek DiStefano, Jim Cotton, Operation New Uniform CEO and founder and Ponte Vedra resident Michele McManamon, Jim Houston and Chris Bedford.

a newfound passion of mine,” said Jeff Blount, chief operating officer. “The camaraderie is fantastic and the opportunity to support an organization that provides

such invaluable services to our veterans is incredibly rewarding. This is a great team-building event with work colleagues or just a great afternoon with good friends. I would encourage anybody, whether they are an accomplished shooter or a novice, to come on out and support the great work of Operation New Uniform.”

Proceeds from this event allow Operation New Uniform to offer life-changing career training programs and wraparound services at no cost to veterans and spouses.

Ninety-seven percent of Operation New Uniform graduates find meaningful employment within four months of completing the program with an average annual salary of \$74,000. To date, Operation New Uniform has served more than 15,000 veterans and spouses and has graduated more than 400.

Comprehensive wraparound services include one-on-one coaching and mentoring, resume consultation, regular networking events, career fairs and more.

Sponsorship opportunities are available. Contact Cindy Cooper at cindy.cooper@onuvets.com.

To register as an individual or team, go to onuvets.org/vets-cup.



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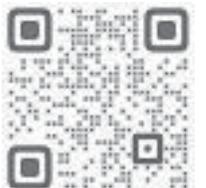
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Bingo fundraiser to benefit Mission House

A bingo fundraiser at Culhane's' Irish Pub in Atlantic Beach will be held from 6 to 8 p.m. April 24 to benefit Mission House on Jacksonville Beach and their care of homeless and lower-income individuals and families. The public is invited to attend this event coordinated by The Rotary Satellite Club of Oceanside Atlantic Beach.

Tickets to the event are \$20 and include two bingo cards and two drink tickets com-

pliments of Culhane's' Irish Pub. Attendees may "pay to play" bingo by cash or check at the door or prepay by credit card via a live link: needsconnector.com/bingonight. Prizes will be awarded to bingo game winners and those who purchase raffle tickets.

Mission House is a day shelter and provides a place for homeless in the area to shower, gain clothing, medical attention, meals and counseling to assist in

their finding employment and a place to call home again. Mission House also has a medical clinic open two days a week to provide medical care with the help of area medical professional volunteers. For more information on Mission House, go to missionhousejax.org.

The Rotary Satellite Club of Oceanside is a group of community and business leaders who work together to address

the challenges affecting the community and communities around the world. For more information regarding Jacksonville Oceanside Rotary and The Rotary Satellite Club of Oceanside go to oceansidejaxrotary.org.

For more information on the bingo fundraising event, contact Rotary Satellite President Joanne Campbell at jocampbell1956@hotmail.com.

Merchant Marine memorial placed at Atlantic Beach

A memorial to all who served in the U.S. Merchant Marine and Navy Armed Guard was placed at the Beaches Veterans Memorial Park on March 7. The Memorial Park is at the corner of Atlantic Boulevard and Mayport Road in Atlantic Beach, adjacent to the American Legion Post 316.

The Merchant Marines suffered 6,839 lost lives and the Armed Guard suffered 1,810 lost lives. In all, 731 ships were sunk between 1941 and 1945. Their motto is "We aim to deliver, and we did."

Among those present to observe the placement of the two-sided memorial and thank merchant mariners were Commander General of the Naval Order of

the United States Bob Whitkop; Clarence Hill, Past National Commander of the American Legion; Stephen Snyder of American Merchant Marine Veterans; Merchant Mariner Charlie Sellers; Former Atlantic Beach Town Council Member Jimmy Hill; Atlantic Beach

Public Works Director Scott William; and We Can Be Heroes Foundation President Beth Heath.

"This beautiful two-sided memorial is a reminder to all Americans of the Merchant Marine valor, dedication and heroic history," said Heath.

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The intersection of Mickler Road and State Road A1A has been a talking point in recent months.

New traffic survey available for Ponte Vedra Beach residents until April 8

By Anthony Richards

The time has come once again for the Ponte Vedra Beach Citizens Traffic Task Force to conduct a community survey in response to the growing conversations

and issues revolving around traffic and roadway infrastructure in the area.

According to CTFF vice president Greg Leonard, 20 years ago, the Florida Department of Transportation had the funds in place to expand State Road A1A into six lanes, but due to the local community voicing their opinions against it the project did not go forward and the money was used elsewhere.

However, although the idea to six-lane is still not a popular one in the eyes of Leonard and the CTFF, there has also been a realization that there are different ways that can be taken to help with the seeming increases of traffic flow along the local roadways.

“A lot has changed over the years with population increases and the CTFF is fully aware of that,” Leonard said.

Leonard stressed that the goal of the CTFF is not only to come up with solutions with better traffic flow in mind, but also heavily factors in ideas that will also create the safest routes for those traveling them.

“The last traffic study was done five years ago, so it’s reached that time for a new one,” Leonard said. “We’re doing our best to get as much input as we can from those who travel and live along these roads.”

As a result, Leonard urged the importance of getting as many people as possible within the Ponte Vedra Beach community to take the time to fill out the survey, because their input will go a long way in helping determine what the future of the local roadways will look like.

The survey is anonymous, and the results and feedback given will be presented to the St. Johns County Commission



Photos by Anthony Richards

The continued increases in population and traffic has resulted in the CTFF presenting a new survey for local residents to relay their feedback.

for their consideration.

The latest CTFF survey was made available online to the public March 15 through email lists gathered by the Ponte Vedra Municipal Service District, Ponte Vedra Community Association, Palm Valley Community Association, Ponte Vedra Beaches Coalition, Ponte Vedra Lakes Owner’s Association, along with the homeowner’s associations of Sawgrass, Marsh Landing, Player’s Club and Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach.

Residents or businesses who do not belong to one of the communities mentioned are encouraged to participate by going to www.surveymonkey.com/t/Pressrelease2023CTFFSurvey to fill out the survey.

The deadline to complete the survey is April 8. It consists of 12 questions and will take an estimated four minutes to complete.

CTFF was created in 2014 and since then has collaborated with leaders from St. Johns County, the state legislation, and the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization.

This includes the CTFF helping to facilitate construction of key intersection improvements recommended by a Ponte Vedra Beach/Palm Valley traffic study completed in 2017, which analyzed roadway conditions from J. Turner Butler Boulevard in the north and stretching south to Mickler Road, as well as, from A1A to the Intracoastal Waterway.

“We’re just a board of community residents doing our part,” Leonard said. “Traffic is something that’s on everybody’s radar, and it’s something we all have to deal with on a daily basis. We’re just trying to ensure that our voices are heard.”

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Generation W to explore 'the positive and the possible'

Generation W will conduct its annual signature event Friday, March 24, at the University of North Florida's Fine Arts Center. The theme is "The Positive and The Possible," and the event will host a

specially curated livestream.

This daylong event features 15 inspirational speakers, including athletes, corporate leaders, actresses, authors and more. There will be panels, workshops and opportunities to connect.

The day's schedule is as follows:

- Registration, coffee and conversations: 7-8 a.m.
- Morning line-up: 8 a.m. to noon
- Lunch and conversations: Noon to 12:20 p.m.
- Workshop 1: 12:25 to 12:55 p.m.
- Workshop 2: 1:15 to 1:45 p.m.
- Afternoon line-up: 2-3 p.m.
- Connection reception: 3 to 3:30 p.m.

The mission of Generation W is to empower women and girls through inspiring action, connection and community.

For tickets, go to genwnow.com/generation-w-2023. Breakfast, lunch and parking are included in the price of the ticket.

In related news, Generation W has made two significant leadership appointments to help further its mission.

Dr. Olenda Johnson will succeed Lisa Shalett as the organization's board chair. In addition, business executive Shantel Davis joins Generation W in the newly created role of vice president of Generation WOW, Generation W's girls' initiative.

Johnson is a professor of strategic leadership and leader development at the U. S. Naval War College, a graduate-level institution for highly selected military officers and federal civilians. She also works with other military units such as U.S. Army Special Forces Command to support and develop their leader development programs.

A passionate teacher and educator, she shares her experiences and knowledge to instill in others the courage and confidence to lead. Her awards and decorations include receiving the Army Commander's Medal for Public Service, as well as being honored as a Daughter of Greatness at the Muhammad Ali Center.

Davis will play a key leadership role in the nonprofit's program for teen girls.

Founded 10 years ago by listening to the voices of girls and providing curriculum and activities based in the ethos of the positive and the possible, Generation WOW is a leadership and mentorship program that helps the leaders of tomorrow meet the leaders of today.

Davis, a Jacksonville native, served as the general manager and vice president of sales for the Southeastern Region at The Greenbrier Companies. Previously she worked at CSX Transportation for more than 20 years in various executive leadership roles. She is very active in the community, participating on several boards including the Sulzbacher Center for the Homeless, Metro YMCA, Goodwill of Northeast Florida, Jacksonville Classical Academy and the Jacksonville University Public Policy Institute.

She is a lifetime member of Leadership Florida, Delta Sigma Theta, Bold City Chapter of The Links, Inc. and Jack and Jill of America, Inc.

For further information about Generation W, go to genwnow.com.

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More occupational therapists needed by 2030

Growth of aging population increases demand

By Shaun Ryan

Increasingly, advocates are sounding the alarm about a growing shortage of health care workers: doctors, nurses, clinicians across the spectrum of disciplines. Though the reasons for this vary, one principal factor stands out: the needs of an aging Baby Boomer generation.

By 2030, all those born between 1946 and 1964 will be age 65 or older, an estimated 73 million people or about 22% of the population, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Because so many health care concerns arise with age, provider shortages will become increasingly evident in the years ahead, especially in states with the largest populations of senior citizens, such as Florida.

One of the reasons for this is simple: Many retirees are relocating to the

Sunshine State where they find life more amenable than in other places.

St. Johns County is keeping up with the trend, with about one person in five older than 65.

When selecting careers, many students are naturally drawn to those with higher profiles. Some professions, such as occupational therapy, may be overlooked, though the need for practitioners is increasingly critical.

“We are expecting a 14% increase in job need for occupational therapists that serve the aging population,” said Tia Hughes, associate dean of the College of Rehabilitative Sciences for Occupational Therapy at the University of St. Augustine for Health Services.

Occupational therapists treat patients who have sustained an injury or illness or who have a disability that impairs everyday activities. For the older population, it can mean the difference between remaining independent and having to move into a nursing home.

Colleges like the University of St. Augustine are seeking to meet the growing

need for occupational therapists.

“When we bring students in, we want to make sure that we are really giving them the hands-on experience and skills they need to hit the ground running in the field of tomorrow’s patients,” Hughes said.

Students can pursue either a master’s degree or a doctorate, either of which will get them working in the field. For students who have weekday responsibilities and are unable to return to college full time, the University of St. Augustine offers a weekend program.

A degree in occupational therapy is portable. It can be taken state to state without the need for recertification.

“It’s very, very flexible,” Hughes said.

In addition, the pay is good. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median pay for occupational therapists in 2021 was \$88,570.

Of course, not all therapists choose to specialize in geriatrics. The profession addresses needs for patients of all ages, so some practitioners choose to focus on pediatrics or some other area. Occupational therapists work in hospitals, schools, private homes, senior living facilities, rehab centers and more.

Because students determine their careers as undergraduates — and sometimes before high school graduation — the college is spreading the word about this profession.

“We’re reaching out to younger students because it is maybe an area that students just don’t know about,” Hughes said.

The University of St. Augustine for Health Services has five campuses: St. Augustine; San Marcos, California; Miami; Austin, Texas; and Irving, Texas. For further information, go to usa.edu/programs/occupational-therapy-programs.

Watch for signs that occupational therapy is needed

By Shaun Ryan

Occupational therapists help patients to remain independent. This might mean teaching the patient to do things one-handed where they might previously have needed two hands. It might mean working with caregivers to help patients get in and out of bed. It might mean teaching patients to drive an automobile using adaptive equipment.

Tia Hughes, associate dean of the College of Rehabilitative Sciences for Occupational Therapy at the University of St. Augustine for Health Sciences, said it is imperative to look for signs that a loved one may be declining in some area and in need of occupational therapy.

“When things that they used to be able to do easily are becoming a little more challenging,” she said, “that might be the time to ask for an occupational therapy referral from their care provider.”

Occupational therapists can help with fall prevention, medication management, taking care of pets or doing any everyday task that has become difficult due to pain, injury, illness or a disability. They can even make recommendations for assistive equipment or ways to make the home safer.

For those who have suffered a stroke, the occupational therapist might team up with a physical therapist and a speech therapist to help the patient overcome resulting impairments.

Successful treatment will help patients maintain their independence.

“They don’t have to say, ‘I can’t do this anymore,’” said Hughes.



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Baptist Health participates in study to advance stroke treatment

Baptist Health of Northeast Florida recently participated in a large international clinical study, which found that patients experiencing a large stroke had significantly better recovery after receiving a thrombectomy, plus standard medical management. This outcomes data was compared to patients who received standard medical management alone.

Baptist Health's Stroke & Cerebrovascular Center was one of 31 medical centers in the world that participated in the study.

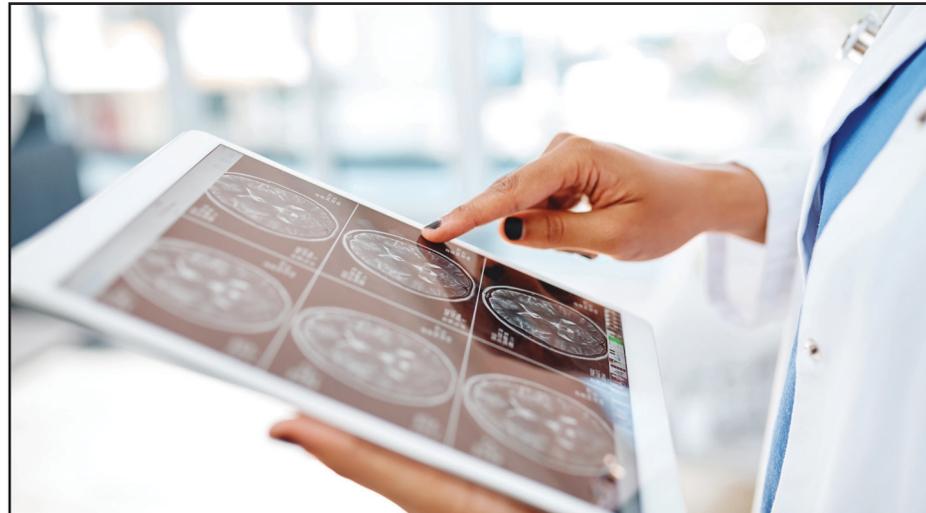
What is a thrombectomy?

A thrombectomy is a minimally invasive procedure that is very effective for the treatment of ischemic strokes. Ischemic strokes, also called a "blocked brain vessel," occur when a blood clot blocks blood flow to the brain.

During a thrombectomy, the physician inserts a catheter, guided by X-rays, into a patient's blood vessel to remove the clot causing the blockage.

Why is this study significant?

Prior to this study, called SELECT2, thrombectomy treatment was used for



patients who experienced strokes with a lesser degree of brain damage. The extent of brain damage is measured with advancing imaging techniques that determine the amount of dead brain tissue and the amount of tissue at risk for further damage.

Previously, patients with a large amount of dead brain tissue may have been excluded from thrombectomy and treated with medical therapy alone, as it was felt thrombectomy increased their

risk of a life-threatening brain hemorrhage. Patients with existing damage have much higher rates of death and permanent disability.

The results of the trial show that patients experiencing larger strokes benefit significantly from having a thrombectomy. The lead investigator in the study expects treatment guidelines to change very soon following the positive results.

In fact, because of the superior outcomes, the study ended early.

"It's an honor to participate in groundbreaking studies like SELECT2," said Nima Amin Aghaebrahim MD, neurointerventionalist and primary stroke director of Baptist Stroke & Cerebrovascular Center. "Because of our participation, we're able to bring positive, innovative treatment options to our community earlier than other centers."

"The results from this study will likely change the future of stroke treatment — and most importantly, will save lives," added Ricardo Hanel MD, neurosurgeon and co-medical director of Baptist Stroke & Cerebrovascular Center.

Both Aghaebrahim and Hanel represented Baptist Health in this landmark study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine*.

How did this study work?

Patients were randomly assigned to two groups — 178 received thrombectomy and 194 received medical management only. Of the patients who received thrombectomy, almost 20% ended up having functional independence, compared to only 7% of those who received medical management only.



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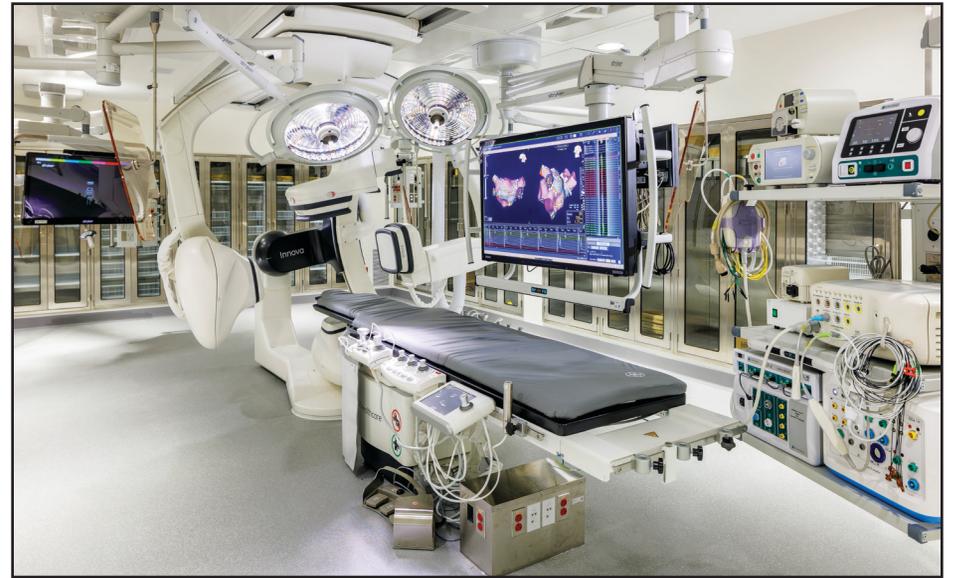
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Photos provided by Baptist Health



A Heart Rhythm Center patient room.



The electrophysiology lab.

Baptist Health opens center to treat heart rhythm disorders

Sixty to 100 beats per minute — that’s a normal resting heart rate for adults. However, one in 18 people experience an irregular heartbeat during their lifetime.

To provide specialized care to people with heart rhythm disorders, Baptist Health opened a Heart Rhythm Center, the region’s first facility of its kind. The new center, a \$17 million investment for the health system, is located in the Baptist Heart Hospital and officially welcomed the first patients on Monday, March 20.

The Heart Rhythm Center is a compre-

hensive, hospital-based destination for caring for the heart’s electrical system, a special field of cardiology called electrophysiology (EP).

“When patients arrive at the new Heart Rhythm Center, their experience will be like checking into a hotel,” explained Matthew McKillop MD, cardiac electrophysiologist and medical director of the electrophysiology program. “It’s truly a ‘one-stop shop.’ We have the latest and greatest technology, highly trained physicians and staff — all in an environment

designed to help patients feel relaxed and comfortable.”

Highlights of the 14,400-square-foot center include:

- A dedicated team of caregivers and physicians with specialized training in the diagnosis and treatment of heart rhythm disorders.
- Three hybrid operating rooms equipped with the latest imaging and surgical technology for procedures including ablation and device implantation (pacemakers, defibrillators, etc.).

- Ten patient rooms, each with a scenic view of the St. Johns River.

- A family lounge to make everyone’s stay comfortable, including family and loved ones.

“Every inch of the Heart Rhythm Center is carefully crafted with our patients top-of-mind,” said Michael A. Mayo, president and CEO of Baptist Health. “The Center reflects Baptist Health’s commitment to providing outstand-

HEART continues on Page 17

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Photos provided by Baptist Health



A classroom in the Heart Rhythm Center with electrophysiology lab connectivity.



The waiting area in the Heart Rhythm Center.

Heart

Continued from 16

ing cardiovascular care to those in our region.”

Heart rhythm disorders

Atrial fibrillation, often called Afib, is the most common type of heart rhythm disorder. It occurs when the upper and lower chambers of the heart are not coordinated, causing the heart to beat too slowly, quickly or irregularly.

Other common heart rhythm disorders include:

- Tachycardia (heart is beating too quickly)
- Bradycardia (heart is beating too slowly)
- Ventricular fibrillation (causes the heart to stop beating)

Symptoms of heart rhythm disorders include:

- Heart palpitations
- Fatigue
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Sweating

“If you have any signs of a heart rhythm disorder, it’s important to seek treat-

ment right away,” said McKillop. “If left untreated, these conditions can cause hospitalization or death. We have the tools to help you get back to feeling like yourself again.”

Demand for care

The explosive demand for electrophysiology care in the region can be credited to two key factors, according to McKillop:

1. The growing and aging population in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia, as heart rhythm disorders are more common in later life stages.
2. The ability to diagnose heart rhythm abnormalities with expanding new tech-

nology, like wearable devices.

“Smartwatches have amazing technology that notifies people if they are experiencing a heart rhythm abnormality,” said McKillop. “This helps patients identify an issue and get to a cardiologist earlier than ever. Patients can get help before they have other life-changing symptoms like fatigue and shortness of breath.”

“We are honored to bring this specialized treatment center to Jacksonville to meet the growing health care needs of our community,” said Nicole B. Thomas, hospital president of Baptist Jacksonville. “Lives will be saved here. That’s the most important part of this special place.”

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- | | |
|---|--|
| Gum disease and tooth loss increases risk of Alzheimer’s disease. | Gum disease increases risk for head, neck, pancreatic, and kidney cancer. |
| Increased trigeminal nerve traffic from TMJ and bad dental bite can create central sensitization and migraines. | If you have diabetes and bleeding gums, your risk of premature death increases by 400 to 700 percent. |
| At least 80% of American adults have gum inflammation disease. | Gum disease is linked with blood vessel disease, heart attacks, and strokes. |
| Poor ventilation during sleep, triggers nighttime clenching and bracing to maintain the airway. | Cavities are caused by acid-loving bacteria spread during kissing and sharing food. |
| Bad bites and poor oral-facial development increases risk for sleep apnea. | Oral bacteria are being found in brain tissue, heart vessels, joints, and many other parts of your body. |

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Heart-healthy foods to add to your diet

A healthy diet can help people lower their risk for various conditions, including heart disease. That's a significant benefit, as the World Health Organization estimates that 32 percent of deaths across the globe can be attributed to cardiovascular disease, which is an umbrella term used to refer to a group of disorders of the heart and blood vessels.

Individuals who want to change their diets are urged to speak with their physicians for insight regarding specific changes that can address any preexisting issues they may have. But it never hurts to consider heart-healthy foods, and the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends adding these heart-healthy foods to your shopping list.

Fruits and vegetables

Variety is the spice of life, and the good news is that an assortment of fruits and vegetables promote heart health. That means individuals can eat a heart-healthy diet without eating the same foods every day. The ODPHP notes that



fresh, frozen, canned, or dried fruits and vegetables can all promote a healthy heart.

- Fresh vegetables: Tomatoes, cabbage and carrots
- Fresh fruits: Apples, oranges, bananas, pears, and peaches
- Leafy greens: Spinach, Romaine lettuce and kale
- Canned vegetables: Look for low-sodium canned veggies
- Frozen vegetables: Look for products without added butter or sauces
- Canned, frozen or dried fruit: Look for varieties with no added sugars

Dairy

The ODPHP recommends fat-free or low-fat dairy. Such products include:

- Fat-free or low-fat (1 percent) milk
- Fat-free or low-fat plain yogurt
- Fat-free or low-fat cheese or cottage cheese
- Soy milk with added calcium, vitamin A and vitamin D

Whole grains

Various products may be promoted as “whole grain,” but the ODPHP notes that whole wheat or another whole grain should be listed first in the ingredient list. Products that are “100 percent whole grain” also should be chosen over the alternatives.

- Whole-grain bread, bagels, English muffins, and tortillas
- Whole-grain hot or cold breakfast cereals with no added sugar, such as oatmeal or shredded wheat
- Whole grains like brown or wild rice, quinoa, or oats
- Whole-wheat or whole-grain pasta and couscous

Proteins

Heart-healthy proteins can add variety to a diet, which can make it easier to enjoy different flavors and dishes.

- Seafood, such as fish and shellfish
- Poultry: Chicken or turkey breast without skin, or lean ground chicken or turkey (at least 93 percent lean)
- Lean meats: Pork shoulder, beef sirloin or lean ground beef (at least 93 percent lean)
- Beans, peas and lentils: Black beans and chickpeas (garbanzo beans)
- Eggs
- Unsalted nuts, seeds and nut butters, such as almond or peanut butter
- Tofu

Healthy fats and oils

When cooking with fat and oil, cooks are urged to replace saturated fat with healthier unsaturated fats.

- Avoid cooking with butter and instead cook with oil, including canola, corn, olive, peanut, safflower, soybean, or sunflower oils
- Choose oil-based salad dressings, such as balsamic vinaigrette or Italian, instead of creamy dressings like ranch

A heart-healthy diet is full of flavor and can help people reduce their risk for cardiovascular disease.

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First Coast Surgery Center offering smart knee implant

First Coast surgery center is now the first center in North Florida offering Persona IQ, the world's first and only smart knee implant granted De Novo status by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for total knee replacement surgery.

Persona IQ combines the proven and trusted knee implant Persona The Personalized Knee with implantable sensor

technology that measures range of motion, step count, walking speed and other gait metrics.

"We're excited to offer Persona IQ, the world's first smart knee implant, to our patients considering knee replacement surgery," said one of the orthopedic surgeons. "This new to world innovation will provide surgeons access to objective

kinematic data directly from the implant post-surgery."

Persona IQ features implantable sensor technology that records and wirelessly transmits a wide range of gait data from the knee implant to a patient's personal base station at home. The data is then securely delivered to a HIPAA-compliant, cloud-based platform and can be accessed

by the patient and surgeon. Persona IQ will work together with mymobility, a remote-care management platform that tracks pre- and post-operative mobility metrics.

For more information about Persona IQ, go to zimmerbiomet.com/en/patients-caregivers/persona-iq.html.

Simple ways to make meals healthier

Cooking foods at home is one of the simplest ways to gain greater control over personal health. It is the easiest way to know precisely what you're putting into your body each day. Making your own meals also enables you to customize recipes so they align with any dietary restrictions or personal preferences you may have.

When cooking at home, cooks can consider various tips to make meals that much healthier.

• **Increase fiber intake.** Fiber improves bowel regularity and helps a person feel full between meals. High fiber foods also help stabilize blood sugar levels. Two servings of fibrous foods at each meal and an additional fiber-rich snack each day can ensure your body is getting the fiber it needs.

• **Slow down eating.** The pace at which

a person eats a meal can affect his or her overall health. Healthline reports that fast eaters are more likely to eat more and have higher body mass indexes than slow eaters.

• **Choose whole grains.** Choosing whole grain breads or cereals over refined grains can make for a more nutritious diet. Whole grains are linked to a reduced risk for type 2 diabetes, heart disease and cancer.

• **Swap Greek yogurt for other varieties.** Greek yogurt contains up to twice as much protein as regular yogurt, providing roughly 10 grams per 3.5 ounces. Protein along with fiber helps a person feel fuller longer, which can manage appetite and reduce overeating. Greek yogurt also can replace mayonnaise or sour cream in certain recipes.

• **Add a vegetable to every meal.** Veg-

etables are loaded with essential vitamins and minerals. Plus, they tend to be high in antioxidants that strengthen the immune system. Increase vegetable intake by eating vegetables with every meal.

• **Choose healthy fats.** While a person should minimize the amount of oils and other fats used during the cooking process, when it's necessary for a recipe, select the best fat possible. Olive oil is a monounsaturated fat that is packed with antioxidant polyphenols. It is considered a heart-healthy oil, and it may promote a healthy brain and memory function.

• **Cut out sweetened beverages.** Sodas and other sweetened drinks are leading sources of added sugar in diets. Opting for water or naturally sweetened fruit juices can improve overall health.



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The Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach
in cooperation with The Ponte Vedra Recorder
2023 Local Heroes Awards
Nomination Form

Nomination Deadline:
April 15, 2023
Email entries to:
stevecrosby101@gmail.com
or mail to:
Local Heroes Awards Committee
Rotary Club of Ponte Vedra Beach
P.O. Box 70
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32004
Or submit your nomination online at: pvbrotary.org

The Local Heroes Awards recognize individuals who give back to the community and reflect the spirit of the Rotary Club's motto, "Service Above Self." From volunteering with local charities to giving back through the arts, education, environmental protection activities or doing your job in an exemplary way, we seek to recognize the "unsung heroes" who make Ponte Vedra such a special place to live, work and raise a family.

Please complete this nomination form and return it to the address below by April 15, 2023. For more information or any questions, contact Ponte Vedra Beach Rotary Club member Steve Crosby at stevecrosby101@gmail.com.

Nomination Submitted By:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email Address: _____ Telephone: _____

Nominee Information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Email Address: _____ Telephone: _____

Title/Organization (if applicable): _____

Nominee's activities and/or contributions to the community:

Please provide sufficient details so the nominating committee may give your nominee every consideration! Feel free to attach additional pages as well as a resume, articles or other supporting materials (optional).

Multiple horizontal lines for providing details on the nominee's activities and contributions.

Thank you for your nomination!

Business Weekly

For MORE business news, go to facebook.com/ThePVRecorder

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THURSDAY, MARCH 23, 2023

www.PonteVedaRecorder.com

— FEATURING —
Tribute to Realtors & Builders



Local Realtor shares stories as Vietnam War pilot

By Anthony Richards

Local Realtor Jake Piatt shared stories from his time as a pilot during the Vietnam War as the guest speaker at the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors quarterly breakfast meeting March 14.

He talked about his experience spending eight months flying airplanes over Vietnam in 1969 as a 23-year-old in a squadron of 17 pilots.

Both the missions and the technology of the aircrafts proved to be dangerous and challenging at times.

“One out of every three pilots would die in action during those days,” Piatt

said. “We were dealing with primitive technology back then, compared to today with the F-18s.”

Piatt and the rest of his squadron were taken over to Vietnam on the USS Kitty Hawk, which was a ship that served for 48 years before being retired in 2009.

“For eight months we lived on the carrier and would take off on missions concentrating on bombing the truck routes and supply chain along the Ho Chi Minh Trail,” Piatt said. “We helped a lot of ground forces, especially to Marines in Shau Valley that needed close air support.”

According to Piatt, the flights were not routine and there were many factors

that came into play, including being fired upon and even landing on the carrier was an adventure of its own especially during night runs.

“You wouldn’t even see the carrier until 15 seconds from landing,” Piatt said. “You were led by radar, which was all that was guiding you.”

Piatt flew an A-7 Corsair during that time and wound up having a 20-year military career and retired as a U.S. Navy commander before eventually venturing into real estate with Country Club Real Estate.

He reminisced about how the A-7 Corsair cockpit was very tight and left just enough room for the pilot and the

hatch to close.

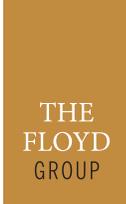
“When you were flying it was like being a bird,” Piatt said. “You didn’t even see because it closed in so close to the pilot’s head.”

During his time in Vietnam, he had a pair of “close calls,” the first of which came on a day mission during a fifth bombing run he started feeling violent vibrations and he was about 10 seconds from ejecting from his plane when the engine began responding.

However, the close calls continued and the very next day his tail hook, which is used to catch a wire that helps

PILOT continues on Page 26

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Compass Real Estate joins Chamber, welcomes new location

The following are photos from the ribbon cutting ceremony hosted by Compass Real Estate to celebrate their newest location at 601C A1A North in Ponte Vedra Beach and partnership with the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division.

Photos by Susan Griffin



Compass Real Estate held a ribbon cutting ceremony March 1 at its newest location at 601 A1A North in Ponte Vedra Beach.



Compass Real Estate is now a member of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division.

NAI Hallmark brokers sale of Chipotle's newest Jacksonville location

NAI Hallmark, a commercial real estate brokerage and property management firm in Jacksonville, has announced the sale of the property at 5801 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville.

NAI Hallmark Senior Vice President Daniel Burkhardt and Managing Partner Keith Goldfaden represented the seller, C & C Jax Investors. The buyer, a private investor, purchased the property

for \$3,649,000.

"This is a newly constructed Chipotle with a 15-year absolute NNN lease opening soon," said Daniel Burkhardt, senior vice president at NAI Hallmark. "We continue to see robust investor demand for high-quality, well-located NNN properties in Northeast Florida."

The 2,425-square-foot Chipotle's prototype with a drive-through is

located along Beach Boulevard, one of Jacksonville's major east-west corridors and one of the most trafficked roads in Jacksonville. Situated on a 0.91-acre outparcel, this Chipotle features a "Chipotlane," an exclusive and modernized drive-through experience that delivers the most efficient experience possible to Chipotle customers.

The property also has four EVgo electric vehicle charging stations, an amenity that will attract more customers and serve as an additional income source to the buyer.

For more information regarding the sale of the property or any questions relating to investment sales, contact NAI

Hallmark at 904-363-9002.

NAI Hallmark specializes in sales and leasing brokerage, property and facilities management, and corporate services in Northeast Florida. Established in 1993, NAI Hallmark is currently involved in the leasing and/or management of a portfolio in excess of 6-million square feet of office, industrial and retail properties and is one of the leading investment sales practices in Northeast Florida.

As a member of the NAI Global network, NAI Hallmark is also connected to the largest network of independent commercial real estate firms worldwide.

Learn more at naihallmark.com.

JUST SOLD!

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



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ICI Homes honored at Northeast Florida Laurel Awards

ICI Homes recently swept the annual Laurel Awards competition, earning 23 awards including the Grand Laurel Award. Presented by the Northeast Florida Builders Association, the Laurel Awards is an annual competition recognizing sales, marketing and design excellence.

“We are genuinely honored to be recognized by the Laurel Awards judges and our peers in the building industry for our success,” said Joe Bianco, ICI Homes North Florida division manager. “These awards are a testament to the dedication demonstrated by our talented team, who provides the highest quality of design and construction, and exceptional customer service.”

ICI Homes received Laurel Awards in several categories, including the following in new construction:

- Costa Mesa in Silverleaf — Best Model Home in the \$900,000-\$950,000 category
- Aiden in Middlebourne — Best Model Home in the \$750,000-\$800,000 category

- Eastport in Seven Pines — Best Model Home in the \$700,000-\$750,000 category
- Elkton in West End — Best Model Home in the \$550,000-\$600,000 category
- Palos Verdes in Middlebourne — Best Outdoor Living Space in the \$150,000-200,000 category

Individual achievement awards were presented to Alaina (Record) Helmuth for Sales Manager of the Year, Juliana Toohey for Site Agent of the Year and Ashley Morrell for Rookie of the Year.

The company’s team of new home sales associates received numerous awards for sales excellence. Top Producer — Million Dollar Circle Awards were presented to Juliana Toohey, Eric Weyh, Barbi Rinks and Kelly Nowak. Kim Holder, Kelly Weyh, Austin Babb, Lia Chinchilla, Cindy Voyles, Lynda Winters, Ashley Morrell, Mandy Spurlin, Emily Mowery and Kyla Knowles were also honored for sales success.

For more information about ICI Homes and its communities, go to ICI-Homes.com.



The ICI Homes team at the Laurel Awards competition. The company and its sales associates earned 23 awards including the Grand Laurel Award.

Contributed photo



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Seven Pines honored with six Laurel Awards

*Accolades include
Master-Planned
Community of the Year*

The Northeast Florida Builders Association recently honored the community of Seven Pines with six Laurel Awards including Master-Planned Community of the Year.

The other tributes were Best Signage, Best Digital Marketing Campaign, Best Logo Design, Best Video Commercial and Best Print Advertising Campaign. Seven Pines is a master-planned community offering new homes crafted by two Jacksonville builders, ICI Homes and David Weekley Homes.

“We are honored to receive this recognition from our industry peers including an award recognizing Seven Pines as Master-Planned Community of the Year,” said Tom McCall, chief operating officer, ICI Homes. “Seven Pines is becoming one of the most sought-after communities in Northeast Florida.”

“We have seen remarkable enthusiasm for Seven Pines since the day it was announced,” said Steve Ebensberger, area president, David Weekley Homes. “The

community is truly distinctive to Jacksonville — a place where people can live, work and enjoy life in a setting unlike any other in Northeast Florida.”

Seven Pines was recognized at The Nationals, the National Association of Home Builders’ national awards competition, with four honors.

The community of Seven Pines offers a neighborhood environment with contemporary homes, unique outdoor amenities and an exceptional location that is close to everything. Homes at Seven Pines are nestled within walkable neighborhoods with lush green space, water and tree-lined streets. With more than 1,000 acres of natural beauty, Seven Pines will offer a vibrant village center, parks, trails, lakes and family outposts that bring residents closer to nature — and each other.

Seven Pines amenities are currently under construction. Plans for the community include a 34-acre central park and a 7,900-square-foot residents club located alongside a lake. The residents club will offer a resort-style pool, a lap-lane pool and children’s sprayground with interactive water features and slides. The clubhouse will provide nearly 3,000 square feet of fitness space that will include a group fitness area and a cardio workout



Contributed photo

The community of Seven Pines received six Laurel Awards including Master-Planned Community of the Year. Pictured from left are Terry Santos, Ashley Thompson and Mike Daniel of David Weekley Homes, and Alaina Helmuth, Kelly Nowak and Kim Holder of ICI Homes.

area in addition to meeting/event space. Plans for the amenity area include an Outpost building by the lake for canoes and kayaks.

In addition to eight furnished model homes, ICI Homes and David Weekley Homes have several quick move-in homes under construction at Seven Pines. The homes feature a variety of floor plans and a wide range of square footages and styles. Model homes are open daily. Home

prices at Seven Pines start in the upper \$600,000s.

Seven Pines is located on Kernan Boulevard south of J. Turner Butler Boulevard. The community offers quick access to the beaches and downtown Jacksonville, and has a premier location near shopping, dining, schools, recreation, medical centers, business centers and more.

For more information, go to sevenpines.com.

Tips for tax season was the ‘Chamber at Noon’ topic



Ericha Gore and Jamie Johnson

The following photos are from the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division Chamber at Noon event March 15 at Marsh Landing Country Club. Certified public accountant Jennifer Howard, owner of Accounting Results and Consulting, was the guest speaker during the event. She spoke about being compliant with taxes and gave helpful record-keeping tips.

Photos by Susan Griffin



Juan Carlos Balcazar, Jennifer Howard and Karina Coryell



Chamber members enjoying themselves during the chamber at noon event March 15.



Kari Zerrahn, Miranda Haley and Jennifer Howard



St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division chair Kathleen Floryan makes announcements.

Sales up for housing in Northeast Florida

Closed and pending sales for housing in Northeast Florida increased in February, which is rare at this time of the year. The combined number of single-family homes, condos and townhouses in the region rose almost 26% from January to February demonstrating that the housing market within the six-county area is alive and well, despite low inventory and higher prices.

“Love was in the air for real estate this February,” said Diana Galavis, 2023 president of the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors. “Closed sales were up as more buyers said, ‘I do,’ and closed on their perfect home match. Increased listings on the market provided buyers with more inventory to shop and potentially secure a home. With more ‘fish in the sea’ and increased active inventory, more homes were going under contract. This is a reflection that buyers are comfortable with the fluctuating market and were ready to make a move in securing real estate.”

With an active inventory of 4,811 in February, the number of single-family homes in the region inched up a mere 2%, but showed a 174% increase from a

year ago. This represents a 3.4-months’ supply of homes, a 20.5% decrease from January 2023, but a 277.9% increase from February 2022 when it there was not even a months’ worth of inventory on the market.

“The months’ supply of inventory moved to under four months,” Galavis said. “More buyers were in market than there was available inventory to purchase. Factors such as building supply, construction, job transfers and relocations played a role. Six months of inventory is a stable market.”

The median sales price for single-family homes throughout the region remained at \$360,000, the same as the month before, while the median price per square foot of homes slightly decreased to \$196. This is a sign that a different product mix may be selling in the market as larger homes sell for more money but often at a lower dollar amount per square foot.

“The median sales price temporarily stabilized with the price per square foot slightly decreasing. This can be contributed to market interest rates and buying power,” Galavis explained.

As the median sales price of single-

family homes stabilized, so did the Home Affordability Index for single-family residences in the six-county region. In February the index again registered at 76. It shows whether a typical family earns enough to qualify for a mortgage on a typical home, based on current interest rates, median income and median home prices. A higher number means greater affordability. An index value of 100 means that the average family has exactly enough income to qualify for a mortgage.

“Real estate is local,” said Galavis. “It is important buyers and sellers have a Realtor, a local trusted expert, to help them navigate the market. There are many steps in the process of buying, selling and investing in real estate and a Realtor can give them the professional help they need.”

In St. Johns County, February 2023 median prices fell slightly by 3.1% to a median price of \$510,000 for single-family homes. The median days on the market were 48, a 22% drop from the month before.

Month-to-month, closed sales rose 18.9% to 315, pending sales wobbled down .7% to 418 and new listings

dropped slightly 1.9% to 578. Active inventory rose to 1,210 homes, an increase of 1.9% from January 2023, and 3.8-month supply.

The affordability index inched up 1.9% to 53, demonstrating that St. Johns County became slightly more affordable yet remains the most expensive area to live in the region.

In Duval County, the February 2023 median price of single-family housing was \$315,000, a slight 2.4% increase from January 2023 when it registered \$307,500. The median days on the market in February was 49, a 1% increase over January.

Month-to-month, closed sales soared 33% to 761, pending sales rose 11.4% to 938, and new listings increased 13.1% to 1,409. Active inventory for the county was a 3-month supply — 2,317 homes, which is an increase of 4.3% from January and a 150.8% hike from the year before.

In February, the home affordability index showed housing was becoming slightly less affordable by registering at 86, a 2.8% drop from the month before.

Pilot

Continued from 21

slow down the planes on the carrier, had issues catching the wire during a night landing, and after five passes it was realized that his tail hook had broken and was missing.

So instead of landing on the USS Kitty Hawk, he had to fly another 20 minutes away to land, but wound up being on fumes during the extra trip and had to perform an in-flight refuel procedure just to make it the rest of the way.

Even with the close calls, Piatt said fear was not the first thing that came to his mind during the 100 combat missions he took part in.

“We didn’t have time to be scared,” Piatt said. “Everything was a mental task, and it took all of your attention.”

He also told a quick tale about how he started selling at a new place at the time called The Plantation shortly after getting his real estate license.

“When I started with The Plantation in 1987 there were no homes,” Piatt chuckled. “It looked just like the Guana (research reserve) does today. The first five homes were not built until July 1987.”



Local realtor Jake Piatt spoke about his experience as a pilot during the Vietnam War as guest speaker at the NEFAR quarterly breakfast at The Plantation Beach House March 14.

Photo by Anthony Richards

In the Arts

Send your arts news to
news@pontevedrarecorder.com

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www.PonteVedraRecorder.com

Award-winning wood turner featured at gallery for March

The Professional Artists of St. Augustine (P.A.St.A.) Fine Art Gallery located on the historic, and often photographed Charlotte Street, is presenting Tina Minahan as the featured artist for the month of March.

During the First Friday Art Walk on March 3, Minahan's work of lathe and hand-carved wood-turned creations were on display in the front room of the gallery. Minahan was on hand to meet with gallery visitors and customers during the evening.

Minahan's family moved from Pennsylvania — where she was born — to South Florida when she was very young. She remained a resident of the Palm Beach and Miami areas well into her adulthood when she left for California to pursue a career in the insurance business. Upon retirement she moved first to Tennessee, then eventually to the St. Augustine area.

Minahan's interest in woodworking started early when she took a course in the early '70s. Her first project was a stand-alone spice cabinet. Bitten by the woodworking bug, she continued to practice her craft and take classes wherever and whenever possible. Her first foray into woodworking was centered around furniture making, and she quickly became adept at producing classic Windsor-style chairs. During the production of the Windsor chairs, Minahan was introduced to the lathe in order to make the chair's legs.

Using the lathe, she quickly discovered, allowed her to complete projects in much less time, as compared to making furniture. Inspired by the results of her early lathe work, Minahan jumped in to designing and turning wood bowls, platters and other vessels.

"When you turn a bowl or platter out of wood, you accentuate the natural beauty of the wood, including the growth rings, the heartwood and even the bark," Minahan said. "Tree burls, which are nothing more than an infection in the tree, can result in some of the most satisfying and beautiful results with whorls and interesting patterns, naturally formed."

Her process starts with a collection of wood, tree stumps and tree chunks, received from friends, tree trimmers and fellow woodworking club members. Special types of wood are purchased from lumber salvagers. The wood Minahan uses has either

come from fallen trees or trees that were taken down for building or landscaping purposes.

Some of the most beautifully grained and colorful wood, like her favorite, box elder, with its red veining, come at a higher price from the salvagers. With a design in mind, she attaches it to her lathe, dons her safety mask and ear protection and begins the steady process of turning the "wet" wood on the lathe. When it has assumed its rough shape, she will let it slowly dry before returning it the lathe for its final turning. When the work is completed, she uses a natural, food safe oil to seal and enhance the beauty of the wood.

Minahan is a member of the American Association of Wood Turners and the North East Florida Wood Turners Association, located in Jacksonville. She has won numerous awards for her work throughout the years and continues to push herself and her art through wood-turning symposiums.

To see Minahan's work, go to pastagaleryart.com and the gallery's Facebook page, facebook.com/pastaartgallery.

The Professional Artists of St. Augustine Fine Art Gallery was founded in 1982. Its mission is to showcase local and regional art and to educate and encourage area artists.



Contributed photo

Tina Minahan is shown with one of her creations.

NEW Adult Art Classes with Charley Edelman



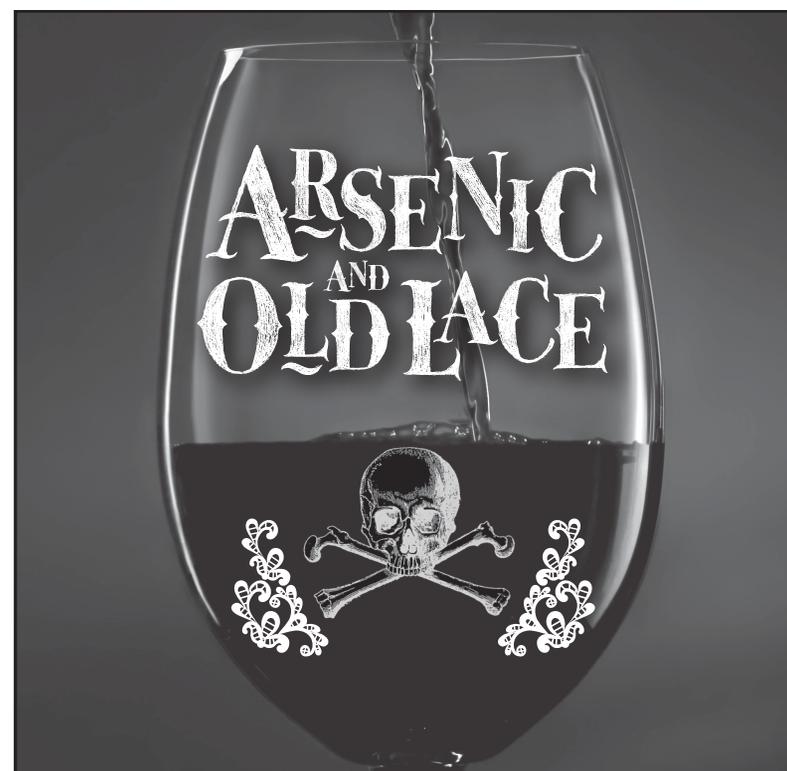
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CANVAS, STAGE AND MORE

A look at what's happening in the arts locally.

Spycraft for thriller writers is meeting topic

Intelligence is one of the world's oldest professions, and possibly the most misunderstood.

Much of what the public believes it understands about espionage in general and the CIA in particular, comes from spy fiction novels, television series and movies. Sometimes writers get it right. More often, they do not, to the detriment of the public's understanding of what intelligence officers do for our country.

Northeast Florida Sisters in Crime is planning a dynamic presentation by former CIA operative and noted author Dr. Edward Mickolus, an expert on CIA-related intrigue. The meeting will be held at 10 a.m. April 1 at the Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library, 101 Library Blvd. The public is invited.

Mickolus served in analytical, operational, management and staff positions at CIA for 33 years, where he was CIA's first full-time analyst on international

terrorism; analyzed African political, economic, social, military and leadership issues; wrote political-psychological assessments of world leaders; and managed collection, counterintelligence and covert action programs against terrorists, drug traffickers, weapons proliferators and hostile espionage services.

In retirement, he taught at CIA, the FBI Academy, ODNI and numerous universities.

Sisters in Crime welcomes misters and sisters who want to learn more about writing, promoting and enjoying crime fiction.

For further information, contact floridasistersincrime@gmail.com.

Sundays at Stetson's concerts announced

The monthly Sundays at Stetson's performance schedule for the rest of 2023 has been announced. Events are free, though a \$10 donation is recommended. Concerts are 2-4 p.m. and are held at Belulahatchee Park.

The park opens at 1 p.m. with tours of Stetson Kennedy's house and museum before and after the concert. Space is

limited and reservations are required. To make reservations or get more information call 904-206-8304.

The park is located at 1523 S.R. 13 in Fruit Cove, just south of the intersection at Roberts Road.

Concerts are scheduled as follows: April 2, Rod MacDonald; May 21, Scott Jackson and Joe Mark; June 11, Lee Hunter; July 9, Bob Patterson; Aug. 13, Woody Guthrie Tribute (NFFN); Sept. 10, Ashley Gang (25th anniversary); Oct. 8, Songs For Stetson; Nov. 12: Bear and Robert; and Dec. 10, Feed You Neighbors (NFFN).

Program teaches kids about Broadway shows

The FSCJ Artist Series will present Next Stop Broadway, a weeklong musical theater program, on June 12-16 at the Nathan H. Wilson Center for the Arts, 11901 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville. Registration is now open at fscjartistseries.org.

Next Stop Broadway is a five-day intensive for ages 10-17 that focuses on being in the ensemble of a classic Broadway show. Participation in the program requires no previous experience.

The program consists of classes, workshops and rehearsals and focuses on the "Golden Age of Broadway." The staff of Broadway professionals will teach songs and choreography from classic Broadway productions and replicate the process of putting on an authentic Broadway show at the same break-neck speed as the real thing. The week culminates with an "opening night" performance for family and friends.

Registration is now open. Go to fscjartistseries.org to pay tuition and fill out the Next Stop Broadway application upon paying tuition. Space is limited.

Check-in begins at 8:30 a.m. and program hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Friday will run until approximately 7 p.m. for the "opening night" performance.

The cost is \$575 for returning cast members and \$595 for new cast members for the week, and includes lunch, snacks, two T-shirts and a professional head shot.

Email nextstopbroadway@fscjartistseries.org for more information.

— *Compiled by Shaun Ryan*

Series to feature noted Israeli concert pianist

The Beaches Fine Arts Series will present Israeli concert pianist Alon Goldstein on April 16 in his third performance in the series.

Doors open at 6:45 p.m. and the performance is at 7 p.m. at St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church, Jacksonville Beach. Admission is free.

A reception will follow with an art exhibit by Jessica Hall.

Goldstein is one of the most original and sensitive artists of his generation, admired for his musical intelligence and dynamic personality. His artistic vision and innovative programming have made him a favorite with audiences and critics alike throughout the United States, Europe and Israel.

He made his orchestral debut at the age of 18 with the Israel Philharmonic under the baton of Zubin Mehta and returned a few seasons ago with Maestro Herbert Blomstedt in Beethoven Concerto No. 1. In recent seasons, Goldstein has performed with the Los Angeles Philharmonic; Philadelphia Orchestra; the San Francisco, Baltimore, St. Louis, Houston, Vancouver, Kansas City, Indianapolis and North Carolina symphonies; and orchestras on tour in Paris, Mexico, Russia, Romania and Bulgaria.

Goldstein graduated from the Peabody Conservatory where he studied with Leon Fleisher and served as his assistant — a position assigned only to his most exceptional students. In 2019, Goldstein was elected to the Johns Hopkins



Contributed photo

Concert pianist Alon Goldstein will return April 16 for his third performance in the Beaches Fine Arts Series.

Society of Scholars. He is one of only two Peabody graduates to have been selected.

Jessica Shockley Hall, previously a resident of Atlanta, Georgia, has called Jacksonville Beach home for the last

10 years. Hall is an oil painter and has practiced sporadically throughout her adult life, learning and working with other artists, recently making painting her primary focus.

Putting her unique contemporary spin

on a long-held tradition of artists who have been inspired by the beauty of nature, Hall is currently working on a body of work based on and inspired by various flora.

Sports



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Photos courtesy of Kate Zarczynski



The Planet Swim girls relay teams racked up their share of victories during the Florida Swimming Senior Championships.



Planet Swim finished runner-up thanks to combined success from both the boys and girls swimmers representing the program during the championships March 8-12 in Orlando.

Planet Swim earns runner-up result at state championships

By Anthony Richards

Planet Swim Aquatics continues to establish itself as one of the premier swimming programs in the state.

That was made even more clear after the group traveled to Orlando and came back to Ponte Vedra with a runner-up finish in the Florida Swimming Senior Championships that took place March 8 to 12.

The weeklong competition featured 49 swimmers representing Planet Swim at the state qualifying meet. They were led by Planet Swim owner and head coach Gus Calado.

The second-place result was a combination of success across the boys and girls divisions with several personal best times and top-three finishes.

Planet Swim won a trio of team events,

including the 200-yard medley relay in both the girls and boys classes.

Hayden Sunman, Nic Parnell, Alex Kim and Matt Koziel swam to the title in the boys 200 medley relay, while Annie Wohlgeomuth, Liv Copland, Penny Zarczynski and Maryn McDade proved to be an unstoppable grouping as they won both the girls 200 and 400 medley relays.

Sophie Fox replaced Copland and joined Wohlgeomuth, Zarczynski and McDade for the girls 200 free relay, but the results remained the same as they secured yet another victory.

Wohlgeomuth, a Ponte Vedra senior, stacked up six wins during the championship, including three individual titles in the 50 backstroke, 100 backstroke and 50 fly.

She is known for her specialty with the backstroke discipline and set a new meet record in the process during the event.

Zarczynski joined Wohlgeomuth as Ponte Vedra High swimmers that enjoyed success at the event, as she won the 15- to 16-year-old girls 100 fly with a time that also qualified her for the winter junior national championships.

Nease senior Matt Koziel placed third in the 50 freestyle, and also qualified for winter junior national championship competition.

Many swimmers from high school programs across the First Coast take part in Planet Swim and left their mark during the state championships:

- Creekside High junior Hayden Sunman won the 15-to 16-year-old boys 200

IM, and placed third in the 200 breaststroke with a winter junior national championships qualifying time

- Fleming Island High junior Maryn McDade won the 50 free and qualified for the winter juniors

- St. Augustine High sophomore Jack Mainville won the 15-to 16-year-old boys 50 breaststroke and finished second in the 100 breaststroke

- Bishop Kenny High sophomore Owen Kerkezi placed second in the 15-to 16-year-old boys 50 backstroke

- Toco Creek junior Alex Kim came in third in the 50 butterfly

- Ponte Vedra High freshman Kate Pelot finished third in the 15-to 16-year-old girls 50 backstroke

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ACROSS

1. Influential American political family
5. ___ Chantilly, ___ de Menthe
11. Within
12. Pleasure seekers
16. Computer manufacturer
17. Home to college sports' Flyers
18. Fungal disease
19. Sleepwalk
24. Spielberg sci-fi film
25. Seasonable
26. Taxis
27. Radio direction finder (abbr.)
28. Thin, narrow piece of wood
29. "Mystic River" actor Sean
30. Ingenuous
31. Musical composition
33. Turkish surname
34. High or hilly area
38. Wilco frontman
39. Pour it on pasta
40. Electric car company
43. Sea eagle
44. Walk with difficulty
45. Sign of healing
49. Boy
50. Protein-rich liquid
51. Washington city
53. Individual portion of TV series (abbr.)
54. Thought over
56. Scads
58. News agency
59. Standard
60. Deadlock
63. Pre-Columbian empire
64. Removed
65. French commune

6. Cut down in size
7. Denotes past
8. Larry and Curly's partner
9. Samoyedic ethnic group
10. Male parent
13. Specific gravity
14. Demeaned oneself to
15. Rigidly
20. Yankovic is a "weird" one
21. Belonging to me
22. Path
23. Airborne (abbr.)
27. Level
29. Atomic #94
30. Born of
31. Midway between northeast and east
32. Northeastern bank
33. Defunct airline
34. Having no purpose
35. A low wall

36. Swedish city
37. Earn a perfect score
38. Atomic #81
40. Beginner
41. Give off
42. Incorrect letters
44. Telecommunication service provider (abbr.)
45. Idyllic
46. Popular beer
47. A way to fine
48. Evildoer
50. More withered
51. Seventh note of a major scale
52. Commercial
54. Abnormal breathing
55. Moved more quickly
57. City of Angels
61. Partner to Pa
62. Equally

DOWN

1. Large, dangerous animals
2. Straighten out
3. Family tree
4. Large stinging paper wasp
5. European river fish

SUDOKU

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

Level: Intermediate

Here's How It Works:

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

Landrum kicks off spring break with county title



Contributed photo

The Landrum Middle School girls basketball team celebrated their spring break by showcasing their skills on the basketball court by winning the St. Johns County basketball championship 36-19 over Pacetti Bay.

Spring break was a time for baseball, softball tournaments

By Anthony Richards

As the name states, spring break is a time for students to have a break from school. However, for student-athletes they may not be in school but they are not missing out on the opportunity to represent their school on the playing field.

Both the Ponte Vedra High baseball and softball teams, as well as the Nease High baseball squad played their share of games in various spring break tournaments during the week off.

The Sharks baseball team dominated in the three games they played, including sweeping a doubleheader March 14 with victories over Beachside 10-0 and Crescent City 22-2 in five innings, respectively.

Senior Braden Kessel drove in six runs against Beachside and came up a single shy of hitting for the cycle, while nine different players drove in a run in the lopsided performance over the Raiders.

They followed it with a convincing 14-5 win against Eustis, and the bats coming alive is something that the Sharks will want to build upon heading into the second half of the season.

Kessel was back at it for the Sharks in the 14-run outing as he and fellow senior Ethan Yesensky both had home runs.

Nease baseball had a busy week playing games in four straight days during the spring break week.

Three of those contests were against high schools from Oklahoma while the other was pitted against one from Tennessee.

The Panthers seemed to handle the tough out-of-state competition nicely, taking two of four games, as they defeated Choctaw 8-2 and Norman (Oklahoma) North 8-7, while falling to Yukon 7-0 and Knoxville (Tennessee) Catholic 8-3.

However, facing different competition outside of the usual suspects within the state of Florida was a different experience for the Panthers and a memory that they will surely have from this season.

For the Nease softball squad, they welcomed in Heritage High of Maryville, Tennessee, and lost 7-6 in a close one that was back and forth throughout.

After the Panthers scored three in the bottom of the sixth to take a 6-5 lead, Heritage responded with a pair of runs of their own in the top of the seventh and was able to hold on to narrowly defeat the Panthers.

Juniors Corinna Cioffi and Taylor Burton each had two RBIs apiece in the game. Burton also successfully stole a base in the contest.

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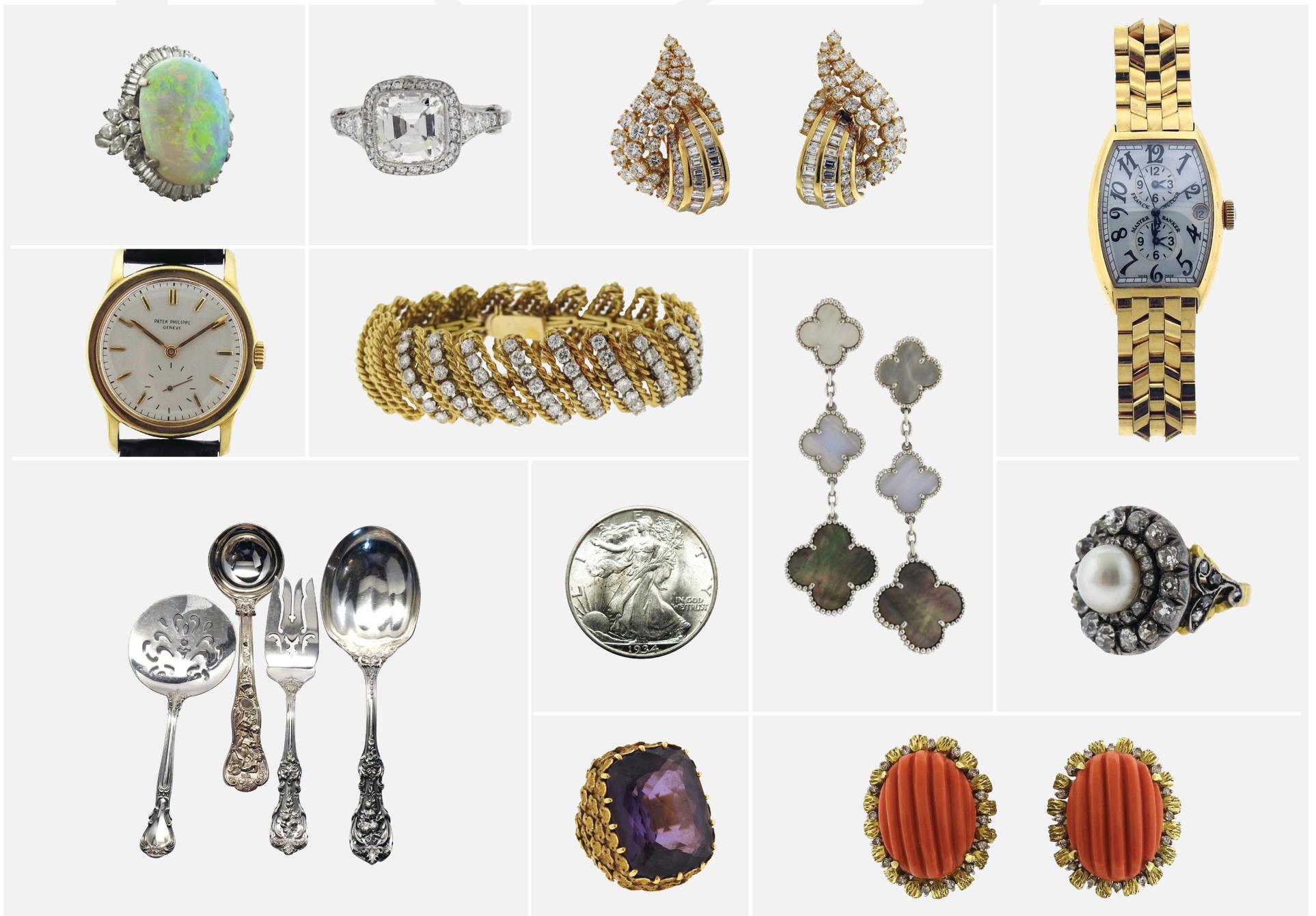
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