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Business Weekly
Featuring Dollars & Sense
Page 23

Thursday, January 4, 2024

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Initiative to battle bigotry

By Shaun Ryan

Recent events have laid bare a growing antisemitism across the nation. Many of the boldest examples have occurred in places traditionally associated with scholarship and a respect for diverse cultures and opinions: college campuses.

But expressions of hate have not been confined to institutions of higher learning. Neither do they target a single group of people.

Now, local community leaders from diverse backgrounds are implementing an initiative launched in 2020 by UF Hillel to combat antisemitism and all forms of hate, a

INITIATIVE continues on Page 3



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

Providing the gifts of hope, kindness

MaliVai Washington Foundation spreads holiday spirit through community

By Anthony Richards

The MaliVai Washington Foundation does its part in giving back to the community in a variety of ways, and one of those traditions is its annual toy drive known as the Holiday Angels program.

This year, gifts were donated, gathered and delivered to more than 300 children who are considered to be in low-income or at-risk situations.

According to Terri Florio, executive director at the MaliVai Washington Foundation, the ability to give every child and families the sense of true holiday spirit by letting them know someone cares about them and that they are not alone is the ultimate goal of the Holiday Angels program.

"We've been doing this since 2000," Florio said. "It's kind of morphed from the 27 kids we had in our program in 2000, to now 23 years later and serving 200 kids and nearly 150 families."



Photo by Anthony Richards

The MaliVai Washington Foundation held its annual Holidays Angels program recently.

Every child that asked for a toy in the program gets at least a new toy, a new pair of sneakers and a new outfit, but sometimes donors will buy a couple of each thing listed.

"It's a nice time of the year for the community to come together and do something nice for someone who might not have as

much as they do," Florio said.

The foundation's main office and center is located at 1055 West Sixth Street in Jacksonville.

"This is an incredibly challenged area with the highest violent crime and homi-

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BRIEFS

\$1M project to add parking, ADA-accessible walkover to park

St. Johns County is moving forward with plans to provide a new ADA-accessible beach walkover and additional off-beach parking at Crescent Beach Park, 6930 A1A S., St. Augustine. The walkover and expanded parking will use the space previously occupied by the South Beach Grill. St. Johns County purchased the restaurant's former location at 45 Cubbedge Road, St. Augustine, for \$2 million in June 2022.

The project budget is \$995,000 from the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget, which includes \$145,000 for demolition and design and \$850,000 for construction. Demolition of the site is ongoing, with the project expected to be completed by the end of 2024.

Palm Valley Market every Tuesday

The Palm Valley Market is held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. every Tuesday inside the Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Road. The market offers fresh produce, baked goods, local honey, tea, seasonal treats, soap, jewelry, plants and more.

Republican Party meeting set

A St. Johns County Republican Party District 4 meeting will be held at 6:15 p.m. Jan. 18 at Palm Valley Community Center, 148 Canal Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach.

Democratic Club to meet

The Ponte Vedra Democratic Club will hold its monthly meeting on Jan. 22 at the Ponte Vedra Library, 101 Library Road. Chat and chew at 5:30 p.m., meeting at 6 p.m. Featured speaker will be Donna Deegan, mayor of the City of Jacksonville. For more information, go to PVDemClub@gmail.com.

Author to speak at Jewish Historical Society event

On Jan. 29, The St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society will host Robert I. Blau, an American career foreign service officer and author of "The Oldest City's Oldest Synagogue, a History of the St. Augustine, Florida, Jewish Community."

The one-hour presentation will begin at 4 p.m. and take place at the Main Library, 1960 N. Ponce De Leon Blvd., in St. Augustine. All are welcome to this event. There is no charge. For best directions call the Main Library at 904-827-6940 or go to sjcpls.org. For further information

about the St. Augustine Jewish Historical Society, go to sajhs.com or call 804-914-4460.

Woman's Club plans masquerade ball

The Ponte Vedra Woman's Club will hold a Masquerade Ball on Feb. 17 at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall. The event will benefit five local charities. It will be hosted by Toni Foxx of Easy 102.9 morning show. Tickets will be available soon via Ticketmaster. Admission is \$125 per person through Jan. 31, \$150 per person from Feb. 1-16, and \$175 at the box office on the day of the event.

For further information, go to: pontevedrawomansclub.com/info.php?pnun=86558a36b25e75.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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Initiative

Continued from 1

good-will effort called Spread Cream Cheese Not Hate®.

Each January, Jewish and non-Jewish student volunteers invite others at the University of Florida to sign a pledge to combat hate and to keep the community safe and welcoming. In return, they receive a free bagel and cream cheese. The bagel is a way to help break the ice, to start a conversation, to ultimately build a coalition of people working together toward this common

goal.

The goal is to promote tolerance and understanding among people from different backgrounds.

Last year, Tammy Shumer and Karen Freedman, then-co-presidents of Beth El The Beaches Synagogue, learned of an initiative by The B'nai Tzedek Next Gen Grant Making Committee of the Jewish Federation & Foundation of Northeast Florida to support programming that would combat antisemitism, bias and hate. They saw an opportunity to partner with the surrounding community to implement the Spread Cream Cheese Not Hate® initiative.

Christ Church, Palms Presbyterian, JaxTHRIVE and students from UNF have joined the effort, and more than 50 volunteers have been trained to encourage dialogue and education about the issue.

The churches are planning pledge events this month (with a goal of 1,000 pledges), and the initiative will commence with a kick-off dinner featuring guest speakers as well as teen leaders from Ponte Vedra High School, Landrum Middle School, Episcopal High School and Bolles High School. There will be follow-up educational programs in February.

“We feel these actions will demonstrate the strength of our community in standing against antisemitism and all forms of hate and have the potential to make a meaningful impact,” Freedman wrote in an article for Jewish Life Magazine.

Members of the community not affiliated with the participating churches can still take the pledge online at <https://form.jotform.com/233165102944148>. Signers can claim their free bagel and cream cheese between 10:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. Jan. 28 at Trasca & Co., 155 Tourside Drive, No. 1500, Ponte Vedra Beach.



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Pictured from left are Susie Menaged, director of development, The Jewish Family & Community Services; Stephen Heywood, president, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Florida Jacksonville East Stake; Colleen Rodriguez, CEO, The Jewish Family & Community Services; and Marilyn Darius, financial assistance/food pantry supervisor, Max Block Food Bank, JFCS. The donation was received at the JFCS main office.



Tour of the Frisch Family Holocaust Memorial Gallery, inside the JFCS Facility.

Contributed photos

Interfaith donation helps to meet community housing needs

Latter-day Saint Charities, the humanitarian arm of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, recently donated funds to The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services (JFCS) to provide local struggling individuals and families, including seniors, with housing assistance.

The one-time payment is estimated to provide assistance to more than 80 households over the next year in the Jacksonville area. The goal is to allow households to remain in their current housing accommodations, wherever possible.

“Emergency financial assistance is the heart of JFCS wraparound care, keeping families safe, together and in their homes,”

said JFCS Chief Executive Officer Colleen Rodriguez. “For families struggling with poverty, whether generational or situational, housing stability is a top barrier to family safety and wellbeing.”

Flexible funding from Latter-day Saint Charities will allow The JFCS to directly address the range of needs of families in crisis and help them achieve housing stability. This funding will allow JFCS to meet people where they are and provide the support that makes sense for each individual family. Whether it’s rent, utilities, a car repair, prescription assistance or a GED program, it’s a win for the entire family. With support tailored to each fam-

ily, JFCS can help families build the skills and resources to achieve and maintain true housing stability.

Latter-day Saint Charities is committed to supporting local nonprofit organizations with interfaith efforts to achieve the greatest good. JFCS met the criteria for support due to their long-standing impact in this area and the impressive programs in place to help those in need in many ways.

“JFCS stood out to us as an organization in alignment with our charitable goals,” said Stephen Heywood, president of the Florida Jacksonville East Stake of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “I am so pleased we were able to

facilitate this support.”

As a separate initiative, the two organizations have also collaborated to provide food assistance to the JFCS’ registered program participants. In 2022 the Max Block Food Pantry served more than 174,699 meals to more than 19,000 clients.

“We could not be more grateful to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for their partnership and incredible generosity,” said Rodriguez. “Through this most recent impactful gift we are able to continue our work, preventing homelessness for the most vulnerable in the community.”



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Berta Odom is the current chair for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors. She is also a Realtor with RE/MAX 100 Realty.

Berta Odom

As told to Shaun Ryan

Tell me about your background. Where are you from originally and how did you get into real estate?

I was born and raised in St. Augustine, so am extremely proud of my community and what it is all about. I worked for State Farm Insurance for over 30 years, and when I retired, I decided to come back “home.”

After a few years I realized that there had to be a way for me to get “reacquainted” with my community. Real estate had always been an interest of mine, so I decided to pursue another career in real estate. Now after 20 years in the business I still enjoy it today.

I have been fortunate to serve as the president of the Board of Realtors for two years, 2020 and 2021, as well as many other designations regarding real estate.

Do you specialize in a specific geographic region or type of property?

I primarily do residential in all of St. Johns County and surrounding counties. I feel that I know residential and should stay in my lane of what I know best. There are too many other good Realtors that specialize in commercial, etc. that I can refer business out to.

What do you like best about your career?

So much! The wonderful and different people that I get to help, and some have become very good friends to this day. The flexibility is also a plus. After being in the business for 20 years I have a lot of repeat business or referrals from them.

You are the new chair for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce. Do you have anything specific you plan to focus on in the coming year? Are there some significant issues that the Chamber will take up during that time?

Yes, continuing to work on attainable housing for St. Johns County. We commissioned a study and a “white” paper; people can find the results on our website. Please encourage residents and businesses to join our coalition, explaining that by joining the coalition they are just stating that they agree that having attainable housing in St. Johns County is important for our economic growth.

One of the ways to plan for attainable housing in the long run is to use the Comprehensive Plan and Future Land Use Map, which is fully updated every 25 years. The Chamber is looking forward to working with the county consultant and providing recommendations from the Chamber’s Comp Plan Committee as the new plan needs to be updated by 2025.

We will continue our goal to become an autism-certified tourist destination. And we will end the fiscal year celebrating our 120 years!

I understand that post-COVID there have been some new, mostly small businesses opening up. Describe some of the reasons these new business owners — or even not-so-new ones, for that matter — should consider becoming members of the Chamber.

If you own or operate a business in St. Johns County and want to grow it, you should be a member of the Chamber. Joining the Chamber strengthens business credibility as you become a member of the second-largest, broad-business organization in the region with more than 1,000 members. Joining the Chamber improves



Contributed photo

your business visibility through connections and networking with other business owners and exposure in the community through board service.

I hear often members saying: “The quality and the number of connections I have made through the Chamber is not achievable on my own.” They go further saying: “It would have taken me at least a couple of years to expand my network and only took me a few months with the Chamber.”

We accelerate the connections businesses are able to make and provide a platform for business owners to meet decision makers. In addition to that we advocate for businesses and drive prosperity with our economic development and public policy influence to ensure this community is conducive for businesses to expand and

relocate to.

What do you like best about living here on the First Coast?

What is not to like! First Coast offers beaches, national parks, history and let’s not forget the beautiful weather!

How do you like to spend your free time?

Being a Realtor and a Chamber member, there is always something to do. When my twin grandsons are in town, we hit the beach and enjoy our beautiful community. Six months out of the year I volunteer for Turtle Patrol; I do my part to help save the sea turtles. Volunteering is something that I enjoy and is the most fulfilling.



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Santa Paws visits K9s

Santa Paws has been busy delivering the good law enforcement K9s on the First Coast their favorite dog toys, thanks to the community's help. For the past seven years, 12-year-old Emma Johnson, "Santa Paws," has spent her Christmas Eve dressed up with her parents delivering dog toys to the First Coast four-legged crime fighters who protect and serve their communities. This year is no exception as the Johnson family dressed up as "National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation" characters and arrived in a Cousin Eddie-style RV to make the deliveries. New this year: The community's elves who shopped Santa Paws' Amazon link helped provided even more toys.

Yacht Club marks 150 years

2024 marks the 150th anniversary for the St. Augustine Yacht Club.

Founded in 1874, its membership now exceeds 250. A SAYC Sailing Center focused on the youth living in and around St. Augustine is currently under construction as the sailing program grows.

On Feb. 13, the club will host a Grand Masquerade Ball, mimicking those elegant affairs held in the late 1800s. A black tie and masked event such as this has not been seen in St. Augustine for some time now.

Dinner will be catered by Purple Olive with cocktail hour entertainment by classical guitarist Chuck Rogers, with his wife Laura accompanying him on the flute. Later in the evening, attendees will dance the night away to live band music by Contact Buzz.

The ball will be held 6-10 p.m. at River House. Tickets are \$150. Both members and the public are invited.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, the club was referred to as the Winter Newport because so many prominent northern families came here for "the season," January through May. The club became renowned for its parties. The most famous was the "Grand Bal Masque," held each February at a hotel. It "eclipsed anything of the season," according to one scribe. Two hundred attendees, many of them masked, would dance to an orchestra until 2 a.m.

For information or tickets, go to staugustineyachtclub.com/event/xkjUpSXibM.



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Gifts

Continued from 1

cide rates in the city,” Florio said. “A lot of our kids witness or are around a lot of that stuff, so to bring some holiday joy is really important to us.”

It has been a busy time of year for the MaliVai Washington Foundation, which began around Thanksgiving, when they sorted food items for families instead of toys.

Other events the nonprofit was a part of during December were the ability for children in the program to shop with a Jacksonville Jaguars player, where the children had the opportunity to shop not just for themselves but also for their family members.

“We also had children drink smoothies with Josh Allen here on Monday (Dec. 18), but this is truly the culmination of our holiday season. Every day you look at it and wonder how it’s all going to get done, but at the end of the day the kids are happy, and the families are happy.”

The support from the community is key to helping make sure the programs are a success, and the volunteers that helped

both gather and deliver gifts mean the world to Florio and the foundation’s staff.

Another sign of that support is that the Furyk & Friends Foundation gave some of the food collected during its “Hope for the Holidays” food drive to the MaliVai Washington Foundation to disperse to its families in need.

“We’re blessed that we are able to provide a helping hand to those families that have a need or request help over the holidays,” Florio said. “We’re still kind of a well-kept secret, in that we’re not as big as some of the other organizations in town, which means for us it’s a way to expose more people to all the things that we do through their involvement.”

The Holiday Angels program is one of the many MaliVai Washington Foundation events held throughout the year, and some volunteers are regulars that have been helping offer support for years.

“There are a lot of different ways for us to involve the community and for them to donate or give back with their time,” Florio said.

Homework assistance, life skills classes and fitness activities, such as tennis, are just some of the services the foundation offers throughout the year.



Volunteers help organize gifts.

Photo by Anthony Richards

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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

Celebrate the new year with flowers

"The new year stands before us, like a chapter in a book, waiting to be written." — Melody Beattie

By Kathy Esfahani



Kathy Esfahani

Happy 2024! With the arrival of the new year, we make many fresh starts in our lives. Be sure to include flowers in your plans! Many blooms symbolize luck or new beginnings and are, therefore, perfect for centerpieces, decorations or just new additions to your home.

- Orchids represent luck, wealth, abundance, luxury and beauty. They are available in a variety of colors and make a thoughtful gift. An orchid prefers a bright environment, but not direct sunlight, and requires little maintenance other than proper watering.
- Daffodils are traditional symbols of new beginnings or rebirth. Although many associate these blooms with spring, they are also a popular gift for the new year — just be sure to give more than one as some believe a single daffodil bloom symbolizes bad luck!
- Lotus flowers submerge into the water and mud around them at the end of each day but blossom again the following morning as a beautiful bloom above the water.

Photo provided by Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery



Flower of the Week

Orchid

Their waxy petals do not hold the mud, producing a clean, bright bloom each day. For these reasons, a lotus flower is a symbol of rebirth and purity, but they also represent wealth, peace, grace and devotion.

- Calla lilies symbolize youth, purity and new beginnings. Their name comes from the Greek word for beauty, and the blooms have silky, elegant petals. The white calla lily is most recognizable and often used in wedding bouquets. However, these flowers are available in a variety of colors including yellow (meaning friendship),

- black (meaning mystery) and purple (meaning royalty).
 - Alstroemeria represents fortune, prosperity and wealth. It is also known as the Peruvian lily and features a trumpet-shaped bloom. These flowers are wonderful additions to arrangements as they can last up to two weeks when cut.
 - Hyacinth flowers are signs of new beginnings and change, but they are also used in Christian churches to symbolize joy and love. A hyacinth plant has long leaves and one to three spikes full of purple/blue flowers. They have a pleasant scent but contain oxalic acid that can cause skin irritation (be sure to wear gloves if working with the blooms).
 - Peonies represent prosperity, innocence, dignity and compassion. Red blooms in particular are symbols of good luck and are, therefore, often seen in gifts or decorations around New Year's. Peonies produce large blooms in a variety of colors.
- Happy new year!

Flower of the Week: Orchid

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 and ideas, visit Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery, 196 N. Roscoe Blvd. The phone number is 904-655-7373.



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Jimmy Jam BBQ Slam returns Saturday, Jan. 6

The Jimmy Jam BBQ Slam is returning to the St. Johns County Fairgrounds on Saturday, Jan. 6, for a day filled with smoke, music and a new addition, a throwdown of the best chowder around. It is presented in partnership with title sponsor MasterCraft Builder Group.

The Jimmy Jam BBQ Slam is named for James Wray, affectionately called Jimmy Jam by his many friends. He managed the Betty Griffin thrift store in St. Augustine, which helps fund the Betty Griffin Center. The center provides a safe and secure shelter for victims and survivors of domestic or sexual assault.

Wray had a deep passion for helping others and continued doing so up until his death from cancer. His love for barbecue and cars helped inspire the event. Every dollar raised by the Jimmy Jam BBQ Slam continues his philanthropic work, helping members of the community who find themselves in need.

While the BBQ takes center stage, there are plenty of fun activities for the whole family. Everyone will flip over the car show, featuring classic cars, trucks and motorcycles. Trophies will be presented to the finest rides. A cornhole tournament kicks off at noon. Competitors can register beginning at 11 a.m. for \$25 per person. The kid's zone will provide hours of entertainment for the littlest guests while more than 50 local vendors offer an array of goods, from datil sauce and candy to art, candles and jewelry.

Live music provides the soundtrack for a day of barbecue, cars and fun. Beginning at 11 a.m.,



performers include Orlando Mendez, David Loose, Rambler Kane, Skin & Bonz, Kirk Whalen and Stephen Quinn.

A selection of drinks, cold beer and various food trucks will be on-site to quench your thirst and stave off hunger until the BBQ is ready.

The St. Johns County Fairgrounds are located at 5840 State Road 207 East, Elkton. Gates open at 10 a.m., and parking is free. Admission is \$10 per adult; children 10 and under are admitted free.

For event details and to purchase tickets, go to jimmyjambbqslam.com.



Photos courtesy of Jimmy Jam BBQ Slam

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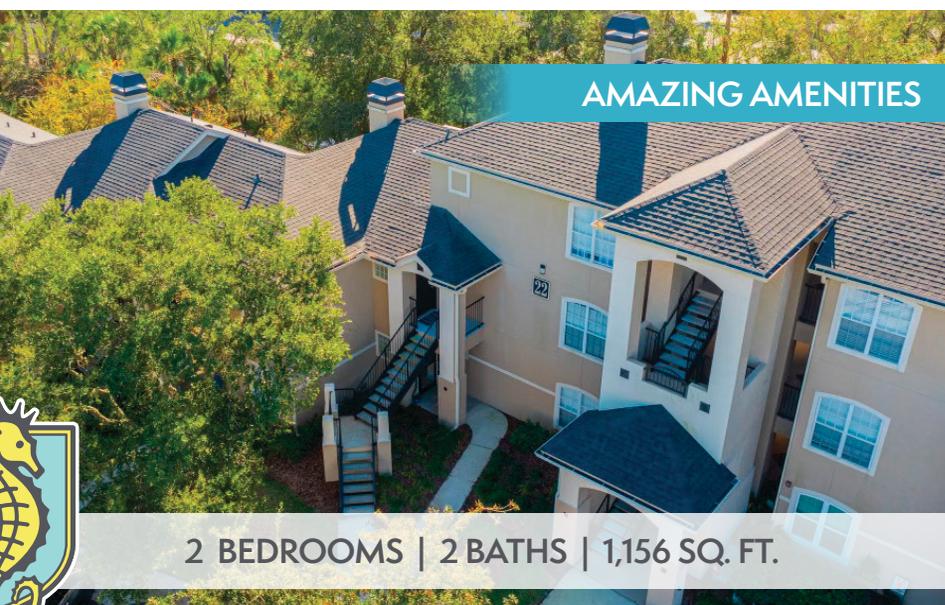
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Contributed photos

Jacksonville Boat Show set for Jan. 26-28

The North Florida Marine Association has announced its 76th Jacksonville Boat Show, to be held Jan. 26-28 at the Prime Osborn Convention Center in Jacksonville. The North Florida event has been bringing together the boating community since 1947.

This year's show, sponsored by VyStar Credit Union, will offer three days of water-related fun, family-friendly activities and educational seminars — as well

as good deals on hundreds of boats and thousands of accessories.

Boat show attendees will be among the first to see and board brand-new models of all types of watercraft, including fishing boats, cruisers, ski boats, pontoons, inflatables, personal watercraft and more.

Show sponsors include VyStar Credit

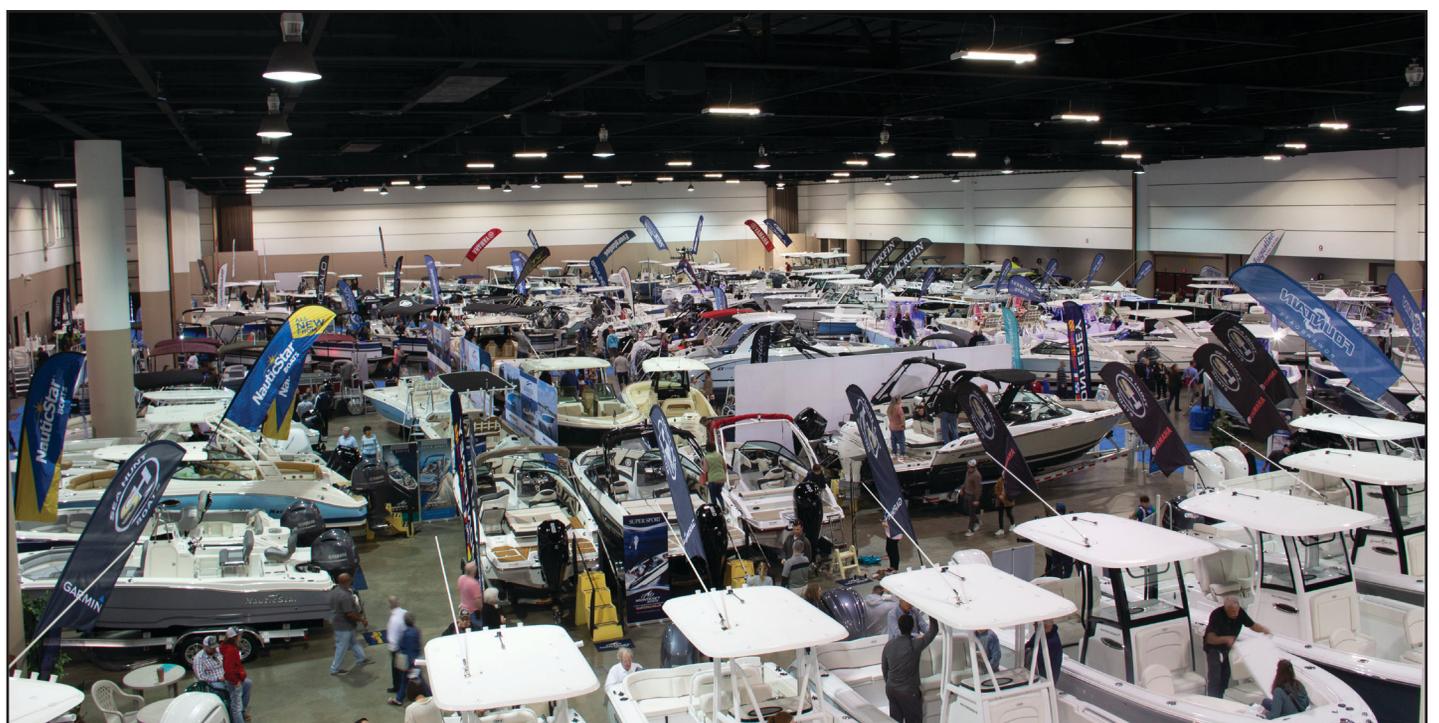
Union, Continental Battery Systems and AgPro. Tickets are available now at boatjax.com.

Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center is located at 1000 Water St., Jacksonville. Boat Show hours are 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. Jan. 26; 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Jan. 27; and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Jan. 28. Admission is \$15 for

adults; \$5 for children 12 and under; and \$12 for seniors, military and first responders with ID. Food is available for purchase from the vendors and is not included with admission.

Parking for the general public is \$10 per automobile per day.

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Jacksonville Humane Society gets grant from THE PLAYERS

The Jacksonville Humane Society (JHS) has received a \$45,000 grant from THE PLAYERS Championship. This significant contribution will be used to purchase a dedicated vehicle for JHS, enhancing its capacity to deliver humane education outreach programs to the local community.

The grant from THE PLAYERS will specifically fund the acquisition of a mobile outreach vehicle, enabling the Jacksonville Humane Society to expand its reach and impact in the community. The focus of this outreach effort is to bring the joy of reading and the companionship of animals to children in local schools and afterschool nonprofit programs via Pawsitive Reading, the program currently offered at the JHS campus.

“We are immensely grateful to THE PLAYERS for their generous grant, which will enable us to take our humane education initiatives to the next level,” said Denise Deisler, CEO at the Jacksonville Humane Society. “This program will bring the joy of reading and the therapeutic benefits of interacting with animals to children who may not otherwise have the option to come to JHS and participate in Pawsitive Reading. Now, we can take Pawsitive Reading on the road!”

“We hope that with this donation we can help foster a lifelong love of learning for our younger fans, and we can’t think of a better way to do this than with the helping paws of our furry friends at Jacksonville Humane Society,” said Emily Bellock, senior director community outreach, THE PLAYERS Championship.

The vehicle’s first stop was to deliver new books to youth at the MaliVai Washington Youth Fund Center along with a visit from a Dudley, a mixed-breed dog who was adopted from JHS. Children took turns reading



THE PLAYERS Championship recently provided a \$45,000 grant to the Jacksonville Humane Society.

their new books to Dudley, who delighted in hearing the stories. The books were made possible by a grant from The Jim Moran Foundation, which also helps fund educational outreach at the Jacksonville Humane Society.



Contributed photos

Kids read to Dudley, a mixed-breed dog, as part of the Pawsitive Reading program.

To learn more about humane education programs offered by the Jacksonville Humane Society for children of all ages, go to jaxhumane.org/education. For more on THE PLAYERS, go to THEPLAYERS.com.

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Pictured from left are County Administrator Joy Andrews, project manager Valerie Pacetti, County Commissioner Roy Alaimo, County Commissioner Sarah Arnold, state Sen. Travis Hutson, Public Works Director Greg Caldwell and County Commissioner Henry Dean.



Contributed photos

Commissioner Sarah Arnold, right, listens as state Sen. Travis Hutson speaks to the attendees.

Ground broken for \$32.5M road project in St. Johns County

St. Johns County held a groundbreaking ceremony on Dec. 21 to celebrate the start of the \$32.5 million County Road 2209 Road Improvement Project. This project will add an additional four miles of four-lane road from SilverLeaf Parkway to State Road 16 with a sidewalk on one side and 12-foot-wide multi-purpose path on the other.

“This project is more than just a road project and a sidewalk; it’s about building a better St. Johns County for the people of our community,” District 2 County

Commissioner and St. Johns Board of County Commissioners Chair Sarah Arnold said.

District 7 state Sen. Travis Hutson participated in the ceremony.

“It’s been about a decade of this being a priority, and we finally delivered on it, so the state is partnering up with the county, and this is going to relieve the congestion that you see on 95,” Hutson said. “So, we are happy to be a partner and it is going to help a lot for the residents.”

A ceremonial dirt toss included Arnold, Hutson, District 3 County Commissioner Roy Alaimo, District 5 County Commissioner Henry Dean, County Administrator Joy Andrews, Public Works Director Greg Caldwell and project manager Valerie Pacetti.

This project will cost \$32.5 million and is funded by Florida Department of Transportation grants and Capital Improvement Project funds from the county. This is one of 35 transportation projects totaling \$183 million that is available on

the county’s Capital Improvement Project Public Access Dashboard.

Currently, the county is extending the existing box culvert across Mill Creek to accommodate the road widening project.

England-Thims and Miller Inc. led the civil design work and J.B. Coxwell Contracting, Inc. will be the contractor for the project.

Construction is set to break ground this month and will be completed in January 2026 weather permitting.

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Grants available to nonprofits

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, the largest funder of nonprofits in the region, has grant opportunities for nonprofits open now.

Small Organization Grants

The Community Foundation offers a special opportunity for small organizations to apply for grant funding, and offers one-to-one appointments with grantmaking staff, virtually, in person or by phone to help those who need assistance. Grants are for small organizations with budgets of \$150,000 or less, and funding can support strengthening organizations and program development. Grants are available up to \$2,500, and the deadline to apply is Jan. 25. Learn more at jaxcf.org/grants/small-organization-grants.

Women's Giving Alliance

Nonprofit agencies and their clients in Northeast Florida continue to be disproportionately negatively

impacted by recent and persistent economic conditions. In response, the Women's Giving Alliance is offering one-time grants of up to \$50,000 to eligible nonprofits to provide funding focused on client basic needs support. To apply, nonprofits must have current 501(c)3 status and programs that exclusively serve women or girls. Grants are available up to \$50,000, and the deadline to apply is Jan. 15. Learn more at wganeff.org.

Beaches Community Fund

Grant opportunities are now available for nonprofit organizations serving residents from Mayport to Guana. Priority will be given to grantees offering supports for K-12 students, early learning opportunities for low-income students and support for the basic needs of Beaches residents. The deadline to apply is Jan. 12. Learn more at jaxcf.org/grants/beaches-community-fund.

\$192M water reclamation facility OK'd

During its Dec. 19 regular meeting, the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners approved phase 2 of the State Road 207 Water Reclamation Facility Project. This included awarding the design-build agreement with Jacobs Project Management Co. for the new S.R. 207 Water Reclamation Facility and Associated Improvements for a total not-to-exceed amount of \$191.82 million including a contingency of \$6.23 million.

"This project regionalizes availability of reclaimed water, promotes water conservation and strengthens the utility department's position to protect our future water resource," said St. Johns County Utility Director Neal Shinkre. "The strength of our financial position allows us to deliver these infrastructure projects with no rate impacts to our customers."

This project will provide a state-of-the-art advanced wastewater facility that collects and cleanses water to be reused for lawn irrigation. Recycled water is part of the county's plan to be more sustainable, diversify its water sources and protect the environment. Currently, the county recycles 56% of all wastewater treatment flows for beneficial

purposes to replace the use of traditional freshwater supplies.

Senate Bill 64 requires a statewide elimination of non-beneficial surface water discharges of effluent and this project will move the county forward in meeting this goal before the implementation deadline in 2032. The project includes a 13-mile pipeline network maximizing delivery of reclaimed water for residential irrigation and over the next 20 years, helps reduce more than a million pounds of nutrients discharged to the Matanzas River.

On Sept. 6, 2022, the board had authorized the county administrator to execute a design-build agreement with Jacobs Project Management Co. to complete phase 1 of the agreement for a not-to-exceed amount of \$30 million and to negotiate a guarantee maximum price (GMP) amendment for presentation to the board for completion of Scope 2.

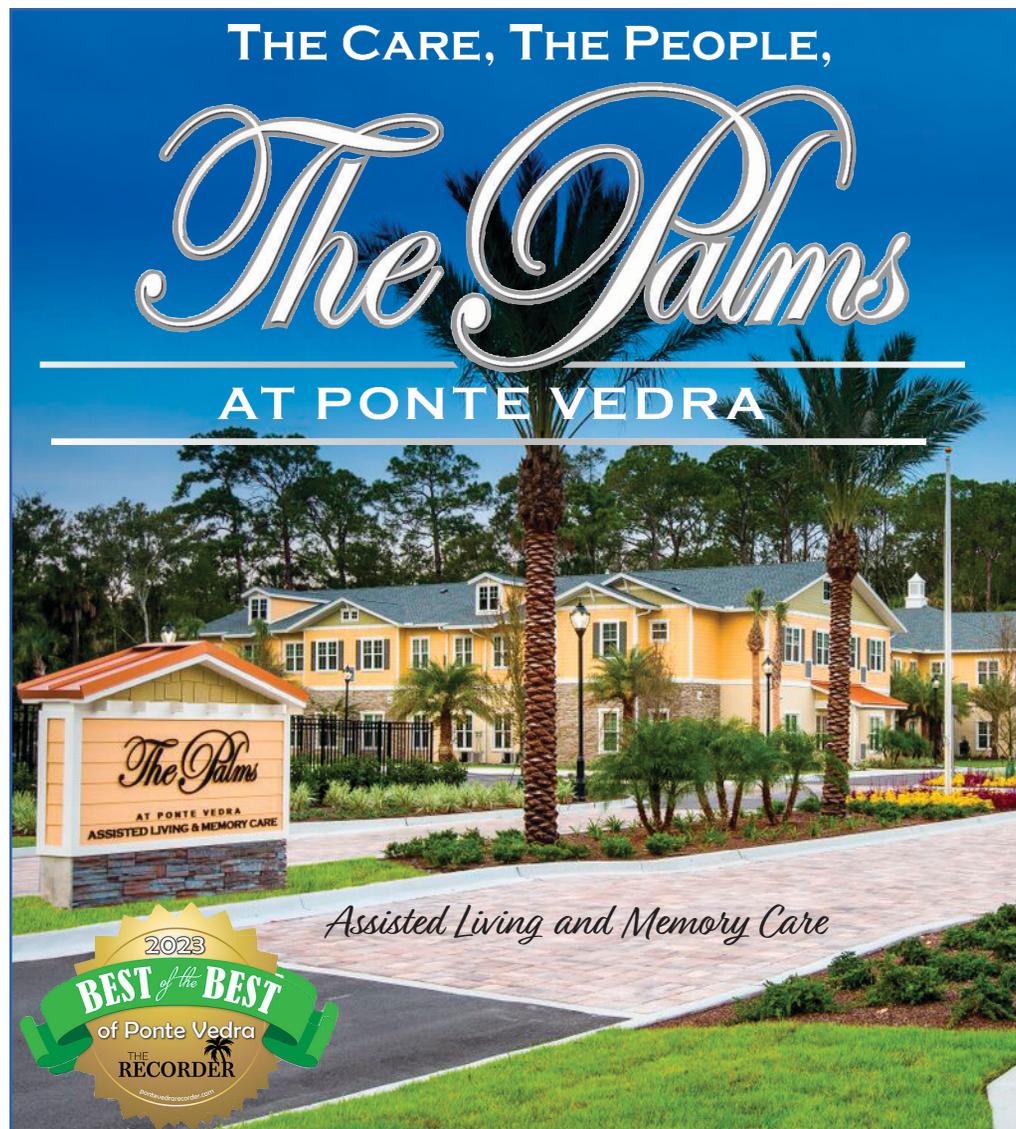
The project is funded primarily through utility bond proceeds. This will not affect customer rates.

Currently, the project is in Phase 1 with 62% completion and the entire project is scheduled to be completed in May 2026.

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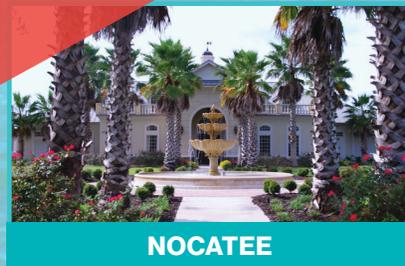
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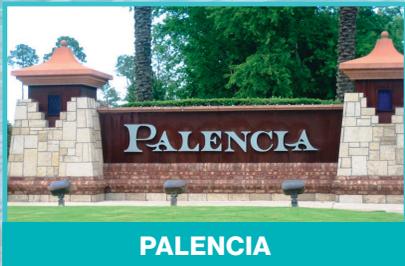
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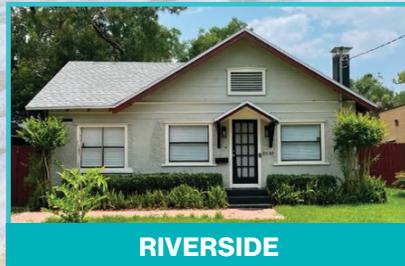
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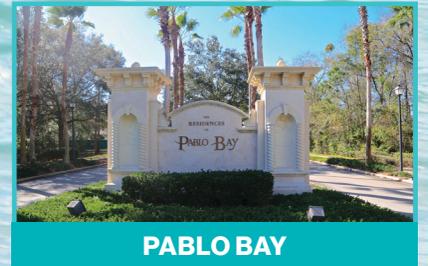
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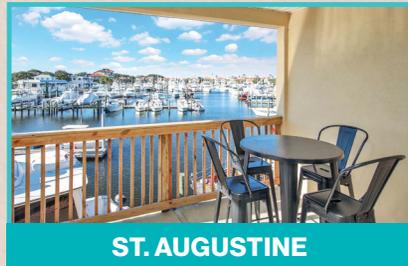
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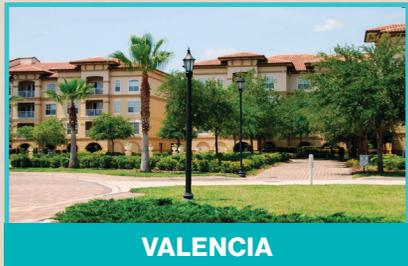
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Help sought for kids in need

HUGS St. Johns' all-volunteer team is looking for help from the community.

A donation that will go directly to the emergency clothing or school-based pantries programs for 2024 would be welcome. Volunteers are also needed — even if just for one day a month.

HUGS is an all-volunteer, 501(c)3 nonprofit that provides clothing, shoes, toiletries and food to thousands of St. Johns County children and youth in pre-K through grade 12 who are in need and are referred by their school counselors or partner nonprofit agencies.

Check out our links below:

- Donations: stjohnshugs.org/give or mail to HUGS St. Johns, 101 Marketside Ave., No. 404-254, Ponte Vedra, FL 32081

- Emergency Clothing Program Volunteers: signupgenius.com/go/70A0B44ACA829A0F85-clothing2

For further information, email info@stjohnshugs.org or call 904-580-4847.

Clays for a Cause raises \$358K for local nonprofits

The 11th Annual Clays for a Cause event, presented by St. Johns County home-builder MasterCraft Builder Group, was held Dec. 7 at Saltwaters Shooting Club in St. Augustine. The event brought together members of the local construction community as well as the general public for a day of clay shooting and raising money for area nonprofits.

The largest to date, the 11th Annual Clays for a Cause raised \$358,300 for multiple Northeast Florida charities including Seamark Ranch, St. Augustine Youth Services, Alpha-Omega Miracle Home, Rethreaded, HorsePlay Therapy Center, Investing in Kids, Jimmy Jam, Port In The Storm, Top Shots, Builders Care and Kids Safe Zone — bringing the 11-year total to just under \$1.5 million.

“The most important thing to note here is that all of your money, every single dollar, is going directly to these charities, since MasterCraft pays for every penny it takes to put on the event,” said MasterCraft Builder Group CEO and founder Chris Shee as he addressed attendees during the checks presentation. “Also, all of the money stays here locally where we can truly see the good that it does. I truly could not do this without all of you or without my amazing team.”

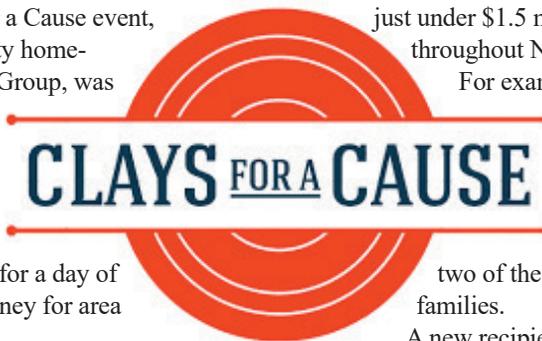
Since its conception, Clays for a Cause has raised

just under \$1.5 million for 37 charities throughout Northeast Florida.

For example, the Homeless Coalition of St. Johns County, which was given \$25,000 from the fundraiser, will be using the funds to build a new office space, which will free up two of their existing homes for more families.

A new recipient of Clays for a Cause, Villages of Hope, which was also given \$25,000, will use the funds to continue building their tiny homes community in Jacksonville that offers a safe place for women to heal and restore as they pursue a new life that is free from substance abuse, trafficking and sexual exploitation.

“Clays for a Cause is the golden standard of a fundraising event,” explained Lauren Peterson, director of donor relations for St. Augustine Youth Services (SAYS). “Chris’ pure-hearted generosity and joy in giving is infectious. This event invites people to dig into the community where we live and invest in making it better. SAYS is so grateful to be one of the beneficiaries, and we love watching the event grow year-after-year. Chris and this event have been a direct influencer on our ability to expand to meet the growing mental health needs of our growing community.”



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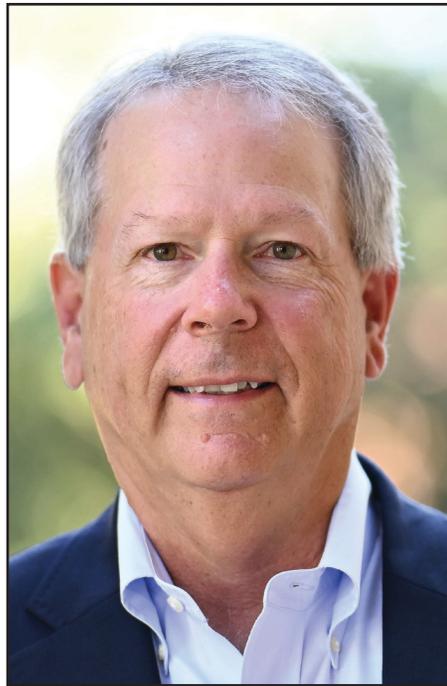
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Hughhins retires from TPC Network

After a tenure spanning more than three decades, John Hughhins has retired from his position as senior vice president of TPC Network Operations, effective Dec. 31. In a seamless transition, Victor "Vic" Aliprando Jr., currently serving as vice president of business development, will ascend to the position of senior vice president.

"John's journey within the TPC Network has been nothing short of inspiring," said Jim Triola, TPC Network chief operating officer. "His unwavering determination and commitment have shaped the course of the TPC Network. As we bid farewell to John, we are confident that Vic is the right person to carry us forward. We extend our warmest wishes to John on his well-deserved retirement."

Since commencing his journey as an assistant golf professional at TPC Sawgrass in 1984, Hughhins has been a driving force in the development and growth of the organization, providing a unique blend of practical and operational expertise. He went on to serve in key roles such as general manager at MetroWest Golf Club and Arnold Palmer's Bay Hill Club and Lodge before returning to the TPC Network. His leadership has extended



John Hughhins

across various TPC properties, including TPC Eagle Trace, TPC Southwind, TPC Sugarloaf and TPC Sawgrass before assuming the role of senior vice president, TPC Operations at the PGA TOUR in 2004.

In taking the reins from Hughhins, Aliprando brings a wealth of experi-



Victor Aliprando Jr.

ence and a track record of success in golf course management.

He began his career within the TPC Network in 2002 at TPC Sugarloaf in Duluth, Georgia, where he served as head professional before earning promotions to director of golf and general manager. In 2012, Aliprando

transferred to TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra Beach as the club manager. He was promoted from TPC Sawgrass in 2013 to senior director of business development and then vice president of business development for the TPC Network.

A graduate of Mississippi State University, Aliprando holds a bachelor's degree in business administration with a major in marketing and has completed the PGA Golf Management Program.

His professional journey began as the head professional at Spencer T. Olin Community Golf Course in Alton, Illinois. Additionally, he was general manager at Silverthorn Country Club in Brooksville, Florida, The Carolina Club and Woodlake Resort & Golf Club in Pinehurst, North Carolina.

"It's a true honor for me to follow in John's footsteps and assume the position of senior vice president," said Aliprando. "I am committed to building upon the strong foundation John has so brilliantly laid, and together with the exceptional TPC Network team, look forward to charting new heights."

To learn more about TPC Network, go to tpc.com.

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Program delivers toys to children for the holidays



Contributed photo

Santa Claus prepares to give out Christmas gifts.

During the Dec. 19 meeting of the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners, the Service Delivery Team reported that the Family Integrity Program brought toys and joy to dozens of children this holiday season.

On Dec. 3, the Family Integrity Program, in partnership with the St. Johns County Foster and Adoptive Parents Association, held its annual Christmas Party at the Tringali Barn. In total, 39 children and 54 adults attended the festivities. In addition to this event, 160 children received gifts, thanks to community support.

“Family Integrity Program Leadership is very thankful for the generosity of our community partners who donated time, Christmas gifts, food and beverages to ensure that our most vulnerable children

could experience the holidays in a fun and memorable way this year,” St. Johns County Health and Human Services Director Shawna Novak said.

The Family Integrity Program thanked the following party and gift sponsors: Chris Shee and the Tringali Barn, Sonny’s BBQ, Briskey’s BBQ, Jimmy Jam BBQ, Carmelo’s, Lowes, Home Depot, St. Johns Illuminations, Coldwell Banker Vanguard, Fostering Connections and Fostering Hope, Anastasia Baptist, Geneva Presbyterian, River of Life, Cross Creek Churches, St. Johns County Administration Building Employees, St. Johns County Clerk’s Office, The Playful Family, United Way, Ancient City Sirens and Matanzas Bay Buccaneers and Usina Construction.

Thrift shop reopens Anastasia Island location

After being closed for nine days, the Betty Griffin Center Thrift Shoppe has reopened in St. Augustine with a new store layout and new flooring. Longtime customers looking for bargains at the St. Augustine location at 1961 AIA South are now enjoying a new shopping experience.

“The customer reactions have been great,” said store manager Jesus Roman. “So many of our regular customers have expressed to me and the staff how good the floors look and the huge difference it’s made in the appearance of the store.”

In conjunction with the installation of epoxy flooring by R/C Glamorous Epoxy Coatings, Roman said, the flow of the store aisles were also reconfigured to create “a more inviting and spacious appearance.”

Proceeds from purchases made at both locations support the nonprofit agency in providing services to survivors of domestic violence and their minor children, as well as sexual assault survivors.

Momswhothink.com, a popular blog post

since 2000, recently named Betty Griffin Center’s St. Augustine location among the eighth-best thrift stores in St. Augustine.

Betty Griffin Center also operates a second thrift store at Julington Square Shopping Center located at 445 State Road 13, in Fruit Cove.

Both locations have weekly sales, including: Monday: Senior Citizen Discount Day. Guests age 65 and older receive 15% off purchases

Wednesday: Wacky Wednesday. Ten pieces of adult clothing for \$10 and children’s clothing is 50% off (excluding boutique items)

Thursday: Military, first responders and teachers receive 15% off

Both shops are open 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday and are closed on Sundays. Donations are accepted at both Anastasia Square and Julington Square locations from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Monday through Saturday. Betty Griffin Center also offers home or office pick-up for large donations. Those who have large furniture or estate donations can call 904-495-8216 to schedule a pick-up time and date.

Ronald McDonald House Charities elects new board members

Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville’s Board of Directors has recently elected three new members: Megan Denk, THE PLAYERS Center for Child Health; Jessica Jones, Jacksonville Jaguars; and Tara Spruill, Nemours Children’s Health, Jacksonville.

Denk is the executive director of THE PLAYERS Center for Child Health at Wolfson Children’s Hospital. She brings the commitment to provide strategic direction and enhance the health, wellness and quality of life of families throughout Northeast Florida by extending the reach of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville’s partner in health, Wolfson Children’s Hospital.

Jones was recently promoted to senior vice president of human resources for the Jacksonville Jaguars.

She leverages years of experience in leadership development, HR operations, employee relations and paralegal services.

Spruill is the vice president, chief nursing officer at Nemours Children’s Health, a certified pediatric nurse and certified nurse executive, Spruill brings years of experience for caring for critically ill children along with a passion for pediatric health.

Joey Leik, chief executive officer of Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville, welcomed the leadership additions stating, “Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville is fortunate to have this level of executive leadership lending their time to our board of directors. Their dedication and strategic vision will serve us well into the years to come.”

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The 2023 Champions for Child Safety Pro Am Golf Tournament raised \$457,000 to support MBF Prevention Education Programs.



Contributed photos

Pictured from left are MG Orender, Mark McCumber, Ed Burr and Tanya Ramos-Puig.

Tournament raises \$457K toward child safety

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children (MBF) has announced that its 2023 Dream Finders Homes Champions for Child Safety Pro Am Golf Tournament, presented by AT&T, Impact Landscaping and Irrigation and MJC Land Development, raised \$457,000 to support MBF Prevention Education Programs to protect children.

“Another successful and memorable event that will enable us to fuel our life-saving work,” said Tanya Ramos-Puig, MBF chief executive officer. “We are incredibly grateful to our countless golfers, sponsors, donors and volunteers, many of whom have been supporting us year after year. They made the golf tournament a tremendous success and helped MBF raise much-needed funds to support our efforts to protect children and remove obstacles to accessing prevention education — both locally and globally.”

Co-chaired by Jim Furyk and Mark McCumber and hosted by MG Orender, the annual tournament, benefitting MBF, offered corporate teams and individuals the opportunity to golf with professional golfers at The Palencia Club in St. Augustine. Since the tournament began, it has raised more than \$5 million for MBF.

During the 2023 Pro-Am Pairings Party, presented by Lennar Homes, Lynn Layton was honored with the Champion for Child Safety Award from MBF in recognition of her work and dedication to child advocacy and community outreach while at the helm of MBF from 2008 to 2022. MBF thanked Layton for the tremendous impact her efforts and continued dedication have made on countless children throughout the country.

In addition, Goya Cares was recognized and honored with the Champion for Child Safety Award at the 2023 Pro-Am Awards Ceremony. MBF and Goya Cares joined forces to serve more than 30,000 students in New York, New Jersey and Illinois with child safety curriculum to prevent child abuse, bullying, trafficking and digital dangers that can lead to other forms of child victimization.

The partnership has removed obstacles and barriers to accessing prevention education in some of the most high-risk and underserved communities across the nation. Rafael Toro, national director of public relations at Goya Foods, accepted the award on behalf of Goya Cares.

MBF prevention education programs are making a difference in the lives of

youth, protecting them from bullying, digital dangers, various forms of abuse, exploitation and human trafficking. MBF Programs are a series of comprehensive, evidence-based, trauma-informed programs that educate and empower youth (grades pre-K to 12) with knowledge and strategies to prevent, recognize and respond appropriately to bullying, cyberbullying, online dangers, child abuse and exploitation/trafficking. MBF Programs equip students with education, tools and resources to recognize unsafe situations and make informed decisions to ensure their safety.

To learn more about MBF’s comprehensive, evidence-based prevention programs, go to mbfpreventioneducation.org.

MBF expressed gratitude for its 2023 Dream Finders Homes Champions for Child Safety Pro Am Golf Tournament Pro-Am event sponsors, including title sponsor Dream Finders Homes, and presenting sponsors AT&T, Impact Landscaping and Irrigation, and MJC Land Development.

Other sponsors include: Ahead, AndersonOrd, ARC Document Solutions, Auld & White Constructors, Barraco and Associates, Basham and Lucas Design Group,

Black Rifle Coffee Company, Blue Stream Fiber, Bo Jahna, Callaway Golf, Carlton Construction, Clockwork Marketing, Club Car, Cross Lake Partners, Dennis Rosa, Donna J. Feldman and Mo Krausman, Doumar Insurance, Drummond Press, England-Thims & Miller Inc. (ETM), EW Consultants, Fields Auto Group, The Fiorentino Group, FMS Bonds, GHG Insurance, Governmental Management Services, GreenPointe Holdings, H & J Contracting, Hampton Golf, Hill Ward Henderson, Homes By WestBay, Invision Construction, Jacobsen Textron, James Hardie Building Products, Jax Utilities Management, JUM Group LLC, Kearney Companies, KPMG, Lee Mar Building & Construction, Lennar Homes, Lucido and Associates, Mahoney Law Group, MasterCraft Builder Group, The Palencia Club, Pepsi, PGA Tour, Richmond American Homes, State Farm/Denny Doyle, Superior Construction, Taylor Morrison, Tideland/Higginbotham Automobiles, Tito’s Vodka, The Isaacs Family, Vallencourt Construction, Volato, Vulcan Materials, Wells Brothers Construction, William Kappaz, Wrathell, Hunt and Associates, and Yellow Dawg Striping.



Pictured from left are Ed Burr, Lynn Layton and MG Orender.



Pictured from left are Tanya Ramos-Puig, Rafael Toro and Ed Burr.

Business Weekly

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— FEATURING —
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GUEST COLUMN

Tools available for family business transitions

Written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors

Transitioning your family business to your heirs may sound simple enough, but in fact, doing it successfully can prove difficult. To help improve your transition's chances for success, consider family business governance.

This is a system of correlated tools and actions to support the next generation with controlling, owning and operating the business. It also puts in place a framework that contains business protocols, describes how future owner-

ship changes occur and establishes a precedent for making business decisions.

Frequently used tools

There are several tools that can be employed as part of a family business governance system, including:

A buy-sell agreement is a legally binding contract that stipulates how an owner's share of a business may be reassigned if triggering events occur, the price that will be paid and the payment structure.

A family employment policy document can be kept within the family for

private use or incorporated into the business's human resource documentation. It sets expectations for heirs, spouses and extended family members about such issues as how they can obtain employment in the business, the requirements to attain key positions, the compensation standards to be used and incentive language for family members.

A distribution or dividend policy is key in setting expectations with family members regarding what distributions they should expect to receive from the business. Business owners must balance the need for cash to maintain or grow

the business with the desire to receive distributions.

A professional board of directors is a governing body that helps oversee the business and makes major decisions. A board generally comprises three, five or seven professionals from various industries that have the subject matter expertise to assist the company strategically.

A family board or council is a group within the family — or may include the entire family — that comes together to make decisions about the business on

TRANSITIONS continues on **Page 25**

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GUEST COLUMN

A funny thing happened on the way to the recession



By Scott A. Grant

Two and a half months ago, I was talking to a friend of mine about Wall Street adages. He is also in the investment management business and his son and my son both run cross country for

Ponte Vedra High School. There are an insane number of investment adages, and many are complete and opposite wisdoms. The one that caught our combined imagination was “Wall Street climbs a wall of worry.”

At the time, the market was setting a near term low, and things looked bleak for a stock market that had just previously begun to show a slight glimmer of hope. It was memorable, because we both blurted out the adage at the same time. For a brief moment, we bonded on that thought, both thrilled by our shared latent optimism.

At the time, the prevailing wisdom was that the United States would be going into a recession either next quarter or the quarter after or the quarter after that. “Recessions don’t usually announce themselves in advance,” I declared. He nodded in agreement. “They usually come out of nowhere and blindsides you on a random Tuesday afternoon.” We both laughed and

went back to our volunteer jobs at our home Cross Country meet. The Ponte Vedra meet is named in honor of Craig Speziale. Craig was the first principal at Ponte Vedra and beloved. He died suddenly, and I wanted to take this chance to remember him.

Anyway, back to the recession, the one that has been coming for years now. The one that may never come. The idea that there was a recession out there on the horizon, that we could see it coming, but had not really reacted to it, never made sense to me. The stock market is a forward-looking indicator. In other words, it is predictive and not reactive. If a recession were coming, the stock market and stock prices should be signaling that in advance. And it just wasn’t. Stocks were signaling inflation concerns and institutional uncertainty.

Ever since that random conversation with another investment adviser at running meet, the market has steadily been getting stronger, like a snowball rolling

down a mountain into this December’s “Santa Claus Rally.” That rally came out of nowhere and left many scratching their heads and asking each other, “What happened to the recession?”

“Santa Claus Rally” is another Wall Street saying. It refers to a December rally where the market goes up dramatically around the holidays. It does not happen every year, no matter how often we ask. But in years when the economy is good, we often see robust returns in December. The fact that we got one this year suggests there are more positive returns to come.

I do not know what the market is going to do in 2024; no one does. But, if I had to bet, and my choices were between a much-advertised recession and a surprise market rally, I would bet on the rally.

Scott A. Grant is a local author and investor. He is a frequent contributor to the Recorder.

GUEST COLUMN

What should you know about RMDs?

Written by Edward Jones

You may spend decades contributing to various retirement accounts. But for some accounts, such as a traditional IRA and 401(k), you must start withdrawing funds at a certain point. What should you know about this require-

ment?

To begin with, the rules governing these withdrawals — technically called required minimum distributions, or RMDs — have changed recently. For many years, individuals had to begin taking their RMDs (which are based on the account balance and the

IRS’ life expectancy factor) when they turned 70½. The original SECURE Act of 2019 raised this age to 72, and SECURE 2.0, passed in 2022, raised it again, to 73. (If you turned 73 in 2023, and you were 72 in 2022 when the RMD limit was still 72, you should have taken your first RMD for 2022 by April 1 of this year. You will then need to take your 2023 RMD by Dec. 31. And going forward, you’ll also need to take your RMDs by the end of every year.)

Not all retirement accounts are subject to RMDs. They aren’t required for a Roth IRA, and, starting in 2024, won’t be required for a Roth 401(k) or 403(b) plan. But if your account does call for RMDs, you do need to take them, because if you don’t, you could face tax penalties. Previously, this penalty was 50% of the amount you were supposed to have taken, but SECURE 2.0 reduced it to 25%.

When you take your RMDs, you need to be aware of a key issue: taxes. RMDs are taxed as ordinary income, and, as such, they could potentially bump you into a higher tax bracket and possibly even increase your Medicare premiums, which are determined by your modified adjusted gross income. Are there any ways you could possibly reduce an RMD-related tax hike?



Mike Wynn

You might have some options. Here are two to consider:

- Convert tax-deferred accounts to Roth IRA. You could convert some, or maybe all, of your tax-deferred retirement accounts to a Roth IRA. By doing so, you could lower your RMDs in the future — while adding funds to an account you’re never required to touch. So, if you don’t really need all the money to live on, you could include the remainder of the Roth IRA in your estate plans, providing an initially tax-free inheritance to your loved ones. However, converting a tax-deferred account to a Roth IRA will generate taxes in the year of conversion, so you’d

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Transitions

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the family's behalf.

A company mission statement can be valuable to your employees and your family as it addresses the business's purpose and vision and can help guide future company leaders.

Your estate plan can address ownership, control, distributions and several other factors.

The business's governing documents should be reviewed at the same time the family business governance system and tools are put in place. Revisions to these documents or corporate resolutions stored in the corporate minutes may be needed to align these documents with the company's governance system.

Helping ensure a successful transition

Transitioning the family business to the next generation is much more than transitioning shares. A well-thought-out and documented plan that addresses ownership, control and operations helps build a strong governance system for your business. This system, combined with communication with the next generation, can be key to helping ensure your transition's success.

Wells Fargo Advisors is not engaged in rendering legal or tax advice. If legal or tax assistance is required, the services of a competent professional should be sought.

This article was written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors and provided courtesy of Jamie Seim, CFP, Senior Vice President – Investment Officer in Ponte Vedra Beach at 904-273-7917.



Pictured from left to right: Jamie Seim, Matthew Guevara, Evonne Heykens and Stephen Foody.

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RMDs

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need the money available to pay this tax bill.

• **Donate RMDs to charity.** In what's known as a qualified charitable distribution, you can move up to \$100,000 of your RMDs directly from a traditional IRA to a qualified charity, avoiding the taxes that might otherwise result if you took the RMDs yourself. After 2023, the \$100,000 limit will be indexed to inflation.

Of course, before you start either a Roth IRA conversion or a qualified charitable distribution, you will need to consult with your tax adviser, as both these moves have issues you must consider and may not be appropriate for your situation.

But it's always a good idea to know as much as you can about the various aspects of RMDs — they could play a big part in your retirement income strategy.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by Mike Wynn AAMS™, Financial Advisor, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL. Edward Jones, Member SIPC



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Benchmarks of Success

A look at major career developments in the area



Husk named to prestigious list

Melanie Husk, senior vice president and chief consumer officer of Baptist Health, was recognized by Becker's Hospital Review on its 60-strong list of hospital and health system chief marketing officers to know. The prestigious list honors

“bold, strategic thinkers” who drive marketing, communication and brand development within their respective organizations.

Husk joined Baptist Health in 2006 and has more than 40 years of experience in marketing leadership roles. As chief consumer officer, she leads marketing, communications, digital strategy, advertising, social responsibility and community-based initiatives for the thriving health system that provides top-quality care and services to 750,000 people annually in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia.

Baptist Health is committed to improving patient experiences and making it easier for people to connect with the health system about their health and wellness needs. The organization builds on this commitment through digital initiatives such as the My Baptist Chart online patient portal and HealthPlace On Demand, which makes online doctor's visits accessible to patients 24/7, as well as by investing in community impact projects such as Blue Zones Jacksonville and the Emerald Trail, a 30-mile walking and bicycling path linking 14 neighborhoods with downtown Jacksonville.



Katie Root

Root named director of marketing

Katie Root has joined the bestbet executive team as the new director of marketing. In this role, Root will spearhead strategic marketing and business development efforts across the company's three locations in Jacksonville, Orange Park and St. Augustine.

She brings more than 15 years of experience in entertainment marketing, including leadership roles with The Atlanta Hawks and State Farm Arena, as well as The St. Augustine Amphitheatre and Ponte Vedra Concert Hall. Her extensive experience positions her as a seasoned professional in entertainment marketing, supported by her deep insights into consumer behavior and market trends. Her track record reflects her ability to contribute effectively to this dynamic industry.

She can be reached at KatieR@bestbetjax.com.



Mark Ford

Ford joins real estate firm

Mark Ford has joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty at its Ponte Vedra/Nocatee office. Ford brings a wealth of experience shaped by his military and law enforcement background, reflecting his unwavering dedication to discipline and ethical practices.

His journey includes valuable insights gained as the owner of a veteran-owned small business, highlighting his expertise in sales and business.

Ford can be reached at 904-789-0235 and mark.ford@floridanetworkrealty.com or mford.

floridanetworkrealty.com.

The Ponte Vedra/Nocatee office, located at 333 Village Main St., Suite 670, Ponte Vedra Beach, is managed by Holly Hayes, who can be reached at 904-802-0432, Holly.Hayes@FloridaNetworkRealty.com and floridanetworkrealtycareers.com.



Paola Sanchez

Sanchez joins real estate firm

Paola Sanchez has joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty in its Ponte Vedra/Nocatee office, bringing with her a wealth of experience from her diverse background.

Formerly a sales assistant at Ja-Ru, Inc., Sanchez seamlessly transitions into her

new role.

Having previously made significant contributions to the PR and communications sector in Miami, Sanchez is well-versed in effective communication and relationship-building – skills that are essential in the world of real estate.

A graduate of Florida International University, Sanchez holds a degree in International Business, demonstrating her dedication to education and a global perspective. She is also bilingual and fluent in Spanish.

Sanchez can be reached at 786-334-8829 and Paola.Sanchez@floridanetworkrealty.com or PSanchez.floridanetworkrealty.com.

The Ponte Vedra/Nocatee office, located at 333 Village Main St., Suite 670, Ponte Vedra Beach, is managed by Holly Hayes, who can be reached at 904-802-0432, Holly.Hayes@FloridaNetworkRealty.com and floridanetworkrealtycareers.com.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan

Clubhouse being constructed at Stillwater

Stillwater Golf and Country Club, the hallmark of Lennar's 549-home active-adult gated community in St. Johns, has begun construction on a state-of-the-art clubhouse as part of the final phase of amenity development. The roughly 15,000-square-foot clubhouse will include an onsite restaurant with a bar, golf pro shop, fitness center and lounge. The developer expects to complete construction by the fall of 2024.

“Stillwater's incredible new clubhouse

will become the central hub for our residents,” said Melanie Raub, division president for Lennar in North Florida. “With bundled golf club memberships, beautifully designed homes, and now, a clubhouse that will serve as the heart of our vibrant community, Stillwater is more than just a place to live. It's the epitome of an extraordinary, active lifestyle.”

Additional Stillwater amenities include the 18-hole golf course by renowned architect Bobby Weed, a resort-style swimming

pool, pickleball and tennis courts. The community also caters to residents with regular featured events and activities that promote an active, social lifestyle.

Stillwater's unique 18-hole golf course features flexible loops of three, six and nine holes returning to the clubhouse, allowing members to play as their time permits. In addition, the 16-acre practice facility is a rain-or-shine, year-round destination. The lighted driving range has covered hitting bays equipped with Toptracer Range. Play-

ers of all skill levels can receive instant feedback on their swing and distance data.

Stillwater home prices start from the mid \$300,000s, with six model homes to tour and 13 distinct floor plans to choose from. Homes range in size from approximately 1,500 to 2,300 square feet of living space and include a two-car garage, along with two to four bedrooms and two to three-and-a-half bathrooms, depending on lot size.

To learn more, go to Lennar.com.



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Gamble Rogers Folk Festival announces headliners

Contributed photos



AJ Lee & Blue Summit

For three days, enjoy folk, Americana and bluegrass music from dozens of bands featured on four stages at the 28th Annual Gamble Rogers Folk Festival, set for April 12-14 at the St. Johns County Fairgrounds.

The festival honors Gamble Rogers and his musical storytelling that forever changed folk music. Headlining the festival is AJ Lee & Blue Summit and the John Jorgenson Quintet, with supporting



John Jorgenson

acts including Verlon Thompson, Jerron “Blind Boy” Paxton, Remedy Tree, The Krickets, Red and Christopher Henry & Their All Star Band, Wyatt Ellis and more.

AJ Lee & Blue Summit is a bluegrass band from the Bay Area that draws influences from country, soul, swing, rock and jam music. Led by singer-songwriter and mandolinist, AJ Lee, the band includes Sullivan Tuttle and Scott



Jerron “Blind Boy” Paxton

Gates on steel-stringed acoustic guitars, Jan Purat on fiddle and Chad Bowen on upright bass.

John Jorgenson Quintet is a dynamic, authentic gypsy jazz band led by music virtuoso John Jorgenson, known for his fast guitar licks. In addition to acoustic and electric guitars, Jorgenson plays the mandolin, saxophone, clarinet, bouzouki and pedal steel and performs as a vocalist. His quintet has been hailed the “U.S.



Red & Chris Henry

ambassadors of gypsy jazz,” and is comprised of Casey Driscoll on the jazz violin; Rory Hoffman on guitar, piano and the accordion; Simon Planting on bass; and Rick Reed on percussion.

One of the highlights of the Gamble Rogers Folk Festival is the YoungFolk Stage, where a new generation of musi-

FESTIVAL continues on Page 28

Cold case resolution is writers' topic

The Northeast Florida Sisters In Crime guest speaker for this month, Jason Futch, has made a big difference in the realm of cold cases.

Futch has been intrigued since childhood with true crime. His first exposure to realities of the unknown came when he was a criminal justice student at Florida Gateway College. When he heard about an unidentified torso found in 1994, he was able to uncover details never released to the public. His postings on Websleuths, coupled with a poster from the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, enabled the victim's family to finally find closure. The victim was identified and his killer arrested in 2017.

At the writers' meeting at 10 a.m. Saturday, Jan. 6, learn why and how Futch established first a podcast called “True Cold Case Files,” then a Facebook page for Suwannee Valley Unsolved and then a database for local unsolved homicide and missing persons cases in the Suwannee Valley.

SVU is now a nonprofit charity which has contributed to cold case resolution through an interactive map, road signs and relationships with law enforcement and forensics personnel.

Bring your coffee and bring a friend to

the meeting at Ponte Vedra Beach Branch Library. The group welcomes misters and sisters to learn more about writing, promoting and enjoying crime fiction.

For further information, email florida-sistersincrime@gmail.com.

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Contributed photos



The audience of a previous Saint Augustine Film Festival is seated in Lewis Auditorium.

Saint Augustine Film Festival is Jan. 11-14

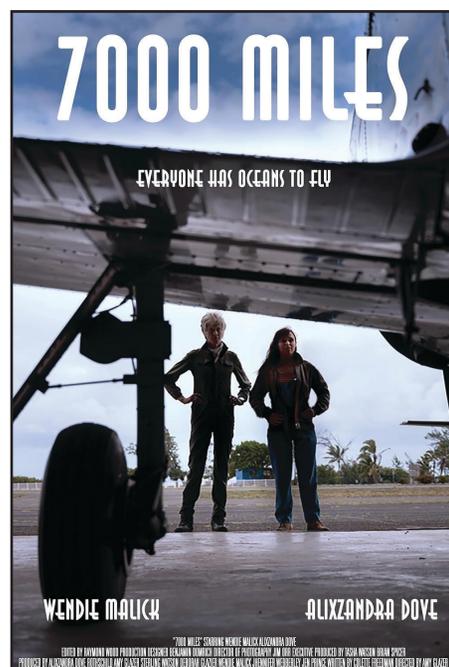
Big names in film will be in St. Augustine for the 14th annual Saint Augustine Film Festival, taking place Jan. 11-14 in St. Augustine venues.

Films will screen in Lewis Auditorium and Gamache-Koger Theatre, both at Flagler College, and in the Alcazar Room, part of City Hall at Lightner Museum. Passes are on sale now at staugfilmfest.com

Special guests on Jan. 12 include Rod Lurie, Mark Ciardi and Mike and Eileen Flynt, from the film “The Senior,” a stirring sports drama starring Michael Chiklis as Mike Flynt and Mary Stuart Masterson as Eileen Flynt.

Pamela Poitier will attend on Jan. 13 for the film “Sidney,” a 2022 American documentary directed by Reginald Hudlin and produced by Oprah Winfrey. The film is a portrait of the life and legacy of actor Sidney Poitier in his final appearance.

Melora Hardin, known for her roles in “The Office” and “Monk,” will be in St. Augustine on Jan. 13 for a screening of “Golden Vanity.” After an unhinged stage crash at a 1967 awards show, faded



The movie poster for “7000 Miles”

movie star Mabel Montgomery-Mayflower flees and barricades herself in her mansion to tape-record her life story. In a solo tour de force, Melora Hardin (NBC’s “The Office”) powerfully and painfully

embodies the end product of Hollywood’s use-them-up and spit-them-out machinery.

Denny Tedesco (son of musician Tommy Tedesco) and Leland Sklar (member of James Taylor’s backing band) will attend the 2024 Saint Augustine Film Festival on Jan. 13 for “Immediate Family.” This documentary tells the story of four musicians who find lasting success but stay out of the limelight while performing with iconic singers Phil Collins, James Taylor, Carole King and others.



Wendie Malick

decide what is more important, protecting the innocence of those you love or famed success.

Malick starred as Judith Tupper Stone

Special guest Wendie Malick will be in St. Augustine on Jan. 14 for “7000 Miles,” a film that follows Jo, a passionate pilot who is inspired by her grandmother’s mysterious legacy and must

in the HBO sitcom “Dream On” and as Nina Van Horn in the NBC sitcom “Just Shoot Me!” for which she was nominated for two Primetime Emmys and a Golden Globe Award. She also starred as Victoria Chase in the TV Land comedy series “Hot in Cleveland.” She is also known for her recurring role as Gayle Buchanan on “Baywatch” as well as Ronee Lawrence on the final season of “Frasier.”

The 2024 Saint Augustine Film Festival will include 32 films, three awards to actors, and six parties — at iconic and fun St. Augustine locations, including a cruise during Nights of Lights.

Passes and tickets are available at staugfilmfest.com

The Saint Augustine Film Festival is an outreach program of the Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival. The event is supported in part by the St. Johns County Tourist Development Council, the St. Johns Cultural Council and the Florida Division of Arts and Culture.

Founding sponsors are Arnold and Barbara Grevior, along with Allen and Cathie Altman and Shirley and Kenneth Walker.

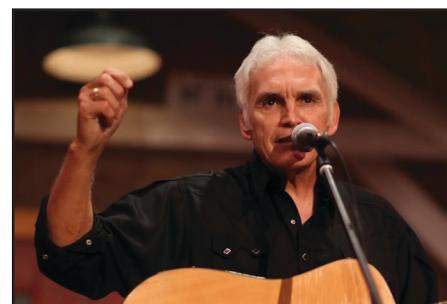
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Remedy Tree



The Krickets



Verlon Thompson



Wyatt Ellis

Festival

Continued from 27

cians have an opportunity to perform on a nationally recognized professional stage. These up-and-coming performers are aged 19 and younger and epitomize how the festival is keeping the folk music tradition alive for future generations.

Mandolin prodigy Wyatt Ellis returns

this year with his band as a highlight performance of the YoungFolk Stage.

Three-day tickets are \$100. Friday night ticket is \$35. Saturday day ticket is \$65. Sunday day ticket is \$35. Primitive camping and RV sites are available, and kids 16 and under are admitted free. There will be food trucks, local artisans, craft vendors, activities for kids, workshops and more. Pets are also welcome on a leash. Bring blankets, hammocks

and chairs to relax and revel in the tradition of folk music. Tickets can be purchased at eventbrite.com/o/gamble-rogers-folk-festival-51483367423.

The Gamble Rogers Folk Festival and Concert Series is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit charitable organization dedicated to commemorating the life and music of Gamble Rogers, the folk legend who shaped American folk music with his poetic storytelling and passion for folk

tradition.

The annual festival and concert series aims to keep the folk music tradition alive for future generations by encouraging and supporting young musicians. They also host monthly music workshops for students from local area schools.

Learn more at gamblerogersfest.org and follow along on social media @ [gamblerogersfest](https://www.instagram.com/gamblerogersfest).

Sports



THURSDAY, JANUARY 4, 2024 · PAGE 29

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Persistence results in 81 gold medals

81-year-old's goal to stay fit leads to powerlifting prowess

By Anthony Richards

Eighty-one is a lot in most instances, especially when it comes to one's age or the number of gold medals won, and for David Parsons, he checks both of those boxes.

Parsons recently won his 81st gold medal in powerlifting and did so at the Florida Senior Games, which is a competition for people older than 50 years old, on Dec. 11.

However, what makes the achievement even more unique is that he did not start weight training until he was about 30 years old.

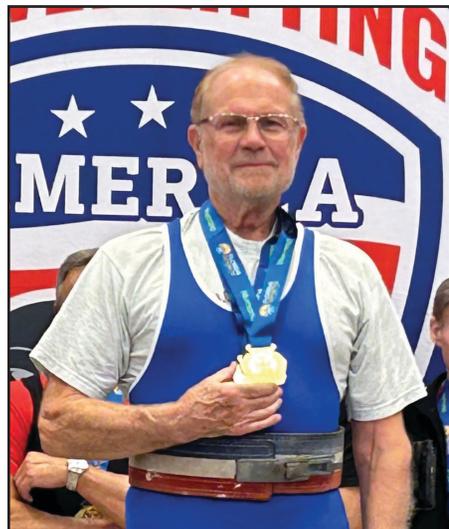


Photo by Anthony Richards

David Parsons, 81, won his 81st gold medal in powerlifting at the Florida Senior Games on Dec. 11.

"My dad introduced me to Olympic lifting and taught me basic lifts as a kid, but I learned them out of curiosity and never really committed to doing much with it for years."

Then, years later he decided to put his focus into finding a way to get exercise and get fit, and he remembered the techniques his dad had taught him, and he started working out in his basement while living in Massachusetts.

"One day I was looking in a strength and weightlifting magazine that they were having AAU meets, and that my marks weren't that far off from those at the state meets and went on to finish fourth place in my first meet," Parsons said.

Ever since his first competition, he has gone on to earn a medal every time out, but he also noticed that he could not get higher than a bronze medal.

"I was one of the few that were not taking steroids and looking to take it to the professional level," Parsons said. "I just did it for exercise purposes, so why would I want to do something that would harm that. Health was always my top priority."

As his sons got older they began powerlifting and eventually body building and the family even competed in the same events at times.

For years now, people have been taken back when they find out he is a powerlifter, but the fact that they do not believe him when he first tells them is something he has come to take pride in, because he knows he came about it by natural hard work and dedication.

As he has gotten older and competed in categories where only those not taking

steroids can compete, the gold medals have begun to rack up each year, with multiple golds coming in some years.

"I compete in what they consider a category for lifetime drug-free participants," Parsons said.

One of his formulas for success is that strategy he employs during a competition and with his approach to powerlifting.

"Every time I strive to achieve a personal best year after year, but only by five pounds or so," Parsons said. "I do this either with more weight or more reps."

That strategy of consistency has helped him win a world championship and has allowed him to win a gold medal in

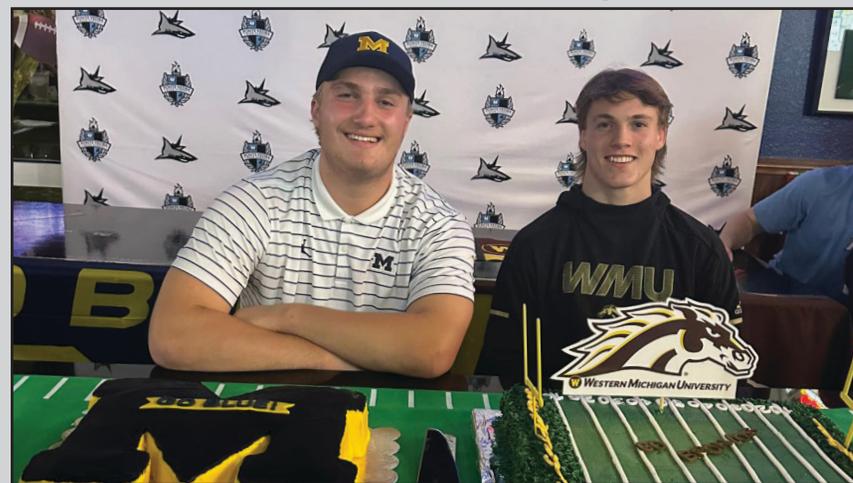
every Florida Senior Games he has ever entered.

"It's like the story of the tortoise and the hare," Parsons said. "It's all about consistency and building over time. I only lift enough to win."

However, he also acknowledges the fact that his whole experience is a unique one.

"Most Olympic lifters reach their peak strength at 35 years old, but mine was 65, so it's kind of weird," Parsons chuckled. "It just shows that if you stick with it for a long period of time, you can do something that some would have never even dreamed possible."

All smiles for pair of Ponte Vedra football signees



Contributed photo

Ponte Vedra football players Jake Guarnera and Maddux Babin signed to play in college during a signing ceremony at Mr. Chubby's Wings on Dec. 22. Guarnera will play at Michigan, while Babin will play at Western Michigan.

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 - Horizontal passage into a mine
 - Adult males
 - Fail to entertain
 - Dried-up
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 - Southern U.S.
 - German river
 - Oxygen
 - Make law
 - From pentane (Chemistry)
 - Gradually gets into
 - Commercial document (abbr.)
 - Overhang
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 - Lacking a plan
 - Tattle
 - Rockers like it "heavy"
 - One who's been canonized
 - Indicate time and place
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 - The voice of Olaf
 - Fragmented rock
 - They __
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 - __ Clapton, musician
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SUDOKU

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