

# the register

FIRST ON THE FIRST COAST

## Spring HOME & GARDEN

**FEATURING**  
**49TH ANNUAL RAP HOME TOUR**



**WINE & DINE ON  
THE FIRST COAST**

**KIDS' SUMMER FUN GUIDE**

**AND MUCH MORE!**

APRIL/MAY 2023

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The cover features a house that was featured in the 2023 RAP Home Tour.

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE RIVERSIDE AVONDALE PRESERVATION



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**ADVERTISING (904) 285-8831 | DISTRIBUTION (904) 285-8831**

PUBLISHED BY OSTEEN MEDIA GROUP INC - LOCALLY OWNED & OPERATED  
PONTE VEDRA RECORDER, 1102 A1A North, Unit 108, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082  
www.pontevedrarecorder.com

The Register is published bimonthly.



## Ponte Vedra Oceanfront Estate

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

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## The Esplanade at Town Center

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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.

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# TWO OF US

## *Ben and Dan Espling*

as told to **SHAUN RYAN** photo by **SHAUN RYAN**

**B**rothers Ben and Dan Espling run Espling Jewelers, which has two locations, one in Jacksonville and the other in Jacksonville Beach. The business was started as a watch repair shop by their parents, Bengt A. and Laura Espling. Today, Espling Jewelers buys, sells and repairs high-end jewelry and watches. It also handles estate jewelry, which brings them in contact with some of the most unusual treasures out there.

### **Tell me a little about Espling Jewelers.**

**Ben Espling:** Dad started the business a long time ago, 1972. It was basically a watch repair shop. Since then, through the years and growth, we went more into jewelry and sales. We still do complete watch repair, and now we do a lot of estate jewelry, buying and selling and coins and even silverware.

**Dan Espling:** We can custom-make jewelry, and we have a lot of new items in stock.

**Ben:** We're both gemologists, so we are used to identify a lot of things. We've invested in technology and equipment for identifying things — including synthetic diamonds.

### **What's involved with becoming a gemologist?**

**Ben:** To become a gemologist or a graduate gemologist takes time. It's not a three-month, quick certification. It's getting everything from a beginner's jewelry background to colored stones to diamonds to diamonds-graduate to colored stones-graduate. Then, there's lab testing. You go to GIA — Gemological Institute of America — either New York or California or other labs around the country.

We also have DCA — Diamond Council of America — and several of the guys on staff have certifications through them.

We also support the Pearl Association. We have a couple of guys that have pearl certifications and graduate pearls through GIA.



Ben, left, and Dan Espling stand behind the counter at their Jacksonville Beach store.

So, we've got a lot of education.

**Dan:** I have jewelry in my blood.

**Ben:** We've both been jewelers at the bench, making jewelry, doing everything from setting stones, soldering, carving, designing ... we've both done that pretty much all our lives. We have a lot of years of experience.

The definition of a jeweler can be a lot of things, from the guy who sells you something to the guy who owns the place to the guy who fixes your watch or sits at the bench. We've worn a lot of hats.

### **What qualities set Espling Jewelers apart?**

**Dan:** I think the estate jewelry and the service aspect, including watch-repair service. Then, the local atmosphere. We try to be part of the community and know our customers.

**Ben:** We do so much with estate jewelry, people find they have commodities around the house that we

buy. That turns into extra money for them. In a sense, we offer a service to the community financially.

Often, we inherit things or we just have things where we go, "I don't know what it is." And we spend a lot of time looking at that. That makes it fun. ...

You come in and say, "What is it?" We're going to be the guys that figure it out.

It's exciting, because you never know what you're going to see next. We have a pearl that is so big — I've never seen one like it before. I couldn't even find one on the internet that big.

Then, we've had things like a large butterfly. I wouldn't normally have bought it, but this is 18 karat gold and has stones all through it, diamonds and such. You just look and go, "You know, if it weren't for estate, we'd never even see it."

There's a treasure in everybody's box somewhere. It's just: Who is it a treasure to? And is there someone else it could be a treasure to?

### **What was it like growing up in a family-owned business such as this one?**

**Dan:** I'd say we grew up with a positive can-do attitude. There was nothing that we couldn't do, build or repair. We always could tinker with little things, and the jewelry business was just a good place to nurture that.

### **Did your dad show you the intricacies of all the different things that he would do?**

**Dan:** He showed me everything.

**Ben:** He wasn't actually a jeweler. That, we took on ourselves. But he was a master watchmaker who trained under somebody who's well-known, Henry B. Fried.

**Dan:** Correct. But we wouldn't be in the business or have gone on to further

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37 ■



The Monique Burr Foundation for Children's annual charity fundraiser, A Night in the Vineyard, presented by Constellation FURYK & FRIENDS at SoNapa Grille, raised \$200,000 for the foundation.

Ed Burr, founder of the Monique Burr Foundation for Children

# NIGHT IN THE VINEYARD RAISES \$200K FOR THE *Monique Burr Foundation*

photos by **SUSAN GRIFFIN**

## Fundraiser benefits programs to help keep youth safe

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children's (MBF) annual signature fundraising event, A Night in the Vineyard, presented by Constellation FURYK & FRIENDS at SoNapa Grille, raised more than \$200,000 for the foundation. All proceeds from A Night in the Vineyard will support MBF Prevention Education Programs — personal safety curricula that educate and empower youth and the adults in their lives with strategies to recognize, prevent and respond to all forms of child abuse, bullying, exploitation and other types of child victimization.

"We appreciate everyone who attended and supported A Night at the Vineyard, raising much-needed funds to reach more youth around the world and remove obstacles to safe communities," said Tanya Ramos-Puig, MBF chief executive officer. "We are thankful to all of our supporters for championing MBF's mission to keep youth safe. MBF programs are making a difference in the lives of youth, protecting them from bullying, digital dangers, various forms of abuse, exploitation and human trafficking through prevention



Pablo Alfaro with Pacific Southern Wine Company

education. We are keeping our most vulnerable citizens safe."

A Night in the Vineyard guests enjoyed wine tastings, conversations with local and Napa Valley winemakers, gourmet food, access to live and silent auctions and live musical entertainment by Nashville recording artist Colleen Orender and singer-songwriter Paris Winningham, a finalist from NBC's "The Voice."

"A key pillar of our SoNapa Grille's culture, since our opening in March 2022, is to give back to the communities that support us," said Adam Barringer, founder of SoNapa Grille. "It is humbling to partner with the Monique Burr Foundation to help raise money to keep children safe in Florida and beyond. We look forward to a long tradition of A Night in the Vineyard."

Event sponsors included Constellation FURYK & FRIENDS, 4 Rivers

Smokehouse, Blue Stream Fiber, Carlton Construction, Clockwork Marketing Services, Dominion Engineering Group, Dream Finders Homes, Drummond Press, The Fiorentino Group, Foley & Lardner LLP, Francis Ford Coppola Winery, Glisson Family Investments, Go Bright Marketing, GreenPointe Holdings, Hahn Family Wines, iPhotoBooth Jax, K & G Construction Co, Lennar, Lift Up Auction, The Lighthouse Wealth Management Group at Morgan Stanley, MasterCraft Builder Group, NiteLites, Oceano Wines, Pacific Southern Wine Company, PRI Productions, Republic National Distributing Company, SoNapa Grille, Southern Glazer's Wine and Spirits, Tarpon Cellars, The Tim and Leah Chapman Foundation, TomaHook, Vallencourt Construction, West Coast Wines and 904 Happy Hour.

MBF programs are comprehensive, evidence-based/trauma-informed and provide youth with universal strategies to keep them safe, including five easy-to-remember safety rules. The programs are proven to be effective, and they are trusted by schools and parents. Since its inception, MBF has reached more than 9 million children with its prevention education programs.

To learn more about MBF's comprehensive, evidence-based prevention programs, go to [mbfpreventioneducation.org](http://mbfpreventioneducation.org).

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# MALIVAI WASHINGTON HONORED WITH MURAL

story and photo by **SHAUN RYAN**

## Winner of Good Neighbor Award also received financial gift for his foundation

**A** new mural painted on the West 6th Street side of the MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation celebrates the longtime Realtor and former tennis pro who founded the nonprofit 26 years ago. Its many elements also recognize the good work of the foundation and the contribution of Realtors to their communities.

The mural was unveiled Thursday, April 13, at the Jacksonville facility. At its heart, it commemorates the award-winning tennis and tutoring program MaliVai Washington founded to create life-changing opportunities for the city's at-risk youth.

"I love the fact that it kind of represents who we are and an organization," said Washington, who pointed out the various elements to those in attendance. "And it just beautifies the City of Jacksonville, and specifically this community."

The mural was painted by Central Florida artist Christian Stanley and was commissioned by the National Association of Realtors. Washington was one of five Realtors from across the nation to win the association's Good Neighbor Award in 2022.

Winners received a \$10,000 grant for their charities. In Washington's case the local Northeast Florida Association of Realtors (NEFAR) matched the gift for an additional \$10,000. Washington said the funds would be used for scholarships. Next month, the foundation will award \$75,000 in scholarships to students furthering their education following high school.

"NEFAR is proud to have MaliVai Washington, a longtime member, receive the Good Neighbor Award from the National Association of Realtors," said NEFAR President Diana Galavis, who was present for the mural unveiling. "MaliVai's work with youth is an inspiration to us all."

The foundation works to break the cycle of poverty through a vibrant after-school mentoring program. It serves about 100 children and youth annually, focusing on tutoring, leadership skills, financial training and fitness.

To participate in the programs, the students must attend school, and the foundation has attained a 100% high school



Gathered in front of the mural are MaliVai Washington, NEFAR President Diana Galavis, NEFAR Treasurer Tiewa Vincent, NEFAR CEO William "Glenn" East, staff members and several youth who use the facility.

graduation rate for teens who have gone through the program. By comparison, the surrounding neighborhoods are seeing a 20% dropout rate.

The kids enter the foundation's programs as early as kindergarten and receive support through high school. There is a facility just for elementary school kids, who "graduate" to the middle- and high-school facility at 1055 W. 6th St.

Here, neighborhood youth enjoy activities in the game room and music room and cooking in the kitchen. They have a place to do their homework, get tutoring and financial training, gain leadership skills and work on fitness.

"There are a lot of activities for the kids to engage in to help keep them on track," Washington said.

"We give them some guidance, give them some inspiration and help them realize their potential," he added.

Among the teens visiting the facility April 13 were Alphonso Pascal and Zion Goni-Denson, both 15.

"I like to come here and do the activities they have here, like music and art & design," said Alphonso. "I like coming here and chilling, drawing, showing off my art. It's really nice."

"It's great to have a place like this," said Zion. "They open up a lot of opportunities. I get to do programming. I get to do art and all that. At the same time, I get opportunities for scholarships and things like that."

He added that it was nice to have a place to connect with other people.

"To me, I don't really have anywhere else I can go," said Alphonso. "That's why I'm here. I've been here for like eight years."

Both young men are planning for the careers they hope to pursue one day. Alphonso wants to go into animation and game design. Zion wants to do coding and programming.

Washington pointed out one of the many successes the foundation has seen. Marc Atkinson, who started in the foundation when he was in the sixth grade and went on to play tennis for Florida A&M, worked at the foundation for 10 years. And just recently, he was named the first coach of Edward Waters University's new women's tennis team.

"Realtors are naturally giving in nature and do a lot of good works," said Galavis. "MaliVai is just one of the many Realtors who give their time and talent to our Northeast Florida community. Realtors are good neighbors."

Washington has been a Realtor for 27 years.

Want to help or learn more? Go to [malwashington.com](http://malwashington.com). You can make a donation there or schedule a tour of the campus.

# ATTRACT BUTTERFLIES TO YOUR GARDEN

story and photo by **KATHY ESFAHANI**

**I**t can be captivating to watch a butterfly. We find ourselves taking a moment away from the hectic demands of everyday life to enjoy the wonder of these delicate creatures.

Planting a butterfly garden is a beautiful and colorful way to attract butterflies into your landscape.

An intentionally planned butterfly garden provides a safe place for these visitors. They can easily find food and water, take shelter and reproduce. Strong butterfly populations also support the larger environment by attracting other insects that benefit the garden and providing food for mammals, birds and lizards that help control pests in the garden.

A sustainable butterfly garden should include vegetation that supports both adults and larvae; plants that provide shelter from strong temperatures, heavy



rain and predators; and a water source for the butterflies.

Remember these tips as you design your butterfly garden:

- Garden in both full sun and partial shade.
- Use quality topsoil to ensure plants and flowers are enriched.
- Include milkweed, fennel, and purple passion vine. These are host plants that provide food for caterpillars in order for them to cocoon.
- Add black eyed susans, butterfly bush, coreopsis, firebush, gaillardia,

lantana, pentas, porterweed, sage and sunflowers to attract adult butterflies.

• Select an assortment of plants that bloom at different times so that the butterflies have a consistent food source.

• Choose plants of varying heights, colors, shapes and sizes.

• Arrange plants in groups as butterflies are more likely to land in a concentration of color instead of on a single plant.

• Consider planting sweet-smelling plants and/or herbs such as sedum, lavender and fennel.

• Include a water feature or a bird bath — even a simple shallow dish with water and rocks will encourage butterflies to visit!

Enhance your space by planting shrimp plants, dwarf or regular bottlebrush trees, and mystic spires salvia. These additions will also bring hummingbirds to your butterfly garden.

Happy planting!

NOTE: Kathy's Creative Gardens services areas from Ponte Vedra Beach north to Neptune Beach and inland to the Nocatee area. For readers living outside these neighborhoods, Kathy's Creative Gardens staff are unable to provide onsite services at your homes, but they say they would love to see you at the nursery, 196 N. Roscoe Blvd.

Please email Kathy at [kcg.pvr@gmail.com](mailto: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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[ spring home & garden ]

# RAP CONTINUES SPRING TRADITION WITH HOME TOUR

photos by  
ANTHONY RICHARDS

**T**he 49th Annual Home Tour presented by the Riverside Avondale Preservation took place April 15 and 16.

Residents took to the streets, many on bikes as they stopped at the various properties along the tour.

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[ spring home & garden ]

## HOME TOUR

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

There were 12 properties featured on this year's tour including St. Paul's Catholic Church and the businesses Plush N' Prana and Art House, to go along with residential homes.

The tour offered a mix of both historic and modern vibes, with the featured home being built in 1929 and inspired by the Italian Renaissance.



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# CUMMER MUSEUM PRESENTS 'FLAMBOYANCE! A TOPIARY MENAGERIE'

photos provided by  
THE CUMMER MUSEUM OF ART & GARDENS

## The museum's first horticultural exhibition brings fun and whimsy to the community

The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens opened its first horticultural exhibition, "Flamboyance! A Topiary Menagerie," on April 1. The exhibition features 50 topiary flamingos situated throughout the museum's historically significant gardens located on the St. Johns River.

The exhibition will be on view until June 25.

"Flamboyance" is the collective noun for a gathering of flamingos, providing inspiration for the title of this extraordinary spectacle. The sculptural flamingo topiaries will be posed in groups and punctuated by colorful, bold tropical plants — a fun juxtaposition to the otherwise formal geometry of the Cummer Gardens.

The exhibition is a playful riff on the plastic pink flamingo, a classic Floridian garden motif, and it will invite visitors to enjoy



Patrick MacRae, director of gardens and horticulture, is seen with some of the topiaries.

the riverfront gardens through a refreshing new lens of color and creativity. Each of the nearly five-foot-tall topiary sculptures have been named by "adoptive parents," or "Flockstars," as the museum playfully refers to them, revealing each flamingo's unique personality.

As the museum's first horticulture exhibition, "Flamboyance!" elevates its gardens and places the Cummer Museum squarely in conversation with botanical garden peers.

"With its focus on the fantastic, fun and the unexpected, this exhibition promises to delight visitors and marks a new era of outdoor programming for the museum," said Andrea Barnwell Brownlee, the George W. & Kathleen I. Gibbs director and chief executive officer of the museum.

Preparations for the exhibition started months in advance. In the late fall, museum horticulturists, led by Patrick MacRae, the Doolittle Family director of gardens and horticulture, constructed a purpose-built structure behind the scenes on the museum campus to house and protect the topiaries from the threat of frost.

The flamingos arrived in late January on loan from the Franklin Park Conservatory and Botanical Gardens in Columbus, Ohio. Within days of their arrival in Florida, the museum horticulture team and a group of 12 volunteers from the Late Bloomers Garden Club had planted each topiary with wax begonias, which flower a perfect shade of flamingo-pink.

"The museum is well-known for extraordinary exhibitions in our galleries, and this is an opportunity to expand the dynamism of the Cummer experience into our beautiful gardens," said MacRae. "'Flamboyance!' is all about experiencing gardens with a sense of humor. Gardens are tremendous sources of joy — what better way to experience unbridled happiness than through a fabulous, and flamboyant, exhibition?"

The ancient art of topiary — the artful pruning and shaping of plants into decorative shapes — dates to the first century.



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[ spring home & garden ]

# LISA BARTON HOLDS SPRING FLING

contributed by **LISA BARTON**  
photos by **SUSAN GRIFFIN**

The Lisa Barton Team hosted their annual Customer Appreciation Party in April at The Yards in the Sawgrass Players Club. The evening was lovely, filled with great friends and happy customers. Guests enjoyed terrific food from 3 J's Catering, a fresh new catering company, as well as a variety of beer, wine and seltzers. Guests had a great time playing the "beer" loop (a 3-hole golf course that's part of The Yards Golf facility). The Lisa Barton Team was grateful for the opportunity to celebrate another successful year in real estate.



Photo courtesy of  
The Lisa Barton Team

## Village Arts Framing and Gallery

155 Tourside Dr. #1520 Sawgrass Village  
Ponte Vedra Beach, FL  
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Photo by David McCormick

[www.villageartspvb.com](http://www.villageartspvb.com)

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RightWay Integrated Lawn & Pest Solutions recently celebrated its one-year anniversary.



The RightWay staff is currently four employees and very experienced within their respective field.

# YARD OF THE MONTH HELPING HAND

story by ANTHONY RICHARDS

photos courtesy of RIGHTWAY INTEGRATED LAWN & PEST SOLUTIONS

## RightWay combines customer service, education in search of perfect lawn

With springtime upon us and summer right around the corner, and nothing defines that time of year like green grass and a beautifully landscaped lawn.

However, getting to that point can be quite a challenge and it can be a never-ending battle for homeowners.

That is exactly why Greg Cressman decided to start RightWay Integrated Lawn & Pest Solutions one year ago.

He had lived in Palm Valley for a while and began to realize that there was something lacking from the lawn and pest control providers in the area.

One of the ways that he believes RightWay stands out is in its customer service approach, which some may see as “old-fashioned,” but Cressman sees as just what is needed.

“A company’s culture has and always will be key no matter the industry, and that’s been the case everywhere I’ve been,” Cressman said. “If you take care of your employees, then they’ll take care of the customers. It can really affect how they sound on the phone and their attitude when they show in the yard.”

One way they offer good customer service is by providing top notch service when called to work on a lawn or property.

As a result, they have not only gained customers in the past year, but they have also maintained them, which is another major piece of the puzzle.

“We hired really good technicians at the start, and we haven’t lost a single customer during our first year,” Cressman said. “We have high quality people and are as environmentally friendly as we can be. The response has been great.”

What makes having knowledgeable employees so important is the fact that they interact so closely with homeowners in making sure everyone is on the same page when it comes to the desired plan for their lawn and what it entails.

“There is so much that goes into working with the homeowners, and getting in tune with what goes into an

irrigation system,” Cressman said.

According to Cressman, a lawn in Florida is different from those in other states as it comes down to the various weather patterns and seasons in that specific state.

This is something that has come into play with so many new residents moving to the First Coast from other parts of the country.

“It’s a full education process and we spend a lot of time on that,” Cressman said. “St. Augustine grass is so dominant here and some people don’t even know what that is.”

The unique and big weather swings that happen in Florida play a huge role, and chinch bugs present another unique problem, as they are not common in the Northeast United States, according to Cressman.

RightWay only has four employees now, but Cressman has a plan in place where he would like to see it get to in the future, but it all centers around growing at a smart pace and not too rapidly.

Their current size does have its advantages, because it allows the company to have quicker adaptability to changing situations than a larger company.

However, his goal for the future includes doubling the company’s number of employees this year and reaching more than 2,000 customers in the next couple of years.

“We service lawns seven times a year with a normal program, but we will come out and treat any situation that presents itself with a lawn,” Cressman said.

One of the things he never wants to see wear, even as they expand and grow down the road, is their reputation for reliable customer service.

“One of the ways we measure this is how often we answer the phones,” Cressman said. “We answer within three rings 80% of the time and voicemails are returned within 100% of the time. It was one of the areas where I saw a weakness and knew there was a better way to go about it.”

RightWay also offers discounts for veterans and first responders, as Cressman understands the sacrifice made having served in the military himself.

# FLOWER SHOW SET FOR MAY 5-6

**R**ibault Garden Club members have been busy propagating plants, visiting members' gardens and potting a variety of native plants in preparation for the club's National Garden Club Standard Flower Show.

The event will be held at 1-4 p.m. May 5 and 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. May 6 at Ribault Garden Club, 705 Second Ave. North, Jacksonville Beach. It is open to the public and admission is free.

The event is divided into several divisions, each with its own focus. The Design Division is a creative showcase based on the show's theme. The Horticulture Division exhibits the best plants at their best. The Education Division offers insight on a particular subject. The Youth Division encourages gardening and creativity at a young age. The Botanical Division is a fun interpretation, which may include fairy gardens, dried flowers, wearable art and photography.

Designs are submitted by members of the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs. Ribault Garden Club members reside throughout the Beaches area, Nocatee, west of the Intracoastal and throughout Florida.

Ribault Garden Club is a member of National Garden Clubs Inc., Deep South Garden Clubs Inc. and Florida Federation of Garden Clubs Inc. (District IV).



"Flamboyance! A Topiary Menagerie" features 50 topiary flamingos.

## TOPIARY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

The fantastical style of topiary on display in "Flamboyance!" was pioneered by the Walt Disney Company in the 1960s, when the company began using steel mesh frames wrapped over metal support structures in the shapes of animals, including Disney characters. The steel mesh structures are planted with fast-growing plants that can achieve the desired effect in far less time than traditional topiary art.

The museum relies on support from individuals, corporations and foundations in order to realize its unique mission and serve as a vibrant cultural resource. Support is provided by lead sponsor Joan and Preston Haskell; celebrated sponsor Munz Family Holdings; tourism sponsor Visit Jacksonville; program partners First Horizon Bank, Hair Peace, Jacksonville Environmental Protection Board, Teresa Radzinski; exhibition season presenters City of Jacksonville, Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville, Ronald and Karen Rettner; exhibition lead sponsors State of Florida, The Robert D. Davis Family Endowment, The Schultz Family Endowment; exhibition sponsors Director's Circle Donors at the Cummer Museum and The Winston Family Foundation.

For further information about the museum, including hours, go to [cummermuseum.org](http://cummermuseum.org).



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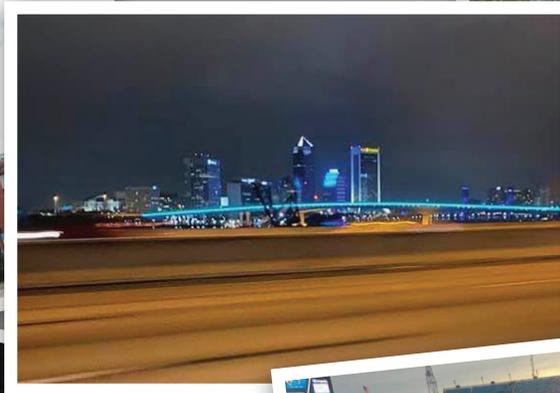
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# FACES OF *The First Coast*



Faces Of The First Coast is an exclusive feature for First Coast Register readers to get to know prominent business leaders in Northeast Florida's coastal communities.

*If you would like to be featured in Faces of the First Coast, please contact us at (904) 285-8831.*

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Clareberryrealestate.com

Lucky me! I have been a Realtor in my home, Northeast Florida, for nearly 40 years. I grew up in Jacksonville and moved to the beach in my 20s. I studied architecture and interior design in college, feeding my love of homes and style. After graduation, I worked in media, where I learned the art of listening and asking questions, marketing and advertising.

In 1985, I transitioned from media to real estate, joining Watson Realty's Ponte Vedra office. It was meant to be! Serving customers by customizing promotions for their homes and researching housing options for buyers is exciting. The reward of finding a seller or a buyer the perfect home is what keeps me charged up about real estate. In 1990, I moved to the original Marsh Landing Realty, where I learned about lots and builders and the development process.

In 1993, I opened my own brokerage, Berry & Co. Real Estate. Our first listing was The Ponte Vedra Carlyle, 48 new condominiums on Ponte Vedra Boulevard. That was an exciting time – new residences in a premier location, with Lodge membership included for every purchaser!

Berry & Co. Real Estate continues to be a robust general brokerage. We have helped hundreds of buyers and sellers with their residential real estate needs. We take pride in our market knowledge – it is the foundation for the extra level of service we provide our customers.

My customers describe me as “one of our most trusted advisors”... “responsive, kind and honest”... “always felt we were in good hands”...”stands out from the rest regarding professionalism, true customer satisfaction and a real passion to do things the right way.” I am committed to share my knowledge and insights to help make the real estate buying and selling process efficient, enjoyable and rewarding.

While homebase for our office is Ponte Vedra Beach, we also are active in neighboring Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach, Atlantic Beach and Nocatee as well as greater Jacksonville. Our real estate market is ever-changing and always intriguing. I'm so grateful for the challenges and opportunities each new day brings.



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### OUR TEAM

**Jamie Seim** has over 12 years of investment experience as a Financial Advisor. He attended the University of Nebraska at Kearney and the University Arkansas at Little Rock on golf scholarships, graduating cum laude. He later graduated with an MBA in Accounting & Finance from Jacksonville University. Over the years, Jamie has devoted much of his time to local organizations and charities.

**Stephen T. Foody** has 38 years of Capital Markets experience. He

holds a BA in Economics and History from Fordham University. He was chairman of the board of trustees for the Guardian Catholic School, and a founding member of Ponte Vedra High School PTO.

**Evonne T. Heykens**, Senior Registered Client Associate, has 40 years of financial services industry experience. She started within the financial industry in 1982, and most of her career has been in Jacksonville or Ponte Vedra.

**Melissa Scott**, Client Associate, has almost 20 years of financial services experience. Born and raised in Indiana, she joined the United States Air Force out of high school and spent 10 years living in many states around the country and some abroad.

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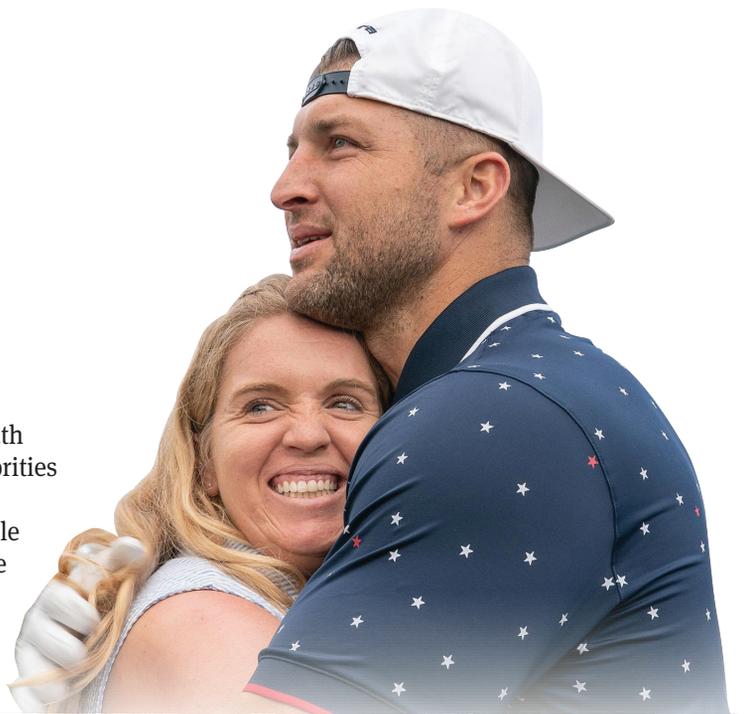
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# CELEBRITIES TURN OUT TO SUPPORT TIM TEBOW FOUNDATION

photos courtesy of **TIM TEBOW FOUNDATION**

The following are photos from the Tim Tebow Foundation's 12th Annual Celebrity Gala & Golf Classic. There were many celebrities that came to take part in the event and support the efforts of the nonprofit organization, which strives to fight for the most vulnerable people (MVPs) in the local community and around the world. Some of the celebrities in attendance this year included Jacksonville Jaguars quarterback Trevor Lawrence, former Olympic gymnast Shawn Johnson and Rascal Flatts lead singer Gary LeVox.





# THE WOMEN'S FOOD ALLIANCE

## *Golden Pineapple Gala*

photos by **SHAUN RYAN**

**T**he Women's Food Alliance held its 10th anniversary Golden Pineapple Gala Dinner March 22 at Renaissance World Golf Village. The big night began with a cocktail reception and live music by celebrity guitarist Russ DeFilippis. Guests queued up to have whimsical pictures taken at the Toro Things photobooth, operated by Evelyn Toro. And they enjoyed a complimentary cocktail, "The Golden Pineapple," hosted by the Culhane Sisters and 5 Sisters Spirit Vodka.

Preceding and following dinner, Alliance founder Leigh Cort and master of ceremonies Bruce Hamilton presented awards to 18 women representing specific years in the organization's history. The evening concluded with members gathering around the cake and singing "That's What Friends Are For."

For information on the Women's Food Alliance, go to [leighcortpublicity.com/womens-food-alliance.htm](http://leighcortpublicity.com/womens-food-alliance.htm).



# SUMMER CAMPS OFFER VARIETY OF FUN TOPICS

Summertime is almost upon us, so it's time to start getting signed up for special classes and camps offered in our community. Here's a helpful list of the season's top offerings.

## FIRST COAST CULTURAL CENTER

For summer camp information, locations, pricing and registration, go to [firstcoastculturalcenter.org/arts-programs/summer-art-camps](http://firstcoastculturalcenter.org/arts-programs/summer-art-camps). Contact Toni Thomas at [tthomas@firstcoastculturalcenter.org](mailto:tthomas@firstcoastculturalcenter.org) or 904-280-0614 ext. 1206 if you have any questions.

"Imagination Vacation" camps and Summer Art Camps have a strong arts-and-crafts focus. All supplies

are included, but campers will bring their own snacks, lunches and water bottles.

### "Imagination Vacation"

Weekly, themed art camps will be held at the Cultural Center, 3972 Third St. South, Jacksonville Beach.

**Fairytale Land:** Campers will create fairytale-inspired art projects, exploring new twists on classic stories.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. May 30-June 1
- Where: Cultural Center
- Cost: \$190 (\$170 for members)

**Enchanted Forest:** Campers will create whimsical and nature-inspired art projects.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: June 12-15

- Where: Cultural Center
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

**Making Magic:** Campers will conduct fun art-inspired experiments, such as color-changing and invisible/surprise-reveal art projects.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: June 19-22
- Where: Cultural Center
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

**Merry Monsters:** Campers will create their own merry monster village using various artistic mediums throughout the week.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: June 26-29
- Where: Cultural Center
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

**Under the Sea:** The camp is all about ocean-inspired crafts, stories and songs, with an emphasis on magical and imaginary under-the-sea worlds ... and maybe a pirate or two.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: July 3, 5 and 6
- Where: Cultural Center
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

### Adventures in Time Travel:

Campers will create projects inspired by the past and the future. Each day they will "travel" through time to visit a different time period.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: July 10-13
- Where: Cultural Center

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23 ■



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## CAMPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 22

• Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

**Candy Land:** From candy-inspired crafts to gingerbread houses, Candy Land week is the sweetest week of camp.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. July 17-20
- Where: Cultural Center
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

**If I Were a Superhero:**

Campers will create their own class comic book and celebrate superheroes all week long. They will end the week celebrating real-life helper heroes in the community.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. July 24-27
- Where: Cultural Center
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

**Somewhere Over the Rainbow:**

This camp is inspired by all

things rainbow, from songs to crafts.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Aug. 7-9
- Where: Cultural Center
- Cost: \$190 (\$170 for members)

**Summer Art Camp**

These camps will be held at PVPV-Rawlings Elementary School, 610 S.R. A1A North, Ponte Vedra Beach.

**Camp Dinosaur:** Kids will learn about dinosaurs, make dino-inspired art and create their own class dinosaur world, complete with a volcano experiment.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. June 5-8
- Where: PVPV-Rawlings Elementary School
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

**Enchanted Forest:** Campers will create whimsical and

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 24 ■

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## CAMPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

nature-inspired art projects.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. June 12-15
- Where: PVPV-Rawlings Elementary School
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

**Merry Monsters:** Campers will create their own merry monster village using various artistic mediums throughout the week.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. June 26-29
- Where: PVPV-Rawlings Elementary School
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

**Under the Sea:** This camp is all about ocean-inspired crafts, stories and songs, with an emphasis on magical and imaginary under-the-sea worlds ... and maybe a pirate or two.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: July 3, 5 and 6
- Where: PVPV-Rawlings Elementary School
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

### Adventures in Time Travel

Campers will create projects inspired by the past and the future. Each day they will "travel" through time to visit a different time period.

- Ages: 5-11
- When: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. July 10-13
- Where: PVPV-Rawlings Elementary School
- Cost: \$250 (\$225 for members)

### Ready, Set, Act — Acting Camp

Students will learn all aspects of acting, such as improv, character analysis, stage movement, scene study, relaxation and theater games. On the final day of camp, parents will be invited to visit and watch campers perform monologues and skits.

- Ages: Kids 9+
- When: 9 a.m. to noon June 19-22
- Where: PVPV-Rawlings Elementary School
- Cost: \$145 (\$130 for members)

### Culinary Camp, Part 1

Kids will be introduced to age-appropriate cooking skills along with kitchen hygiene and other basics, introductory nutrition concepts and more. Each day campers will make a variety of dishes and explore new ingredients and foods. Make sure to contact the center about food allergies or dietary restrictions.

- Ages: 4-7
- When: 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. July 31 and Aug. 1
- Where: Cultural Center
- Cost: \$100

### Culinary Camp, Part 2

Kids will be introduced to age-appropriate cooking skills along with kitchen hygiene

and other basics, introductory nutrition concepts and more. Each day campers will make a variety of dishes and explore new ingredients and foods. Make sure to contact the center about food allergies or dietary restrictions.

- Ages: 8-11
- When: Aug. 2-4
- Where: Cultural Center
- Cost: \$150 (\$135 for members)

### Alhambra Theatre Camp

This is a two-week summer theater camp for aspiring actors or for those who want to experience the theater and acting. The camp is currently full, but a waitlist is available.

- Ages: 8-17
- When: June 12-23
- Where: The Alhambra Theatre, 12000 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville.
- Cost: \$560 (\$510 for members). Waitlist is free.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25 ■

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# CAMPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 24

## JOHN BEARD ART GALLERY

This new gallery, located at 110 Cumberland Park Drive No. 105, just off Old County Road 210 across from Beachwalk, will offer two weeklong **Kids' Summer Art Camps**, one in June and the other in July.

In this progressive paint camp, attendees will learn about painting tools — both traditional and nontraditional — as well as paint materials and mediums. Creative problem solving will be practiced during the create-your-own paint tool challenge. Campers will learn to apply various mediums (pastels, ink, chalk, acrylic, paint sticks, sand, etc.) to a large canvas, show their work at a Friday gallery show and take their art home to hang.

- Week 1: June 12-16 for

ages 6-13. Sales end June 9. Lunch and snack provided. Waiver and allergy forms will be emailed. Cost: \$285 for the week.

• Week 2: July 10-14 for ages 6-13. Sales end July 7. Lunch and snack provided. Waiver and allergy forms will be emailed. Cost: \$285 for the week.

Drop off time: 8:30 a.m.  
Pick-up time: 3 p.m.

The parent gallery show is from 11 a.m. to noon.

To sign up, go to [eventbrite.com/e/kids-summer-art-camp-tickets-479137401867](https://eventbrite.com/e/kids-summer-art-camp-tickets-479137401867).

### THE LINK

The link, 425 Town Plaza Ave., Ponte Vedra (in Nocatee), is offering several camps between June 5 and Aug. 4. Camps are open to members and nonmembers. To register, go to [thelink.zone/camps](https://thelink.zone/camps).

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39 ■



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To learn more about the school and its programming, go to **douglasandersonSOTA** on Facebook, or online at **da-arts.org**.

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TABLE TALK

# BELLA VISTA'S SECRET INGREDIENT: *Love*

story and photos by  
**LEIGH CORT**

**T**he popularity of Italian food today strikes a balance between the old guard and the new.

Giovanni Prignano, chef and proprietor of Bella Vista Italian Restaurant in Fruit Cove and his wife, Alysha, are honored to be new in Northeast Florida. They have, within a few short months, brought their authentic Italian cuisine to the booming dining scene — an exciting new family-inspired Italian restaurant that welcomes neighborhood friends by reservation, occasionally having room for a group that drops by. They care at Bella Vista, making you feel as if you've been welcomed into their family home in Sicignano Degli Alburni, wondering when you might meet members of la Famiglia.

Calling ahead for reservations and speaking with someone directly is a unique moment in this era of online booking. At Bella Vista, you might hear Giovanni's or Paolo's lyrical accents welcoming you to a choice table when you're ready to relax and enjoy the dining experience.

"The Beautiful View" (Bella Vista's meaning) began for Giovanni and Alysha when they met as strangers in New Jersey, when he spoke very little English. When Alysha asked Giovanni how long he had been in the United States, his reply was: "I'm 22 years old." Their friendship and romance are a charming story — something you feel when you glance around Bella Vista at family photos, their mural of the Italian countryside and spot a video of the narrow streets of Salerno.



Alysha and Giovanni Prignano, owners of Bella Vista Italian Restaurant in Fruit Cove.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Alysha and Giovanni Prignano at a castle in Sicignano Degli Alburni, Italy.

Born into a family of farmers and helping the family from the time he was a little bambino, by 9 years old Giovanni declared, "I'm going to be a chef." Giovanni always had an affinity for food and coming to America.

His love of food started with the

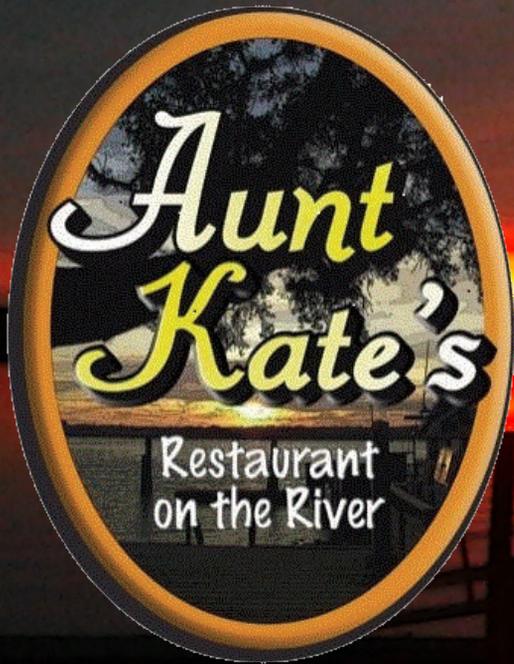
care that his family infused into their own home. His teen years were spent studying cooking until he came to the metro New York region where he worked in restaurants while learning how to speak English and meet his love, Alysha. Though he knew very little English, today it's evident that he's fearless and determined. His passion for cooking is the biggest force in his life. Alysha knows that "Giovanni isn't afraid of anything. If Giovanni could move across continents, we could make a change and move to Florida; I wanted this for both of us."

The intentionality of Giovanni's cooking was one aspect of her new husband that Alysha really admired. Their like-mindedness blossomed, making them a dynamic duo to leave the Northeast seeking warmer weather, lots of sunshine and an opportunity for Giovanni to combine all his restaurant and private chef experiences into their own business. When the opportunity knocked at their door, they happily brought together family members and local talent to help them open Bella Vista, where chef's philosophy reigns.

"Mine is a scratch kitchen. Everything made to order. Let me treat you to our best, like my mother and grandmother, Filomena."

Italian food reveals an ancient openness about cooking; food is wonderful when it's cooked with love. Bella Vista brings Giovanni's passion to the table. And who can create an Italian meal better than, well, an Italian? So many dishes on the menu are remarkable: Involtini di Melanzane

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 ■



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Flounder Francese

## BELLA VISTA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

(eggplant rollatini stuffed with ricotta), Polpetta Della Nonna (homemade meatballs served with ricotta) and many of chef's favorites: pastas! You must mangia with joy by ordering Pappardelle Bolognese, Gnocchi al Gorgonzola, or the irresistible Cacio E Pepe (fettuccine in a creamy sauce with black pepper tossed tableside in their

[ wine & dine ]

signature giant cheese wheel).

As if the lunch or dinner menu doesn't offer enough mouth-watering appetizers, seafood, pastas or meats (the Veal Milanese is utterly delectable as is the Chicken Marsala sautéed with mushrooms in a Marsala wine sauce), there are nightly specials that will tease you, too. Giovanni cooks with insatiable excitement and a spiritual reverence for each ingredient. He opened Bella Vista in a way that guests also feel his dedication to making his family proud with authentic origins like gathering olives on a beautiful late autumn day.

Alysha, Giovanni and the entire staff have so much to do to keep the restaurant flourishing. It opened in November and today sees a pulsating demand from fans who have recently found it.

The menu evolves daily depending on what is currently fresh and inspiring. Bella Vista has created the most incredible "family-style menu" that combines the culture of Italian dining with Old World hospitality. The best way to sample their menu is in parties



Bella Nice Pizza with Prosciutto, Burrata, Mozzarella

of four or more. And if you have seven or more in your party, the family-style menu is what you must enjoy. It's a culinary adventure, all named for regions of Italy like Sorrento, Positano and Amalfi.

A sampling of the Amalfi "feast" includes five appetizers, two pastas, two entrees and a grand assortment

CONTINUED ON PAGE 29 ■



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Calamari Fritti



Giovanni Prignano dishes out a pasta entre.

## BELLA VISTA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

of Italian desserts. Antipasto, caprese, New York-style pizza, eggplant rollatini, fried calamari to begin. Rigatoni Bolognese and Cacio e Pepe for your pasta course. Entrees might include Chicken Milanese or Chicken Parmigiana and Shrimp or Salmon Oreganata!

Then, imagine your celebration by adding unlimited house wine and beer to any family dinner (\$35, \$45 and \$55/pp) for only \$10/per person.

Ah, lunch in Italy — if you want to be transported for a lovely family dinner midday, Bella Vista serves lunch daily from 11 a.m. (closed on Mondays). All menu items are served throughout the day, but you might want to sample a Panini (sandwich) until 3:30 p.m. Chicken Sorrento (breaded fresh chicken, mozzarella and honey mustard), Eggplant Parmigiana sandwich with fresh basil or Meatball Parmigiana (homemade grandma-style meatballs, marinara, melted mozzarella, parmigiano cheese) are worth the visit.

I do occasionally dream of stumbling into a restaurant as if I had just landed in a small town in Italy, travel-weary and needing a bite to eat. That is exactly the overwhelming feeling and warm welcome that guests receive when they find Bella Vista. Food this good should be contemplated and consumed with a moment of silence. And if you need just a little extra piece of crusty bread to be dabbed into a dreamy pool of olive oil, herbs and garlic — don't be shy.

Alysha and Giovanni are still acting like newlyweds — but they don't need to pass their cell phones back-and-forth anymore to hunt for English and Italian translations as they did when they first met. Now they're busy making guests happy that they found this wonderful restaurant. And it's not necessary to know about the creation of every dish on chef's menu because it's mostly a language of love!

Learn more at [www.BellaVistaItalian.com](http://www.BellaVistaItalian.com).



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## ST. AUGUSTINE FOOD + WINE FESTIVAL SCHEDULE ANNOUNCED

The third annual St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival, named “One of Florida’s Top 10 Food & Wine Festivals” by USA Today, will take place on Florida’s Historic Coast, May 3-7.

The St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival, presented by Publix GreenWise Market, will once again be a showcase of culinary, beverage and culture that highlights celebrity guests chefs, local chefs, celebrity winemakers/proprietors, live music, artisans, farmers, local craft spirits and beers, along with renowned wine, spirits and beer brands from around the globe.

There are very limited tickets left available for some events.

New this year, all events include culinary and beverage samplings — including the Saturday, May 6, Grand Tasting. Nearly 40 restaurants and chefs from around the South and Northeast Florida are participating in events throughout the week of the festival, with more than 300 varieties of beverage tastings.

Some of the restaurants include: River & Fort, 1912 Ocean Bar & Rooftop/Sawgrass Marriott, Blacksheep Restaurant Group, The Reef, SoNapa Grille, Preserved Restaurant & Chop Shop Artisan Butcher, Johnny’s Oyster Bar/Meehan’s, Farmery, Hurricane Patty’s, Folklore, Peculiar Pig, Pi Artisan Pizza, Biscottis & BB’s, Sysco, Publix, First Coast Technical College, Atlantica.co and Legacy Gold BBQ, Heart & Soul Food Truck, One Hot Mama’s, The Darling, Vilano Main Street Diner and more.

The festival recently added the Champions Brands Craft Brews Alley for Smoke on the Walk and the Grand Tasting, which will showcase local

breweries and ciders throughout Northeast Florida.

Celebrity guests chefs include Jernard Wells, an award-winning TV host, celebrity chef and bestselling cookbook author, who will participate on the Publix Cooking Demo Stage on May 6.

Wells is the host of “New Soul Kitchen” and “New Soul Kitchen Remix” on CLEO TV. He is a contributor on “The Best Things I Ever Ate” on Cooking Channel and on “Food Fantasies” on Oprah Winfrey Network.

The World Golf Hall of Fame and the official hotel partner, World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine Resort, are the host location sites for the 2023 festival, located 20 minutes north of historic downtown St. Augustine and the beaches.

Events in St. Augustine’s historic district will take place at San Sebastian Winery and the Lightner Museum. The festival is being made possible in part by support from St. Johns Cultural Council and a 2023 St. Johns County Tourist Development Grant.

St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival Schedule of Events, which are subject to change, include:

- **May 3:** “River Walk Tastings” in the historic district at San Sebastian Winery and the Homewood Suites St. Augustine San Sebastian from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. There will be a trolley shuttle, live music and food and drink tastings at both venues, with culinary tastings from Norberto Jaramillo and Drake’s Catering. The progressive tasting tours begin at San Sebastian Winery.

- **May 4:** Harvest, Premium Wine Tasting & “Harvest Awards,” Lightner Museum, 75 King St., St. Augustine. The wine lover’s ultimate tasting event with

premium wines and showcase wine pairings, along with the festival’s select official beverages. The historic Lightner Museum, which is the centerpiece of St. Augustine’s historic district, provides the backdrop to tasting wines from around the world and sampling some of Northeast Florida’s best restaurants.

- **May 5:** “Cinco de Mayo Tacos & Tequila,” presented by Publix and Mijenta Tequila from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. at the World Golf Hall of Fame courtyard patio. Celebrate Cinco de Mayo with a festive and fabulous selection of tacos and signature tequila drinks.

- **May 5:** 6:30 to 8:30 p.m., “Smoke on the Walk,” presented by Sysco, the Florida Times-Union/Jacksonville.com and the The St. Augustine Record/staugustine.com. Location: Walk of Champions, 1 World Golf Place. This all-inclusive barbecue extravaganza is a showcase of the Southeast’s most celebrated pitmasters and grill masters with wine, beer and spirits along the Walk of Champions and live music from Remedy Tree. Enjoy unlimited beverage tastings in a souvenir glass, along with delicious grilled, smoked and roasted gourmet BBQ bites — all included with ticket price. Free parking. This is a 21-and-older-only event; no pets allowed.

- **May 6:** 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., “Rioja in the 21st Century,” with Ana Fabiano, at World Golf Hall of Fame Museum Tower. Rioja is recognized as one of the five greatest red wine regions in the world. Travel to Rioja through the glass and guide of Ana Fabiano, noted Rioja wine expert and author of the award-winning book, “The Wine Region of Rioja.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39 ■

# ST. AUGUSTINE'S MOST DELICIOUS WEEK OF FOOD & WINE MAY 3 – 7, 2023

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5/4/23, The Lightner Museum



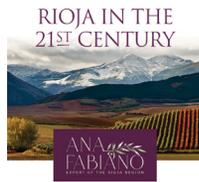
**CINCO DE MAYO,  
TACOS & TEQUILA**  
5/5/23, World Golf Hall Of Fame



**SMOKE ON THE WALK**  
5/5/23, World Golf Hall Of Fame



**GRILLING WITH ORCHID**  
PAULMEIER, 5/6/23



**RIOJA IN THE 21ST CENTURY**  
WITH ANA FABIANO, 5/6/23



**SATURDAY, GRAND TASTING**  
5/6/23, World Golf Hall Of Fame



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[ wine & dine ]

# JAY FUND WINE TASTING GALA RAISES RECORD TOTAL

photos courtesy of TOM COUGHLIN JAY FUND FOUNDATION

The Tom Coughlin Jay Fund Foundation held its annual wine tasting gala on March 2 at Venue 841 on the riverfront in downtown Jacksonville. The event raised a record \$331,000 to help the nonprofit in its continued mission of helping families in their fight against childhood cancer. More than 800 guests attended this year's event, as the night included a sampling of selections from top restaurants in the area as well as hundreds of wine choices.



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Citrus Distillers owner Dustin Skartved stands next to the three types of stills used during the company's distillation process.



Pumpkin pie and cranberry flavored whiskey are popular during the fall months.

# RAISE YOUR GLASSES

story and photos by  
**ANTHONY RICHARDS**

## Citrus Distillers develops brand one bottle at a time

**C**itrus Distillers has been bottling and branding alcohol for years, but three years ago Dustin and Nicki Skartved decided to start developing their own brand as well.

"We first started with our Citrus Distillers flavored whiskey and our first couple of products were lime and pecan flavored whiskeys," Dustin Skartved said.

Having years of experience in the distilling business is something Skartved believes has really helped them, and they have quickly made the most of their new adventure in the distilling world.

They have gotten to the point with retailers where their various flavors have become hits during certain times of the year, such as pumpkin pie whiskey and cranberry whiskey during the fall, while blueberry and orange flavored whiskeys are among the most popular during the summer months.

"We like doing things seasonal because it allows people to enjoy a variety of the flavors we offer, and we can continue to grow them," Skartved said. "We want to be the bourbon or whiskey

that people are drinking locally, and we pride ourselves in that."

Last year was the first time they created a Jacksonville Jaguars whiskey, which came in a special commemorative bottle, and they plan on doing that again this year.

"It takes about three months off and on of etching those bottles to get everything ready," Skartved said. "We'll start that project in June and probably switch to selling mode for them around August."

One of the challenges they have run into is a wood supply shortage, which has made it difficult for distillers because wooden barrels are used to house the alcohol.

"It has made it truly hard on distilleries because all the wood was dried up, and it's important that when they make a barrel, the wood has to sit outside and age for two years in the air before it can be used," Skartved said. "There are cooperages that have gone out of business because they just couldn't get any wood to make their barrels."

According to Skartved, the process of producing a perfect whiskey is one that can be deeply involved, and the aging process is perhaps the most important.

"We've got about 7,000 gallons of whiskey that we can't make," Skartved said. "It's pretty much just sitting there waiting to go into a barrel as we wait for this crazy shortage to come to an end.

We've been told it will be 2024 before we start getting barrels again."

The Citrus Distillery warehouse can house up to about 24,000 gallons, and they distill a variety of alcohol, such as vodka and rum and have the option to flavor it once it comes over to the facility's mixing tank.

There are different ways of distillation that can be used depending on the desired outcome of the alcohol being distilled. The most used is their copper-packed pot still.

"That still is used the most because the whole idea with that still is to strip the water out of everything, so the first run of almost everything is run through there, because once it runs through the copper, you basically strip all the sulfites and the water out," Skartved said.

They also have a column still, which is a 12 plate copper column primarily used for vodka and gin.

"When we run that, the plates help us get to 190 proof, which is key because vodka and gin both have to be run at 180 proof or over," Skartved said.

The last still that they use is their marble still, which has the sole function of concentrating the alcohol that is run through it. The marble still does not add or take away any flavor.

"We've done over 300-plus brands in the last 10 years, ranging anywhere from gins, bourbon to flavored vodka, Skartved said. "You name it."



The Dune Bar is convenient to anyone spending some relaxation time at the beach.

PHOTO PROVIDED BY RITZ-CARLTON

## PACK YOUR PORTMANTEAU

# A RECIPE FOR RELAXING LIKE ROYALTY

story and photos by **LEIGH CORT**

## Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island continues to demonstrate why it's a Top Resort

**M**ore than 30 years after the Ritz-Carlton opened its doors to the Atlantic Ocean on Amelia Island, the mystique of its appeal hasn't lost its luster.

If you have visited in the past for an overnight stay, dropped in for a day-visit to the spa, ordered a cocktail at the lobby bar or stayed for a 5-star dinner at SALT (which originally opened as The Grille), then you might recall a memorable experience like no other in Northeast Florida.

For first-time visitors, perhaps you wonder what the excitement is all about; but once you entrust your vehicle to the seasoned bellmen, they'll make you feel like royalty.

At first glance, the façade appears somewhat austere. But step inside and the glossy elegance that has come to define the resort's brand has truly

become what I've always believed it could be and just a bit more! There's a reason why this hotel is the recipient of two prestigious AAA Five Diamond designations, the travel authority's highest rating. In addition to the resort's lodging award, SALT is also honored for world-class service and imaginative menus.

Busy front desk check-ins are handled with graceful care, even including a flute of champagne if you're waiting to register on busy days. Concierge Steven and Michael keep guests feeling comfortable if you've arrived early, hearing a reassuring, "Please relax. I'm at your service while you're waiting for your room. May I offer you a beverage or an hors d'oeuvres at the Lobby Bar?"

Clearly, the broad expansive ocean vistas from every seat in the lobby feels like an elegant living room with fireplace, sofas and seating for conversation. Each vignette is perfect for relaxation from quiet sunrise mornings until late night partying ends. If you're an early riser, you can watch silhouettes walking along the beach or gathering on the oceanfront lawn with a steaming coffee from First Drop, the casual, easy walk-in and take-out

coffee bar serving pastries, snacks and informal fare throughout the day.

With accommodations featuring balconies either with an ocean vista or island view, they make in-room "fine" dining one of the best ways to relax in your room without worrying about a vacation alarm clock. The personalized service is ideal for the guest who likes to really enjoy the room. Weather permitting, food and beverages (from fine wines to imported teas that are poured for you if you choose) can be set up on your private balcony from 6 a.m. until midnight; stylish menus reflect the culinary excellence in all the Ritz's restaurants.

Voted among the Top Resorts in Florida by Travel+Leisure 2022 as World's Best Award and Conde Nast Traveler 2022 Readers' Choice Award, the Ritz-Carlton Amelia Island has been viewed in a respected echelon of vacation destinations for 30 years. There is a fine balance of luxurious accommodations, exquisite culinary adventures, island explorations on and off the beaten path, birding and nature excursions, kayaking and paddleboard

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35 ■

## RELAXING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 34

tours.

They are famous for creating memorable family fun with their renowned Ritz Kids Program of supervised games, crafts, movies, dinners, treasure hunts and themes that are offered for full- and half-day options. There are many planned activities if you're interested in cycling the numerous scenic, yet hidden, island bike paths — guided nature walks with a respected naturalist, hunting for shells and shark teeth with a hotel recreation team member.

Turn the page to wellness and explore the unforgettable spa that embodies a holistic approach to well-being amid the gentle rhythm of ocean waves. The menu of spa treatments is in their inspired and timeless setting to soothe and nourish. Treat yourself to something as stressless as "Heaven in a Hammock." It's 100 minutes that was created on Amelia Island to combine the benefits of "zero-gravity" and touch therapy in the gentle rocking motion of a hand-woven hammock. Just close your eyes and visualize the movement



Don't let the somewhat austere exterior deceive you. Inside, it's pure elegance.

of the tide with gentle masseuse hands creating a complete sense of comfort that connects your mind, body and spirit. The vibe at the Ritz-Carlton is all about blending in with the surrounding environment in a quiet, natural and stylish way.

For culinary fans who look forward to adventurous dining, this hotel doesn't disappoint. Rise early, slip into First Drop and take away an artisanal beverage. Then you should plan to enjoy at least one visit to their casual restaurant Coast for a lavish and savory Amelia Breakfast Buffet served until 11:30 a.m. Wear your beach attire, feel at home with flipflops or gather for

a family celebration. Everything is appropriate whether sitting indoors or on the covered outdoor verandah.

Keep in mind that there are seven totally unique dining options at the resort. With friends and family, enjoy Tidewater Grill; it's designed with a laidback nautical ambiance. Catch a game on large screen TVs, share seafood and American grill classics, discover local beers and signature cocktails.

A day at the beach should always include a visit to the Dune Bar — perfectly named for its rustic dune-side breezy style a few steps from the sand. Craft beer, casual order bites from the grill and a place to play cornhole, too. Weather permitting here!

A favorite gathering place for many years is their expansive magnificent lobby with The Lobby Bar as its centerpiece. Yes, it's a vibrant atmosphere, rather sophisticated and romantic. Each made-to-order sushi presentation and other bites are served with utmost pride from mid-afternoon to late night partying! It's known for a wonderful 5:45 p.m. daily gathering where you can experience "First Call,"

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36 ■

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## RELAXING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 35

a presentation of infused bourbons. Musicians fill the lobby with marvelous listening-and-dancing music where



Retail Director  
Nailah Nash

you can savor The Smoked Old Fashioned; both are worthy of adding to your vacation planner. Dressing up is a wonderful reason to pack your favorite evening dress or dinner jacket, although there isn't a formal dress code, only suggested if you're planning to indulge in the stunning "night to remember" SALT. For these special occasions, a visit to the resort's Luxe Shops is recommended. Retail director Nailah Nash continues to search the globe for the best designers and distinctive luxury items that you might not find anywhere else. Each season, she and her retail team always have recommendations for a new outfit, designer accessory or holiday gift.

The most unusual facet of shopping

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A tasty dessert at SALT.

here is working with one of the 10 on-property professional personal shoppers who are available either when you walk in or make an appointment while on vacation.

Nash flies around the United States just to study luxury retail establishments to make sure that the Ritz-Carlton, Amelia Island stands above.

SALT is a kaleidoscopic dining voyage! Today's fashionable chefs are cooking with more exotic salt, which doesn't mean it's going to taste salty — especially with their magical colors, salt flakes and tiny crystals. It's no surprise that the Ritz-Carlton's radiant restaurant embraces this global phenomenon. SALT's Chef Okan

Kizilbayir spares no culinary wizardry to thrill his guests and the professional service makes you feel as if you're a foreign dignitary.

If you have a daring palate, the Chef's Seafood Adventure lives up to its name with five courses and paired wines. Each stunning dish features the finest ingredients of the season. The chef's choices change daily, but imagine beginning with Osetra Caviar and a sweet harmonious ending of Paris Brest for dessert. The overall dinner screenplay includes masterful sommeliers whether selecting a full-length show or just one magnificent act featuring an entrée and champagne! SALT is a work of art.

Alas, it's time to leave the "Ladies and Gentlemen Serving Ladies and Gentlemen." There is no mystery about why Amelia Island's legendary resort is continuing in the traditions that impressed us decades ago. Everyone's warm and sincere greeting extended to the fond farewell reminds us that this sweet getaway does enliven the senses for a moment in time. I can't wait to crave another "squiggle of raspberry puree next to my warm lime beignet!"



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## TWO OF US

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

training without his leadership and knowledge.

**Ben:** I should mention that Mom was there all the time working in the store.

**Dan:** The two of them were ... a “dynamic duo.” They were married for 67 years.

### What should people know when they are looking for a piece of jewelry, a diamond or a watch?

**Dan:** It’s not so much what you would have to know as who you know.

**Ben:** You should be comfortable with who you’re dealing with. If you’re not, then you’re not going to feel right about any of the answers anyway. Same thing as with a doctor. When you go to see a doctor, you’ve got to feel comfortable with him. With a jeweler, you should feel the same way.

### What do you like about what you do?

**Ben:** That I never know what’s coming through the door next when it comes to the estate jewelry. There’s some new, exciting treasure showing up. And then, the history behind it, the story behind it; I think of it like the “Relic Hunter,” where it’s just something new and unknown.

Sometimes it takes research to figure out: What is it?

**Dan:** I like that every jewel tells a story. Its whereabouts and the life it’s had and the life it’s shared with the person who owned it.

**Ben:** We look at diamonds all the time, and you can look at the cut of the diamond and often tell the time period, the history ... Maybe the wear where it’s been rubbing on another stone, which would have to be another diamond.

**Dan:** I think you can come in contact with something that will certainly outlast your being. If you’ve found something that’s already 100 years old and it lasts another 100, it transcends your existence.

**Ben:** When somebody brings it in and you have a look and say, well, is this a reproduction or is this something that was pieced together with stuff from 150 years ago and then redone maybe 30, 40 years ago? When did they first use white gold, and what metals did they use in the 1800s vs. the 20th century?

### Are you from Jacksonville originally?

**Dan:** I was actually born here.

**Ben:** I’m about three years outside of being a native.

### Where were you born?

**Ben:** Charlotte, North Carolina.

**Dan:** We were both raised in Jacksonville, and we live in this Jacksonville community.

**Ben:** We both surfed this area, fished all through the Intracoastal and the ocean. I played music up and down here: art walks and things, restaurants here in Jax Beach.

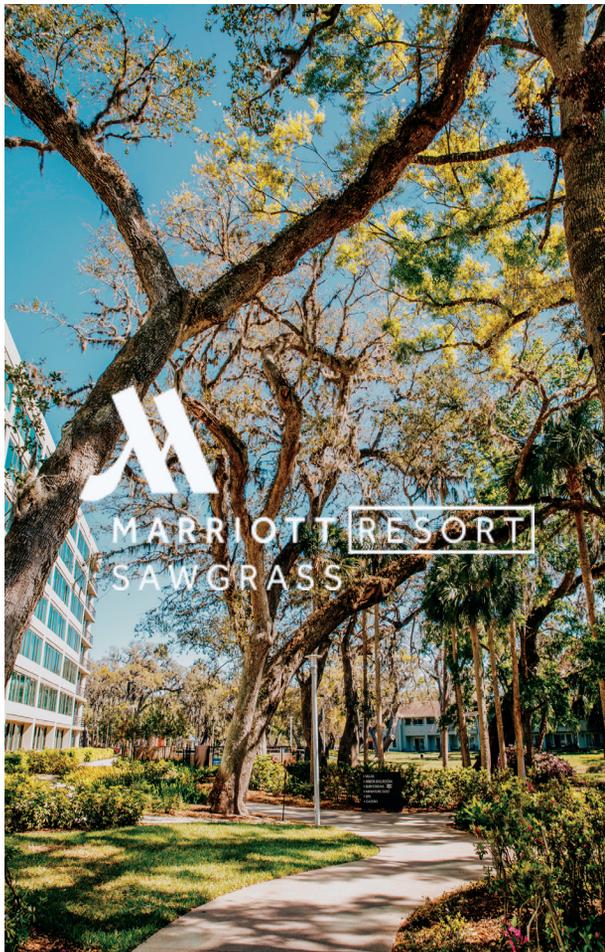
### What do you play?

**Ben:** Guitar, harmonica. I sing. I played a couple of seasons at Billy’s Boat House. Also played at European Street as an open mic host. Played a lot of different restaurants out here, including Culhane’s and Poe’s in Atlantic Beach.

### What do you like most about living in the Jacksonville area?

**Dan:** I love the weather. I like the outdoors that we have here. It’s great for hiking. I like cooking outdoors, grilling and all that. And the people here. It’s a friendly kind of town.

**Ben:** Weather and outdoors — and anything to do with water. Recently, I have found a lot of good hiking, not only at the parks, but our zoo’s pretty good, too. So is going down to St. Augustine and some of the hiking there, like at the Alligator Farm. I enjoy visiting and revisiting those places.



# Spring Time AT SAWGRASS



### Mother's Day Brunch at Vernon's First Coast Kitchen & Bar

Celebrate Mother's Day with a bountiful  
brunch buffet and a gorgeous view!

*Sunday, May 14, 2023 10am - 3pm*



### Spring Time Spa Special at Sawgrass Spa

Cocoa Vino Facial, 50min \$165  
With powerhouse enzymes to boost your  
natural defenses against the look of wrinkles.

*Through May 31, 2023*

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# THE AMELIA HOLDS 28TH ANNUAL AUTOMOBILE SHOWCASE

photos courtesy of **THE AMELIA**



The following are photos from the 2023 The Amelia Concours d'Elegance from the grounds of the Ritz-Carlton in Amelia Island. The famed event was a car lovers paradise with automobiles that spanned generations on display with roughly 25,000 enthusiasts taking part in the two-day showing. A 1935 Voisin C25 Aerodyne won best in show Concours d'Elegance, while a 1964 Ferrari 250 LM was named best in show Concours de Sport at this year's event.



## FESTIVAL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

This authentic European wine region embodies ancient, classic and modern grape-growing and wine-making that is steeped in heritage, tradition and cutting-edge innovation. This class and tasting will range from whites to aged reds and will educate, entertain and empower your palate and wine experience in life. Tasting bites will be paired with these wines.

• **May 6:** 2-5 p.m. "St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival" Main Event, at Walk of Champions, World Golf Hall of Fame, 1 World Golf Place, St. Augustine.

An afternoon of culinary and beverage tastings with live music in the beautiful lakefront surroundings of the Walk of Champions, the centerpiece of the World Golf Hall of Fame. Tickets include a souvenir cup for unlimited beverage tastings from hundreds of wine, beer and spirit exhibitors, artisans, Publix Cooking Demo Stage, Jacksonville Magazine Music Stage with Chillula, Edible Northeast magazine's People's Choice Harvest Awards, presented by Sysco and more.

Here's the Publix Cooking Demo Stage, presented by The Local Palate magazine, schedule: 2:15 to 3 p.m., Ansley Kinchen, senior managing chef, Publix Aprons Cooking School; 4 to 4:30 p.m., Sysco Team; 4:30 to 5:00 p.m., Jernard Wells, award-winning chef/author and TV personality.

• **May 8:** 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., "The Jazz Brunch" (family-friendly event), St. Johns County Convention Center, 500 S. Legacy Trail, St. Augustine.

The Jazz Brunch is one like no other with an all-inclusive priced ticket featuring live music, brunch buffet with carving station, indulgent sides, made-to-order omelet station, seafood station and a variety of desserts. Bloody mary bar, champagne, mimosas, and a host of unlimited beverage stations from the festival's partners include wine, beer, spirits beverage tasting stations inside the brunch — coffee, iced tea and soft drinks beverages included.

There are still some behind-the-scenes volunteer opportunities available, including assisting celebrity guests, pouring beverages, etc. Volunteers can earn free tickets to events as well, for more information go to [staugustinefoodandwinefestival.com/](http://staugustinefoodandwinefestival.com/) volunteer.

The most up-to-date festival information is available at [staugustinefoodandwinefestival.com](http://staugustinefoodandwinefestival.com).

## CAMPS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

### Healthy Hands Cooking Camp

Chef Corina Danielson will cover a variety of topics such as kitchen preparedness, kitchen safety, proper food handling, hygiene, cross-contamination, measuring and proper food storage.

For ages 6-12.

Seven morning sessions open (9 a.m. to noon): June 12-16, June 19-23, June 26-30, July 10-14, July 17-21, July 24-28, July 31-Aug. 4

Eight afternoon sessions open (1-4 p.m.): June 5-9, June 12-16, June 19-23, June 26-30, July 10-14, July 17-21, July 24-28, July 31-Aug. 4

### Dance & Tumble Summer Camp

Kids will learn and practice basic dance and tumble skills under the guidance of experienced and qualified instructors. Pack a snack and bring a refillable water bottle for your camper. No nuts.

Cost for each five-day session is \$250.

For ages 5+

Two sessions from 9 a.m. to noon: June 12-16, June 26-30.

### LEGO Robotics

Lego Robotics focuses on building robots and other vehicles and programming them to move and perform tasks. Campers develop skills in spatial reasoning, problem-solving, creativity and critical thinking. Pack snacks, lunch and bring a refillable water bottle for your camper. No nuts.

Cost for each five-day session is \$350.

For ages 7-12.

Five sessions open (9 a.m. to 4 p.m.): June 12-16, July 10-14, July 17-21, July 24-28, July 31-Aug. 4

### Olympic Style Fencing

Coach Alan Chernomashentsev has more than 30 years of fencing and coaching experience, has won several medals and was ranked second in Veteran Men's Foil in 2018 by USA Fencing.

Pack a snack and bring a refillable water bottle for your camper.

Cost for each five-day session is \$250.

For ages 6-13.

Two sessions from 9 a.m. to noon: June 5-9, Aug. 7-11.

### SAPNA Summer Creativity Camp

Throughout the week, kids will have the opportunity to participate in various art projects, immersive (virtual) field trips, creative storytelling, real world math, hands-on science/engineering activities, interactive games, imaginative play, performance art and more.

Cost for each five-day session is \$250.

For ages 5-8:

9 a.m. to 1 p.m. June 5-9, June 12-16, June 19-23, June 26-30, July 10-14, July 17-21, July 24-28, July 31-Aug. 4

For ages 8-12:

1-4 p.m. June 5-9, June 12-16, June 19-23, June 26-30, July 10-14, July 31-Aug. 4

### Special Sapna Summer Creativity Camp

Cost: \$900. Offers expire April 15.

Two morning sessions (9 a.m. to 1 p.m.): June 5-30, July 10-Aug. 4. Ages: 5-8.

One afternoon session (1-4 p.m.) July 10-Aug. 4. Ages 8-12.

### LIMELIGHT THEATRE

Limelight Theatre, located at 11 Old Mission Ave., St. Augustine, offers theatre instruction for ages 5 to 18 in the KidzFACTory program, with fully staged shows, workshops, day camps, summer camps and outreach programs at area schools and organizations.

To register, go to [limelight-theatre.org/youth-programs](http://limelight-theatre.org/youth-programs).

### KidzSing Under the Sea!

Go under the sea through song, dance and costuming. This summer camp will culminate in a 10- to 15-minute free showcase for friends and family.

• Ages: K+

• When: Noon to 3 p.m. June 5-9, plus show.

• Cost: \$200

### KidzSing Broadway Babies! A Cabaret for Kids

• Ages: Grades 3+

• When: 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays, June 5-16, plus show

• Cost: \$450

### Finding Nemo Jr.

A 60-minute musical adaptation of the 2003 Pixar movie "Finding Nemo."

• Ages: Grades 4+

• When: Weekdays, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. June 19-July 14 and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. July 10-14, plus show

• Where: Kirk Auditorium, Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind.

• Cost: \$450.

### KidzSing Disney Week

This summer camp will culminate in a 10- to 15-minute free showcase for friends and family.

• Ages: K+

• When: Noon to 3 p.m. June 19-23, plus show

• Cost: \$200

### The Spongebob Musical

• Ages: Grade 8+

• When: Weekdays, 2-5 p.m. June 26-July 21 and 1-5 p.m. July 17-21, plus show

• Cost: \$525

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

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From the moment you reach out to Creeks Air Conditioning and Heating you will recognize their professionalism and commitment to service are superior in the industry. The polite voice answering your call will reassure and work proficiently to accommodate answering your questions while placing your needs as their priority. From sales to installation, the representatives of Creeks Air Conditioning and Heating demonstrate their excellence in every aspect of their profession. I have called upon them on two separate occasions in two different homes (never the same unit) over the past 15 years and will continue to use them if I need HVAC repair or replacement. - DC Junior



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