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February 2014

Mandarin Branch Library appreciates customers; plans events

By Contributing Writer Lynne Baldwin, Branch Manager/Senior Librarian, Mandarin Branch Library



City Council Member Matt Schellenberg dropped by the Customer Appreciation Holiday Party at the Mandarin Branch Library on December 18. Pictured are SE Region Manager Michael Sullivan, Library Clerk Jessica Jones, Library Clerk Sara Peretzman and Schellenberg.

Everyone knows that the customers at the Mandarin Branch Library are the best and I mean the very best customers in Duval County. The staff at the Mandarin Branch Library thanked their customers for their continued support with a Customer Appreciation Holiday Party on Wednesday, December 18 with cake and popcorn. Frances Wickes, Diane Lewis, Sara Peretzman and Jessica

Jones did a great job organizing the party. An added bonus for staff and customers were visits by City Council Member Matt Schellenberg and Erin Skinner, the vice chair of the Library Board of Trustees, who are two of the biggest supporters of the Mandarin Branch Library and the services it provides to the community.

Do you have pint size Picasso just pinning to paint? Do

you have a mini Monet making his mark on your walls? If the answer is yes, then it is time to check out the Mandarin Art Club hosted by Alison Pulley. Art Club is our new after-school art program for children ages eight to 12. Kids are invited to draw, paint and learn about art history. Art Club will help to promote creative thinking and creative expression with open-ended projects inspired by famous works from art history. Please note that the Art Club meets every other Tuesday each month at 4:00 p.m. in the Community Room at the Mandarin Branch Library. For more information, please call Alison Pulley at 262-5201.

Are you an Artist? Singer? Dancer? Poet? Comic? Musician? Are you in a band? Do you have a painting, drawing or sculpture you'd like to display? At the Mandarin Branch Library, artists and fans alike are welcome! On February 22, the Mandarin Branch Library will be hosting a talent show for teens and tweens, ages 10 to 18. To energize your performance and keep the audience Mandarin Library cont. on pg. 14

Native Sons & Daughters in Gator Bowl Parade

By Contributing Writer Brian Quirk



Braving chilly temperatures and ominous skies, members of the local Native Sons and Daughters program participated in this year's TaxSlayer.com Gator Bowl Parade.

The children assisted their fathers in building this year's float. The float consisted of three distinct areas: a water feature, a camp fire and a tipi. In order for the children to earn their Parade patch, they had to spend at least two hours building, painting or decorating the float.

One of the float craftsmen, Rich "Bull Gator" Malzahn said, "Being able to spend one-on-

one time with both my son and daughter, allows them to see their efforts displayed in front of thousands of spectators along the parade route."

Snoring Eagle added, "My children were able to march in a televised parade and they saw several of their classmates as they escorted the float."

Frank "Sunfire" Silverio said, "This is just one more opportunity to build life-long memories with my children."

For more information regarding our unique parent/child program, please visit our website at www.timucuan.org.

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Black History Month celebrated at museum's Third Thursday Lecture

The Mandarin Museum and Historical Society is proud to honor Black History Month by featuring a public concert by the Philip R. Cousin African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church Choir at the February 20 Third Thursday Lecture.

The quarterly lectures are presented in partnership with the Mandarin Community Club to educate the public about historical figures, general history and events in and around Mandarin. This event will feature one of Mandarin's oldest continuing religious congregations, founded in 1886. At that time Mandarin's population was only 1200 people - and 900 of those



Philip R. Cousin AME Church Choir

residents were African American. The church was originally named Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church of Mandarin. The first structure, a wooden building, was erected on Orange Picker Road on the same property as the present church. After a merger with Mt. Pleasant AME Church of Fruit

Cove in 1990, the church was renamed to honor Bishop Philip R. Cousin. Since that time the pastor has been Reverend Eugene E. Mosley, a life-long Mandarin resident.

The choir has been in existence since the early 1950s and currently has 15 active members under the leadership of

Sandra Platt, music coordinator, as well as Lionel Lawrence and Ava Jacques, musicians/director.

They will be singing traditional hymns and Christian gospel music, including Jacksonville native James Weldon Johnson's (1871-1938) famous and beloved "Lift Every Voice Third Thursday lecture cont. on pg. 14

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What's New Community Happenings

*Do you have community or club news you would like included in Mandarin NewsLine?
Then contact Martie Thompson at:
editor@mandarinnewsline.com or 886-4919.*

AARP Tax Assistance will be available each Tuesday at the South Mandarin Branch Library, located on San Jose Boulevard, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. beginning on February 4 and ending on April 8. For a complete list of the free tax assistance sites, please visit the library website at <http://jaxpubliclibrary.org>.

The February General Meeting of the **All Star Quilters Guild** will be held on Monday, Febru-

ary 17 at 9:30 a.m. in the First Christian Church, located at 11924 San Jose Boulevard. The program will be by Cathy Peters of the Longarm Quilting Shop located at Cinnamon's Quilt Shop on Hood Road. Visitors are welcome! For more information, please contact Dot Butler at 642-6574 and visit us at www.orgsites.com/fl/allstarquiltguild.

The **Mandarin Council** will meet for their monthly lunch meeting on February 13, from 11:30 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. at Bucca di Beppo by the Avenues Mall and for the monthly breakfast meeting on February 27, from 8:00 a.m. until 9:30 a.m. at Red Elephant Grill on San Jose Boulevard. Please visit www.MandarinCouncil.org for more information and to register. Come to network and learn about the Mandarin Council. We live, work and play in Mandarin!

The **Italian American Club** is looking forward to a great year. We are open for membership and welcome everyone. We will be having a Valentine's Day dinner on February 9. If you would like to come and see what the club is about, please call 268-2882. We also have a great rental facility for upcoming weddings, graduations and anniversaries, so keep us in mind. We are the best kept secret in Mandarin!

The **Mandarin Toastmasters Club** meets the first and third Saturday of each month in the South Mandarin Library, located at 12125 San Jose Boulevard (at the intersection of Orange Picker Road and San Jose Bou-



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levard, across from Walgreens). The meeting time is 10:15 a.m. until 12:00 noon. The meetings are open to all and visitors are always welcome. February's meeting dates are February 1 and February 15. For additional information, please contact the Mandarin Toastmasters at mandarintoastmasters.org and/or president, Morgan North, at 268-9380.

The **Mandarin Chapter of AARP** meets the third Friday of every month at 2:00 p.m. at Augustine Landing, located at 10141 Old St. Augustine Road.

We are a non-profit, non-partisan membership organization, affiliated with the national AARP. Our activities and programs are designed to help people age 50 and over improve the quality of their lives. January's meeting will be held on Friday, February 21 with guest speaker and occupational therapist at Baptist Medical Center South Liz Oole, whose presentation is entitled "Pain in the Neck." Visitors are welcome!

The Department of Homeland Security will be presenting

What's New cont. on pg. 4

Riverkeeper cautions against proposed water withdrawals

By Contributing Writer Lisa Rinaman, St. Johns Riverkeeper

You may recall a huge fight a few years ago when Seminole County was seeking a permit to withdraw water from the St. Johns River for irrigation. Well, Central Florida is back for more – over 30 times more water than before!

According to the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD), Central Florida is reaching the sustainable limits of its predominant source of water, the Floridan Aquifer. As a result, the three water management districts in this five county area created the Central Florida Water Initiative (CFWI) to identify alternative sources of water to meet growing demand. (www.cfwiwater.com/)

Recently, the CFWI released a Draft Regional Water Supply Plan that relies heavily on surface water withdrawals from the St. Johns River and one of its most important tributaries, the Ocklawaha River. The plan calls for potentially withdrawing more than 150 million gallons of water a day from the St. Johns at an estimated expense of nearly \$1.5 billion.

In addition, the SJRWMD recently released a Water Supply Plan for all of the 18 counties within its jurisdiction. The District's plan calls for the withdrawal of an additional 125 million gallons or more of water a day from the St. Johns and more than 85 million gallons

from one of its most important tributaries, the Ocklawaha River. (<http://www.sjrwmd.com/DWSP2013/>)

St. Johns Riverkeeper has serious concerns that these proposed withdrawals would:

- Worsen existing pollution problems,
- Increase the frequency of toxic algal blooms,
- Further reduce flow and increase salinity levels farther upstream, and
- Adversely impact the fisheries, wildlife and submerged vegetation in and along the St. Johns and its tributaries.

Instead of siphoning millions of gallons of water a day from our rivers, the focus should be on aggressive conservation and efficiency measures. Unfortunately, both water supply plans downplay the potential of conservation to meet future demand. The Central Florida Plan determined that only "3.9 percent of the projected demand for 2035 can be eliminated by water conservation."

Unfortunately, our limited public resources are being directed towards expensive and risky new sources of water before we have addressed the root causes of our water supply problems and exhausted all opportunities to use existing water resources more efficiently. Despite the looming water shortages and call for new sources of supply, our state water management districts also continue to issue frivolous consumptive use permits (CUP) that will further deplete our aquifer. For instance, the SJRWMD staff recently



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Riverkeeper cont. on pg. 6




Feb 6 LILY TOMLIN

Merle Haggard Sat, Feb 1, 8:00 pm	Darlene Love Thurs, Feb 13, 8:00 pm
Queens of the Stone Age Mon, Feb 3, 8:00 pm	Kenny Loggins Fri, Feb 14, 8:00 pm
Pat Metheny Unity Group Wed, Feb 5, 8:00 pm	The Irish Rovers' Farewell Tour Sat, Feb 15, 8:00 pm
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From the City Council Member's Desk

By Contributing Writer Matt Schellenberg, City Council Member, District 6

Mandarin News: I took some of my own advice during the holidays and visited several of Mandarin's parks and spent time in our libraries at Kori and Orange Picker Roads. I also spoke with many people around District 6 to see how we, as a community, can be better connected to each other. I listened with great interest to many intriguing ideas for improvement.

One interesting idea is to repair and extend the sidewalks throughout Mandarin so we can walk, run and ride our bikes without interference from cars. Wouldn't it be wonderful if all the neighborhoods along Mandarin Road were connected by way of a sidewalk? Yes, it has been discussed before, but due to the recent state law requiring the roadway access to bikers, it has become necessary to revisit this issue. Over the past year, I have heard your concerns and complaints concerning the cycling groups that tend to dominate the roads. Creating a sidewalk path without damaging Mandarin's beautiful trees would greatly

enhance all our neighborhoods and our daily experience along our roadways. Let me know what you think.

On another note: I would like to announce that I will be filing for re-election in the first quarter of the New Year. I have considered it an honor representing the over 60,000 residents of District 6 and have thoroughly enjoyed doing so. I hope you will allow me the privilege of continuing on for another four years.

City Hall notes: Some of you have heard about the possible extension of the six-cent gas tax which is set to expire in August of 2016. The gas tax was first introduced in 1985 for a period of 10 years, but in 1991, the City Council and then-Mayor extended the gas tax for another 20 years, for a total of 30 years. Three times the length of the original bill. The gas tax was intended for road construction and repair. Currently the money, approximately \$27 million a year, goes to the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) for administration and bus subsidies.

As you know, a bill was recently introduced to extend the gas tax for another 20 years, for a total of 50 years. That is five times the original length of the bill. Well, President Reagan once said, "The closest thing to eternal life is a tax." I think the City Council should say no to the extension because it is not being used for its stated purpose and I'm not sure that the JTA is the appropriate entity to build and repair roads. JTA has an administration barely a year old, comprised mainly of people from Atlanta and so far, I'm not overly impressed with how they are managing the bus and Skyway systems.

What we should do is take the \$27 million coming in from the gas tax and demonstrate to the citizens of Mandarin and Jacksonville that we can spend that money wisely and for its stated purpose. Local governments must first act responsibly with what they have before asking for more.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at MattS@coj.net or 630-1388.

Happy New Year!

What's New cont. from pg. 3

Citizenship 101 on Wednesday, February 19 at 6:30 p.m. at the Mandarin Branch Library. For more information about the program, please call the Library at 262-5201.

The MOMS Club of Jacksonville/Mandarin-SE offers support for stay at home and part-time working moms living in zip code 32258. With the club you will have enriching activities for you and your children, during the day when you need the most support. A sample of activities includes park days, beach days, monthly socials, playgroups and field trips to the zoo and museums. For additional information, please email semandarin-moms@yahoo.com.

The Dogwood Circle of the Mandarin Garden Club will meet on Tuesday, February 18, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the clubhouse located on Loretto Road. Our guest speaker will be Kathie Goodrum from Wild



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Birds Unlimited. Visitors are always welcome. Please visit our website at www.mandarin-gardenclub.org for more information.

The Mandarin Women's Club is honored to have Billy Barwald speaking on "The Story of Jacksonville - From 1901 until Present Time" for our February 27 luncheon. Barwald is a native of Jacksonville; he was born in Riverside in 1918 and moved to Loretto Road in 1938. Be sure and mark the date for this historical and informative lecture. The luncheon is held at the Ramada Inn, located at 3130 Hartley Road in Mandarin, with the doors opening at 10:30 a.m. The price to attend is \$16; reservations are required and can be made by calling Marilyn at 260-8431 by Thursday, February 20. The Mandarin Women's Club is a social club with numerous activities and is open to all women no matter where they live and we're always eager to meet new friends! For further information about the club and how to join, please call Diane at 880-5354.

Shuffleboard is played on Tuesdays at 1:30 p.m. at the Mandarin Park (south end of Mandarin Road) next to the tennis courts at the park entrance. Beginners are welcome. Just show up, unless it rains or is just too cold!

The River City Women's Club will hold their monthly

meeting and lunch on Wednesday, February 19 beginning at 10:30 a.m. in the Mandarin Ramada Inn. The members and guests will then play Bunco with prizes given to the winners. All monies will be donated to the club charities. Visitors are welcome! The luncheon costs \$15.50 and reservations may be made by calling 267-8719. For additional information, please call Marian at 288-0078.

Be My Valentine! Make your own Valentine's Day card for your sweetie at the Mandarin Branch Library on Tuesday, February 11 at 4:00 p.m. For more information about this program, please call 262-5201.

The Duval County Extension Office is offering a fun day for gardening enthusiast to listen to exciting speakers on many different subjects on Saturday, February 22 from 8:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. You can shop for plants and garden themed items with the vendors and have lunch with us. The workshop will be held at 1010 North McDuff Avenue in Jacksonville. The cost is \$15 per person and pre-payment and registration are required. Payment must be received by Tuesday, February 18. To pay by check, please email Beckyd@coj.net to get a registration form. You can register with credit card at <http://2014adayofgardening.eventbrite.com>. There is a small service fee for registering online. Space is limited and no walk-ins are accepted. For questions, please call 255-7450.

Sierra Club, Northeast Group will host Melissa Beaudry of the North Florida Land Trust at their meeting on Monday, February 10. NFLT is partnering with other groups to restore McCoys Creek and the surrounding "Emerald Necklace" of parks designed by Henry Klutho. Come and hear the plan for restoration of these city core green and blueways. The meeting will be held at Lakewood Presbyterian Church, located at 2001 University Boulevard West. Social time will be held from 6:30 p.m. until 7:00 p.m. and the program begins at 7:00 p.m. For additional information, please contact Janet Larson at 247-1876.

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School District Journal

By Contributing Writer Jason Fischer,
School Board Representative, District 7

On the week of January 26 through February 1, communities and schools across the country will celebrate National School Choice Week. I am proud to report Duval County Public Schools was recently recognized as a national leader for the breadth and quality of school choices we offer our students, ranking 13th overall on the "Education Choice and Competition Index," a report published by the non-partisan Brookings Institute.

To promote the high-quality magnet programs, career academies, charter schools and high school acceleration programs offered across Duval County, DCPS also hosted our School Choice Expo on January 11. More than 15,000 parents and students had the opportunity to meet with teachers and principals representing schools of choice from across the district and familiarize themselves with what option might best suit their educational needs. That so many families took time out of their busy weekends to learn more about educational options provided locally demonstrates that demand for high quality educational options is growing, alive and well in Jacksonville.

One of my primary goals as your School Board member is to ensure all families, regardless of income level or zip code, have the opportunity to choose the option that best meets the needs of their child. That, among many reasons, is why I recently voted to approve the contract authorizing the opening of the Renaissance Charter School in Mandarin. Furthermore, the demand in District 7 for an additional public charter school is high. For example, Duval Charter School at Baymeadows, an A school which is near the proposed site for Renaissance, has over 900 students on the waiting list. Renaissance will accommodate 1,145 students, many of whom may find themselves on a waiting list

in need of a higher quality or better-fitting option than what is otherwise available. I see no reason to stand in the way of the educational wants and needs the families of District 7 clearly desire.

It is the duty of our school system to empower moms and dads with the ability to choose the best educational environment for their child so they can have every opportunity to flourish in the classroom. The data is clear: when parents have options, student achievement improves. Student achievement data here in Duval County and across Florida has consistently improved since school choices became more prevalent and accessible to Florida's families. In the years to come, as DCPS continues to focus on improving student achievement, we must ensure that continued support and expansion of high quality school choice options remains a critical component of our strategy to make DCPS the best in the state of Florida.

Happenings:

Students at Twin Lakes Academy Middle School received online tutoring from titans in the computer science field like Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg during "The Hour of Code," an event promoting computer science education. The 1,200 students at Twin Lakes were among four million middle school students from 165 countries who participated in the program during Computer Science Education Week (December 9 through 15). This project is supported by Apple, Microsoft, Google, Amazon, Boys and Girls Clubs of America and more than 100 other organizations.

Mandarin Middle School hosted more than 300 youth during a "Challenge Day" event held at the school on December 17, 2013. Challenge day is a three-day program aimed at fostering self-awareness, love, friendship and respect among



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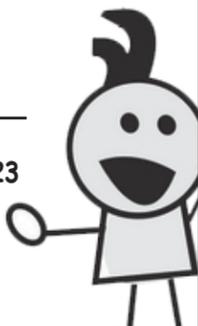
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Duval Soil and Water Conservation District Board update

By Contributing Writer Greg Tison

Let me begin by saying Happy New Year to you and your families. It is an honor to have been chosen to sit on the Duval Soil and Water Conservation District Board.

In the past few years some individuals in our community have led unsuccessful efforts to abolish the board. I believe those individuals have lacked the full understanding of what conservation districts are all about. Over the next several months, I will inform you about the district responsibilities, how it serves Duval County and how you as a property/landowner can benefit from the district.

The 1930s Dust Bowl spurred Congress to declare soil and water conservation a national policy and priority in 1935. Today there are nearly 3000 conservation districts nationwide involved in efforts of conservation needs and the

students.

DCPS' Special Olympics Florida flag football teams competed in early January in the 2014 State Championships. The teams consist of both traditional and intellectually disabled students. From Atlantic Coast High School, the Crushers and Avengers won gold and silver medals in the Senior Division, respectively.

Congratulations to Ashley Hulshult for being selected as the 1010 XL Scholar Athlete of the Week for January 6, 2014. Hulshult is a student at Mandarin High School and has a G.P.A. of 4.0. Her activities include serving as president of the National Honor Society; director of Smile Camp; participant in the Chess Club and Brain Brawl team; volunteering at a local nursing home; Interact Club; AP Scholar with Distinction; and, District and Conference Volleyball Champion.

Important Dates:

- February 4: School Board Meeting, Cline Auditorium, 6:00 p.m.
- February 5: Early Dismissal
- February 17: Washington's Birthday - Schools Closed
- February 19: Early Dismissal

Thought for the Month:

"I am in politics because of the conflict between good and evil and I believe that in the end good will triumph."
~Margaret Thatcher

local citizenry they serve. In 1937, Florida created soil and water conservation districts under Florida Statutes, Chapter 582. A soil and water conservation district organized in the State of Florida constitutes a governmental subdivision of the state. The governing body of the soil and water conservation district consists of five elected supervisors and they serve four-year terms. Vacancies are filled by the remaining supervisors until the next election. Supervisors receive no monetary compensation for serving.

Through the years agriculture has been the primary focus of the soil and water conservation districts and how farmers care for the land. In

Duval County, agriculture is a \$2 billion industry with nearly 800 large and small farms employing 10,000 people. In areas of urban sprawl, districts must adapt to the new challenges.

During the course of the coming months, I will inform you of the programs that districts participate in, the agencies it works with and the programs that are being worked on in Duval County. You may also learn more by attending one of the monthly meetings held at City Hall on the third Tuesday of each month at 6:00 p.m.

I look forward to sharing with you each month. If you have any questions or concerns, please email me at lgitison@bellsouth.net.

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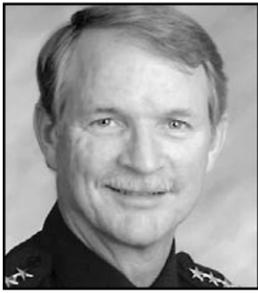
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The Sheriff Reports

By Contributing Writer John H. Rutherford, Duval County Sheriff

Welcome 2014

A reporter asked me, "Sheriff, will 2013 go down in history as a 'good' year?" I stopped and reflected on that question. And the answer, like it so often can be, is both "yes" and "no."

Many challenges still exist for our great agency and city, as we head into the New Year. We continue to struggle with a popular culture that glorifies violence everywhere we look, while many of us are personally working to instill in our youth a belief that violence is not a solution to conflict. Many of our young people are never shown that there exists a dignity and a peace that comes from walking away from a fight that is degenerating from words to weapons. We pour our energy into making sure our educational and government institutions are reinforcing the good and positive in everyone, yet the assaults and murders, particularly among parties known to one another, continue. This good work must net us a better outcome. (visit www.jaxpal.org for more information)

As a community, we continue to grapple with the economic crisis, from which our city is just starting to rebound. An economic downturn forced us to take out of service 92 Community Service Officers and 147 sworn Police Officers at a time when we were affecting historic declines in crime. With fewer people to enforce the law, enforcement is an everyday challenge.

But, statistically, we are winning the good fight, as overall 2013 will most likely result in our fourth year of crime declines – including the recent record low number of overall crime incidents in 2011. We are happy about the numbers, because we are at a 41-year low, but we are not happy with the numbers. Murder is up, which is a very bad thing, while prop-

erty crimes continue to decline, which is a good thing. (visit www.fdle.state.fl.us and search UCR)

We don't "celebrate" crime numbers, but we must appreciate that they continue to move in a downward direction. This is a testament to the hard work of the men and women of the agency, the engagement of our citizens and the strong partnership we have with our State Attorney's Office and the hard work of the judiciary. Amid the sadness of so many lives lost to violence and roadway crashes, there is a kernel of comfort that is derived by knowing every victim and victims' families are treated with respect and every resource that could be utilized by our agency to solve a crime or recover property is explored. Even unsolved crimes that occurred decades ago – we don't give up and we never forget.

One significant challenge in 2014 will be raising awareness about the carnage on our roadways. It's more complicated than people speeding in cars or getting on a bike and forgetting that you must obey stop signs or traffic signals. There are contributing factors such as distracted drivers and distracted pedestrians and cyclists – who too often aren't aware of their surroundings or aren't obeying all traffic laws. We are writing citations and that will raise awareness of the laws; but getting off the phone or crossing only at a cross walk or cycling with a flashing light and reflective gear is certain to preserve life and property, too. (Go to jaxsheriff.org to learn more Alert Today Alive Tomorrow)

Citizen engagement continues to be the rallying cry of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office. Picking up the phone and calling 9-1-1 when a crime is occurring is a moral imperative. Calling our 630-0500 non-

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emergency number and sharing information about suspicious activity or people – well, that is an act of civic engagement. Think about it: if everyone who knows something or saw something was to make that call*, more crimes can be solved, more property recovered and more crime prevented. When the public helps us make a good case, we then take it to prosecutors who work tirelessly to hold people accountable for their crimes.

If you are not currently involved with us, please consider doing that in 2014. To see a full list of the many ways you can help "fight the good fight," please visit jaxsheriff.org/communityaffairs.

President John Adams once said "facts are stubborn things" and he was right. The fact is: 2013 will go down in history as a year with many challenges, but still a year of great accomplishments. I hope your New Year is a safe and healthy one.

*You can call First Coast Crime Stoppers at 866-845-TIPS (8477) with your crime tip and remain completely anonymous and receive an award if an arrest is made.

Letter to the Editor

Mr. Richardson's use of the word "treehugger" in the first sentence of his commentary [in the January 2014 issue of *Mandarin NewsLine*] was an indication of what was to come in the rest of his piece. If any group of people could be accused of knee-jerk automatic reactions, it is the growth junkies who scream for more everlasting economic growth at every opportunity regardless of the environmental, economic, social and financial costs.

Just look at the title. The reasons for opposing the dredging disaster are many.

Let's first start with the most important. The environment. Whether a deeper channel will damage the ecology of the

river is not certain. It probably will, but what is certain is the increase in truck traffic on the region's roads. The additional noise pollution and air pollution from these 40-ton vehicles will be tremendous. All for the purpose of putting more foreign-made junk on the shelves of Wal-Mart?

Next. Who is going to pay for the dredging? Well the taxpayers, of course. That is how things go in Jacksonville. Let's not leave out the absurdity of reducing the costs of importing foreign made goods while there is a movement to "Buy American." Makes no sense at all—unless your name is Brian Taylor.

Tom Louderback

Bank closes public offering of common stock

Atlantic Coast Financial Corporation (the "Company") (NASDAQ: ACFC), the holding company for Atlantic Coast Bank (the "Bank"), announced in early December the closing of its previously announced underwritten offering of its common stock. The company raised \$48.3 million in gross proceeds by issuing 12,880,000 shares of its common stock, which included the issuance of an additional 1,680,000 shares as a result of the exercise of the underwriters' over-allotment option, at a price to the public of \$3.75 per share. FBR Capital Markets and Co. acted as the sole book-running manager for the offering.

Net proceeds from the sale of the shares after underwriting discounts and estimated offering expenses are expected to be approximately \$45.2 million. The company intends to use the net proceeds of the

offering for general corporate purposes, including contributing substantially all of the net proceeds of the offering to the bank to maintain capital ratios at required levels and to support growth in the bank's loan and investment portfolios.

A registration statement was filed previously by the company relating to the public offering of the shares of common stock with the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and is effective. The registration statement and other company filings with the SEC are available on the SEC's website located at www.sec.gov. The offering may be made only by means of a prospectus. Copies of the prospectus may be obtained from FBR Capital Markets and Co., Prospectus Department, 1001 19th Street North, Arlington, VA 22209, (703) 312-9726 or prospectuses@fbr.com.

Riverkeeper cont. fm. pg. 3

recommended the approval of a permit from California-based Niagara Bottling to nearly double groundwater withdrawals for its water bottling facility in Lake County to 910,000 gallons of water a day – an 88 percent increase.

As the downstream donor communities, we have nothing to gain and everything to lose

from these shortsighted proposals. Please, join us in opposing water withdrawals from the St. Johns River and its tributaries and demanding the more efficient use of our water resources.

Our river's future depends upon conservation and our willingness to ensure its protection. Learn more at www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org.

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Tax Tip of the Month

Now in effect are the tax increases connected with the "Affordable Care Act", such as the 3.8% Medicare Tax on Net Investment Income in excess of threshold amounts, the ADDITIONAL .9% Medicare tax on W2 earnings in excess of \$200,000, the decrease in the medical itemized deduction, and the INDIVIDUAL health insurance mandate. Everyone must have qualifying coverage to avoid a penalty in 2014. If you have questions or need assistance in determining how these items affect you, please contact our office.

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From the Florida House

By Contributing Writer Representative Charles McBurney, State Representative, District 16

Now that the holidays have come to an end, the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate will be heading back to Tallahassee for committee meetings. These meetings will take over the next two months at the State Capitol. After all the committee meetings are completed, the Regular Session convenes Tuesday, March 4, 2014.

Each of 120 Representatives and 40 Senators serves on a variety of committees and subcommittees. In the Florida House, I am proud to serve on the Appropriations Committee, Education Committee, Joint Legislative Budget Commission, Judiciary Committee and the Select Committee on Gaming. I also serve as chair of the Justice Appropriations Subcommittee.

As chairman of the Justice Appropriations Subcommittee, I have been tasked with overseeing the budgets of the Department of Corrections, Department of Law Enforcement, Department of Legal Affairs (the Attorney General), Department of Juvenile Justice, the courts system, the Justice Administration Commission and the Parole Com-

mission. Some of the issues my committee will be facing this year are increasing prison population, changes in juvenile justice and changes in behavioral health services around the state.

Committee weeks are also the start of a bill's journey into becoming a law. Each State Representative is allowed to file up to six bills, which will be considered during session. Each bill will then go through various policy or budget committees before making it to the House floor for a vote. At the same time, an identical Senate companion bill must move through the Senate committees before the approved House Bill can be sent to the Senate floor for a vote. If the bill is amended by the Senate, the bill is then returned to the House to be voted on again. This process only allows a small percent-

age of filed bills to make it to becoming laws.

The Florida Constitution requires the state to have a balanced budget and each year we have passed a budget that serves the needs of our state—and without raising taxes. Our projected state revenues are continuing to head in a positive direction. The revised forecast for 2014-15 has projected growth of nearly \$1.15 billion (or 4.4 percent) over the revised 2013-14 estimates. I am highly optimistic that this year we will be able to present the state with balanced budget that puts us on track for a bright and prosperous future.

If there is any legislation that you are interested in or if you would like to learn more about the bills I have filed, please email me at charles.mcburney@myfloridahouse.gov or you can call my Jacksonville office at 359-6090.

E Pluribus Unum: Civics for one and all

By James A. Lee, M.Ed., Ed.D. ABD, Peer Teacher Evaluator, St. Johns County School District, jal@rtpublishing.com

Anyone who knows me fairly well may know that I care little for the trappings that come with Valentine's Day. I have nothing against the sentiment. I happily share expressions of our love with my wife every year. I just don't care for the flamboyant gaudiness of it all. For me, then, to write an essay that in any way summons the exaggerated sentimentality of St. Valentine's Day is contrary to my being. More importantly though, how, you may ask, can civics and Valentine's Day be linked?

Again I draw from one of the greatest speeches of American history, Lincoln's first inaugural address. An often cited line from that speech makes the connection between the sentiment of Valentine's Day and democracy. Lincoln said, "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained it must not break our bonds of affection." He was of course warning against the decision of the southern states to divide the union. But the words are just as important today even if the circumstances less dire. We are nine months (Valentine's Day reference intended...just think about it) from another vital election. Electioneering, political posturing and issue spinning are already happening around the state and nation. Sides are being drawn, endorsements are being made and big money is being spent, all in the name of democracy. In November, those Valentine's babies will arrive to an atmosphere of anger, frustration, divisiveness and voter

fatigue.

Why do we Americans, and for that matter, citizens of all free democracies, subject ourselves to such frequent spasms of discord and pain? It is, simply, or not so simply, that democracy was never intended to be easy. It is slow and inefficient at best, vitriolic and fractionate at worst. It is this very nature of democracy to which Winston Churchill referred with his famous words, "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all those other forms that have been tried from time to time." To opt for a purely efficient and resolute government is to retreat to tyrannical absolute authoritarianism. Democracy is slow, divisive, inefficient and factional. But it is the best option available to imperfect humans.

Valentine's Day celebrates love, the strongest emotion of the heart. Just as the broken hearts of two lovers can be mended through understanding, patience and compromise, so can the hearts of a democratic people be opened to understanding, patience, and compromise. In his book "Healing the Heart of Democracy," Parker Palmer said, "Our sharpest disagreements need not be the seeds of democracy's destruction. If we know how to hold their tensions in ways that open our hearts, they can become proof of democracy's genius and drivers of its renewal."

Lincoln concluded his address with these hopeful words.

"The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every

battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

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Year in review and December 2013 housing sales results

December 2013 monthly results and a 2013 Annual Report covering real estate sales and activity is now available from the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors on NEFAR.com. Except where otherwise indicated, statistics reflect combined results for single-family residential and condominium properties.

2013 finished strong with a 21.7 percent increase in closed sales over 2012; \$153,400 median price for 2013 is 15.3 percent higher than 2012; and homes are selling on average in 88 days.

December highlights:
 There were 1,840 closed sales; a 7.7 percent increase year over year.
 Pending sales topped out at 1,799; a 26 percent increase over December 2012.
 2,080 new listings hit the market; 26.1 more than the prior December.
 Sellers on average received 92.9 percent of their original list price.
 There were 13.5 percent of properties that sold for more than the list price.
 Inventory continued to decline, dropping 7.9 percent from

a year ago to reach 8,767 properties.

The share of sales activity that was due to lender mediated properties was 36.2; down from 42.7 a year ago.

2013 Annual Report highlights:
 Inventory of for sale properties continues to drop, decreasing 7.9 percent from 9,515 year end 2012 to 8,767 year end 2013.

Closed sales in 2013 reached 21,883; a healthy 21.7 percent increase over the 17,974 sales in 2012.

Median sales price for the year came in at \$153,400; 15.3 percent more than the 2012 median of \$133,000.

Homes changed hands quickly during 2013, averaging just 88 days on market until sale; a 20.7 percent reduction from 111 days in 2012.

Single family detached homes sold in an average of 89 days while condos and townhomes sold in an average of 80 days.

The five areas that experienced the greatest upticks in median sales price (by percentage) from 2012 to 2013 are St. Johns County Southwest

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(61.3 percent); Atlantic Beach (21.7 percent); Springfield/Downtown/Paxon/Trout River South (21.4 percent); Arlington/Fort Caroline (20.3 percent); and Riverside/Avondale/Ortega (17.5 percent).

2014 NEFAR President Linda McMorro says, "The \$153,400 median home price for 2013 marked a five year high and 21,883 closed sales was the largest number of sales since 2006. Low inventory has spurred rising prices, which in turn equates to more homeowners seeing the equity in their homes increase."

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Political commentary

One man's sprawl is another man's progress

By J. Bruce Richardson

One man's sprawl is another man's progress. Back in the 1960s, it became fashionable for liberal tree-huggers and their ilk to try and control how many of us choose to live. Their goal is to maintain tight, compact cities where people live on top of each other in tall buildings. Their

idea of green space is to have controlled parks where during the day denizens enjoy walking and playing and at night muggers can ply their trade in a bucolic setting.

Some say Jacksonville is a sprawling city, causing problems wherever people choose to

live. That's not true; a growing city is a prosperous city; if someone chooses to live in a single family home with a yard, lawnmower, sprinkler system and a dog and children they should be able to do so if it fits their budget. If someone chooses to live in a community where homeowners share common walls, roofs and yards, that's okay, too.

It's all about rational choice, not about "allowing" someone to live differently than everyone else.

We hear a lot about "walkability" and mass transit, both of which lend themselves to city living. Some demonize the automobile, calling private cars "selfish" and fossil fuel energy hogs, which gets into an entirely other irrational discussion.

The bottom line is, why can't there be all types of lifestyle choices? For those who want to live in an urban environment and trod on pavement instead of grass and dirt, why not? For those who crave a home and yard, why not? For those who choose to live on a larger piece of land with an expansive home, why not that, too?

When the discussion of city sprawl begins, always the endless discussion of a revitalized downtown crops up, along with plans to take money away from other areas to recreate a long-gone era.

Prosperous shopping centers, malls and now town centers and office parks have made it possible for residents of a large city like Jacksonville to choose to live and work in a specific area of town and not have the burden of exploring what fellow residents are doing on the other side of the St. Johns River or elsewhere. Some would falsely tell you this is a bad thing, that for the sake of the holy writ of diversity everyone should work and congregate together.

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Well, no, they shouldn't. If you choose to live and work at the beach and ignore townies, that's okay, if that's your choice. If you're a lifelong resident of Mandarin and are constantly confused by what's going on up on the Northside or Westside and choose to stay away from there, that's okay, too.

Jacksonville is such an interesting place to live and work; you can find whatever lifestyle you choose to live in and work. From the pastoral to the teeming downtown rush hour streets,

Jacksonville has it all. And that's something to celebrate, not wring our hands over constantly. Can't diversity in this instance, be a good thing?

J. Bruce Richardson is a longtime journalist and consultant who writes in Jacksonville print publications exclusively for RT Publishing, Inc. He has led projects in Washington as well as Ottawa, Canada, and authors an Internet-based transportation column which is read in more than 60 countries. He lives and works in Jacksonville.

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Another viewpoint: Proposed dredging of the St. Johns River

By Contributing Writer Jimmy Orth, Executive Director, St. Johns Riverkeeper

The proposed deepening of the St. Johns River from 40 to 47 feet has received a lot of attention but not enough critical analysis. Before Jaxport and local leaders should expect the public to jump on board the dredging bandwagon, we must have all of the relevant facts and information needed to make a fully informed decision. Too much is at stake to get this critical decision wrong. We must make absolutely sure that the potential harm to the river has been thoroughly analyzed and significant and irreparable harm will not come to our region's most important natural resources.

Unfortunately, that has not happened or even been possible. The evaluation process by the Army Corps of Engineers was fast-tracked, dramatically reducing the study schedule by more than a year. As a result, the Corps has not had enough time to thor-

oughly evaluate this critical issue. After carefully scrutinizing the Corps' study, St. Johns Riverkeeper and our team of experts are convinced that the impacts to the river have been significantly underestimated and we are dismayed that virtually nothing is being proposed to offset the damage that would likely occur to the St. Johns.

In addition, the public must be made aware of all anticipated costs associated with the dredging, where the money would come from to finance this massive project and what return on investment can be reasonably expected. Again, this critical information has been incomplete, misleading, inaccurate or has not been provided at all. The reality is that Jacksonville is facing stiff competition from numerous other ports that are better positioned to attract the larger Post-Panamax ships. There is also no guarantee or even favorable odds that significant jobs and economic benefits will result from deepening our river to 47-feet. When all is said and done, the dredging and necessary infrastructure improve-

ments will cost well in excess of \$1 billion with speculative prospects that this massive investment of public dollars would ever reap the dividends that have been promised. The financing of this megaproject could actually strap the port and local taxpayers with significant debt for years to come, leaving us with underutilized new port facilities and a further degraded and forever altered river.

Our port is certainly an important part of the local economy and opportunities for growth likely exist. However, we must carefully assess whether or not a 47-foot harbor is necessary or even makes sense for our port to be viable. We must also make sure that long-term damage does not occur to our river due to an incomplete analysis, failure to fully inform and engage the public and an overzealous desire to attract jobs. We simply cannot afford to roll the dice with the future health of our river or invest a billion dollars in a risky and highly speculative mega-project that has not been fully vetted. Learn more about this important issue at www.stjohnsriverkeeper.org.

Political Commentary

Growth may not always be good for Mandarin or for us

By David Milton

Many of you have probably driven through the intersection of San Jose Boulevard and Oak Bluff Lane. Within the past few months, maybe you've noticed pre-construction activities on the southwest corner of that intersection. There's talk of new restaurants and even a bank – how exciting!

However, some local residents aren't so excited. They're concerned that this new growth will affect their quality of life. They've protested and spoken out at City Council meetings, forcing Jacksonville's City Council to consider how high a price we're willing to pay for new development. On January 15, the City Council green-lighted the construction.

But this issue isn't limited to the corner of San Jose and Oak Bluff – the issue of what kind of growth we want affects us all. And striking the right balance between growth and preserving our existing communities is not as easy as some would have us believe.

Before we continue, let me be clear: people need places to live, work, worship and relax. However, some kinds of growth – like sprawl – can have negative consequences.

Basically, sprawl is the spread of a city into less developed areas. The definition of sprawl also includes cookie-cutter housing on treeless,

postage-stamp sized lots, drab strip malls and the proliferation of fast food chains. Sprawl is growth without vision or direction.

Sprawl kills communities. One of Jacksonville's strengths is the diversity of Jacksonville's distinct neighborhoods. Sprawl makes the preservation of unique and highly desirable places like Mandarin much more challenging.

Sprawl tramples our natural treasures. Jacksonville's natural beauty, including the St. Johns River, is one of Jacksonville's greatest assets. In fact, that beauty is what attracted many of us to the area. But sprawl contributes to the degradation of Jacksonville's natural beauty and strains our limited water resources.

Sprawl limits our choices. For example, on a personal level, longer commutes mean less time with family and friends. On a city-wide level, building, expanding and maintaining roads (and basic city services) means less money for libraries, parks, schools or even tax breaks.

And while we're talking about the financial burdens of sprawl, I must mention impact fees. Impact fees require developers to pay a portion of the costs of new infrastructure. However, when those fees are waived, somebody still has to

pay. That somebody is us. We are subsidizing somebody else's bottom line.

It sounds like I'm opposed to any growth. I'm not. I'm only opposed to growth foisted on us by unthinking ideologues and narrow-minded special interests. Do developers deserve a seat at the table? Yes. Do developers deserve the only seat at the table? Absolutely not. We also need elected representatives who sit at that table to be more interested in our long-term sustainability than in their short-term personal popularity.

My point is not that we should ban all new growth. My point is that we should be thinking carefully about the issues affecting our community. You don't have to agree with everything I write, but you should think about these issues thoughtfully and reasonably. Use a little bit of your own vision. After all, without vision, the people perish.

Dave Milton is a husband, father and local attorney who's interested in doing his part to make sure Jacksonville is a city where every person feels at home and every person has a chance to pursue his or her American Dream. When Dave isn't with his family or at work, he's involved with his church, scouting and other civic and non-profit organizations. If you have any thoughts or other comments to share, please email Dave at davidm.milton@gmail.com.

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Ramsgate community update

By Contributing Writer Lynn Cuda

The Ramsgate Homeowners Association will mark its 28th year at their annual membership dinner and meeting, to be held on January 30 at the Mandarin Community Club. Scheduled guest speakers this year are Gary Dickinson of the JSO Community Affairs Office and Duval County School Board (District 7) member Jason Fischer.

Governed by an all-volunteer board of directors, the RHA represents a subdivision of 264 homes. Membership is voluntary but a majority of residents choose to join.

In addition to the annual

dinner and meeting, the association sponsors other events including block parties and a yard of the month competition and maintains common areas within the neighborhood. It is part of the JSO Neighborhood Watch Program and participates in the National Night Out Crime Prevention event each October.

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Clearing up curbside recycling

By John MacKenzie

Mandarin NewsLine has done the research to help sort out the confusion about your recycling bin. A review of the new recycling city rules helps to end the proverbial confusion of what should be recycled, what has special recycling procedures and what is just garbage. The following information should clear the air and give you a sense of "Aha! I wondered about that." Let's start at the beginning ...

Depending on your neighborhood location, your recycling bin may be the typical, tall city garbage bin of a different color and with a different lid color or it may just be a small crate. The body of the bin will be blue and if it has a cover, the lid will be yellow. This recycling bin should be set to the curb by 6:00 a.m. on your collection day.

If you are new to the neighborhood, the bin should be provided to you automatically by the city in the same way they provide you with garbage pickup, but if you are rent-

ing, you may have to contact your landlord. Apartment and condominium dwellers will need to contact their property management company for available recycling options. If you are a new homeowner or if you have a broken or missing bin, you can contact the city or contracted recycling company for your neighborhood for a replacement. While you are waiting for your new bin, you are allowed to "use paper bags or other comparably sized plastic bins for their recyclables" (coj.net). Please keep the size of the bin being used by your community in mind because the bin has to match the hard work of the people and equipment doing the collection.

After ensuring that residents are using the correct collection bins, one of the most serious focal points of city recycling efforts is spotlighting the importance of the materials that should and should not be placed in your recycling bin. Everyone must take into account the fact that no bin may be collected if an "employee has to separate material prior to it being put in the truck" (coj.net). Most people place 80 to 90 percent of the correct materials in the bins with the idea that the other 10 to 20 percent is a good guess and may fall into the category of "better safe than sorry." However, imagine the cost to tax payers for additional city recycling employees required to remove the tops from recycled bottles (screwed on or just thrown in the bottom of the bin) when the city specifies to "please place the tops/lids in garbage" or to break



down boxes to the right size for the recycling machines or to empty an aerosol can to avoid it potentially bursting inside the recycling machine. Making a small effort can cut costs for the city's recycling program (and taxpayers) while also helping to save our Earth.

While enjoying the recycling program of our great city, we must all pay attention to the guidelines provided so the program can be cost effective and a smooth working process that we can enjoy. You can always call the Jacksonville city offices at 904-630-CITY (2489) to support, complain, suggest or just to find out more information about this and other programs. To get a full rundown of recycling rules and guidelines and a list of what should or should not be in the recycling bins, everyone should review the city's website, www.COJ.net; look for Recycling under the Solid Waste link in the Department of Public Works. You can also perform an internet search for "Jacksonville, Florida recycling." On their website you will also find a link to a Recycling Guidelines Flyer you may download and print to help others understand this vital procedure for maintaining a beautiful and green city. Keep an eye out for our next issue where we explain those materials used daily but require special recycling efforts.

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Team name still to be determined

Jacksonville gets new soccer team

By John MacKenzie

The North American Soccer League (NASL) is a professional men's soccer association with eight teams in the United States



Mark Frisch

and Canada, headquartered in Miami, Florida. The modern NASL was founded in 2009 (there was a former NASL from 1968-84) and began playing in 2011 with planned expansions in 2014 and 2015. The NASL uses a split season schedule running from April to November, with a monthly break in July. The champions form the spring and fall play-offs at the end of the season in the Soccer Bowl. The NASL is owned and operated by its member teams through the Board of Governors which consists of a delegate from each team. NASL's vision is to develop up to 20 teams by 2018. They hope to add more teams in the West and Midwest, looking first to the 25 largest cities without a professional

soccer team. With three new teams starting in 2014, the newest approval adds two new cities which include Jacksonville starting in the 2015 Spring Season. The Jacksonville team is part of the Sunshine Soccer Group, owned by founder and CEO Mark Frisch and founder and SSG president Dario Sala, who is also the technical director and general manager. The team's club president is Steve Livingstone who directs the business operations. Frisch is a native of Jacksonville and graduate of the University of Florida.

"I am thrilled to have helped lead an effort to bring pro soccer back to Jacksonville," said



Dario Sala

Frisch. "I am very grateful for all the support from the city and the fans leading up to this day. I know the fans out there have been waiting for this moment

for a long time. I cannot wait to go out and meet them all personally and talk the beautiful game of soccer in Jacksonville."

Sala is a former professional goalkeeper with over two decades of professional soccer experience. He has played in over 500 games and over 30 international competitions, achieving a distinction as the



Steve Livingstone

least scored-upon goalkeeper and leader of his team. Sala has developed into one of America's most sought-after player agents and talent scouts.

Jacksonville has a great management team and over a year to get it all together.

The NASL commissioner, Bill Peterson, said: "I have seen first-hand the desire the Jacksonville community has for a professional soccer team to call its own and believe this is a great move for soccer in

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Florida."

In the spring of 2015, Jacksonville will begin its competition for soccer dominance with over 10 rivalry teams including Atlanta Silverbacks, Carolina RailHawks, FC Edmonton, Fort Lauderdale Strikers, Minnesota United FC, New York Cosmos, Puerto Rico Islanders, San Antonio Scorpions FC, Tampa Bay Rowdies, Indy Eleven (2014), Ottawa Fury FC (2014), Virginia Cavalry FC (2014) and Oklahoma City (2015).

NASL does not currently invest money into obtaining TV contracts and instead streams its games online free of charge

on the NASL.com website. You can follow JaxNASL or NASL on Facebook and Twitter. But to stay updated on the local team, just head over to JAXNASL.com.

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McBurney files bill to make uniform yellow light intervals

Representative Charles McBurney (R-District 16) introduced HB-553, to establish standardized regulations for traffic infraction detectors in the state of Florida. The bill includes a consistent yellow light interval across all counties and municipalities, requiring counties to annually test their devices and requires reports on the device's traffic and citation statistics. The bill further provides defenses when the vehicle was stolen or leased or when yielding because of emergency vehicles or as part of a funeral procession, along with defenses raised by municipal laws.

"Regardless of one's position on the use of red-light cameras, the primary focus should be on safety, not rais-

ing money for government. There should also be reasonable defenses and an analysis of the red-light camera program," said Representative McBurney.

"Importantly, citizens should feel confident that the yellow light interval will be consistent and not tampered with just so government can make money off of traffic regulations," McBurney said.

Senator Greg Evers (R-District 2) stated he will be filing the same bill in the Senate.

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Mandarin Band News

By Contributing Writers Brooke Sapolsky and Levana Osher

What is solo and ensemble? "The FBA (Florida Bandmaster Association), through its membership, has provided exceptional musical experiences for thousands of band students, while upgrading the musical standards and making music an integral part of the school curriculum, making our slogan, 'A Band in Every School' a reality."

Band students will prepare a piece of music for three months in order to obtain the highest quality and then perform their piece as accurately as possible in front of a judge from the FBA. Through participating in solo and ensemble, the music students will learn the importance of improving their musicianship and technique. Another skill learned through this process teaches musicians how to make musical decisions on their own. This can mean anything from choosing dynamic, how loudly or softly to play, to the style of the piece.

As Ms. Chaffin, Mandarin High School's outstanding band director, told her students, "The highest, most efficient way of earning and upholding, the title of being a superior band is for every individual to make decisions about dynamics, articula-



Majorettes Madison Gersten, Payton Jones and Jessica Bachansingh

tion and basic interpretation on his or her own."

Solo and Ensemble directly teaches young musicians how to accomplish such daunting tasks, one measure at a time, but it also gives musicians freedom. High school band students are handed a piece of music and told "This is what we are playing for the upcoming concert." Then they are told what style the piece should be played in and what tempo it should be played at. It is exciting for musicians to experience this change in how music can be made, but, whether they realize or not, the real purpose of Solo and Ensemble is to give young students the opportunity to grow into experienced musicians.

Mandarin High Band is

proud to have such hard working majorettes. Our own majorettes have twirled baton at every football game, the homecoming parade and at basketball games. We are so lucky to have three amazing girls who are so talented and love to twirl. Our majorettes include Jessica Bachansingh, 11th grade; Madison Gersten, 11th grade; and Payton Jones, 10th grade. These three girls have been twirling together competitively for 10 years. The majorettes also participated in solo and ensemble last year each performing a solo and receiving a superior grading.

Gersten remarks, "I love twirling and being able to perform for and support fellow Mustangs!"

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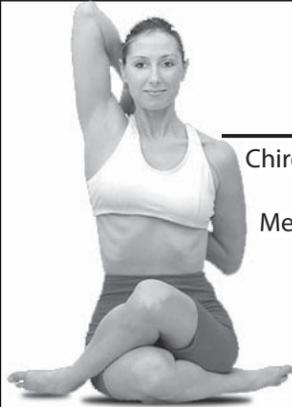
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Hospital's women's programs highlighted in publication

Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville is being highlighted nationally as one of the top "100 Hospitals With Great Women's Health Programs." Becker's Hospital Review has published its list which recognizes hospitals with exceptional programs dedicated to the health and well-being of women. The hospitals featured on the list have programs that include a wide range of healthcare options for women including gynecologic care, reproductive medicine, breast health as well as emotional support and behavioral healthcare options. The programs display clinical excellence and provide quality care.

Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville is one of 11 in Florida recognized. The hospitals were selected to the list based on clinical excellence, quality care, comprehensiveness of their women's health programs and women's health awards.

The monthly publication noted Baptist Medical Center offering a number of women's health services including gynecology, urology, breast health, heart health as well as treatments for post-partum depression and osteoporosis. The publication also pointed to Baptist's Hill Breast Center and the use of

latest technology such as digital mammography, LumaGEM molecular breast imaging, stereotactic core biopsy and bone density scanners. The medical center has been awarded Magnet designation by the American Nurses Credentialing Center.

Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville and Baptist Medical Center South, which share a license, for example, were ranked No. 1 last year among metro Jacksonville hospitals in the *U.S. News and World Report* annual Best Hospital rankings. Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville also carries the Women's Choice Award from WomenCertified® distinguishing it as one of the 2013 Best Hospitals for Patient Experience in Heart Care. The award is based on robust criteria that include female patient satisfaction measurements as well as clinical excellence considerations.

Michael Mayo, hospital president, Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, said the Becker's Hospital Review ranking shows that Baptist Medical Center is committed to delivering exemplary care to patients.

"The rankings continue to show that we are truly changing health care for good for women in Northeast Florida," Mayo said.

Mandarin Senior Center February news

By Contributing Writer David Wunder, Center Activities Specialist, Mandarin Senior Center

Join us for our annual Spaghetti Dinner on Friday, February 21 from 5:30 p.m. until 7:30 p.m. Grab the family, your friends and neighbors to come out for the best deal and meal in town! Enjoy pasta with your choice of sauce, salad, breadsticks, a drink and dessert. We'll have music and door prizes. Hit the game room and make it a family game night as you enjoy playing board games after dinner. Can't stay? You can take your meal to go. The cost is \$5 for adults and to go or \$3 for

kids 10 and under.

Looking for some new and interesting activities? Come see what we have for you at the Mandarin Senior Center! Bingo, bridge, ceramics, dancing, exercise classes, speakers, trivia, trips...the list goes on and on and we're always looking to add new activities like our new belly dancing class and scrabble group.

Visit us at the Mandarin Senior Center, located at 3848 Hartley Road or call us for further information at 262-7309.



The always appreciated \$1.00 Clothing Sale at the Mandarin Garden Club will be held on Saturday, March 1 from 9:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. in the clubhouse, located at 2892 Loretto Road. This event is so well attended by the public from all over Jacksonville it is now held twice a year, in the spring and fall. Gently used clothing for women, men and children will fill the clubhouse. There is something for everyone: casual, dressy, formal, business suits, work-out clothes, plus size, shoes, purses and much more. Funds raised from this event help support Mandarin Garden Club projects. Unsold clothing is always donated to local charitable organization thrift stores. For more information, please visit www.mandarin-gardenclub.org, call 268-1192 or visit us on Facebook.

Mandarin Art Festival planning for big success!

By Contributing Writer Susie Scott



The 46th annual Mandarin Art Festival plans are enfolded as members of the Art Festival committee met in January to kick off the year with new and exciting ideas for the event, which will be held on Easter weekend, April 19-20.

The event is held each year at the historic Mandarin Community Club on beautiful oak-canopied Mandarin Road. Thousands of art lovers and local residents will stroll through more than 100 booths displaying fine art and fine craft of artist exhibitors from near and far. Artistic creations and interpretations represented in glass, pottery, photography, painting, fiber, sculpture, woodworking, jewelry and more will be on display and for sale. The show has been successfully attracting artists and fans for 46 years to become the longest continually running event of its kind in northeast Florida.

And for variety, wander over to the Green Market which is held on the adjacent park property where you can sample hand crafted signature food products and speak with local crafters.

Inside the historic 130-year-old Mandarin Community Club building you will find a

bake sale and the children's art show where the work of aspiring young artists representing many local schools is proudly on display.

Outside the club building purchase your raffle tickets for items too good to pass up at the Community Club table or purchase your official Art Festival tee shirt or club-sponsored merchandise.

And did we mention food? Tasty treats await you from a variety of menus ranging from all natural fruit smoothies to authentic French crepes to yummy seafood to chilly snowballs to hot dogs and more! There will also be live music, art, crafts, fun for kids, fun for grownups and fun for all!

Want to be a part of this community tradition? Volunteers and interested sponsors can contact the club at mandarinartfestival@gmail.com, mandarincommunityclub.org or call 268-1622.

Founded in 1923, the Mandarin Community Club is dedicated to the preservation and beautification of Mandarin; to providing educational forums for the community; to enhancing the cultural and recreational life of the area; and to maintaining the club's historic properties.

Happy 150th Birthday DCPS!

The year 2014 marks the 150th birthday of Duval County Public Schools. During the spring of 1864, J. M. Hawks opened the first free public school in the state of Florida in Jacksonville. This year is also the 145th year for the Duval County School Board. In March of 1869, Duval County's first Board of Public Instruction was appointed by the State Board of Education, with five members. Later that year, the first Superintendent of Public Instruction was appointed.

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Third Thursday lecture cont. from pg. 1

and Sing,” often referred to as the “Negro Anthem.” Originally written as a poem, the music was added by Johnson’s brother Rosamond and was first sung publicly on February 12, 1900 in honor of President Lincoln’s birthday. It was performed by 500 children at Stanton High School where James Weldon Johnson was principal. It is very special that this song will be performed for the audience this night—in February, which is Black History Month and in this historic building with its close connections to Harriet Beecher Stowe and the Freedmen’s Bureau School.

This group performs all of their selected traditional and inspirational music with great talent and contagious enthusiasm. The evening promises to be one that you will enjoy and it will connect you with Mandarin’s deep and important African American roots.

The concert will be presented on Thursday, February 20 at the Mandarin Community Club, which is located at 12447 Mandarin Road. Refreshments will be served at 6:30 p.m. with the music at 7:00 p.m. The event is free and all are invited and encouraged to attend.

Please call 268-0784 or email mandarinmuseum@bell-south.net for more information. Check out the museum website at www.mandarinmuseum.net and the Mandarin Community Club website at www.mandarin-communityclub.org.

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Mandarin Library cont. from pg. 1
happy, the “3 Ps” (Pizza, Popcorn and Pepsi) will be available while supplies last! You do not need a library card to participate. A signup sheet will be on display in the Teen Area, the Children’s Desk and at the Reference Desk. If you are shy and would like someone else to read your poem, it can be arranged. For more information about the talent show and other teen programs, please call Don Carpenter, the teen coordinator, at 262-5201.

Be Doggone Safe! Bring your child to the Doggone Safe Dog Bite Prevention Program for children at the South Mandarin Branch Library on Wednesday, February 19 at 3:00 p.m. and at the Mandarin Branch Library on Wednesday, March 12 at 4:00 p.m. You can keep your kids and dogs safe by joining them for a special dog bite prevention seminar program for school-age

children. This program focuses on fun and interactive activities to teach children how to read dog body language and how to act safely around their own dog and strange dogs. The program will be presented by local professional dog trainer Marge Rogers. Rogers is a Certified Professional Dog Trainer, a licensed presenter for Doggone Safe and a licensed presenter for Family Paws Parent Education. Registration is not required for the program and is suitable for school-age children and their caregivers. For more information, please contact the South Mandarin Branch Library at 288-6385 and the Mandarin Branch Library at 262-5201.

Tax forms are now available at the Mandarin area libraries. The South Mandarin Branch Library is the local site for free tax preparation assistance by the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). AARP Tax As-

sistance will be available each Tuesday at the South Mandarin Branch Library from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. beginning on February 4 and ending on April 8. For a complete list of the free tax assistance sites, please visit the library website at <http://jax-publiclibrary.org>.

Don’t forget to join us for Prime Time at the Mandarin Branch Library beginning on Wednesday, February 26 at 6:00 p.m. Prime Time is a free family reading program designed to build reading comprehension and critical thinking skills for families with children ages six and older. This family-focused program helps children succeed academically and bring families together around the joy of reading. Each weekly session begins with a healthy meal before focusing on storytelling, reading and discussion topics based on award-winning children’s books with

discussion groups conducted by scholars and storytellers. Prime Time is open to the public, but is especially helpful for children who are struggling with reading comprehension skills and families who may not have the most positive past experience talking with their children about their school work or successfully helping their children with their school work. The program is also designed to foster academic success and achievements for children from underserved, and/or low-literacy families as well as encouraging parents to start or continue with their own educational programs. Parents or caregivers must attend each of the six sessions with their child and daycare will be provided for preschool age siblings. Prime time is all about spending quality family reading time in a fun and encouraging environment. Make plans today to get ready for Prime Time by calling the Mandarin Branch Library at 262-5201. Advanced Registration is required.

Please note all Jacksonville Public Libraries will be closed on Monday, February 17 for the Presidents Day Holiday.

February is the time to share a book with your special Valentine. Happy Valentine’s Day from the Mandarin Area Libraries!

South Mandarin Branch Library February events

Here are some more fun events coming up at the South Mandarin Branch Library:

Wednesday, February 5, 3:30 p.m.: Early Out Fun (Lego Club) (ages K-6)

Thursday, February 6 and Thursday, February 20, 7:00 p.m.: Teen Advisory Board

Saturday, February 1 and Saturday, February 15, 11:00 a.m.: Storybook Art (story and a craft)

Saturday, February 22, 3:00 p.m.: Fun with Balloon Twisting with local balloon artist Linda Brunson (ages K-6)

Thursday, February 27, 7:00 p.m.: Mother Daughter Book Club for girls in grades 4-6 and a significant woman in their lives. Call 288-6385 for the book selection.



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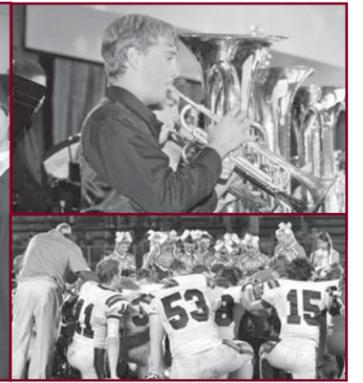
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EXP 2/28/14

Hospital group names new senior vice president

Baptist Health is pleased to announce Scott M. Wooten, FACHE, has been named the new senior vice president and chief financial officer for Baptist Health. Wooten joins Baptist Health after eight years as chief financial officer for Alegant Creighton Health, a 10-hospital system headquartered in Omaha, Nebraska.

“Scott comes from a faith-based, nonprofit health system and understands the need to maximize and leverage our assets to continue to change health care for good in North-east Florida,” Baptist Health President and CEO A. Hugh Greene said. “Scott brings extensive experience and expertise to this role and will be a tremendous asset to

our organization.”

Wooten succeeds Michael Lukaszewski, who is retiring after 26 years with Baptist Health.

Prior to moving to Nebraska, Wooten worked for Adventist Health System in Orlando for 10 years, the last four as senior vice president of finance and senior finance officer at Florida Hospital.

“The mission and values of Baptist Health are aligned with my personal values and this is truly a perfect fit,” Wooten said. “This is an excellent opportunity to continue to build upon the strong foundation of Baptist Health and grow the health care options for the next generation of families in North-east Florida.”

Local scouts celebrate Holiday Hoopla

By Contributing Writer Melissa Salek

“Was Santa a Boy Scout?” asked Walter Carter, scout master for Troop 101, at the annual Scout Holiday Hoopla party, held at Christ’s Church Academy (CCA) on December 13, 2013. Pack 101 Cub Scouts gathered for an evening of fun and games, hosted by Boy Scout Troop 101.

“My favorite game was the Christmas tree bean bag toss,” said Webelos II Scout Alan Painter. “I like to go because you’re having fun with kids in your pack and in your den.”

“Troop 101 has been hosting this holiday tradition for over 10 years,” said Jason O’Brien, charter representative. “It started not only as a way to celebrate the holidays, but also as a way for the Boy Scouts to



Cub Scouts Anthony Scott, Alex Harm, Joshua Nikielski and Cy Wong, along with Boy Scouts Phillip Roussin, Will Molinet and Nicholas Hart. Photo courtesy of Clair Hart.

interact with and be positive examples for the Cub Scouts, all while having some fun.”

The Cub Scouts also participated by having each den create a holiday-themed game, including a “pin the nose on a reindeer” by the wolf den and a game where scouts tossed presents down a cardboard chimney. Prizes were awarded for categories such as Best Scout Theme, Best Holiday Theme and Most Creative.

At the end of the evening, the cub scouts learned that when compared with the values of the scout law, Santa is indeed like a Boy Scout: reverent, clean, brave, thrifty,

cheerful, obedient, kind, courteous, friendly, helpful, loyal and trustworthy. The entire poem can be found on the Boy Scout Trail website at www.boyscoutstrail.com, a resource site for scout leaders.

Boy Scout Troop 101 and Cub Scout Pack 101 are chartered to Christ’s Church and meet on Monday evenings at CCA. For more information about Cub Scouting or Pack 101, contact the Cubmaster at cubmaster@pack101.com or visit the website at pack101.com. For information about Boy Scouting or Troop 101, contact the Scoutmaster at trp101sm@gmail.com.

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Native Sons and Daughters participate in Toys For Tots

By Contributing Writer Brian Quirk



For the sixth consecutive year, the local Native Sons and Daughters organization has partnered with the United States Marines Toys for Tots program. More than 100 members of the group participated in the annual

ice skating event and sought to earn one of their Community Service feathers.

Event host Mike "Wild Eagle" Ryan said, "This is a great opportunity to show our children that not everyone is

guaranteed a visit from Santa Claus."

Although the children really looked forward for their chance to get on the ice, the parents reminded them that their gift will brighten a child's morning. This year the group presented more than 120 toys to the Marines for distribution to deserving youth throughout North Florida.

The Native Sons and Daughters program is a unique parent/child experience for children ages five to 12. For more information, please visit our website at www.timucuan.org.

MHS Happenings

MHS names Employee of the Year

By Contributing Writer Zoe Smolios

With the New Year comes a new employee to be recognized and that is what happened when students returned to MHS to find out the school's Employee of the Year.

The honor was given to William Sullivan, who is currently the text book manager, librarian and is in charge of teacher equipment, scheduling parent-teacher conferences and making sure every student gets a new ID if theirs gets lost or left at home. Sullivan was voted teacher of the year by the faculty and staff of Mandarin High and he also said that the assistant principal as well as the principal nominated him to be the teacher of the district.

"This is one of the top honors to get," said Sullivan. "It just means everyone appreciates the job you're doing."

Sullivan worked at Mandarin High for seven years, transferred to Peterson and then came back to MHS. From 1997-2005 he was the head track and field and cross country coach for the girls' teams, from 2002-2008 he was in charge of ISSP and was the assistant house administrator for the St. Johns house for the 2012-2013 school year, all before taking on the responsibilities he has this year.

Dr. Richardson, the principal of Mandarin High said, "Mr. Sullivan always has a smile on his face and is very positive and encouraging to the students."

Sullivan said the hardest part of his job is getting it right. Between having to figure out times that fit both teacher and parent schedules for conferences and having to assign times for classes to use the computers in the library for research as well as CGA testing purposes, his job is not always easy. He also said

Mandarin Historical Society seeks nominations for 2014 "Miss Aggie Award"

The Mandarin Museum and Historical Society is accepting nominations through February 16 for the 11th annual Miss Aggie Award. This award is named in honor of Miss Agnes Jones, the daughter of Walter and Edith Jones. After the death of her father, she served as Mandarin's postmistress and proprietor of the Mandarin Store and Post Office from 1928 to 1964. Miss Aggie, as she was fondly called, lived in the family home until 1992. This historic house is now part of the Walter Jones Historical Park.

The award, established in 2003, honors a female Mandarin resident who has contributed to the community in the areas of business, civic, educational or charitable accomplishment. The 2013 recipient was Emily Lisska, executive director of the Jacksonville Historical Society and

president of the Mandarin Community Club.

Nominations are available in the Mandarin Museum at the Walter Jones Historical Park, located at 11964 Mandarin Road. Museum hours are Saturday from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Nomination forms are also available at the historic Mandarin Store and Post Office on the first and third Sundays from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m. and on the website.

The winner will be honored on Miss Aggie Day, which will be held on Sunday, March 16, at the Store and Post Office, located at 12471 Mandarin Road, from 12:00 noon to 4:00 p.m. The presentation will be held at 1:00 p.m. Moon Pies and RC Cola will be served.

For additional information, please call the museum at 268-0784 or email mandarinmuseum@bellsouth.net. Check us out on Facebook at www.facebook.com/mandarinmuseum and our website www.mandarinmuseum.net.



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Compost & Vermicompost Workshop

The Duval County Extension Service is offering a Compost & Vermicompost (worms) Workshop on Wednesday, February 12 from 10:00 to noon. Attendees can make their own worm bin to take home for an additional fee. The workshop will be located at 1010 N McDuff Avenue in Jacksonville.

The cost is \$5 per person for attendance only and an additional \$10 to make a worm bin with worms. Pre-payment and registration is required. Payment must be received by Friday, February 7.

Checks can be made to DCOHAC and sent to Compost & Vermicompost Workshop, 1010 N. McDuff Ave, Jax., FL 32254.

Sorry, no walk-ins for the make and take. For questions, please call 255-7450.



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Friends of South Mandarin Library update

By Contributing Writer Sue Giddings, Friends of the South Mandarin Branch Library



Sue Giddings presents a CD boom box stereo to Branch Manager Keli Likins and SE Region Youth Services Senior Librarian Anita Haller. The boom box was purchased with funds from the Friends' June 2013 Book Sale.

first year has made us proud to support our friendly, neighborhood library. Currently on the "Wish List" is a popcorn cart; now that will be a sure fire drawing card for young patrons and parents!

We welcome new members and invite them to join us on the second Thursday of each month in the

In early January, the Friends of South Mandarin Library presented a check to purchase new seating, an activity cube and a colorful story rug to the library's Children's Department. These items were funded by our June Book Sale and member dues. Our

library. Our meetings begin at 2:15 p.m. following the Book Club meeting which starts at 1:15 p.m. Yearly dues are \$10, a portion of which supports the Friends Of Jacksonville Library and the larger part remaining at our local library.

Nine ways to improve curb appeal

Homeowners who want their homes to make strong first impressions must prioritize curb appeal. Homes with strong curb appeal sell well and can impart a welcoming feel to all visitors. Improving curb appeal need not be expensive, and the following are a handful of ways to improve the appearance of your home.

1. Install a bold-looking door in a vibrant color or one with a custom design. This helps the home stand out from other properties in the neighborhood.
2. Edge the driveway to create a distinct border between the driveway and the lawn or other landscaping features. This helps homes appear neat and well kept.
3. Use outdoor lighting to make a home more invit-

ing. Outdoor lighting also makes properties safer to traverse at night.

4. Clean a home's exterior to remove mildew or discolorations from the siding, driveway, patio, and other outdoor elements.
5. Improve landscapes with fresh plants and seasonal color. Homeowners without the time to plant can consider container gardens, which don't take much time to assemble but still add appeal to a home's exterior.
6. Prune planting beds and add new mulch to restore color.
7. Add shutters and accent trim to a home's exterior to improve on the beauty of the house.
8. Install new fencing or give a fresh coat of paint or

9. Replace concrete paths with tile or stone walkways to make entryways more impressive and inviting.

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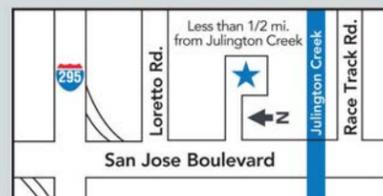


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Movie Review

The Hunger Games, Catching Fire

Directed by: Francis Lawrence. Starring: Jennifer Lawrence, Josh Hutcherson, Liam Hemsworth, Woody Harrelson and Donald Sutherland. Review by T.G. Stanton.

Great Movie, May See It Again (5 out of 5)

This month's movie review belongs to the film *The Hunger Games, Catching Fire*, an action film for adults and teens

Rebellion in the districts could be enough to make any leader nervous. Ever since Katniss Everdeen, portrayed by Jennifer Lawrence, won the last Hunger Games and did so by defying the rule of being the last victor standing, the people in various districts have chosen her as a shining star and a reason to rebel against the oppression of the rich and manipulative Capitol. She threatened to die by eating poisonous berries instead of killing her true love Peeta Mellark, performed by Josh Hutcherson. After a short time home from the games, Katniss reconnects with the

one she truly cares for, Gale Hawthorne, depicted by Liam Hemsworth and her feelings for him have to be kept hidden to keep the victors and all of those they care about alive.

Now the two winners from district 12 are going on a victory tour to visit all of the districts. Here they are to promote the benevolence and wonder of the Capitol and President Snow, characterized by Donald Sutherland, shows up to make sure Katniss understands the risks and benefits of supporting his vision in addition to proving her love for Peeta. The Quarter Quell is his retribution for the continued rebellions and his attempt to end the hope that Katniss has instilled in many of the people

in other districts. This game places her right back in the middle of a new game and all of the dangers that entails. All past victors are in the running to participate and Haymitch, represented by Woody Harrelson, lucks out in not being chosen, leaving him once again as their mentor as well as the man to get them sponsors and aids along the way. He uses the training period as the time to form alliances and build a team to win another game. In addition, the loving couple may just get married, keeping the Capitol and the other districts supportive and enamored. As the relationship grows so do all of the manipulations around them.

This game proves to be

exhilarating and suspenseful. Francis Lawrence directed this film with the novel clearly portrayed throughout. The angst of the many relationships are clear, as well as the desperation of so many of the districts. Jennifer Lawrence is again great as Katniss, as much in her determination to stay true to herself and save Peeta and still win the game. In addition, it is her discomfort in personal situations that endears her to so many.

Donald Sutherland plays the evil leader very well and is easy to love to hate. Woody Harrelson is mischievous and enjoyable as Haymitch. The dangers, trials and tribulations of the game are exciting to watch and well-depicted vision from the book. Any Hunger Games readers should find this a fitting tribute and this watcher and reader eagerly awaits the next film, as this one surpassed the first.

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary update

Dock waters can be shocking – Swimmers beware!

By Contributing Writer Ralph Little, Flotilla 14-8

The theme and some words of this article originate from coverage in Auxiliary publications. It is just too important to not remind Mandarin residents of a danger that is rarely discussed and is enhanced in fresh water. Perhaps it is best discussed in February when few are feeling compelled to jump in the water whether to swim or work on your boat.

You need to know what's in the water before you jump off a dock. Just like you wouldn't want to collide with an object hidden by our stained water, smack into the shallow bottom or be immersed in algae, you need to be careful of electricity in water near a dock or marina. Where there is electric service, there is an unpredictable and often undetectable danger of electric shock. Electricity from the dock gets into the water, either from the dock or through a boat's running gear, usually from a redirection of the higher 110 volt shore power ground.

Once you're in the water, especially fresh water, your body is actually a better conductor of electricity than the water itself and then it is too late to do anything about it. While you may feel a warning tingle from light current, high current is paralyzing. The only way to help a swimmer who is caught in an electric current is to shut

the power off. Even walking barefoot along a dock that has power cords can result in electric shock!

Part of your safety consciousness should include knowing where the power cutoff switch is located for the dock or marina you are using. There are various ways to determine if dock and boat electrical connections are safe, but all require extensive testing by a knowledgeable individual. Check your dock's wiring and turn off power to the dock before you enter the water. Swimming is prohibited in most marinas for many reasons and the electricity danger is one of them. Furthermore, in a marina, boats are constantly changing, so what is safe today may not be tomorrow. If you have further questions contact your marina management or see the BoatUS site <http://www.boatus.com/seaworthy/magazine/2013/july/electric-shock-drowning-explained.asp> for details and a diagram.

Experienced boat operators teach our About Boating Safely course at the Florida Tackle and Gun Club at 9010 San Jose Boulevard. Why not attend a class during the cold months? Please call Bob at 721-1346 to reserve a place in the first 2014 classes on February 1 or March 8 or check our site at <http://SafeBoating-Jacksonville.com>.

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Gardening: Winter pastimes

By Contributing Writer Master Gardener Lesley Arrandale with Duval County Extension, University of Florida/IFAS

Winter usually brings challenges to northeast Florida and this year has been no exception. The polar vortex in the first week of January, which caused such havoc further north, pushed temperatures here into the low 20s for a couple of nights.

I wasn't able to protect my plants, but some surprised me by their resilience. Firebushes have been top-killed, but will likely be slowly resurrected come spring. I won't be cutting them back until the danger of a freeze has passed and that applies to all shrubs and tender perennials like pentas. A limited amount of trimming to tidy up is fine, but not right down to the ground, which would expose roots to cold air. The exceptions are bananas and gingers, which won't suffer. As of mid-January, rainfall has been more than adequate, which has helped plants resist damage. Adding extra mulch around plants also helps.

Winter is a great time to settle down with a good book and I recommend "Eating on the Wild Side" by Jo Robinson, available from the Jacksonville Public Library. Primarily a book for people buying produce from supermarkets or farmers' markets, it discusses which varieties are the most nutritious and how best to prepare them. But the added bonus for gardeners is the comprehensive lists of varieties which can be either grown from seed or purchased as plants. The author discusses the development of our fruits and vegetables from their wild ancestors, and how sometimes thousands of years of "progress" has actually diminished nutritional value in favor of palatability. Hence the subtitle "The missing link to optimal health." A fascinating read.

Another good read, the January/February New Leaf

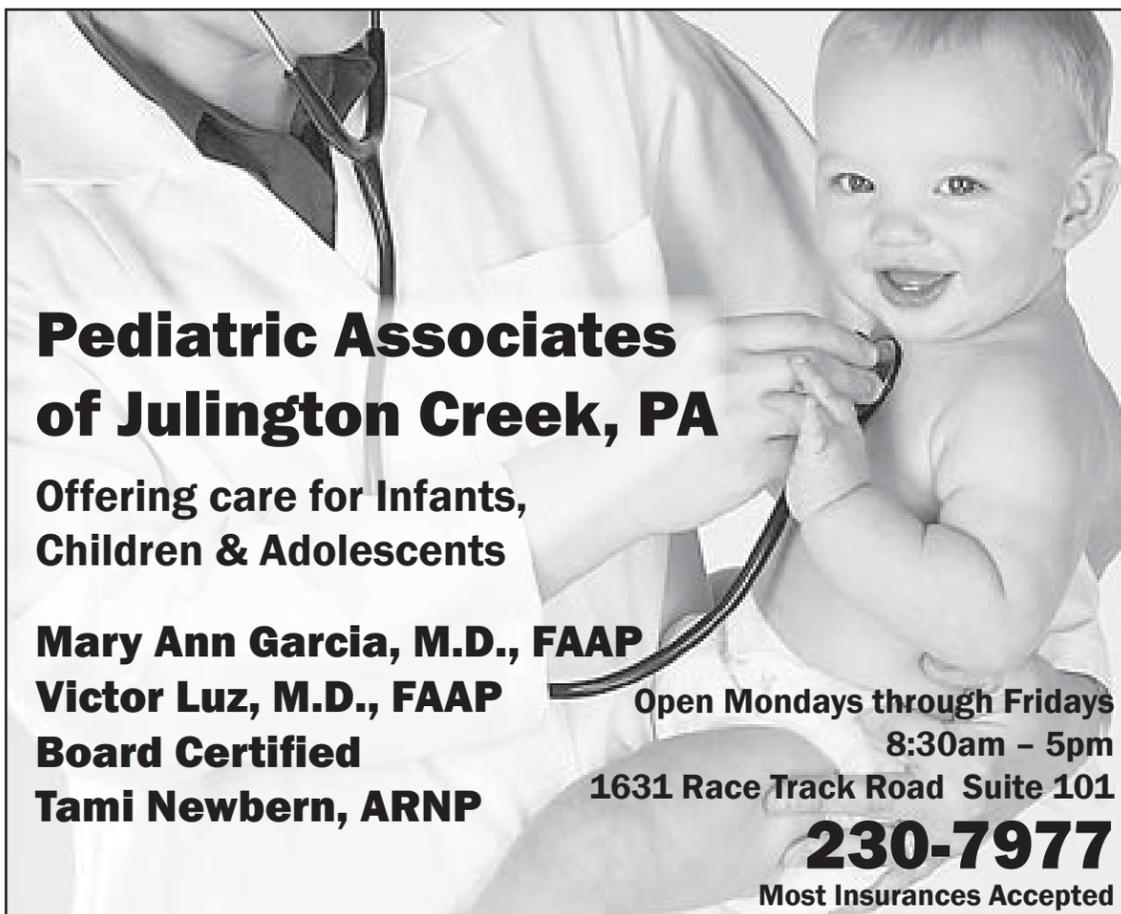
newsletter is available from the Extension Service: <http://duval.ifas.ufl.edu/documents/JanuaryFebruary2014.pdf>. With plenty of information on vegetables, this is a must-read edition. Check out the section on upcoming programs offered by the Extension Service. Notably on February 8, "Growing and Eating Seasonally" and on February 22, the annual "Day of Gardening." There is a fee for each program and pre-registration is required, so book early to avoid disappointment.

At first glance, the countryside in winter appears quite dull, but now that the leaves have fallen from our deciduous trees some of their skeletons are quite elegant. The various shades and textures of bark show clearly against the duller evergreens surrounding them. Vines too are stripped bare and no longer conceal their scaffolding.

The cardinals are radiant among the shrubs in my yard and yesterday I spotted a female red-winged blackbird taking a dip, a forerunner of the small flocks that, usually, come my way later in spring. But nothing is pre-ordained and one happy event may lead to naught. The flocks of indigo buntings I hosted some years ago have been absent these past few springs and so have the rose-breasted grosbeaks. Whatever the reason for these inconsistencies and I rather hope it is weather patterns rather than diminishing numbers of birds, I am really looking forward to the spring migration and the gems that may, just may, drop by.

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Fun facts about February

February is the shortest month of the year, but many people have no idea why that is. February is the only month to have fewer than 30 days, but there is no scientific reason behind that distinction, though there have been various changes to the calendar throughout the centuries and eventually February became what it is today.

The Romans developed a 10-month calendar that began with the Spring equinox in March and ended in December. There is belief that what is now February was overlooked when this calendar was created, as winter weather had little to do with the harvest in the northern hemisphere, where Rome is located. Romans essentially considered the winter a period of time with no distinctive months. When the second king of Rome,

Numa Pompilius, took to the throne in 713 BC, he had plans to make the calendar more accurate by synchronizing it with the actual lunar year, which is roughly 354 days long. Thus, two new months, January and February, were added to the end of the calendar. Both January and February had 28 days.

At the time, even numbers were considered bad luck and these months were not looked upon favorably by the king. So he decided to make changes once more and added a day to January to make it 29 days long. February was left untouched, remaining an "unlucky" month and one devoted to honoring the dead and performing rites of purification, as the word February comes from februa, which means "to purify." February remained the last month of the year for roughly 200 years until the calendar was reevaluated and February was reassigned as the second month, with January being the start of the new year.

This new 355-day calendar simply could not stay in sync with the seasons because it did not account for the amount of

time it takes the Earth to orbit the sun. Therefore, an extra "month" of 27 days was added after February 23 each year to play catch-up. Sometimes this extra month was overlooked or not scheduled in time, continuing the calendar conundrum.

Julius Caesar was responsible for tackling calendar problems further when he was in power. He wished to make the calendar solar-based, like the one Egyptians used, instead of the older lunar-based calendar. This led to the creation of the Julian calendar. Ten days were added to the calendar year in various months and February was increased every four years (leap year) to 29 days to coordinate the calendar year to the solar cycle of roughly 365.2425 days.

February remains the shortest month of the year. Through the years there has been no widespread attempt to reorganize the calendar once more to even out the months and give extra time to February. As a result of the shorter number of days, February has some unique attributes. In common years,

Fun Facts cont on pg. 21



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Is your child ready for full-day kindergarten?

By Contributing Writer Dr Madelyn Speagle, Principal, Shepherd of the Woods Lutheran School

Surprisingly, one of the biggest hurdles for students entering kindergarten from a part-time preschool program is to attend school for a full-day! Kindergarten is a full-day of scheduled academic activities.

Many students struggle in the first months of kindergarten because they are used to only a half-day preschool. Also, some of the simplest things, like eating lunch independently, can be a challenge when added to all the other new challenges of kindergarten.

One thing you can do to assist your child in a smooth transition to kindergarten is to have your child attend a full-day preschool. During a full-day preschool, your child's academic stamina will increase by engaging in a full-day of structured activities that will assist with a successful transition into kindergarten. Your child should engage in activities that develop the following areas important for school success: cognition, social/emotional, fine/gross motor, language and creativity.

Check with your child's preschool about full-day programs and the types of activities that your child is engaging in to insure success in kindergarten.

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Getting kids to go green

Eco-friendly lifestyles aren't just for adults. Encouraging kids to go green at a young age can set them up for a lifetime of making decisions with the environment in mind. The following are just a few ways parents can impart a sense of responsibility to the environment on their youngsters.

- Lead by example. Many kids try to mimic their parents' behaviors and moms and dads can take advantage of that by making sure kids see them as they recycle, conserve water or make other eco-conscious choices. If kids want to know why you're separating trash or opting for tap water over bottled water, explain to them the positive impact that such behaviors can have on the health of the planet.
- Encourage eco-friendly hobbies. Today's youngsters have a host of technology at their disposal, and parents know full well that such access can be both good and bad. While technology can enhance learning in the classroom and beyond, gaming systems and other electronic devices have made it easy for kids to forgo

outdoor activities in favor of more sedentary hobbies. Many medical researchers believe that such hobbies are contributing to higher rates of childhood obesity. But they also can harm the environment. Gaming systems, whether played on televisions, computers or handheld devices, use a substantial amount of energy. Parents who encourage more eco-friendly activities, such as reading or playing outside, can get the best of both worlds, as kids will be getting out and about and embracing activities that don't harm the planet.

- Ride bicycles more often. Reducing fuel consumption is one of the most effective ways to reduce your carbon footprint, and even though kids can't drive, that doesn't mean they can't pitch in to conserve fuel. Children who attend school close to home can ride their bikes rather than taking the bus or hitching a ride with mom or dad. Explain to youngsters the impact that such a choice can have on the environment and ride bikes with your kids

whenever possible, be it on trips to the park or to visit friends and family members. Many kids love to ride their bikes, and they might like it even more if they understand the positive impact that such a hobby is having on their planet.

- Teach kids to reuse products. Waste is a significant environmental issue, but reusing products is a great way to cut back on waste. Items that would once be tossed into the trash after serving their purpose can be repurposed when tackling projects around the house, and kids can get in on the act, too. Rather than purchasing store-bought decorations for holidays like Halloween or Chanukah and Christmas, reuse old products to craft homemade decorations. Birthday gifts or items exchanged during the holidays can be wrapped in old newspaper instead of store-bought wrapping paper. Many products that would otherwise be discarded can be reused and kids might enjoy finding new ways to make use of old items.

JFCS awarded \$200,000 grant



Jewish Family and Community Services was named the 2013 local recipient of Bank of America's Neighborhood Builder Grant. The grant recognizes "high-performing nonprofits" who do great work in the community. The \$200,000 grant will allow JFCS to create a holistic intake process, allowing clients to receive wrap-around services from the myriad of programs JFCS offers.

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A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE

Renowned pianist comes to Young Concert Artist Series

The JCA continues its Young Concert Artist Series with a free performance by pianist Ji on Sunday, February 9 at 3:00 p.m. Hailed by The Chicago Tribune as "a gifted young pianist who is clearly going places," 22-year-old Korean pianist Ji has a compelling musical presence and a career that began at 10 years old when he was the youngest pianist to win the New York Philharmonic's Young Artists Competition. He subsequently played at Avery Fisher Hall under Maestro Kurt Masur. A winner of the 2012 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, Ji made his debut recitals in New York at Merkin Hall and Washington, DC at the Kennedy Center in December.

Ji began playing the piano at age five. At nine, he came to the United States to study at the Music Preparatory Division of Mannes College with Yuri

Kim and later at the Juilliard School's Pre-College with Yo-heved Kaplinsky. He is currently at the Juilliard School, where he works with Choong-Mo Kang.

Ji's creative vision to make classical music more accessible to young people includes his "Stop and Listen" outdoor "guerrilla" performances in Seoul and his Ensemble DITTO

chamber recitals in Korea and Japan.

The JCA's Young Concert Artist Series brings young world-renowned musicians to Jacksonville. Thanks to the generosity of the Berman Family, these concerts are free and open to the entire community.

For more information, please visit www.jcajax.org.



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Faith News

Riverbank Arts Mandarin presents the Jacksonville University Concert Choir in a free performance at The Episcopal Church of Our Saviour, located at 12236 Mandarin Road, on February 6 at 7:00 p.m. The community is invited to attend.

Join us for our monthly **Jewish Java** on Wednesday, February 5 from 9:00 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. at the Village Bread Café on San Jose Boulevard. Since its inception, Jewish Javas have been responsible for creating many friendships and for providing Jewish connections for newcomers and anyone newly interested in the Jewish community. The Java regulars will agree that Java was their first connection to the Jewish community and they are grateful for the experience. Many continue to attend so they can meet and greet the newest among us and share their positive experiences. If you are new to the community and would like more information, please contact Isabel Balotin at 448-5000 x 206 or shalomjax@jewishjacksonville.org.

Weekly, members of the public gather for a conversational examination of their experiences around a particular life issue prevalent in today's society. These coffee and conversation events are held at **Lifetree Café** right here in Mandarin. You will meet friendly people and share experiences, opinions and stories about the "topic of the week" in a small, intimate setting. You're welcome just as you are and your thoughts are welcome. Take a break and join the experience. Admission and refreshments are free! In February, we will discuss: February 4 and 5: "New from the future," a futurist gives a sneak peek; February 11 and 12: "Finding the Family I Never Knew," a story of separation, adoption and reunion; February 18 and 19: "Do Good Dogs Go to Heaven?" questions about animals and the afterlife; and February 25 and 26: "God and Gays," an hour of civil conversation. Lifetree Cafe is held on Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m. at the Mandarin Senior Center located at 3848 Hartley Road and on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. at Hope Lutheran Church (open to everyone) located at 9000 Cypress Green Drive. Find out more about topics and location from the Mandarin NewsLine or Southside NewsLine online calendar entry or call George Treiber at 731-0731.

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Recognize the symptoms of a stroke

Strokes are the leading cause of disability in the United States and the third-leading cause of death. Prompt treatment can limit the damage and save lives. If you suspect someone near you is suffering from a stroke, remember the acronym FAST:

F = Face. Examine the person's features. Ask him or her to smile. If one side of the person's face droops, it's possible that a stroke is coming on.

A = Arms. Can the person raise both arms above his head?

S = Speech. Listen to the person speak. If the words are slurred or the person can't answer questions clearly, the brain may be impaired.

T = Time. Act fast if the person exhibits any of these warning signs. Get him or her to a hospital right away.

Mark your calendar for February 2 Teen organizing benefit for friend injured in accident

Ari Howard, a 14-year-old freshman at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, lives in Jacksonville just a few houses away from another local teen, Orly Ohayon. Howard is reaching out to the community to help his 17-year-old neighbor as she continues to recover from a tragic accident by organizing a Super Benefit Concert.

Orly Ohayon and her mother, Esther Ohayon (of blessed memory), were hit by a car on September 13, 2013 while they were crossing San Jose Boulevard in Mandarin to attend Yom Kippur services. Orly Ohayon's mother was killed instantly and Orly Ohayon miraculously survived. Today, Ohayon requires a great deal of medical attention as she recuperates from her severe injuries.

Ohayon is strong and resilient. Even as she mourns the loss of her mother and faces tremen-

dous challenges as she recuperates, whenever you see Ohayon, she has a contagious smile on her face.

Howard is organizing a Super Benefit Concert with a performance by world renowned classical guitarist, Stephen Robinson and singer/songwriter Mike Shackelford. Also performing will be folk singer Al Poindexter on the banjo and bottleneck guitar and Eric Wendorf on the harmonica.

The Super Benefit Concert, along with a silent auction and refreshments, is being held on Sunday, February 2, 2014 at 1:00 p.m. at the Jacksonville Jewish Center, located at 3662 Crown Point Road in Jacksonville. The suggested minimum donation is \$20.

For more information, please visit www.eventbrite.com/e/orlys-super-benefit-concert-tickets-9942691859.

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Operation Isaiah is ongoing

By Contributing Writer Mimi Kaufman

The call for help has gone out and the Jacksonville Jewish Center has responded in a great way. Members of the congregation plus all the children of the Galinsky Academy and the MAKOM Hebrew High School have generously donated food and toiletry items for the Jacksonville Family and Community Services (JFCS) pantry. Due to the increased demand, the shelves at the pantry are being depleted and are dangerously low. At the present time there are over 300,000 individuals in Jacksonville suffering from "food insecurity." That means that one or more family members had to cut back on eating regular meals due to lack of money or lack of access to food. The effect on children was significant and many of Jacksonville's children depend on their school's breakfast program.

As we begin a new secular year, let us resolve to do more

by continuing to support Operation Isaiah. The community is invited to stop by the Jacksonville Jewish Center and drop off non-perishable food items or toiletries in the carts located in the front lobby. The Center is located at 3662 Crown Point Road.

For further information, please call the Center office at 292-1000.

Fun Facts cont from pg. 19

February can pass without a single full moon. The next time this will happen is in 2018. Once every six years, February is the only month that has four, full seven-day weeks.

February starts on the same day of the week as March and November in common years, and on the same day of the week as August on leap years. February ends on the same day of the week as October every year. In leap years, it is the only month that begins and ends on the same weekday.

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Amazing facts about the human heart

Every Valentine's Day homes and businesses dress up the decor with cupids and hearts to celebrate a day all about love and affection. The heart shape has been used to symbolically represent the human heart as the center of emotion and romantic love. Hearts symbolizing love can be traced back to the Middle Ages. Those familiar with human anatomy realize that an actual heart bares very little resemblance to the ideographic heart shape used in art and imagery. Similarly, the human heart really has nothing to do with human emotions. Despite this, there are many interesting components of the heart, and a man or woman truly cannot love or live without one.

The heart as an organ is relatively small in size. It is roughly the size of a fist and weighs only 11 ounces on average. Although diminutive, the heart is responsible for pumping 2,000 gallons of blood through 60,000 miles of blood vessels each day. It accomplishes this by beating 72 times a minute in a healthy adult. All of the cells in the body receive blood except for the corneas in the eye.

The heart works harder than any other muscle in the body. In

a fetus, it begins beating at four weeks after conception and will not stop until a person's time of death. Even then, sometimes the heart can be revived. A heart can also continue to beat outside of the body provided it has an adequate oxygen supply.

Although many people refer to all of the blood vessels in their body as "veins," they're actually a combination of veins and arteries. Veins carry fresh, oxygenated blood to the body through arteries. The main artery leaving the left heart ventricle is called the aorta, while the main artery leaving the right ventricle is known as the pulmonary artery. Blood traveling back to the heart flows through veins after it has passed the lungs to pick up oxygen. The thumping noise that is heard while the heart is beating is actually the chambers of the heart closing and opening as blood flows through.

While the heart may not be the cornerstone of emotions, it can be affected by feelings. Studies have shown that a "broken heart" is a real occurrence, according to Live Science. Bad news or a breakup with a loved one can put a person at increased risk for heart attack. This type of trauma releases

stress hormones into the body that can stun the heart. Chest pain and shortness of breath ensue but can be remedied after some rest. Conversely, laughter and positive feelings can be beneficial for the heart. Research has shown that a good laughing fit can cause the lining of the blood vessel walls—called the endothelium—to relax. This helps increase blood flow for up to 45 minutes afterward.

Although having a big heart colloquially means that a

Make a plan for garage organization

Spring cleaning plans are on the minds of many once the weather warms up. Many homeowners feel a sense of renewal in the spring, when the desire to clean house and get organized becomes a priority.

Garages are often targets for homeowners hoping to target clutter. Once a space reserved for cars, garages are no longer strictly for vehicles, used instead to store items that simply do not fit inside the home or a backyard shed. Organizing the garage is typically a weekend or

several-day project. Here's how to turn a garage from a cluttered mess into a space suited for storing items of all shapes and sizes.

- Enlist a helper. Organizing a garage is a significant undertaking that is best tackled with two or more people. Enlist a helper to make the project less intimidating.
- Decide what is important to keep. Start the organization process by clearing out the garage and taking inventory of what you have. Items that have not been used for several years can likely be tossed. Make a pile of what will be kept and then put the rest at the curb or donate useful items to charity.
- Give thought to where you want to store particular items. Tools and items that are used more often should be stored within reach or where easily visible, while items that are not used as frequently can be stored higher up. Think about how you operate in the garage. Recycling bins can be stored closer to the door into the home, while bicycles and

Garage organization cont. on pg. 23





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Aggressive driving and excess weight in a vehicle can dramatically reduce fuel efficiency. According to United States Department of Energy, aggressive driving that includes rapid acceleration and braking wastes gas, lowering gas mileage by 33 percent on highways and 5 percent when driving around town.
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Drivers who treat their vehicles as rolling storage closets also could be wasting fuel and money, as the DOE notes that an extra 100 pounds in a vehicle could reduce its miles per gallon by 2 percent.

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Garage organization cont. from pg. 22
skates can be nearer to the garage door for easy access.
• Group like items together. Categorize items that will be kept. Garden tools, camping gear, sporting equipment, and automotive supplies

Presidents' Day
February 17, 2014

should be categorized and stored in their own areas of the garage, determining if certain items can be stored inside the home to free up garage space. Grouping items together will make them easier to locate in the garage.
• Move boxed items into clear storage containers. It's much easier to see what you have when it is stored in clear containers. Some containers are interlocking or stackable, making it much more convenient to store items vertically and free up more floor space.
• Invest in vertical storage systems. Moving items from the floor and putting them on shelving or behind cabinets can make the garage more organized. Hooks and bins also can be used. Employ a peg board full of hooks for oft-used tools or other items you need at the

ready.
• Leave space for hobby and work areas. Garages are where many improvement projects begin or where hobbies, such as woodworking or crafting, take place. Leave space for these tasks and hobbies.
• Give the space a fresh coat of paint. Some garages are dingy and dark. Bright paint on the walls and floor can open up the space and, when combined with more lighting, can make it lighter and brighter.
Garage organization is a common spring cleaning project. But it shouldn't be reserved for this season alone. Periodic checks of the garage and straightening up can keep a garage clean and organized throughout the entire year and make yearly spring cleaning much more manageable.



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A message from the St. Johns River Water Management District...

water less

During Eastern Standard Time, **residential lawn watering is limited to one day per week:**

- Homes with **odd** number addresses: Saturday
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- Nonresidential properties: Tuesday



Restrictions apply to water from private wells and pumps *as well as* public and private utilities.

Water for no more than *one hour per zone.*

Water *only* when needed and *not* between 10 AM and 4 PM

Visit www.floridaswater.com

Gardening tip!

Gardening Tip from the Mandarin Garden Club: No plants were covered at the Mandarin Demonstration Garden for the great freeze of January 2014. Many of the perennials received "nature's pruning" by getting zapped by the cold and will come back in the Spring. But the annual cool season perky pink petunias made it through the freeze just fine without being covered.



What would YOU like to read about each month in *Mandarin* NewsLine?

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Mark your calendars for the Sheephead fishing tournament

The Jacksonville Offshore Sport Fishing Club's 14th annual "El Cheapo" Sheephead Tournament out of the Mayport Public Boat Ramp at Mike Scanlan Park in Mayport will be held on Saturday, February 22, 2014. The entry fee is \$80 per boat prior to February 8 and \$100 thereafter. The entry fee for the Junior Angler Division is \$10 per junior angler.

This event is the "World's Largest Sheephead Tournament" and one of the largest fishing tournaments in the nation. Grand prize for the general tournament will be a 21 foot Carolina Skiff "Sea Skiff" boat, a 115 HP 4-stroke Mercury motor provided by Mercury Marine and a Magic Tilt trailer with a total MSRP of over \$40,000. There will also be boat packages for second and third place, then cash and prizes awarded from fourth through 15th place, plus five \$100 mystery weight awards. Junior anglers (16 or younger) will compete for their own prize structure with prizes being awarded to the top 15 juniors.

A mandatory Captain's meeting will be held at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, February 21 at the J.O.S.F.C. clubhouse at the Mayport boat ramp. On-line registration and printable entry forms for the tournament are available now at www.jaxfish.com. Captains may also register at any J.O.S.F.C. meeting (held the first and third Thursday of the month) or at the Captain's meeting beginning at 5:30 p.m. Registration ends at 6:59 a.m. the day of the tournament. Fishing begins at 7:00 a.m. Weigh-in is from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. with the awards ceremony immediately following. Spectators are encouraged to attend.

The J.O.S.F.C., founded in 1959, attempts to promote education, conservation and safety in offshore fishing. The funds raised during this tournament will be used to facilitate club activities, including artificial reef management, education and boating safety seminars, throughout the year.



This event is the major fundraiser for our organization for the year.

For more information please visit the J.O.S.F.C. website at www.jaxfish.com.

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Captain David's Fishing Report

By Captain David Lifka

For most of the country, the middle of January is the middle of winter with several more months of cold and snow to look forward to. For us, the middle of January means that spring is just around the corner and now is the time to start planning for another year of fishing our area waters.

Without any football or lawn to mow, finding the time to get equipment ready shouldn't be hard. Rods and reels are a good place to start. Reels should be cleaned and their line replaced. Any light weight oil such as reel oil, gun oil, sewing machine oil or WD 40 will work to both lubricate and protect the exterior of your reels. When adding line, make sure the refill spool and reel spoon are positioned the same to avoid any twisting in the line. Any broken or missing guides and tips on your rods can easily be replaced followed with a quick polishing

with a silicone spray to have them looking good as new.

Now is also the time to do an inventory of tackle and add to and replace for the upcoming year. Running out of, or not having needed tackle, can be disastrous to a fishing trip. Winter months offer a great time to find and purchase tackle due to less demand. Not being in a hurry to have your tackle makes on-line shopping very beneficial when looking for specials. Also buying tackle in quantity or bulk in advance can end up saving you a lot of dollars in the course of a year.

If you own a boat now is a good time to ensure it will be ready for the upcoming season. Keeping your batteries charged and your fuel fresh are two easy important things you can do to make sure you are ready to go this spring. An inexpensive trickle charger will help keep a battery charged, while adding

a fuel conditioner will help old fuel from going bad. If you can't get the boat on the water over the winter it is always a good practice to go ahead and fire it up for a few minutes every two or three weeks. Now is also the perfect time to get your boat in for annual servicing. With spring just around the corner

getting your boat serviced now allows you the advantage of beating the rush when marine centers are often booked for weeks and gives you the peace of mind out on the water that your boat is going to operate properly.

Before we know it spring will have sprung. Our ponds, creeks and river will be providing us with multiple fishing opportunities. It sure will be nice to know that when those

days arrive that our equipment is ready, we have the tackle we need and the boat will start.

Fishing Report: Look for largemouth bass during continued sunny warm spells anywhere you have access to freshwater. Be aware of current and new fishing regulations for 2014.

Remember, whether you catch one, some or none, the family time spent fishing will last a lifetime.

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MHS Sports Roundup

New Year, new season for sports

By Hazel Odell, MHS Student

The New Year is a time for new sports at MHS. Basketball, soccer, wrestling and girls' weightlifting have come to a close. Baseball, lacrosse, tennis, fast pitch softball and track and field have begun. The winter season typically begins in the cold weeks of January and February and continues all the way to the sweltering May conditions.

Track and field began conditioning in December and tryouts began on Monday, January 13. Track and field consists of long distance races, sprints, hurdles, pole vault, long jump, discus and shot put. The head coach (and boys' distance coach) and the hurdle coach are veterans, but all other coaches are new. That means that that the team will have a new coach for sprints, girls' distance and pole vault. All the coaches attended a workshop

that began on Wednesday, January 8.

"Everyone is excited for track to finally get into gear," said distance runner Darren Druhl. "It might be cold, but we will keep training and improve our speed and endurance so our team can perform even better at our first meet. We just have to treat every practice as if it's as important as a meet and we will get better and maybe have some fun along the way."

Boys' and girls' lacrosse has also begun. Timothy Lynch said, "It's nice to get back together with the guys and build some chemistry. The team looks as if it'll be pretty good this year. We've got some talent coming up with the freshman class and our returners can only get better."

Tryouts began for fast-pitch softball on Monday,

January 6. Jordenne said, "Conditioning and tryouts were hard work, but it's worth it at the end. It's great to work with the group of girls. I hope the season goes great this year."

The girls' weightlifting team had an undefeated season. On Saturday, January 11, the top lifters competed at districts, which were held at Clay High. Those who placed in the top-four of their weight class will move on to sectionals. Any girls that qualify will compete in state championships on Saturday, February 8 in Orlando.

The wrestling team competed in a Gateway wrestling tournament on Friday, January 15.

Tennis began on Monday, January 13.

The winter season has been short and sweet and students look forward to a successful spring season to finish off the year on a good note. Of note, on Tuesday, January 7, all outdoor sports were cancelled, due to the below-freezing conditions that MHS athletes are far from used to. Some students were surprised by the cancellation, but almost all of them were grateful that they would not have to practice in the harsh conditions.

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Warm up to Riviera Maya, Mexico

By Contributing Travel Writer Debi Lander, www.bylandersea.com

North Florida has suffered its share of cold temperatures this winter and a warm weather getaway certainly sounds enticing. The Riviera Maya in Mexico becomes an ideal escape as flights to Cancun are plentiful and most resorts offer all-inclusive rates which help make budgeting or peso pinching easier.

I recently spent a few nights at Karisma's Azul Sensatori, a hotel offering gourmet inclusive service. All meals including some fabulous Mexican



fare, alcoholic drinks, room service and entertainment were included in the nightly rate. And let me say, I ate and drank well. The grounds were lush, like a botanical garden bordering a sandy beach and the ocean. Playa del Carmen, a hot spot for travelers, is about 30 minutes away.

Sunshine and surf aren't all the Riviera Maya has to offer. The fascinating cultural heritage of the Maya population should be explored with a visit to some of the archeological ruins. The Maya were advanced mathematicians and astronomers and their buildings demonstrate their knowledge. Tulum, the most sacred site of the region, is the only ruin on the coast of the Caribbean Sea and presents breathtaking lookout points and ocean views worth pondering. The walled city rose to prominence during 1000-1500 AD. You'll see carvings and frescoes and stroll past temples and the central "castle." For those less interested in history, wear a bathing suit and take a dip from the glorious beach at this picturesque location.

Coba, an hour inland from Tulum, was once home to 50,000 inhabitants. Thick jungle encircles the crumbling ruins, giving the place a mysterious feel. The largest pyramid, Nohul, remains one of the few that can still be climbed. Make

the effort, but go early before the heat of the day makes it unappealing.

A day trip to Chichen Itza (117 miles west of Cancun) provides the best picture of the past civilizations and their complex social, political and religious ceremonies. The UNESCO World Heritage site is best explored with a guide. Be sure to see the pok-ta-pok ball court where the Maya played for the honor of victory and then faced a sacrificial death. The Platform of the Skulls casts an eerie mood, but the grand pyramid, Kukulcan, commands great respect. During equinoxes, an undulating shadow called the "serpent" slithers along the side of the building's northern staircase. This is caused by the angle of the sun hitting the nine main terraces.

Too cool off, cenotes or underground lakes make popular swimming holes. Wading and swimming through the Rio Secreto is particularly appealing because of its striking cave formations including stalactites, stalagmites and columns. Xcaret, a Mexican version of a Disney park, offers historical recreations as well as a water park. The evening folklore show, starring hundreds in elaborate costumes, can't be beat. I'd rank it and the Riviera Maya as must-see places for 2014.

Jaguars Foundation grant awards for children's programs top \$1,000,000

The Jaguars held a pizza and ice-cream sundae party with 400 children at EverBank Field on Tuesday, December 10 to celebrate the awarding of \$1,095,000 in grants in 2013 to children and youth programs in the greater Jacksonville area.

Jaguars President Mark Lamping noted, "Shad Khan and his family, and the entire Jaguars organization are proud to be a major corporate partner with nonprofits serving children and families. We wanted to celebrate all the good works of these organizations and the wonderful kids who are learning and growing every day at the programs we support."

Jaguars linebacker Geno Hayes, JAXSON de Ville, Chloe and Rachel from The ROAR of the JAGUARS Cheerleaders

and Jaguars staff joined in the celebration with children from various organizations. The children enjoyed games, face-painting and bounce-houses provided by Pump It Up in the south end zone entertainment plaza.

Jaguars Foundation President Peter Racine announced the awarding of nine grants in the final grant cycle of 2013 to area nonprofit organizations serving economically and socially disadvantaged children and families, bringing the total awarded in 2013 to \$1,095,000. In addition, the Jaguars Foundation supports numerous other NFL and team initiatives, including breast cancer awareness, the military/veterans partnership with the City of Jacksonville, community revitalization efforts through LISC-Jacksonville and

the JCCI-led JAX-2025 initiative, exceeding \$1,692,607 in all grants for the year.

Racine noted that the Jaguars Foundation continues to be strategic in supporting programs that have a long-term positive impact on our community's youth, families and veterans. The Jaguars Foundation's total grant giving since 1995 is more than \$17 million in the greater Jacksonville area. This level of giving is among the top few of professional sports teams. Additionally, the team offers the opportunity for nonprofits to earn income through the Give and Go nonprofit ticket sales program, the Jaguars 50/50 Fan Raffle for Charity and by providing volunteers to staff stadium concession stands during home games.



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Master Gardener honored by peers

By Contributing Writer Susan Westermann

The Duval County Master Gardeners who tend the Mandarin Demonstration Garden honored their outgoing leader Martha Dysart with flowers, gifts and an impressive certificate of appreciation at their annual January Organizational Meeting. Dysart, a retired chemist, has dedicated the past 13 years to volunteering as the co-leader and leader of the many outstanding Master Gardeners who tend the Mandarin Demonstration Garden located on the grounds of the Mandarin Garden Club at 2892 Loretto Road. The Mandarin Demonstration Garden is a joint venture started in 1988 between the Duval County Extension Service and the Mandarin Garden Club.

All those many years ago current garden club member and Master Gardener Mary Howe suggested to current



Duval County Horticultural Extension Agent Terry DeValle that the garden club grounds be used by the Master Gardeners as a demonstration garden to help teach the community about

gardening. Now, 26 years later, this wonderful demonstration garden has not just survived, but it thrives.

Thanks to the devoted leadership of Master Gardener

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Dysart, the many Master Gardener volunteers have expanded and improved the Demonstration Garden, which includes a big butterfly garden, perennial garden, native plant garden, vegetable garden, ginger garden, ornamental grass garden, bromeliad garden, potager kitchen garden and small pocket gardens. Dysart has made it a priority to use the Demonstration Garden not only as a teaching tool for the general public, but also to advance the gardening knowledge of the volunteer Master Gardeners.

With her scientific background from her professional career, Dysart has always made it a point to share with the Master Gardeners every possible horticultural detail of what was growing, or in some cases not growing, in the Demonstration Garden so they could use that information to share with Jacksonville's gardening community. She accomplished this by scouring and studying the demo gardens to produce a detailed newsletter and bloom report that she wrote prior to the first and third Wednesdays each

month when the Master Gardeners volunteer. The newsletter/bloom report proved invaluable for the Master Gardeners to keep up with all the different gardens on the over two-acre property.

The many behind-the-scenes responsibilities Dysart managed on behalf of the Master Gardeners are too vast to list. Needless to say, Dysart fulfilled her many, many Master Gardener leader duties in exemplary form. The Master Gardeners and Jacksonville's gardening community send Martha Dysart a great big gardening thank you for her many years of dedicated volunteer service!

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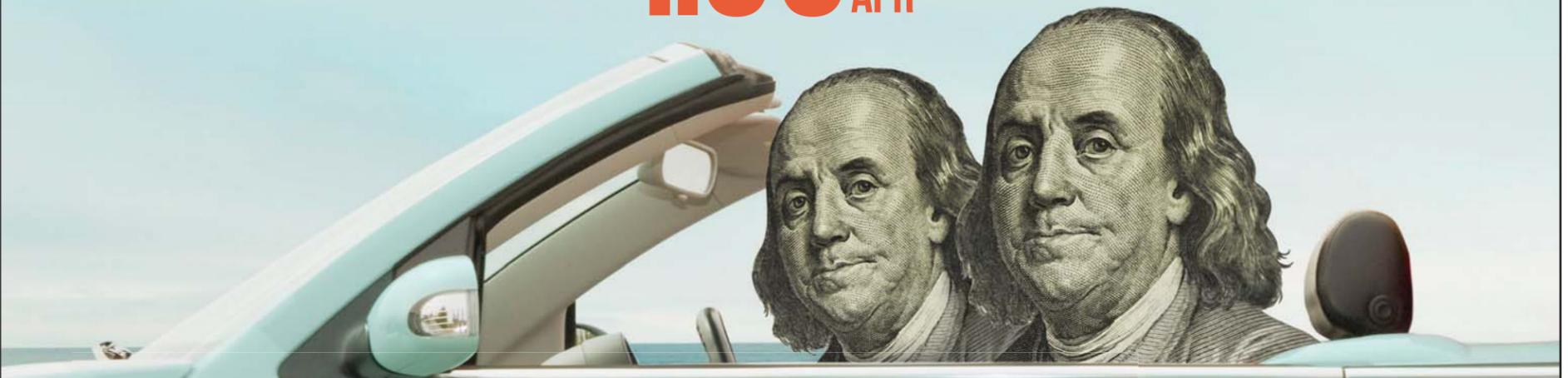
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