

# THE RECORDER



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**Chamber Connections**  
Pages 15-26

Thursday, September 28, 2023

PonteVedraRecorder.com

VOLUME 54, NO. 48 \$1.00

## Attainable housing topic of Chamber event

By Shaun Ryan

St. Johns County, with its excellent schools, recreational offerings and natural amenities, has earned a reputation as a highly desirable place to live. The statistics tell the story: Between 2013 and 2022, the county's population has increased 43%.

And as people settle here from other places, supply and demand — among other factors — have caused home prices to surge and availability of affordable housing and rental units

**HOUSING** continues on **Page 10**

## WEEK 6 FOOTBALL PREVIEW

### Sharks face first district test against Bulldogs

By Anthony Richards

No matter what the format looks like for deciding which teams make the postseason, in high school football winning the district has and still is the easiest way to secure a spot in the playoffs.

The journey to achieving that begins this Friday for the Sharks, as they hit the road and take on Flagler Palm Coast in a district showdown at 7 p.m.

Despite having lost a couple of games this season, it has not been because of the Bulldogs' offense, which is averaging 24 points per game.

However, the Sharks defense has been up to every test this season so far and how they fare against the Bulldog offense may wind up being the key to the game.

Not only do the Sharks have speed on the defensive side of the ball, but they are also very physical and are good tacklers, as exhibited by the performances of Talan Babin, who led the team with 10 tackles against Menendez, including eight of the solo variety



Photo by Anthony Richards

**Ben Burk and the Ponte Vedra Sharks have their eyes focused on the start of district play this Friday night.**

and two for a loss.

Senior cornerback Joe Mahoney was not far behind with seven tackles on the night as he showed his versatility to be a true all-around defensive back that can lock down a receiver, while also

not being shy about sticking his nose in and helping against the running game.

If the defense can hold the Bulldogs to less than 20 points, the Sharks'

**PREVIEW** continues on **Page 37**



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# INSIDE

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# Send us your news

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



Visit our new website at [www.pontevedrarecorder.com](http://www.pontevedrarecorder.com)

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## PUZZLE SOLUTIONS

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## BRIEFS

### Local students recognized in state art contest

Two Palmer Catholic Academy students have been recognized in the 2023 Florida Space Art Contest.

First-grade student Vivian Shafer was one of 12 contest finalists. Students in kindergarten through grade 5 were invited to submit an art piece inspired by the theme “Time Travel to 2123: Florida’s Future as the Space Capital.”

Fifth-grade student Chloe Barry received the Romero Britto Award as the participant who best captured the colorful spirit of Britto’s work.

Chloe, Vivian and the other 11 finalists will receive two tickets to the Kennedy Space Center Visitor Complex and the opportunity to participate on a future project with this year’s featured artist, Britto.

### Notices sent to inactive voters

The St. Johns County Elections Office has completed its bi-annual list maintenance under the new laws that took effect July 1, resulting in a decrease of active registered voters by 15,416.

For the bi-annual list maintenance, the supervisor is required to mail a notice to voters who have not voted in the last two federal general elections (2022 and 2020) or contacted the office since November 2020.

A total 16,688 notices were mailed to these voters on Aug. 4 requesting they complete and return the postcard to the Elections Office.

If voters do not respond to the notice or it is returned as undeliverable by the Post Office, after 30 days the law requires these voters be moved from the active to the inactive list, which begins them on the path to removal from the voter rolls. If they do not vote in two general elections (2024 and 2026), they will be removed from Florida’s voter rolls.

A voter who is on the inactive list is still eligible to vote; however, the voter must first confirm their address.

### Allowance increased for group home residents

The Agency for Persons with Disabilities (APD), in partnership with the Florida Legislature, through the Framework for Freedom

Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-24, has increased the “personal needs allowance” (PNA), essential funding that promotes community living for eligible individuals.

Those residing in an APD licensed group home and receiving a Social Security benefit will receive a minimum monthly benefit of \$164.52, compared to the federal rate of \$30.

The PNA is used to help pay any additional costs the person may have, such as haircuts, clothing and toiletries.

For additional information, go to [APDcares.org](http://APDcares.org) or call 866-273-2273.

BRIEFS continues on Page 14

### Does this describe you?

- Innovator
- Creator
- Disruptor
- Entrepreneur
- Small Business Owner
- Visionary
- Community-centered



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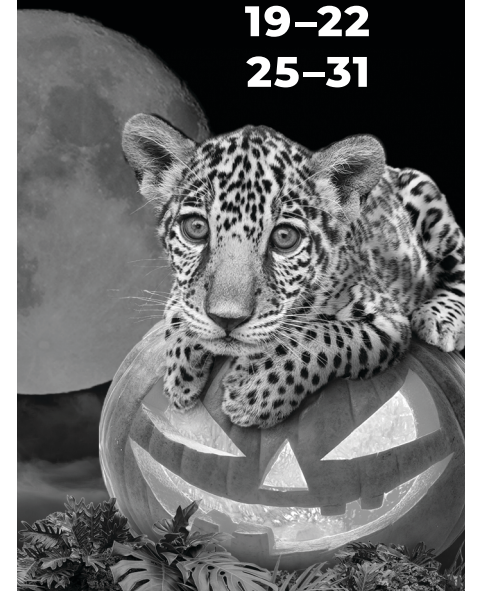


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**OCT**  
**13-15**  
**19-22**  
**25-31**



# Leadership Trainer Steve Saunderson works with Bolles fifth-graders

Mentor and leadership trainer Steve Saunderson traveled to the Bolles Lower School Ponte Vedra Beach Campus on Sept. 15 to teach fifth graders important lessons about sportsmanship and teamwork, with an emphasis on assuming positive intent and seeking to understand.

Saunderson has worked for many corporations, including Nike and now Under Armour, running leadership training for large teams of more than 100 people.

Ponte Vedra Beach Campus art teacher Kimberly Thomas arranged his visit to help the grade five students connect as classmates. She assisted Saunderson in facilitating a lively group activity as well as breakout sessions with each class.

To kick off the morning, the pair took the students out to the basketball courts for a teambuilding exercise using the game rock, paper, scissors. The fifth graders were separated into their respective classes, matching

up for a series of one-on-one competitions. The loser of each round then joined the line of their opponent's team, with the purpose of learning how to support others even when it feels difficult to do so.

When some students grew frustrated with losing, Saunderson and Thomas stopped the exercise to explain how to choose positivity in seemingly negative situations and how that choice can carry through their entire day. Thomas also ex-

plained the danger of assumptions through a dialogue that demonstrated how her students felt like they knew her but weren't aware of many facets of her life outside of school.

After the rock, paper, scissors activity, Saunderson met with each fifth-grade class individually for small-group sessions, which provided further opportunities to mentor and train students on how to support each other and work as a team.



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## OBITUARIES

**Julia Price Scott**

Julia Price Scott (“Judy”) of St. Louis passed away peacefully at her home at The Gatesworth in St. Louis, Missouri on September 13, 2023 at the age of 93.

Julia was born on May 29, 1930 in St. Louis, Missouri to Margaret “Tuck” and Holton Price. She grew up in Clayton, Missouri and graduated from John Burroughs High School in 1948 and Vassar University in 1952. She lived in Pennsylvania, California, Arizona, Georgia and Missouri while she raised her family. Later, she split her time between Sawgrass, in Ponte Vedra, Florida and St. Louis, Missouri.

Julia was known for her kind and selfless nature

and for her courage. At the age of 10, she fell from a jungle gym and broke her arm which revealed that she had bone cancer. The subsequent successful surgery was the first time anyone had survived such cancer without losing a limb. As a loving stay-at-home mother, she was a Girl Scout troop leader, volunteered and donated to many local charities. Later in her life, Julia worked for the Bryan Cave law firm (later Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner) of St. Louis, Missouri. Julia was dedicated to her ever-growing family and enjoyed golfing, playing tennis and bridge, the symphony, opera, and exploring the outdoors and the world.

Julia is survived by her son Jeremy Johnstone Jr. and his partner Sook Holingshead of San Francisco, California; her daughter Katherine Johnstone Hibbits and her husband Kirt Hibbits of Charlotte, North Carolina; her son Christopher Johnstone and his wife Pamela Johnstone of Denver, Colorado; three stepsons Hugh Scott III and Mac Scott, both of Clayton, Missouri, and Henry Scott of Potomac, Maryland; a stepdaughter Phoebe Burke of Clayton, Missouri; and 18 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. Julia was preceded in death by her husband Hugh Scott, Jr, her former husband Jeremy Johnstone, and her grandson Daniel Gardner Hibbits.

A memorial service for Julia will be held at the Church of St Michael & St George, 6345 Wydown at Ellenwood in Clayton on Saturday October 28, 2023 at 11 a.m. Family and friends are invited to gather to remember and celebrate her life. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to Girl Scouts of Eastern Missouri, Special Olympics of Missouri, or the Saint Louis Art Museum.

## DEATH NOTICES

**Patricia Anne Avinger**

Patricia Anne Avinger, 80, of Jacksonville Beach, Florida, died Sept. 16, 2023. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com). 904-249-1100.

**Nestor Ochocho Abelon, Jr.**

Nestor Ochocho Abelon, Jr., 77, of Atlantic Beach, Florida, died Sept. 6, 2023. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com). 904-249-1100.

**Charles Hyman Calhoun III**

Charles Hyman Calhoun III, 80, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Sept. 16, 2023. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com). 904-249-1100.

**Christopher Groucott**

Christopher Groucott, 67, of Jacksonville, Florida, died Sept. 9, 2023. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – [www.pontevedravalley.com](http://www.pontevedravalley.com)

**James W. Langham, Jr.**

James W. Langham, Jr., 73, of Jacksonville Beach, Florida, died Sept. 17, 2023. Arrangements by

Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com). 904-249-1100.

**Catherine “Cathy” Metcalfe**

Catherine “Cathy” Metcalfe, 83, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Sept. 18, 2023. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – [www.pontevedravalley.com](http://www.pontevedravalley.com)

**Jather Rhue**

Jather Rhue, 86, of Jacksonville, Florida, died Sept. 7, 2023. Arrangements by Quinn-Shalz Family Funeral Home & Cremation Centre. [www.quinn-shalz.com](http://www.quinn-shalz.com). 904-249-1100.

**Bobby Roberts**

Bobby Roberts, 82, of Jacksonville, Florida, died Sept. 19, 2023. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – [www.pontevedravalley.com](http://www.pontevedravalley.com)

**David Wells**

David Wells, 69, of Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida, died Sept. 18, 2023. Ponte Vedra Valley Funeral Home, Cremation Center & Cemetery – 904-285-1130 – [www.pontevedravalley.com](http://www.pontevedravalley.com)

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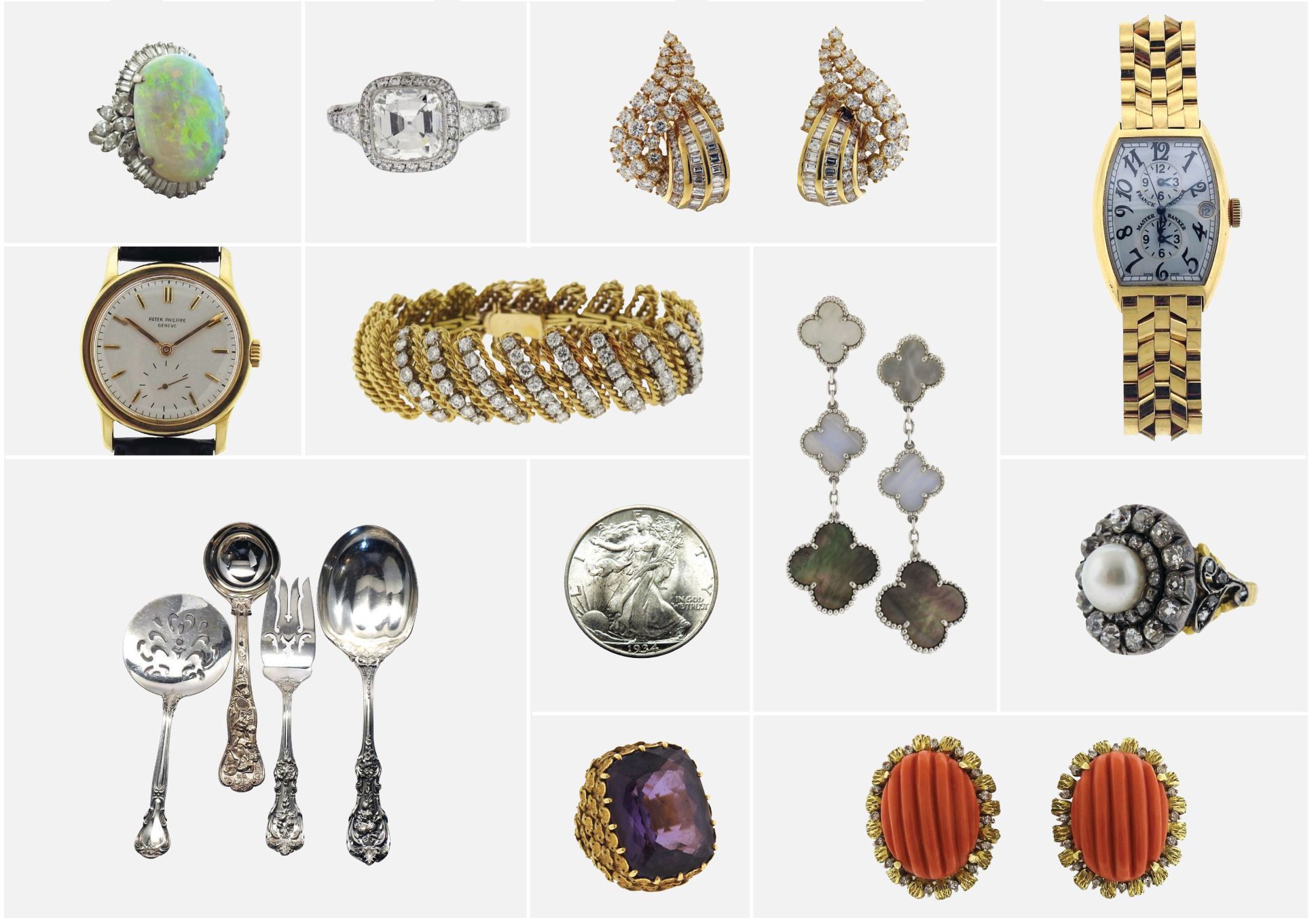
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WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 11<sup>TH</sup> 10-5

CALL TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT

*With so much to see and learn about in Northeast Florida, you can't overstate the value of a knowledgeable tour guide. That's why visitors, newcomers and even some longtime residents wanting to take a deeper look into The First Coast turn to Gary Sass, president of AdLib Luxury Tours & Transportation Inc. and Jacksonville Walking & Neighborhood Tours. Recently, he gave us a look behind the scenes of his unusual business.*

## Gary Sass

### As told to Shaun Ryan

#### Tell me a little about AdLib Luxury Tours & Transportation. What does it offer?

"AdLib" is a personalized tour company. We "AdLib" or customize the tour to fit the guests. After all, it is their tour, not our tour so why not make it specific to their interests.

We offer over 100 different base tours throughout North Florida and Cumberland Island. A personalized tour could be for two people with a pickup at their house or it could even be for 500 people arriving on a cruise ship served by our team of guides. Because we are also a transportation company, we can contract for vehicles as needed.

To date, we have toured guests from 108 different countries visiting our area. While I am technically a local historian, the focus is to create the most entertaining tour.

#### How do you personalize a tour?

It starts with some friendly interaction to understand the customer and their interest. The tour could be planned in advance, or it could be designed on the fly. Once I have the information, I start telling the stories that best connect with the customer.

I like to say I have a thousand stories, however, the 15 stories I tell that day should strike the most responsive chords. For example, I received a call from a new resident of an area of Jacksonville called Avondale and they wanted a tour of their neighborhood. Unbeknownst to everyone, my research revealed their new home was built and lived in by a famous local architect named Sheftall. During the tour, I connected their house to many other Sheftall structures in the community. At the end, I gave them all my research so they could tell the stories to their friends.

Often, I personalize a tour by stopping to do a chocolate tasting or a wine tasting. We may stop for photographs, go into buildings or do anything the customer finds enjoyable. We have an amazing First Coast, and my challenge is to delight guests by connecting them to it.

#### I see you dress in different outfits. Is that part of your style?

Absolutely; I am like a human prop on a tour. I often dress the part to talk about the culture from that period. To be the most entertaining, the cultural stories are usually better than the historical ones. I carry about 20 different props to share such as old photographs, postcards, maps and I even have a silver piece of eight from a Spanish shipwreck to be more interactive.

#### What is your most popular tour?

Often, I get a phone call asking, "Are you that guy that goes into the secret tunnels in Jacksonville?" I respond, "Yes, you found me."

Most of our tours are private. However, we do have one public walking tour on Tuesdays called Jacksonville "Top to Bottom" where we take people into a secret 1909 bank vault. Because we offer this tour to the public on a weekly basis and also to private groups, it is our most popular.

#### Do you tour Ponte Veda Beach?

Definitely; our area has an incredible story and locals want to know it. Before he died, Sid Mickler gave me his personal tour of Ponte Veda/Palm Valley and that be-



Photo courtesy of Gary Sass

#### Gary Sass dressed as Isaiah Hart, founder of Jacksonville.

came the start of a more comprehensive tour. More often though, I will get a request for a "Beaches Area Tour" which I combine Ponte Veda Beach with Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach and Atlantic Beach.

#### How did you get into this kind of work?

Eighteen years ago, my wife Susan and I decided to live in the perfect place with our two small girls. When I saw Mickler's Beach and met Mr. Parrish at Ocean Palms Elementary, I knew we found it. After we arrived, we tried to take a personalized tour since my wife and I had taken them around the world during my software consulting days. To our surprise, there was no such service in North Florida, so we created it.

#### Can you elaborate on your travel adventures I read in the Ponte Veda Recorder?

I like to call myself the History Hiker because I research the area before taking the journey and enjoy

writing about it. In the past, I hiked sections of the Appalachian Trail and Florida Trail. This summer I walked the Portuguese Camino and spent time in Pontevedra, Spain. That is no coincidence. I decided on this particular route which went through Pontevedra because I wanted to learn about our community's namesake in the Galicia area of Spain. Pontevedra is a remarkable city (also the name of the Province) and one of the most pedestrian-friendly places I have ever visited. Since returning, I have given presentations on Pontevedra, Spain.

#### What is next?

I will continue to give personalized tours and presentations since I enjoy it so much. However, it is time to start making the transition to being a writer. My wife and I are now empty nesters, so it is easier to combine my love of long-distance hiking and writing. There are several books in various stages that I started so all I can say is, "Stay tuned."



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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

# Transplanting Trees

"Nature soothes us. Nature heals us, and something more, the woods are a place of power." — Frederick Lenz



Kathy Esfahani

### By Kathy Esfahani

In Northeast Florida, we are part of Planting Zone 9. We have warm winters and hot summers that allow us to plant year-round. This climate also enables us to transplant trees during the fall, winter and early spring months. Transplant after a tree has dropped leaves in the fall and before new buds appear in the spring. It is best to avoid transplanting trees in the summer as the excessive heat can increase the potential for shock in a newly moved tree.

Keep the following tips in mind for a successful tree transplant:

- Be sure your tree is healthy and free from diseases and/or pests. An unhealthy



Crape Myrtle

tree may not be strong enough to survive the move.

- Select a new home for the tree that has similar soil and sunlight to what the tree is accustomed to having.
- Prepare your destination hole before removing the tree from its original location. The hole should be approximately three times as wide as the root ball and close to the same depth.
- Gather the branches of the tree with twine or burlap before digging.
- Strive to face the tree in the same

direction when you replant it. Mark the side of the tree facing north with a ribbon or string while it is in the original location and orient it in the same direction when placing it in the new hole.

- Try to move as much of the root system as possible. Dig a root ball approximately 10-12 inches across for every 1 inch diameter of the tree's trunk (for example, dig a root ball 30-36 inches across for a tree with a 3-inch-diameter trunk).

- Plant the tree only deep enough to line up the soil line of the root ball with the soil line of the new area.

- Fill the hole with subsoil first and then topsoil. Be sure to tamp down the soil as you go to prevent air pockets around the root ball. It can also be helpful to add water to the hole when it is half full of dirt.

- Be sure to water the tree in its new home regularly. Keep the soil moist but not soggy. Continue to monitor the tree, especially for watering as needed, for several months after transplanting.

Photos provided by Kathy's Creative Gardens & Nursery

## Flower of the Week



Drift Rose

- Consider adding 2-3 inches of mulch around the tree to help it retain the moisture it needs. Be careful not to let the mulch touch the trunk of the tree.

Transplanting a tree is not an easy project, so be sure to seek professional help if needed. However, moving existing trees can be a great way to redesign your landscape while making use of already successful plants! Happy planting!

### Flower of the Week: Drift Rose

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

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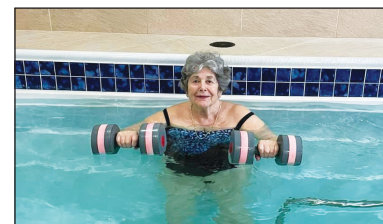
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# PUMPED FOR PUMPKINS



*Wesley Wells Farm is ready for fall with U-pick, extended festival*

**By Anthony Richards**

For many people fall means enjoying pumpkin, whether it is eating or drinking something pumpkin flavored, which seem to have endless possibilities if one walks down any store aisle this time of year.

However, for others, they get their pumpkin fix by going to a local pumpkin patch and picking the perfect pumpkin for carving, decoration or using as part of a family pumpkin pie recipe.

Wesley Wells Farm in St. Augustine is a family-owned farm that takes a unique twist on the pumpkin patch trend by offering guests the opportunity to pick pumpkins fresh off the vine.

“It’s a really fun time to see all the people that make trips out each year pick through the selection or just take some amazing pics,” Amanda Wells said.

Although the u-pick pumpkin patch is such a hit now, it was an idea that initially had some doubt whether it was what people would gravitate to.

“We had no idea that people would ever want to pick their own pumpkins, but we want to thank all those who do and have made it part of their tradition over the years,” Wells said.

However, just like choosing other fruits and vegetables, there are certain signs to look for when picking the “perfect pumpkin.”

“We encourage people to check the vine, although where we are (in Florida), there are plenty that might fall off the vine on their own, but its still very important to look and see how the vine is and if it looks healthy,” Wells said.

Once chosen, Wells recommends keeping pumpkins in the shade in order to help preserve them for as long as possible, especially with the Florida heat.

Also, once a pumpkin is carved into, it will begin the rotting process, so she suggested painting pumpkins on the outside so that they look the part as a festive piece but for a longer period of time.

Wesley Wells Farm will hold its Third Annual Fall Festival beginning Sept. 30, which will include fun things for the family to take part in, such as hayrides, a



Photo courtesy of Wesley Wells Farm

Wesley Wells Farm has extended its fall festival this year to be every Saturday from Sept. 30 to Oct. 28.

PUMPKINS continues on Page 10



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# Housing

Continued from 1

to fall.

As a result, those who make up the county's workforce are increasingly unable to find a place they can call home. And that includes many of the very people who make the county such a desirable place to begin with, "essential" workers like teachers, nurses and first responders. But also, hospitality and food service workers and others.

To seek solutions to this growing problem, the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce formed an Attainable Housing Coalition in 2022. Recently, the coalition released its white paper detailing the issue and suggesting possible strategies.

The findings formed the backbone of a presentation made at the Chamber's Economic Development Breakfast on Friday, Sept. 22.

Victor Raymos, association executive and CEO of the St. Johns County and St. Augustine Board of Realtors, succinctly described the core issue.

"We have an affordable housing crisis in St. Johns County," he said.

## Affordability, Availability

Speaker Mark Nighbor, revenue architect with One Mark Consulting, presented the white paper's findings

and methodology. He addressed the two challenges workers face when looking for a home: affordability and availability.

At the time the study was done, the median price of a home in St. Johns County was \$510,000. In August, it rose to \$550,000, but the study was predicated upon the earlier, lower figure. Estimates were conservative and fixed at a single point in the fluctuating market conditions.

The analysis found that a buyer would need an income of \$176,160 to afford a home at the median price, assuming the purchaser spent no more than 30% of his or her income on housing.

This means none of those essential workers could afford the home on single-earner wages.

So, using the \$260,000 determined by the county as the maximum price that housing could be deemed "workforce," the numbers were run again.

To afford a house at this price, a buyer would need an annual income of at least \$97,400. Though some essential workers could afford this if they were married to other essential workers, it was still out of reach for those on single incomes.

In fact, even the combined income of a higher-earning essential worker and a hospitality worker would be insufficient.

Renting, too, remained out of reach.

According to the study, a food service or hospitality worker would need to spend more than half his or her monthly income to rent a one-bedroom home. Only two of the worker classifications in the study, a nurse or a manufacturing worker, could afford to rent a one-bedroom home on a single income.

Even where a worker can afford the lower-price home, availability is extremely limited.

Nighbor offered a few ideas that could help but said no single action would fix the problem. Rather, it would require a combination of things.

"The most important thing at the core of this is the comprehensive plan that's being worked on right now that will be finalized next year," he said. "It is imperative that we have a component for attainable housing that's built into the comprehensive plan if we want any level of sustainability of a solution for us, long term."

## Economic Impact

The second speaker was Jerry D. Parrish Ph.D., chief economist for the Metro Atlanta Chamber of Commerce.

He addressed the economic impact of adding affordable units. He pointed out that impact fees and ad valorem taxes on these homes would actually benefit the county. He based his numbers largely on the construction of 5,000 smaller housing units — 801 to 1,250 square

feet — over five years, with two-thirds being single-family homes and the rest multi units.

Parrish said this would generate \$63.43 million in impact fees. It would also result in 1,475 jobs, most of which would be directly connected to the construction.

Using \$180,000 for the price of a single-family home and \$80,000 for an apartment, these 5,000 units would generate more than \$28 million in ad valorem taxes in the first five years and more than \$9 million annually after that.

"This is not a charity, where you're giving people free houses," he said. "The county actually brings in income on these types of things."

Meanwhile, workers who cannot afford to live in St. Johns County are forced to commute, which creates traffic congestion and wear on county infrastructure. And it also poses a potential problem for employers here.

"If they're driving in here 40 miles to take a job each way, every day, and one comes open in their neighborhood where they don't have to commute so far, you're going to lose even more of those workers here," said Parrish.

To read the entire white paper, Parrish's presentation, and related materials or to watch a short video on the topic, go to [sjcchamber.com/attainable-housing](http://sjcchamber.com/attainable-housing).



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# Pumpkins

Continued from 9

farm playground with farms animals and a kid zone and games to accompany the pumpkin patch.

However, one of the major changes this year is that instead of the festival being on the pumpkin patches opening weekend as a way to kick off the season, it will now be every Saturday from Sept. 30 to Oct. 28 from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Tickets for the festivals can be purchased at the gate and the farm is located at 2680 Ada Arnold Road in St. Augustine. There will also be different food trucks on site for guests to choose from each Saturday.

As is the case with farming, much of it is dependent on the cooperation of the weather patterns and this summer presented a challenge at times.

"All of our crops took a beating from the weather, because there was six weeks when it rained so heavy that we couldn't even get tractors out to tend to the fields," Wells said. "Some varieties of pumpkins thrived in that wet environment and others didn't do as well."

However, there is already a plan in place to make sure they have plenty of pumpkins available for each weekend and for the many school field trips they host during the month.



Photo courtesy of Wesley Wells Farm

**Guests at Wesley Wells Farm will have the opportunity to pick their own pumpkins off the vine as part of the farm's u-pick pumpkin patch.**

"We will have pumpkins, you don't have to worry about that," Wells said.

According to Wells, seeing the faces of the students on the field trips when they stop at the farm is one of her favorite things about the whole experience they offer.

"They just love it, and their favorite is always feeding the animals and playing in the dirt," Wells said. "They never leave

here as clean as they came."

She also hopes that the field trips become not just about seeing a lot of pumpkins, but also about opening up a child's creativity and imagination to the future opportunities that are out there.

"There are so many jobs and opportunities to get involved in agricultural careers," Wells said. "I hope they see that, and a spark is created."



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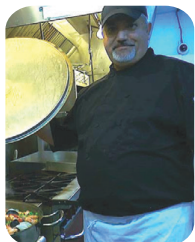
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# Sapna Foundation to host 3rd annual EnterCircle Entrepreneurship Summit

*Event features business expo, Cocktail for a Cause charity networking, pitch competition and more*

Sapna Foundation has announced the third annual EnterCircle Entrepreneurship Summit 2023, which will take place during Global Entrepreneurial Week from Nov. 15 to 17 in Ponte Vedra.

“Entrepreneurship is about finding solutions to a societal need, small scale or large,” said Gurpreet Misra, co-founder of Sapna Foundation. “It starts with an idea that serves a purpose. It takes innovation, resilient leadership and an unwavering focus to thrive with purpose. EnterCircle aims to spotlight these transformative narratives across various industries. I eagerly await EnterCircle 2023.”

This three-day summit is expected to impact more than 350 attendees, including students from high schools and regional colleges, entrepreneurs and small business owners. With phenomenal speakers covering the theme of “Thriving with Purpose,”

attendees will gain insights through talks, hands-on workshops, breakout rooms, panel discussions and networking sessions. This entrepreneurship event encourages attendees to connect, collaborate and share their businesses with the Ponte Vedra community.

“Supporting our local community is a core value of Hyundai of St. Augustine,” said Andrew DiFeo, managing partner at Hyundai of St. Augustine. “We are honored to support EnterCircle for the second year in a row. While the quality of the content and networking opportunities are first-class, it is the entrepreneurial spirit and innovative ideas from our community’s youth that are most inspiring. This year’s theme of ‘Thrive with Purpose’ is very relevant in our ever-changing world with so many opportunities for meaningful change at the local and global level.”

Themes and highlights:

- **Day 1 (Nov. 15):** Focuses on small businesses and startups, featuring a startup pitch competition, startups and small business expo, charity cocktail networking and awards night.

- **Day 2 (Nov. 16):** This is dedicated to providing high school children youth en-



Photo provided by Sapna Foundation

**A student pitches a product to a panel of judges in EnterCircle’s student pitch competition.**

trepreneurship opportunities for students to pitch business ideas, gain coding and design thinking experience and plan for their college and career paths.

- **Day 3 (Nov. 17):** The women’s entrepreneurship event is devoted to providing resources to women, like workshops on revenue modeling, growth strategies, financial planning and more.

The lineup features phenomenal speakers

from a variety of industries like tech and marketing. Speakers include Father Rich Pagano from John Paul II Catholic Church; Joy Andrews, interim county administrator for St. Johns County; Dr. Kathleen Schofield, executive director of Northeast Florida Regional Stem2 Hub; Marc Montemerlo, senior recovery engineer at SpaceX; Nick

**ENTERCIRCLE** continues on **Page 13**



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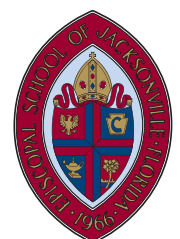
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Photo provided by Sapna Foundation

**Women's Entrepreneurship Day: Willie Gonzales, Beth Sweeney, Jackie Perrault, Isabelle Renault and Joy Andrews discuss women's entrepreneurship at EnterCircle Summit 2021.**

## EnterCircle

Continued from 12

Crouch, co-CEO of Dyne Hospitality; Frank Benedetto, founder of The Honey Badger Project; Adam Lowe and many more.

Registration is open for the business expo, Cocktail for a Cause charity networking night and the women's entrepreneurship day event. Details on how to sign up can be found on [www.entercircle.zone](http://www.entercircle.zone).

The Youth Day program is free to attend with a field trip made possible by the St. Johns County School District. Sponsors and supporters include St. Johns County, Hyundai of St. Augustine, St. Johns County School District, St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, Wired2Perform, Voyce

Admins, Jacksonville University, Tropical Smoothie Cafe, The Ponte Vedra Recorder and Conceptual HR Solutions among many others.

Sapna Foundation, dedicated to propelling entrepreneurship and alleviating poverty, hosts this event in celebration of Women's Entrepreneurship Day on Nov. 19 and Global Entrepreneurs Week from Nov. 13 to 19.

The summit will be held at the link, an award-winning innovation and community center that calls itself a "Space That Inspires" located in the heart of Nocatee at 425 Town Plaza Ave., Ponte Vedra. This 22,500-square-foot facility provides coworking space, event space, events and kids' programming, designed to inspire creativity and innovation.

# Events planned at the link

Here's a look at some major events coming soon to the link.

### Jimmy Buffett Tribute

7-9 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 28

This will be an unforgettable tribute to the legendary Jimmy Buffett. Feel free to bring your favorite food and drinks to enhance your experience, and get ready to groove to the tunes of some incredible performers who will be taking the stage.

Check out the lineup: Eric G of Lady & the Tramp, Mark Wiechman, Digby Morrow, Eric Edwards, Acoustic Flutation, Laura D'Alisera, Oleta Riggs, Ace Collett and Dan McCarthy.

Admission is free, but RSVP is requested at [https://bit.ly/JimmyBuffet\\_Tribute](https://bit.ly/JimmyBuffet_Tribute).

### '80s Trivia for a Cure

5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Oct. 12

The link is doing an '80s-themed Trivia Night for a Cure on Oct. 12 in honor of breast cancer fighters and survivors in the community. Come



dressed in your best '80s attire and have a fun night of trivia for the whole family. Proceeds support local breast cancer fighter Aimee Freedman. The program includes multiple rounds of trivia that test your knowledge of '80s pop culture, prizes and awards for best dressed and the trivia masters, and a special segment to honor and celebrate those affected by breast cancer.

Admission is for \$10 per person for members and \$20 nonmembers. Go to: <https://bit.ly/Trivia4Cure>.

### Beyond Pink

Oct. 22

Details coming soon.

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# MSD approves new fiscal budget with reduced millage rate

*\$450k set aside for two sidewalk projects, hopeful drainage improvements*

**By Anthony Richards**

The Ponte Vedra Municipal Service District approved a budget of \$1,669,389 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year during a special budget meeting on Sept. 20.

The meeting served as the final of several meetings in recent months that had been held discussing the budget and the details pertaining to it.

The approved budget consists of the total revenue and balances, as there will be a cash balance of \$944,737 and a combined revenue of \$724,652, which will include an ad valorem tax, with a millage rate of .2464, of \$696,652 and an interest income of \$28,000.

The millage rate was lowered from .27 previously to the rollback rate of .2464. It is the second consecutive year the MSD has agreed to reduce the millage rate.

“The reason we were able to do that is because last month the board voted to hire the lobbyist, so that’s \$40,000 we had budgeted, but we can pay it this month out of this fiscal year,” MSD chairman Al Hollon said. “They cap their expenses at \$3,000 so therefore the only item we carry forward is \$3,000, so it reduced the cash balance and reduced that line item and then we reduced the reserves.”

MSD trustee and treasurer Rick Brown questioned the \$150,000 placed in the public safety budget for drainage improvements, stating that it was not clear to him why that much was being set aside.

“Finding the solution is not the challenge for the MSD,” Brown said. “The challenge for the MSD is to advocate on behalf of the MSD to those who can make the changes. We don’t have any of the authority needed to make any of the drainage improvements that are needed. We can set aside all the money we choose to set aside, but we can’t spend it meaningfully, because we can get all the

studies we want but we can’t affect the change that has to be made.”

The board approved the final budget by a vote of 4-1, with Brown being the lone opposing vote. Trustees John Cellucci and Charles Callaghan were absent at the meeting.

“I completely understand what you’re saying,” trustee Mickey White said. “What I think is the most effective way to get these things done in the shortest time possible for our contingency.”

According to White, the county is dealing with crumbling infrastructure all throughout and not just in Ponte Vedra Beach, which means there is a list of projects that they have been made aware of, but now it comes down to getting the funds necessary to make them happen.

“My vision of how we could use that money is to help advocate and prioritize our neighborhoods,” White said. “If we do not advocate for these improvements, then we would be like everyone else in the county and go on a list that’s a mile long.”

He stated that through his talks with

the county engineer and that department, they have relayed to him that if a special district or MSD would be able to do some cost sharing with the county when it comes to design and engineering aspects to help with the cost of an overall project, it would help push that project along.

“It’s just hard to rationalize in my mind and for a number of people that I’ve talked to,” Brown said. “All of these things that we’re talking about are already paid for in our St. Johns County property taxes, so we’re layering on to further subsidize or prioritize getting things done that theoretically should already be getting done.”

The drainage issues are not a new problem for Ponte Vedra Beach and the surrounding county.

“Ten or 12 years ago I had a drain-pipe collapse between my house and the county came out and said, ‘We can’t fix it because we don’t have money in the budget to fix it,’” Hollon said. “I just think it would be good to be proactive and induce the county.”

## Briefs

Continued from 2

### Ponte Vedra Woman’s Club plans social

Ponte Vedra Woman’s Club will hold its next social from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Oct. 3 at Palm Valley Outdoors, 377 S. Roscoe Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach. For more information, go to [pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php](http://pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php).

[com/eventregistrations.php](http://pontevedrawomansclub.com/eventregistrations.php).

### Duval school bus option remains available

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA), in conjunction with Duval County Public Schools, will continue to offer free bus rides to Duval County middle and high school students through the MyRide2School program throughout the 2023-24 school year.

Eligible students must provide a form of student identification upon boarding a fixed route or First Coast Flyer bus to verify that they attend a public, private or charter middle or high school in Duval County.

For more information on MyRide-2School, students and parents in Duval County can go to [jtafla.com/ride-jta/fares-passes/my-ride-2-school](http://jtafla.com/ride-jta/fares-passes/my-ride-2-school) or call JTA Customer Service at 904-630-3100.

### 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.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan



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Attainable Housing Coalition  
OF THE ST. JOHNS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Workforce Housing in St. Johns County:

# UNATTAINABLE

Challenges and Solutions  
to Attainable Workforce Housing



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## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT/CEO

### Help us maintain our quality of life – join the coalition!



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

Our quality of life depends on key amenities and services and the community we live in. In St. Johns County, we can rely on high-quality medical services delivered by multiple health

systems. This expertise ranked us as the second healthiest county in Florida\* and will continue to get stronger with the merger of Flagler Health+ and UF Health; now UF Health St. Johns. The best public education Florida can offer is the main reason people relocate to St. Johns County. The low crime rate and the vibrant and unique restaurant and entertainment scene that our oldest city offers are other elements playing a key role in defining our quality of life.

Each of these elements relies on workers to provide the services we are accustomed to. Workers such as our nurses, teachers, first responders, cooks and servers are all hard to come by. A 2.8% unemployment rate and a record number of teacher resignations in May 2023 — an increase of 30% over the previous year — are just the tip of the iceberg contributing to the challenge St. Johns County's employers face to retain and recruit the foundational supporters of our quality of life.

Our local employers continue to rank workforce recruitment and retention as their greatest challenge. Even after qualified candidates are identified many can't find affordable housing in the region and end up declining the offer. Employees commuting from other counties are often lost once they secure a comparable job closer to where

they are living. The situation became so critical post-pandemic that in June 2022 the Chamber created a coalition to focus on the retention and recruitment of the workforce in key sectors — health care, education, manufacturing, hospitality, law enforcement and fire and rescue. We found that the availability of the workforce is tightly tied to the availability of attainable housing\*\* in our community.

During the past year, the Chamber's Attainable Housing Coalition tackled the issue, explained what contributed to the lack of attainable housing, analyzed the situation and identified solutions to consider for our community. The findings, "Challenges, and Solutions to Attainable Workforce Housing," were presented to Chamber members at the September Economic Development Council Breakfast. The coalition also wanted to understand the economic and fiscal impact of adding attainable housing in St. Johns County. We contracted with Dr. Jerry Parrish, Florida State University's chief economist and director of State and Local Policy Analysis at the Institute of Government, to conduct an analysis. Adding 5,000 attainable housing units is estimated to generate these impacts:

- \$85.3 million in wages during the construction phase
- \$63.4 million in impact fees to cover the county's costs of infrastructure, public safety and schools.
- \$28.3 million in ad valorem tax receipts during the first five years.
- \$9.4 million in ad valorem tax receipts annually once all units are completed.
- Ability of St. Johns County employers to fill thousands of open jobs and generate more than \$500 million in additional county GDP and more than \$4 million per year in additional county tax revenue.

Contrary to perception, the building of attainable housing is a revenue generator, job

creator and an important factor in sustaining key employers in our county, including our hospitals and school system.

The solution to providing an adequate supply of attainable housing is a complex matter that needs a collaborative approach. To solve it we will need to do it together. One significant barrier to adding attainable housing to our community is residents' desire to halt residential development of any kind in St. Johns County. Large new developments have been built in recent years and most of them were approved decades ago; but the perception is that they were recently approved, generating an aversion to any new developments in our area.

Yet, we need the development of attainable housing to maintain the quality of life supported by our hospitality workers, teachers, nurses and first responders. If you believe that attainable housing is important to our quality of life, I ask that you join our coalition. By joining the Attainable Housing Coalition, you are voicing to the decision-makers of our community and to your fellow residents that the development of attainable housing is good and essential to maintain the quality of life we enjoy.

Join the coalition as we continue to work with our elected officials, builders, landowners, financial institutions and community organizations to solve this critical issue.

*\*According to the National County Health Rankings, published by the University of Wisconsin's Population Health Institute and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation health.*

*\*\*Attainable housing refers to housing that is accessible and affordable for a significant portion of the population, particularly those with moderate to middle incomes. It is a concept that addresses the gap between traditional affordable housing, which is typically reserved for low-income individuals or families, and market-rate housing, which can be prohibitively expensive for many people.*

**Isabelle Renault**  
President and CEO, St. Johns County  
Chamber of Commerce

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

### OCTOBER

• **Chamber Before Hours Ponte Veda:** 1912 Ocean Bar and Rooftop, Oct. 11

• **Joint Chamber at Noon:** Whitney Meyer, senior VP & chief community impact officer, Jacksonville Jaguars; Casa Marina, Oct. 12

• **Chamber After Hours St. Augustine:** The Exchange at St. Augustine, Oct. 12

• **Chamber Before Hours St. Johns:** Viva Stretch, Oct. 18

• **Chamber After Hours St. Johns:** The Blake St. Johns, Oct. 25

### NOVEMBER

• **Chamber Before Hours Ponte Veda:** Vicar's Landing, Nov. 1

• **Women With Vision Council Meeting:** Speaker TBA; Palencia Golf Club, Nov. 2

• **Veteran's Day Luncheon:** Scott Mackes; Marsh Landing Country Club, Nov. 9

• **Celebrate:** The Treasury on the Plaza, Nov. 15

### DECEMBER

• **Economic Development Breakfast:** World Golf Village Renaissance St. Augustine, Dec. 1

• **Jingle & Mingle:** Marsh Landing Country Club, Dec. 6

For further information and to register at the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce website, go to [sjcchamber.com](http://sjcchamber.com).

## Locally Made roundtable held

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and St. Johns County hosted a community roundtable for creators, manufacturers and sellers of Locally Made products and services to gather input on better supporting these businesses and entrepreneurs. Supporting local artisans and product creators is essential for fostering economic growth and promoting unique handmade goods.

Scott Maynard, vice president of Economic Development with the Chamber, said, "Our goal is to significantly



contribute to the growth and success of local artisans and product creators, enriching the local economy and cultural landscape."

The Chamber utilized the roundtable to learn more about these groups' specific challenges and how to support them better. From the discussion, it was clear that St. Augustine and St. Johns County strongly support the arts, but there needs to be more communication between the different organizations.

One need is to identify a central point of focus where information can be

gathered and exchanged on the services, programs and events taking place. There is a need for performance space for all genres, affordable studio and classroom space, maker space for developing products and places to display and sell locally made products.

Other ideas included:

- Setting aside space in the Visitors Center for locally made products.
- Creating a "Locally Made" seal or tag to identify and brand locally made products. and
- Building a website to feature these goods and services.

Implementing these ideas also allows tourists to quickly identify which prod-



Contributed photo

**Lori Brandel, Vystar Credit Union and chair of the Historic St. Augustine Area Council, and Diane Bradley, president of the board for the St. Augustine Arts Association.**

ucts are certified as locally made. The Chamber is excited to continue work on this project.



# K9s for Warriors hosts Chamber after hours



Allison Misora, director of major gifts with K9s For Warriors, speaks during a St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach division after hours event.

Photo by Susan Griffin

# Chamber at Noon focuses on state of housing, income in county



Photo by Susan Griffin

Mark Nighbor with One Mark Consulting spoke at the Chamber at Noon event on Aug. 16.

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division held a Chamber at Noon event on Aug. 16 at the Ponte Vedra Beach Public Library with Mark Nighbor of One Mark Consulting as the guest speaker discussing the current housing market and income spectrum in St. Johns County.

# Code Ninjas opens third location



Photo by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

A ribbon cutting event was held Aug. 25 for the third Code Ninjas location. The World Golf Village location joins Ponte Vedra and Fleming Island.

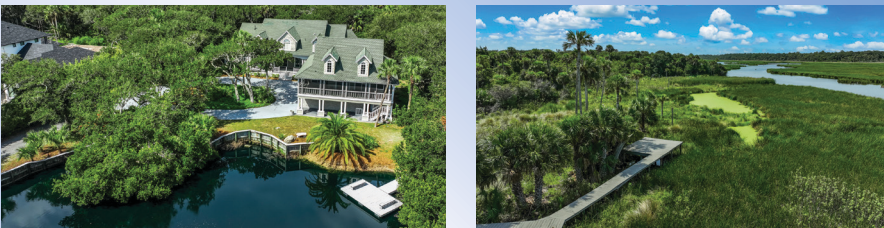
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## Unique Property in Ponte Vedra



This estate property of over 2.5 acres across from the ocean, with access by membership to a private beach club, is one of the most unique offerings I've ever put on the market. The main house is 3brs, office, media room & unfinished 1200 sf upper floor. The guest house is about 1200 sf, perched over the 4-car garage. Offered for \$2,500,000. Contact me for more details!



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# EnterCircle Entrepreneurship Summit scheduled for Nov. 15-17

The third annual EnterCircle Entrepreneurship Summit will be held Nov. 15-17 at the link, 425 Town Plaza Ave., Ponte Vedra.

The event is expected to impact more than 350 attendees, including local high school and college students, entrepreneurs and small business owners.

The theme is “Thriving with Purpose,” and attendees are expected to gain insights through talks, workshops, breakout

rooms, panel discussions and networking sessions.

Each of the three days has a specific focus.

- Nov. 15: Focuses on small businesses and startups, featuring a startup pitch competition, startups and small business expo, charity cocktail networking and awards night.
- Nov. 16: Youth Day. High school

students will have opportunities to pitch business ideas, gain coding and design thinking experience and plan for their college and career paths.

- Nov. 17: The women’s entrepreneurship event is devoted to providing resources to women, including workshops on revenue modeling, growth strategies and financial planning.

The event will also feature speakers representing a variety of careers.

Registration is open for the business expo, Cocktail for a Cause charity networking night and the women’s entrepreneurship day event. Details on how to sign up can be found on [entercircle.zone](http://entercircle.zone).

Sapna Foundation hosts this event in celebration of Women’s Entrepreneurship Day on Nov. 19 and Global Entrepreneurs Week from Nov. 13 to 19.

## Shining a Light on Challenges and Solutions for Attainable Housing in St. Johns County



**Attainable Housing Coalition**  
ST. JOHNS COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

**We’re proud to call St. Johns County home thanks to the high quality of life we have here.** Workers in our key industries teach us, nurse us, serve us in restaurants, keep us safe and contribute to the vibrancy of our economy. But many of these workers who are the foundation of our high quality of life are unable to live in the communities they serve due to a lack of attainable housing.



**Elizabeth Bernardino**

## Elizabeth Bernardino named Chamber’s VP of program development and marketing

Elizabeth Bernardino was named vice president of program development and marketing for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce effective June 29. In addition to overseeing marketing efforts, Bernardino will be responsible for membership experience and programming.

She brings a wealth of nonprofit and for-profit, marketing, membership and programming experience to the Chamber. As head of marketing at Weaver Fundraising (Trail’s End Popcorn for Boy Scouts), Bernardino’s primary focus was to reach, serve and retain every Council, Scout and volunteer by providing awareness, resources and support for their fundraising experience.

Prior to that, Bernardino was the senior vice president at Girl Scouts of Gateway Council and implemented strategy for many departments, including data analytics, membership sales and programs, including the cookie sale.

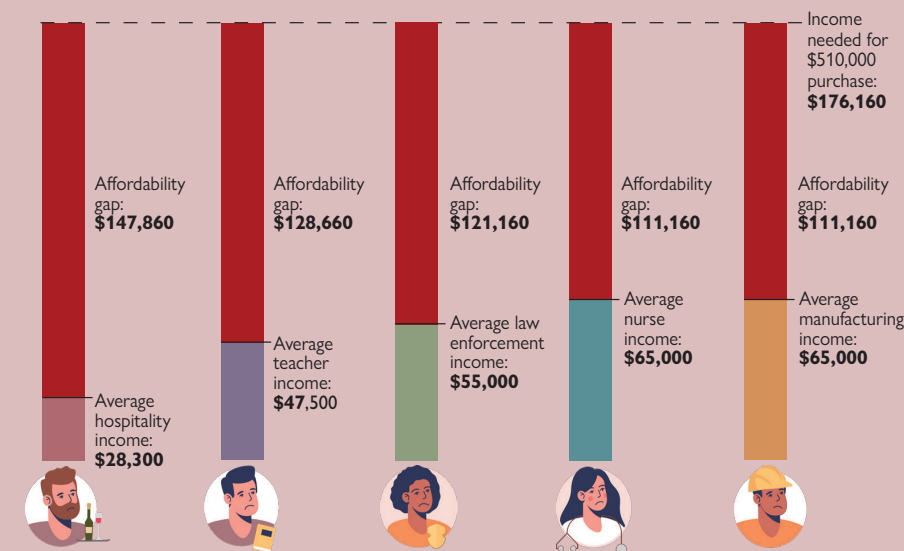
The Chamber began the search for a new vice president when the announcement was made that current Vice President of Operations & Membership Aimee Stafford would be moving back to Kentucky to be with her family.

Bernardino received her Bachelor of Science degree in integrated marketing and communications from San Diego State University. She will be responsible for recruitment and retention management, strategic marketing, brand management, member benefit management and Council and Division governance and programming.

### THE CHALLENGES

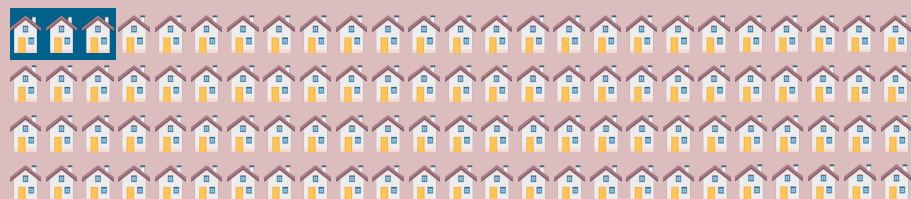
#### Affordability

- To purchase a home at the county median price of \$510,000, buyers need an annual income of \$176,160 — more than three times the average salary of a teachers in St. Johns County.
- Average rent in St. Johns County is more than \$2,000 per month — out of reach for nearly all essential workers.



#### Availability

- Only 3% of available rental units are priced between \$1,000-1,500, an attainable range for only some workers; most rentals are more expensive.
- Inventory of homes for purchase in attainable price ranges has declined in recent years, while inventory of more expensive homes has risen sharply.



### THE IMPACT

**Essential workers often must seek housing outside of St. Johns County — sometimes even taking their job with them and impacting our local economy and quality of life.**

Workers face longer commutes and add to traffic on our roads; they’re farther from convenient child care, leading to stress on families. When workers also find employment closer to their homes outside of St. Johns County, residents experience diminished services and a decline in our quality of life.

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Sign onto the Attainable Housing Coalition to endorse smart solutions so the ones who help our community thrive can also call St. Johns County home.

Scan the QR code or visit [www.sjcchamber.com/attainable-housing](http://www.sjcchamber.com/attainable-housing) to add your name to the coalition.



# Hardage-Giddens hosts Chamber after hours



Photo courtesy of St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce hosted an After Hours event at Hardage-Giddens St. Johns on Aug. 23.

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division hosted an After Hours event at Hardage-Giddens St. Johns on Aug. 23. The evening included networking opportunities as well as food and drinks.

# PROTACTX Brazilian Jiu Jitsu opens



St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce photo

Members of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce were on hand June 29 for a ribbon cutting ceremony at PROTACTX Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, which recently opened at 200 Sterling Plaza Drive, Suite 204, Ponte Vedra.

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# Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery hosts Chamber Before Hours



Karina Coryell, Latisha Akerele and Linda Thomson.

Photos by Susan Griffin

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division held a Before Hours event at Ponte Vedra Plastic Surgery on Aug. 9. Members were able to mingle and network inside and outside the location.

# Riptide team cuts ribbon



St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce photo

Riptide Home Furniture had its ribbon cutting event on Aug. 31. The business is located on U.S. 1 north of Palencia.

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For more information and tickets call **904.354.5547** or visit [Jaxsymphony.org](http://Jaxsymphony.org)



# Bank branch opens



Photo by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

A ribbon-cutting event was held July 26 for TD Bank — Durbin Creek.

# Snyder Air Conditioning, Plumbing & Electric cuts ribbon



Photo by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Snyder Air Conditioning, Plumbing & Electric held its ribbon-cutting ceremony Aug. 22. It was a morning of networking, food and celebrating.

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# Wells Fargo hosts Chamber After Hours



Photo by Susan Griffin

The St. Johns County Chamber Ponte Vedra Beach Division's Chamber After Hours was held at Wells Fargo in Nocatee. Heather McDougal, regional branch manager, and her team hosted the wonderful evening of networking, food and drinks.

# YMCA Pickleball Courts open



Photo by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

The Brown Family YMCA at Ponte Vedra Beach held its official ribbon-cutting for the Maguire Family Pickleball Center on Aug. 8.

Director of Community and Government Relations  
St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce  
Director, Jax Women's Business Center

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Women's Day

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- Book an Expo Table
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- Sign up to Pitch your business



# New THE PLAYERS executive director speaks at Chamber lunch



Photo by Anthony Richards

New executive director of THE PLAYERS, Lee Smith (fourth from the left) spoke at a joint lunch event hosted by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce Ponte Veda Beach Division and the Jax Chamber on July 19 at Marsh Landing Country Club.

# Outer Banks ribbon cutting held




Photo by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce



A ribbon-cutting event was held Sept. 5 for the Outer Banks Boil Company.



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# St. Johns County becomes more inclusive toward guests with autism

*Grants reimburse businesses for training, certification*

**By Shaun Ryan**

St. Johns County has seen some early successes as it moves toward becoming a Certified Autism Destination.

Thursday, Aug. 17, representatives of three key organizations announced that they have been certified by an independent credentialing organization for improving accessibility for those affected by autism or other sensory-sensitive conditions.

After a sufficient number of tourism- or hospitality-centered businesses and organizations achieve this certification, the county will earn the overarching designation. That threshold, which would signify certifications in entertainment, recreation, dining and lodging options, is yet to be determined.

It's a significant goal, one that makes the community more welcoming for families impacted by autism and one that could

benefit businesses that rely on tourism.

The three Certified Autism Centers are: The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and its Ponte Vedra Visitors Information Center

St. Augustine, Ponte Vedra & The Beaches Visitors & Convention Bureau Old Town Trolley Tours & Attractions of St. Augustine

The certifications were granted by the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES). To achieve certification, at least 80% of the guest-facing staff must be trained in autism and sensory disorders and pass a competency exam. The training focuses on understanding the unique needs of guests on the autism spectrum.

In addition, the IBCCES may conduct an onsite review. Certification is good for two years.

Certified businesses and organizations are featured on [autismtravel.com](http://autismtravel.com), a resource used by travelers seeking inclusive destinations.

The local effort began four years ago, when Chamber President and CEO Isabelle Renault read about a community that had



Photo by Shaun Ryan

**St. Johns County Commission Chair Christian Whitehurst announces a tripling of the county's allocation toward grants for businesses seeking the certification.**

become a Certified Autism Destination. She investigated and realized this would make the county a more welcoming environment — not only for visitors but also for local families with neurodivergent members.

“The program assures visitors that our certified tourism and hospitality businesses have taken the necessary training and steps to provide a welcoming experience to neurodiverse guests,” Renault said. “In addition, the certification is a way to open our tourism community to new markets and be inclusive to all guests and their families.”

To help fund the effort, the Chamber and St. Johns County have launched a matching grants program that reimburses participating businesses and not-for-profits for the training. At the Aug. 17 press conference, St. Johns County Commission Chair Christian Whitehurst announced that the county would triple its investment in fiscal year 2024 to \$75,000.

The grant application can be found at [sjc-chamber.com](http://sjc-chamber.com). To be considered, a business must be in the tourism or hospitality industry, have a St. Johns County address and be seeking this training and certification for its public-facing staff.

In addition to training its staff, Old Town Trolley Tours & Attractions of St. Augustine has posted sensory guides outside each of its museums. These guides provide sensory levels for visual, olfactory, auditory and tactile sensitivities so that parents can decide whether their children would be affected should they enter that space.

Old Town Trolley Tours & Attractions operates four museums: the Old Jail, the Oldest Store Museum Experience, the St. Augustine History Museum and Potter's Wax Museum.

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# Hospice 101 with Community Hospice & Palliative Care

In the realm of health care, the term “hospice” carries with it a unique and profound significance.

To medical professionals navigating the complex terrain of end-of-life care, it is unsurprising that a typical hospice experience encompasses a delicate blend of compassion, expertise and unwavering dedication. Hospice care represents the pinnacle of health care, where the focus shifts from curing to comforting, from extending life to enhancing its quality in its final chapters.

The synergy between medical expertise, emotional support and a profound understanding of human experience has long been a hallmark of the profession. While it is not surprising to medical professionals, the general population often misunderstands the

timing of hospice and the care provided.

Hospice care is specialized care that provides comfort, support and dignity to individuals with advanced, life-limiting illnesses. The primary goal of hospice is to improve patients’ and their families’ quality of life during the final stages of terminal illnesses.

Here are some key points about hospice care:

1. Hospice care is based on the philosophy that every person has the right to die with dignity, free from pain and surrounded by loved ones wherever they call home, including the patient’s home, a hospice facility or a nursing home.

2. Hospice care involves a multidisciplinary team collaborating to provide com-

prehensive care. This team typically includes doctors, nurses, social workers, counselors, spiritual care providers, home health aides and trained volunteers. They work together to address the patient’s and their family’s physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

3. Hospice care provided by Community Hospice & Palliative Care is accessible to everyone through Medicare or Medicaid, private or no insurance, and no one is ever turned away, regardless of their ability to pay. A person or caregiver can request hospice services by asking their primary doctor for a referral, calling a hospice directly, or through hospitalization or a long-term facility. To be eligible for hospice care, a patient is typically diagnosed with a terminal illness and has a life expectancy of six months or

less. This timeframe is not an exact prediction but serves as a guideline.

4. Hospice care offers a wide range of services to meet the patient’s, and their family’s, needs, including pain and symptom management, emotional and psychological support, spiritual care, assistance with daily activities and respite care for family caregivers.

5. Hospice care supports the family through bereavement services after the patient’s death. The service is offered to help family members cope with grief and loss and includes counseling, support groups, and other resources for up to 13 months after a loved one’s death.

For more information on hospice services, go to [communityhospice.com](http://communityhospice.com).

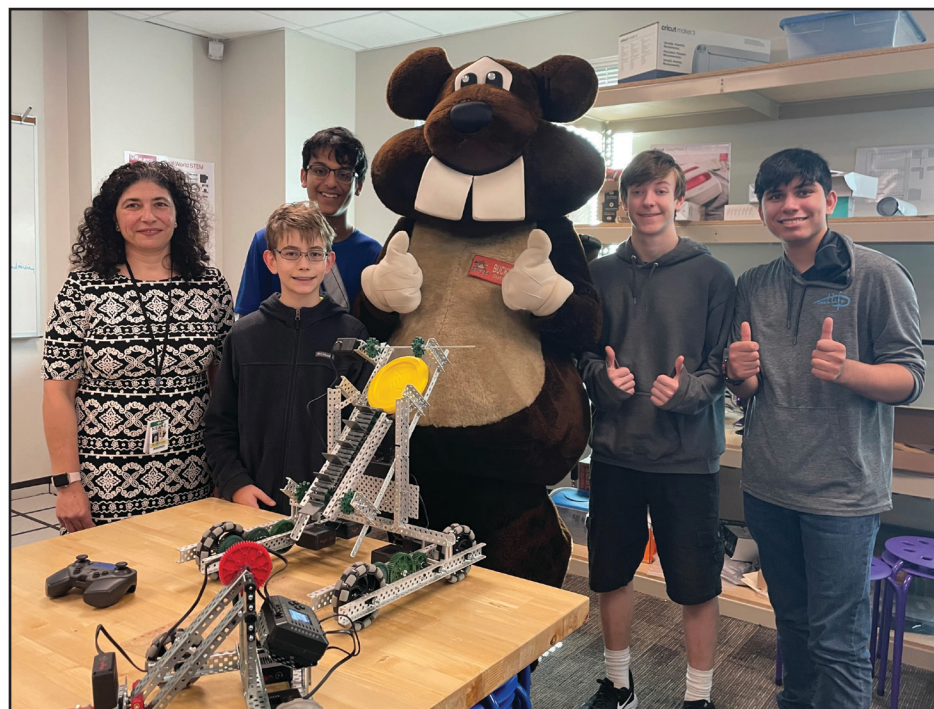
## Beaver Toyota, INK! continue to provide funding for classroom projects

Beaver Toyota St. Augustine and the St. Johns County Education Foundation operating as Investing in Kids (INK!) are continuing a partnership to help fund creative teacher-inspired classroom projects in St. Johns County.

Through this partnership, Beaver Toyota and INK! will match donations to projects posted by St. Johns County public school teachers on the DonorsChoose website.

The dollar-for-dollar match offer is available to all classroom projects created by St. Johns County public school teachers on the specially designed web platform. Community members and interested donors are invited to help support teachers by visiting the DonorsChoose website at [donorschoose.org](http://donorschoose.org) and entering “Beaver Toyota” in the search bar to highlight the St. Johns County projects seeking funding.

“Beaver Toyota and INK! are committed to providing teachers with the resources they need to create meaningful learning experiences in their classrooms,” said Cathy Newman, INK!’s executive director. “Last year, Beaver Toyota and INK! awarded \$25,000 in classroom grants to St. Johns



Contributed photo

**Bucky the Beaver visits a Nease High School robotics class that received funding through the 2022 Beaver Toyota, INK! match campaign on DonorsChoose**

County teachers. We are thrilled to be able to continue this funding and double the

impact by matching community donations on DonorsChoose.”

In 2022, 76 projects were funded through the Beaver and INK! matching grants benefitting 66 teachers and their students at 24 schools throughout St. Johns County. Additionally, 44 projects were partially funded through the match campaign.

Some of the classroom projects funded in 2022 include STEM resources, math teaching tools, classroom libraries, hands-on learning experiences and supplies for science experiments, and art classrooms, among others.

For more information and details about the 2022 Beaver Toyota and INK! match campaign, go to the Partner Page with project descriptions, teacher comments and photos of the learning experiences at <https://tinyurl.com/4a5647pv>.

“It is so important to us that teachers indicate exactly how grant funds are used in their classrooms,” said Nick Reuther, Beaver Toyota general manager. “We are excited to see the success of the 2023 DonorsChoose match campaign and pleased to continue our partnership with INK!,” he said.

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St. Augustine Amphitheatre



Ponte Vedra Concert Hall

# St. Johns County OKs partnership for operation, management of The Amp, Ponte Vedra Concert Hall

At the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners' regular meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 19, the board unanimously approved a public-private partnership with SJC Cultural Events Inc. Effective Oct. 1, SJC Cultural Events will oversee the operation and management of the St. Augustine Amphitheatre and Ponte Vedra Concert Hall.

While the county will continue to retain the ownership or leasehold interests, including associated buildings, real estate and further improvements, SJC Cultural Events will assume comprehensive operational duties. These responsibilities cover event management and promotion, supervising facility expenses, coordinating cultural series such as the Sing Out Loud Festival and the Fort Mose Jazz and Blues Series, and maintaining all facilities and equipment.

SJC Cultural Events is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to providing authentic cultural programming for St. Johns County and live music enthusiasts globally. The unpaid executive board of directors consists of St. Johns County residents and business professionals.

"It's a landmark day for St. Johns County," SJC Cultural Events Board Chair Dylan Rumrell said. "Collaborating with the dedicated county and amphitheater teams to bring this vision to life has been an incredible journey. To our loyal fans of the St. Augustine Amphitheatre and Ponte Vedra Concert Hall: Brace yourselves, for the best of what this team can offer is just around the corner. In the words of the legendary Frank Sinatra, 'The best is yet to come!'"

The St. Augustine Amphitheatre's success is widely recognized. For two consecutive years, in 2022 and 2023, the industry-leading Pollstar Magazine ranked this venue as the top amphitheater

in the United States based on ticket sales during the first six months of each year. In fiscal year 2023, to date, the amphitheater has welcomed a 262,663 guests across 75 events. Meanwhile, the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall has drawn in 34,075 attendees over 80 ticketed events.

A significant upcoming renovation next spring is set to further enhance the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall's appeal by adding balcony seating, boosting its overall capacity.

"This new partnership provides the opportunity for greater mobility in signing performers, improving guest experiences like launching new restaurant options, elevated staff recruitment and retainment, as well as a higher degree of efficiency in daily operations of both facilities — all of which will positively impact tourism and our community," Interim County Administrator Joy Andrews said.

Andrews said the partnership calls for profits from ticket sales to be invested into planning more free shows for residents.

In April 2022, the Board of County Commissioners unanimously agreed to form the Amphitheatre and Concert Hall Advisory Committee. The commission tasked this committee with evaluating and suggesting improvements to existing programs.

By September 2022, the advisory committee submitted a report and recommendation to the board, highlighting the profound economic impact of cultural events and its potential for significant growth in subsequent years. A conservative estimate pegged the direct economic influence for fiscal year 2022 at more than \$39 million.

After receiving an unsolicited proposal from the nonprofit in April 2023, the county issued a request for proposals (RFP) to invite more participants. On

June 6, 2023, the board unanimously decided to allow county staff to begin negotiations with SJC Cultural Events, aiming to define and finalize the terms and conditions of their partnership.

Adhering to Florida's public-private partnership statute, an independent review was conducted by outside counsel: Neville Wainio, CPAs and Bryant Miller Olive P.A. Their comprehensive evaluation of the business plan, combined with a detailed analysis of the operational, financial and organizational elements of the proposal, concluded that this public-private partnership is poised to deliver improved cost efficiency, enhanced community benefits and a sustained commitment to delivering exceptional service to both residents and visitors.

Gabriel "Gabe" Pellicer, CEO and president of SJC Cultural Events Inc., has been a vital force behind the St. Johns County Cultural Events Division for the past 15 years. Born and raised in St. Augustine, Pellicer joined the division soon after the significant renovation of the St. Augustine Amphitheatre in 2007. Throughout his tenure, he has taken on multiple roles, culminating in his most recent position as general manager.

Pellicer has been instrumental in positioning the St. Augustine Amphitheatre and Ponte Vedra Concert Hall as must-visit venues, attracting world-class artists and fostering community-focused events. With his extensive background and deep connections to the St. Augustine music scene, Pellicer's leadership ensures continuity of the transition into the new public-private partnership with St. Johns County.

"Growing up in St. Augustine, I've been deeply connected to our music scene," he said. "Watching the St. Augustine Amphitheatre and Ponte Vedra Con-

cert Hall evolve over the past 15 years has been a personal journey. Stepping into this new role, I'm grateful for the bonds formed amongst our team, county staff, and the board of directors. Today marks an emotionally profound and exhilarating moment for our team. Home is where the heart is; together, we're committed to elevating our venues, continually reaching for the best version of ourselves."

Additional summary highlights of the partnership:

This is St. Johns County's inaugural public-private partnership.

The contract is set to run through Sept. 30, 2050, with potential renewals in five-year increments upon mutual agreement.

Annual audits will be presented to the St. Johns County Board of County Commissioners to ensure transparency.

SJC Cultural Events will manage deferred maintenance projects, aiming for completion within the next three years.

SJC Cultural Events will execute all capital improvement projects in coordination with the county.

SJC Cultural Events commits to enriching flagship community events, such as the Sing Out Loud Festival and Fort Mose Jazz and Blues Series, while also exploring opportunities to introduce new cultural series to the community.

SJC Cultural Events will lead key operational tasks such as budgeting, asset management and maintenance in collaboration with the county.

St. Johns County will provide SJC Cultural Events annual funding: \$750,000 for county facilities maintenance and \$1.7 million for cultural series events. These amounts will be adjusted yearly based on the Consumer Price Index. The nonprofit will also spearhead the previously approved Ponte Vedra Concert Hall project using allocated funds.



Contributed photos

# Bolles Lower School students mark International Day of Peace



Students on the Bolles Lower School Ponte Veda Beach Campus held a special assembly the morning of Sept. 21 to recognize the United Nation's International Day of Peace.

The young Bulldogs shared what peace meant to them during Flag in George Hall, with many focusing on the need to find peace within themselves in order to spread peace across the world.

After Flag, all grades participated in a Peace Walk around the courtyard to reflect and view the peace poles made by last year's grade five students. These poles, each unique in design, feature the words "May Peace Prevail on Earth" written in English on one side and the same phrase written in another language on the opposite side.

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GUEST COLUMN

## What is behavioral finance ... and why should you care?

Written by/for Wells Fargo Advisors

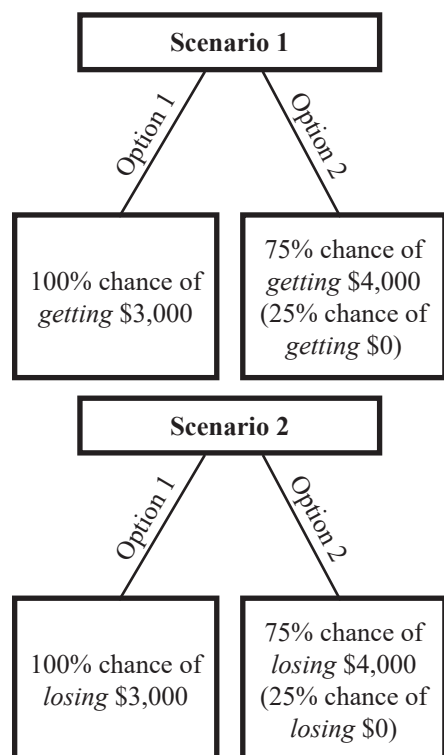


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Investors may like to think they're completely rational in their decision-making, but that's highly unlikely. We don't stop being human beings when it comes to investing, so psychology and emotions are apt to play roles — sometimes large ones — in the choices we make.

Behavioral finance studies investors' real-life behavior and common biases. It considers the roles emotions and psychology play in making financial decisions and aims to identify factors that cause investors to sometimes act irrationally.

A key concept in behavioral finance is "prospect theory," which describes how investors make decisions involving risk and gain. Studies have shown people frequently consider losses far more undesirable than they find comparable gains desirable. For example, take the following scenarios:



Given the first scenario, most people will avoid the risk and take option one (the sure \$3,000 gain). On the other hand, when presented the second scenario, most favor option two (the 75% chance of losing \$4,000) because it offers the possibility of avoiding the pain of a loss.

Keep in mind — and this is important — all four choices are mathematically equivalent. This means individuals' responses were based primarily on their emotional reactions to fear of loss vs. enjoyment of gain, not rational decision-making.

### The psychology of risk and reward

If you ever wonder why markets sometimes act in ways that defy logic, behavioral finance helps explain it. For example, bubbles can form when prices rise based on investors' emotional reactions rather than the fundamentals. Once their sentiment eventually changes, a precipitous sell-off can follow.

Take what's come to be known as the dot-com bubble of the late 1990s. Soon after the internet's introduction, investors realized its potential to transform our everyday lives (which it clearly has). What they were over-optimistic about were internet-based companies' abilities to quickly create profitable businesses.

In response to investors' enthusiasm, the NASDAQ Index, where many of these companies' stocks were listed, rose 189% during the two years leading

up to its peak in March 2000. Perhaps more significantly, the price/earnings (P/E) ratio — a measure commonly used to determine how expensive stocks are (the higher the ratio, the more expensive stocks are considered to be) — was 175. By comparison, it was only approximately 27 at the end of 2022.

That suggests many investors were caught up in the furor over the New Economy and ignored the fundamentals. When investors realized it would be a long time before many of these companies became profitable, the bubble burst and stock prices plummeted.

The lesson for investors is the importance of being diversified and investing primarily based on fundamentals — not on emotion and the fear of missing out on the next "big thing." Of course, diversification strategies do not guarantee investment returns or eliminate the risk of loss.

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## Financial strategies that can help seniors grow their money

Though conventional wisdom regarding financial risk and aging still makes sense, the effects of inflation over the last year-plus have highlighted how important it can be for seniors to keep growing their money even after they retire. Fortunately, various strategies can help seniors grow their money without exposing them to considerable risk.

- **Look into high-yield savings accounts.** High-yield savings accounts offer much higher interest rates than standard accounts. The rules governing eligibility to open such accounts differ between financial institutions, but many mandate that account holders have high minimum balances, typically in the neighborhood of \$250,000. So long as account holders maintain that minimum balance, they can accrue penalty-free interest without exposing their money to the risks of the market.

- **Consider other exclusive bank accounts.** High-yield savings accounts are not the only way seniors' banks may be able to help grow their money without necessarily taking on market-related risk. Products such as Chase Private Client Checking<sup>SM</sup> offer exclusive perks, including a dedicated client advisor who can work with seniors as they navigate life changes, including retirement.

- **Consider low-risk investments.** Low-risk investments can be vulnerable to inflation, not unlike money sitting in a savings account. However, certain short-term bonds, such as Treasury Inflation-Protected Securities, are designed to mirror inflation, which makes them an option worthy of consideration for seniors who have been concerned by the ways inflation has affected their financial status in recent years. According to the Department of the Treasury, the principal of a TIPS can go up or down over its term. When the bond reaches maturity, if the principal is higher than the original amount, bond holders get the increased amount. If the principal is lower at maturity, bond holders still get the original amount.

## GUEST COLUMN

# Cryptocurrency makes it more difficult to divide assets in divorce settlements

By **Lawrence Datz**

Jacksonville Family Law Attorney

The use of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies in divorce settlements is a relatively new phenomenon, but it is one that is becoming increasingly common. The major problems with this type of asset is the anonymity of cryptocurrencies can make them attractive to spouses who are trying to hide assets from their ex-partners, and the volatility of cryptocurrencies can make it difficult to determine their true value.

In some cases, Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies have been used to conceal assets from the court altogether. A spouse may hide their cryptocurrency holdings in a wallet that is not registered to their name, or they may transfer their cryptocurrency to a friend or family member before the divorce proceedings begin. This can make it difficult for the court to determine the extent of the spouse's assets, and it can also make it difficult for the other spouse to obtain a fair share of



Lawrence Datz

the assets.

In other cases, Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies have been used to hide assets from the other spouse during the divorce negotiations. A spouse may refuse to disclose their cryptocurrency

holdings, or they may inflate the value of their cryptocurrency holdings in order to obtain a larger share of the marital assets. This can make it difficult for the other spouse to reach a fair divorce settlement, and it can also lead to further conflict between the spouses.

The use of Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies in divorce settlements can also have a significant impact on the tax implications of the divorce. If a spouse sells their cryptocurrency holdings, they may be subject to capital gains tax. This can add to the financial burden of the divorce, and it can also make it difficult for the spouse to reach a fair settlement.

The use of cryptocurrencies in divorce settlements is a complex issue, and it is one that is likely to continue to evolve as the technology continues to develop. It is important for spouses to be aware of the potential risks and benefits of using cryptocurrencies in divorce settlements, and it is also important for them to seek legal advice from an experienced attorney who can help them navigate this complex

area of law.

Here are some tips for divorcing couples who are considering using Bitcoin or other cryptocurrencies:

Be transparent about your cryptocurrency holdings. If you have cryptocurrency, be upfront about it with your spouse and the court. Hiding your cryptocurrency holdings can make it difficult to reach a fair divorce settlement.

Keep good records of your cryptocurrency transactions. This will make it easier for the court to determine the extent of your cryptocurrency holdings and the value of your cryptocurrency.

Consider using a cryptocurrency escrow service. A cryptocurrency escrow service can help you to safely and securely transfer your cryptocurrency to your spouse during the divorce proceedings.

Seek legal advice from an experienced attorney. An experienced attorney can help you to understand the legal implications of using cryptocurrency in divorce settlements and can help you to protect your rights.

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# Wolfson Children's Hospital gets \$100K grant to address youth suicide

Wolfson Children's Hospital has received a \$100,000 grant as part of the Preventing Youth Suicide: A Cardinal Health Foundation National Collaborative. The program, which is an initiative from Cardinal Health, the Children's Hospital Association (CHA) and the Zero Suicide Institute at the Education Development Center, helps hospitals better identify and care for youth at risk for suicide.

The Preventing Youth Suicide National Collaborative is working to develop a pediatric-specific, data-driven approach that will enable participating children's hospitals and health systems to better track, share and implement best suicide prevention practices with each other. This program supports a system-wide transformation in suicide care at children's hospitals and will help save children's lives.

"We're excited for this grant and appreciative to Cardinal Health, the Children's Hospital Association and the Zero Suicide Institute at the Education Development Cen-

ter for recognizing the importance of behavioral health services," said Terrie Andrews Ph.D., vice president of Baptist Behavioral Health. "Anytime we can intervene and stop death by suicide, it has a positive ripple effect on everyone around that child."

The grant will also aid in training staff, furthering research and building on current Wolfson Children's behavioral health services and initiatives such as On Our Sleeves, the Youth Mental Health First Aid training program and the continuation of embedding behavioral health care into primary care, Andrews said.

Additionally, a new 20-bed Behavioral Health and Wellness Unit is expected to open at Wolfson Children's in spring 2024. The new unit will join the 14-bed Larry J. Freeman Behavioral Health Unit and eight-bed behavioral health pod located in the main Wolfson Children's Emergency Center.

The new unit is funded, in part, by a \$3 million gift from The PLAYERS Championship Village Inc. and a \$5 million appropria-

tion from the state of Florida.

"Like much of the country, there continues to be a demand for pediatric behavioral health services in Northeast Florida," said Wolfson Children's Hospital President Allegra C. Jaros. "This collaborative grant will allow our team to continue providing critical, specialized care and support to patients and their families. We are grateful to Cardinal Health, the Children's Hospital Association and the Zero Suicide Institute at the Education Development Center for this grant that will allow us to work with our partners to meet the needs of some of our most vulnerable patients."

"Children's hospitals and health systems work within their hospitals, outpatient clinics and emergency rooms and in partnership with their communities to improve the health of children and youth — including their mental, emotional and behavioral health," said Amy Wimpey Knight, president of CHA. "With some 30 pediatric health care organizations now focused on

building stronger care systems to recognize, intervene and treat children and youth at risk of suicide through the Preventing Youth Suicide Collaborative, we will save lives. We are grateful to these hospitals, their community partners and to Cardinal Health and the Zero Suicide Institute for their leadership and partnership with CHA. We are committed to sharing their work with children's hospitals across the nation."

"At Cardinal Health, we're committed to investing in the mental wellbeing of not only our employees, but our communities as well," said Jessie Cannon, vice president of Community Relations at Cardinal Health. "We're proud to continue to support the work CHA and children's hospitals are doing to reduce youth suicide. We're confident this program will make a lasting impact in funded communities."

To learn more about the collaborative, go to [childrenshospitals.org/content/behavioral-health/product-program/preventing-youth-suicide-national-collaborative](https://childrenshospitals.org/content/behavioral-health/product-program/preventing-youth-suicide-national-collaborative).

# PulteGroup opens for sales at Cordova Palms

PulteGroup has announced that sales are underway at Cordova Palms, its newest single-family home community in St. Johns County. Located within a master-planned

development, Cordova Palms will showcase a new model park.

"Cordova Palms features spacious, consumer-inspired floorplans right in the

heart of St. Johns County," said Justin Cook, division president of PulteGroup's Northeast Florida Division. "With resort-style amenities and a convenient location combined with the value Pulte offers, we expect our homes at Cordova Palms will be very successful."

Pulte Homes is building single-family detached homes on 53-foot homesites and offering five thoughtfully designed floorplans ranging in size from 2,149 square feet to more than 3,266 square feet. Construction on a new model home featuring the Whitestone plan is underway. Pulte Homes at Cordova Palms starts in the low \$400,000s.

Cordova Palms' amenities include a resort-style pool, fitness center, putting green, Bark Park, sports courts, an outdoor fire pit and a children's playground. Cordova Palms is zoned for A-rated schools in the St. Johns County Public School District.

Located off U.S. 1 approximately two miles south of International Golf Parkway, Cordova Palms is conveniently located a



short drive from historic downtown St. Augustine, beautiful nearby beaches, shopping, dining and more.

Cordova Palms is located at 22 Sandoval Lane in St. Augustine. For more information, call 904-604-7002 or go to [pulte.com/jacksonville](https://pulte.com/jacksonville).

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# Lung screening program completes 20K screenings

Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center’s lung screening program has conducted more than 20,000 screenings since its launch in 2015, leading to the detection of nearly 300 lung cancers. Of these detected lung cancers, 74% were found at an early stage.

In the United States, lung cancer is the second most common cancer and the leading cause of death from cancer among both men and women, according to the American Cancer Society. Each year, more people die of lung cancer than colon, breast and prostate cancers combined.

Fortunately, lung cancer deaths are declining, partly due to a decline in smoking rates and advances in early detection and treatment, including improved chemotherapeutics, minimally invasive lung surgery and lung cancer screening.

While a history of tobacco smoking can lead to lung cancer, it is important to note that 15% to 20% of men with lung cancer are nonsmokers and more than 50% of women with lung cancer are nonsmokers.

Lung cancer screening consists of a noninvasive low-dose CT scan that uses no needles or injections. It allows providers to detect lung cancer at its earliest stages when available treatments are more effective.



For eligible individuals, lung cancer screenings are fully covered by Medicare and many commercial insurance plans. According to the United States Preventive Services Task Force, individuals who meet the criteria below should undergo annual screening CT scans:

- Age 50-80
- 20-pack-year history of smoking or more (this means one pack a

day for 20 years, two packs a day for 10 years, etc.)

- Current smokers or those who have quit within the last 15 years

“No one deserves lung cancer,” said Carolyn Austin RN, the lung screening program coordinator at Baptist MD Anderson. “Everyone at risk for lung cancer deserves compassion, and we are here to offer support.”

There has been a 21% improvement in the national average of survivors five years after a lung cancer diagnosis, according to the American Lung Association. Early detection through screening helps.

In addition to its screening program, Baptist MD Anderson also offers a lung wellness clinic to help patients with smoking cessation, as well as innovative technologies such as robot-assisted bronchoscopy, a minimally invasive approach that allows physicians to view and conduct biopsies of lung nodules found during screening.

Treatment options for early-stage lung cancers continue to evolve. Recent research has shown that surgically removing less lung tissue can be as effective as removing an entire lobe for small tumors, which can offer better quality of life for patients, with fewer effects on breathing after their procedures.

“The spectrum of management for lung cancer, from screening to advanced diagnostics and now lung preservation surgery using advanced robotic surgical techniques, allows patients to not only live longer but enjoy a better quality of life,” said Subrato J. Deb M.D., thoracic surgeon at Baptist MD Anderson.

To schedule a lung screening, go to [baptistjax.com/lungscreening](http://baptistjax.com/lungscreening).



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# In the Arts

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## Jen Fulwiler to bring 'domestic comedy' to Ponte Vedra

By Shaun Ryan

Few things are as funny as real life when it takes an unexpected turn. The best comedians know this, because they know it's relatable. When audiences envision themselves in the absurd situations being described, they can't help but laugh.

And that's probably why so many enjoy the standup comedy of Jen Fulwiler, who describes her style as "domestic comedy with a fresh twist."

She talks about family. She talks about being a mom. Stuff that audiences can identify with. Domestic stuff. The twist, however, is this: Though she had never really planned on being a mom when she was younger, today, she's mom to six kids.

"I'm constantly surprised by my life, every single day," she said.

As you might imagine, Fulwiler's is a life rich in source material. And her new show clearly draws on that source.

"The 'Maternal Instinct' set is funny stories and hopefully relatable moments

of my life and my husband's life, just trying to keep it together as modern parents who often do not feel very equipped to be modern parents," she explained.

Fulwiler's kids have been a big part of her comedy career from the beginning. Because she self-produced her first stand-up comedy tour, booking theaters across the nation armed only with a Google search and her credit card, she quickly realized she was short on staff. But the kids came to the rescue, taking over the many jobs that were otherwise unfilled.

On the road, Fulwiler tries out her jokes on her young audience and gets their feedback.

"They get to travel, and they get to write jokes with me, and they think it's a lot of fun," she said.

The relatability of her humor also brings a sense of relief to audience members who are struggling with a variety of issues in their own lives. Fulwiler's stories remind them that they are not alone.

"Of course, there's lots of laughter, but I do make some points that I think will encourage parents so they walk away



Contributed photo

**Standup comedian Jen Fulwiler will bring her new show, "Maternal Instinct," to the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall on Nov. 1.**

from the show and they say, 'OK, you know what? I feel a little better about my life and a little better about returning to the chaos that is my life,'" Fulwiler said.

Fulwiler keeps her routine family-

friendly because she wants to create a welcoming environment.

"I want people to be able to invite anyone," she said. "If your grandma needs a night out, she should be able to come to my show, too."

And though her humor relies upon her own experiences, you don't have to be a mom — or even a woman — to enjoy her show.

"I work hard to make this show one that is relatable to everyone," she said. "Everyone takes something away, whether or not they have a life exactly like mine. I'm a big believer that good comedy is good comedy. Period. End of sentence."

Jen Fulwiler will be at the Ponte Vedra Concert Hall on Nov. 1 as part of the Florida Theatre "On The Road" Series. Show time is 7 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at [ticketmaster.com/event/22005EF3AAA4C791](https://www.ticketmaster.com/event/22005EF3AAA4C791) or The Amp Box Office.

For further information, go to [pvconcerthall.com/events/detail/jen-fulwiler-2023](https://www.pvconcerthall.com/events/detail/jen-fulwiler-2023).

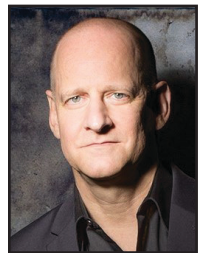
## Brett Young brought 'Caliville' style to St. Augustine

Country musician Brett Young performed a concert at the St. Augustine Amphitheater on Sept. 21 with fellow guest musicians Jake Scott and Griffen Palmer. An electric crowd filled the amphitheater to watch Young perform and sing his unique style of music called "Caliville," which mixes West Coast vibes, where he is from with Southern sound.

Photos by Anthony Richards



# Jacksonville Symphony opens season with Liebermann premiere



Lowell Liebermann

On Friday and Saturday, Sept. 29 and 30, the Jacksonville Symphony will present the world premiere of an original work, Organ Concerto, Op. 41, by award-winning composer Lowell

Liebermann, performed by Paul Jacobs, the first organist ever to win a Grammy. This work is sponsored by Brenda and Gene Wolchok.

Conducted by Music Director Courtney Lewis, the opening Florida Blue Classical concert of the 2023-24 season commences by highlighting Ludwig van Beethoven's masterful musical storytelling in Leonore Overture No. 2. Liebermann's Organ Concerto is next in the lineup, and the evening concludes with Robert Schumann's cheerful Second Symphony.

Liebermann is one of America's most frequently performed and recorded living composers who writes unashamedly for the pleasure of the audience. Liebermann's grand and thrilling new work for the Jacksonville Symphony harnesses the unique power and color of the organ while drawing on its rich history.

"In terms of composition style, the Organ Concerto is very consistent with the rest of my pieces," said Liebermann. "I've always seen my works as being part of the Western classical continuum of music. I never intend for my music to

be a radical break with what's happened before it. To me, the whole history of music is a very enriching tradition, and my music often makes references to other composers, styles and techniques."

Liebermann's Organ Concerto is a large piece in four movements, about a half hour in length. The first movement, titled Chorale-Prelude, is expansively melodic, with references to Baroque music and Johann Sebastian Bach in particular. The second movement is an ironic Dance, mimicking the fast-paced composition of a scherzo. The third movement, Aria, is the emotional core of the piece. This leads, without pause, into the fourth movement, which starts off at one tempo and then gets imperceptibly faster until the exhilarating finale.

"In my music, there usually is no extra-musical inspiration," Liebermann explains. "It's not about sunsets, political events or things of that sort. It's about the manipulation of the harmonies, the melodies, the musical materials I'm using and the abstract emotions that those evoke in the listener."

Premiering the Organ Concerto is Paul Jacobs, Grammy Award-winning organist and pioneer in the movement for the revival of symphonic music featuring the organ. An eloquent champion of his instrument, Jacobs is known for his imaginative interpretations and charismatic stage presence.

The Jacksonville Symphony has embarked on an exciting, multi-year project to premiere original works commissioned



Contributed photo

The Jacksonville Symphony is presenting the world premiere of an original work by award-winning composer Lowell Liebermann.

from today's most exciting composers. The 2021-22 Season saw the first of these works with "Trances," a full symphonic piece by Tarik O'Regan. In this season's lineup of historic masterpieces, new music makes history of its own with not one but two world premieres with Liebermann's Organ Concerto this September and composer Courtney Bryan's original work debuting in spring 2024.

"New music produced by living

composers is so important because it keeps classical music relevant, fresh and reflective of contemporary times," said Lewis. "I cannot wait for our listeners to experience this concerto and discover a new sense of connection with the colossal instrument that it highlights — the historic Bryan Concert Organ."

For more information on the performance and to purchase tickets, go to [Jaxsymphony.org](http://Jaxsymphony.org).

## Students to present 'Beauty and the Beast'

Bartram Trail High School Theatre Department will present "Disney's Beauty and the Beast," Nov. 2-5. Based on the Academy Award-winning animated feature, this iconic stage musical includes all of the beloved songs that we know so well. Mark your calendars and purchase your tickets today.

Performance times and dates are: 7 p.m. Nov. 2, 3 and 4, and 2 p.m. Nov. 5.

The show will be staged in the Bartram Trail High School auditorium, 7399 Longleaf Pine Pkwy, St. Johns.

Online tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 for students (valid school ID required). Tickets purchased at the door for both adults and students are \$20.



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# Sports



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## Make it three in a row for Ponte Vedra girls at Holleman Invitational

By Anthony Richards

The Frank Holleman Invitational continues to grow as an event that high school swim teams from across the area want to compete in.

Twenty-one schools took part in the third annual event at Planet Swim Aquatics in Ponte Vedra, with Ponte Vedra High and Nease High both having successful outings.

Led by coaches Junior Temotio and Kyle Berry, Sharks' girls squad continued their reign of winning the team competition all three years, as they had 17 girls make either the A or B finals and earn points toward the effort.

Some of the top performances included winning a pair of relays, as sophomore Kate Pelot, senior Annabelle MacAdams, junior Penny Zarcynski and sophomore Sophie Fox defeated all comers in the 200 medley relay by three seconds.

Senior Valentina Fraga joined the group of Zarcynski, Pelot and Fox to also win the 200 freestyle relay, unseating the reigning champion Nease Panthers in the process.

The young talent was on display for the Sharks as Lily Doyle joined fellow sophomore Pelot as the individual winners for the Sharks' girls team.

Doyle won the 500 freestyle and set a meet record as well as shattering her own previous school record by a whopping nine seconds.

Pelot claimed her third victory of the event with her triumph in the 100 backstroke.

Runner-up finishes included Zarcynski in the 50 free, and she set a new school record in the 200 freestyle, while MacAdams placed second in the 100 breaststroke. Fraga came home second in the 100 butterfly.

The PV Boys' swim team battled and finished fifth overall with 10 swimmers making the A or B boys' finals and several personal best swims achieved.

The Nease boys' team earned a runner-up finish and



Nease High won the boys 400 freestyle relay with a team that included Jack Mainville, Bradon Gear, Luke Zardavets and Walker Lanoue.

showed every indication they plan to repeat as state champions.

Just like the Ponte Vedra girls, the Nease boys flexed their muscles by winning a couple of relays in the 400 and 200 freestyle style.

The winning 400 freestyle relay team consisted of juniors Jack Mainville, Brandon Gear and Walker Lanoue along with freshman Luke Zardavets.

Mainville, Gear and Lanoue were back at it and also won at the shorter distance in the 200 freestyle relay, but that time they were joined by sophomore Declan Costello instead of Zardavets.

However, Zardavets came to the forefront once again, as he won the 100 breaststroke and placed third in the 200 individual medley.

Gear continued his stellar day by winning the 200 freestyle and finished runner-up in the 500 freestyle to go with his two relay victories.

Fellow junior Mainville placed second twice in the 50 freestyle and 100 freestyle.

The Nease High girls swimming team earned fourth



Photos courtesy of Kate Stollenwerck Zarcynski  
The Ponte Vedra High girls swim team has won the Frank Holleman Invitational at Planet Swim all three years.

place overall, highlighted by a trio of individual winners to accompany a relay victory.

Junior Olivia Moore showed off her skill in the freestyle discipline by winning the 200 freestyle event and second in the 100 freestyle.

It was also a memorable day for the Driesse family, as junior Charlotte demonstrated her versatility with a win in the 200 individual medley as well as a runner-up in the 200 freestyle.

Finishing second to Charlotte in the 200 individual medley was her sister Anna, who also came away a winner of her own by taking the top spot in the 100 breaststroke.

The Panther girls capped their winning day with a victory in the 400 freestyle relay with a team effort from a group of juniors in Charlotte Driesse, Jolie Nguyen, Caroline Triplett and Olivia Moore.

The Invitational also served as a fundraiser to help raise money and food to be donated to the Homeless Coalition St. Johns County to help serve children and families in need of assistance during tough times.



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The Beachside High band marches into the stands before the start of the game.



Nease's Bryce Frick (No. 10) and center Demarco Blackmon (No. 65) communicate to change a play near the goal line.

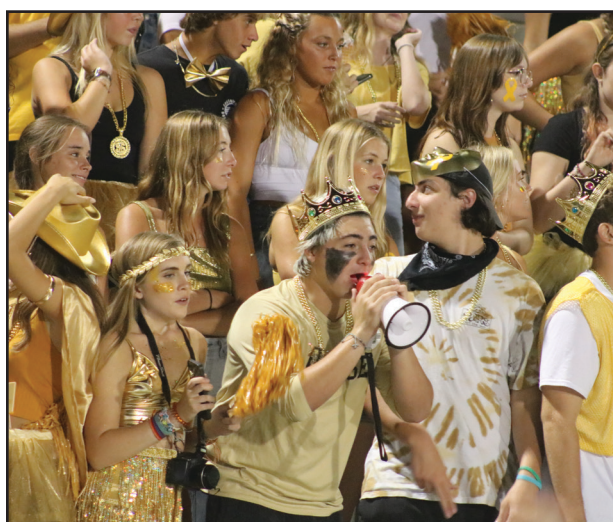


Beachside quarterback Eddie Jordan (No. 11) leaps into the air and pump-fakes as Ridgeview defenders approach him.

# PLENTY OF POINTS, CHEERS TO GO AROUND

The following are photos from the scenes of Friday night lights from week five at Beachside High and Nease High.

Photos by Anthony Richards



The Nease student section was on their feet and loud throughout the game against Orange Park.



Senior Eddie Craig (No. 4) busts through the banner as he led the Barracudas onto the field.



Bryce Gee (No. 1) shakes off a defender along the sideline.

## Preview

Continued from 1

coaching staff has to be confident that being enough to win the contest, especially with the way the Sharks' offense has been clicking of late.

The Sharks have now proven this year that they can win games no matter how the game script plays out or what the opponent wants to force them to do.

That was never more evident than the last two weeks, when Ben Burk threw for five touchdowns against Middleburg and then one week later it was Brian Case doing his thing with four rushing touchdowns as the Sharks leaned on him and he was up to the challenge.

Having shown the ability to win regardless of the situation should bode well for the Sharks as they enter their district slate of games.

### Panthers getting healthy at perfect time

The Nease Panthers seemed to pick up multiple victories against Orange Park last Friday night, as not only did they win on the scoreboard, 27-14, but they also



Photo by Anthony Richards

The Panthers welcomed back senior center Demarco Blackmon who made a difference in the win over Orange Park in his return from injury last week.

welcomed back a pair of senior leaders and playmakers in running back Cam Smith and center Demarco Blackmon.

Both had yet to play full games this season and having them back brought an entirely different vibe to the game both

on the sidelines and on the field.

Blackmon is especially one of the more vocal leaders on the team and he backs that up with stellar play. It appeared that having him and Smith back in the lineup was something the team rallied behind

and it helped spark the comeback win.

Now that the Panthers are getting healthy, they are starting to shape into the team that the coaching staff had high hopes for during the offseason and heading into the year.

And what better time to be finding themselves than with just a couple of more games before they wrap up the season with district play.

The Panthers go on the road to face the Sandalwood Saints at 6:30 p.m.

The Saints are still looking for their first win with a record of 0-4 and have yet to score more than seven points in a game this season.

That is a good trend for the Panthers who continue to come into their own as a unit and force their share of turnovers. They look to build on shutting out Orange Park in the second half last week.

Finally, another bright spot heading into week six for the Panthers was the play of Bryce Frick, who looked extremely poised and in command of the offense for someone making his first start.

The next step for Frick and the Panthers is to pile up success and keep adding to it from week to week.

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**Public Notice**

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF WILSON COUNTY TENNESSEE SITTING IN LEBANON**

**CRYSTAL DAWN SMITH, Plaintiff/Wife,**  
vs.  
**FILE NO.: 2023-DC-205**  
**MICHAEL CHRISTOPHER BLAKE SMITH, Defendant/Husband.**

---

**PUBLICATION ORDER**

This case came to be heard on the 25th day of August 2023 before the Honorable Clara W. Byrd, Judge of the Circuit Court of Wilson County, Tennessee, upon sworn Motion to Allow Service by Publication and for good cause shown, it is hereby ORDERED ADJUDGED and DECREED that:

- MICHAEL CHRISTOPHER BLAKE SMITH's** (hereinafter "Husband");
- That **CRYSTAL DAWN SMITH's** (hereinafter "Wife") sworn testimony was that Husband's location is unknown;
- That Wife attempted to serve Husband via the Secretary of State at two (2) separate addresses; however, said attempts were unsuccessful;
- That counsel for Wife has attempted to reach out to Husband via Facebook, but said attempt was unsuccessful;
- That Husband's last known address to Wife's knowledge was 446 Ocean Vista Avenue, St. Augustine, St. John's County, Florida 32080;
- That pursuant to the background check ran by counsel for Wife, Husband's last known address is 851 Bulkhead Road, Green Cove Springs, Clay County, Florida 32043-8304.
- That Wife's testimony was that she knows of no other location in which Husband may be found;
- That the best possible notice under the circumstances and notice reasonably calculated to give reasonable actual notice is publication in a newspaper which circulates in St. John's County, Florida;
- As such, the publication notice shall be posted with the Ponte Vedra Recorder which circulates weekly in St. John's County which is Husband's last known address.

So ORDERED this the 5 day of September 2023.

**CLARA W. BYRD, JUDGE APPROVED FOR ENTRY:**  
**KANE & CROWELL, PLLC**

**LINDSEY W. JOHNSON, # 36839**  
*Attorney for Wife*  
133 South College Street  
Lebanon, Tennessee 37087  
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## CROSSWORD

1	2	3						4	5	6	7			
8			9					10						
11								12						
13				14				15						
16								17						
18						19	20							
						21				22				
					23				24					
					25				26					
					27				28					
										29	30	31	32	33
										34				
												35		
36												37		
38													39	
40													41	
42														43

- ACROSS**
1. Outsourcing (abbr.)
  4. Post
  8. German city on edge of Black Forest
  10. "\_\_\_, but goodie"
  11. Spiced stew
  12. Passionately
  13. Monetary units
  15. Group of living organisms
  16. Organic compound derived from ammonia
  17. High honors
  18. 5-year-olds' classes
  21. Swiss river
  22. Old woman
  23. Cash machine
  24. A way to soak
  25. Hair product
  26. Deride
  27. "The Blonde Bombshell"
  34. Cause to become insane
  35. Bluish greens
  36. Supported with money
  37. Type of equation
  38. Court officials
  39. Indian god
  40. Rids
  41. Leak slowly through
  42. Units of ionizing radiation
  43. Midway between south and southeast
2. Deli meat
  3. Fibrous substance in fungi
  4. Cutting
  5. Vedder and Van Halen
  6. Horror comic novelist
  7. Rulers of Tunis
  9. Shaped like a circle
  10. Make a pig of oneself
  12. Aphorism
  14. Witness
  15. Single Lens Reflex
  17. Freshwater North American fish
  19. Nautical ropes
  20. Leg (slang)
  23. Pokes holes in
  24. Moved quickly on foot
  25. Fix-it shops
  26. Type of bread
  27. Repaired
  28. Synthetic diamond (abbr.)
  29. Type of drug (abbr.)
  30. German city along the Rhine
  31. Animal disease
  32. Martini necessities
  33. Get away from
  34. Village in Mali
  36. Djibouti franc

## SUDOKU

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

Level: Intermediate

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

- DOWN**
1. Native of Slovakia



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