

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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Magazine

ODET PHILIPPE - PINELLAS' FIRST SETTLER

By Bob Griffin, Local Historian

Generally, historians agree Odet Philippe was the Pinellas area's first permanent, non-native settler. In the late-1830s, he established a homestead on the northwest shoreline of Old Tampa Bay where Safety Harbor now exists. That is why the County Park in that area bears his name.

Other than having a homestead in the area, there is much disagreement about Philippe's life story. His early life is impossible to verify. It was passed down in possibly embellished stories he told his children, who told their children, and they told their children. Much of his early history may or may not be true.

Philippe's version of the story has him being born in Lyon, France in 1787. He was a doctor, who was appointed the Chief Surgeon for the French Navy and served under Napoleon Bonaparte. He was captured by the British in the Battle of Trafalgar and exiled to the Bahamas. After treating the sick in the Bahamas, he was granted his freedom in exchange for his promise to never return to France or England. Instead, he headed to America, sailing to Charleston, South Carolina.

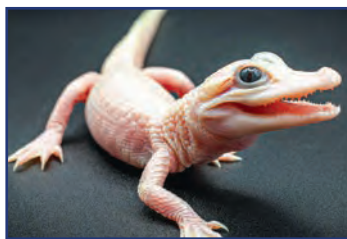
What we do know is in 1807, in Charleston, Phillippe married Dorothee Desmottes. It is said there, he had a medical practice and was involved in large-scale farming. However, historical city directories list him as a "segar" maker, an older spelling of the word cigar.

He and Dorothee had four daughters—Louise Poleanne, Elizabeth Octavia, Septima Marie and Melanie. It is believed that Dorothee died in 1825, after giving birth to Melanie. Philippe then married Marie Charlotte Florance, Septima's godmother.



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Rare Company

Gatorland Orlando welcomes a new, extraordinary set of twins.

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Valentine's Day

Read about the history of the annual romantic holiday.

- page 10

Profile of a Local Clearwater Artist

Kathleen Slaven is a local nature artist with a studio inside her home over looking the bay. She spends her days drawing what she sees her backyard.

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The Origins of Gasparilla

Jose Gaspar may never have sailed the Gulf of Mexico, but Florida has had its share of real-life buccaneers

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CREDITS



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DUNEDIN NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS MAGAZINE

Inside, you will find articles and local information about the nearby area. We call it Neighborhood News because it is primarily about our neighborhood, Dunedin. This newsletter is printed every other month and direct mailed.

Do you need another copy? Ask for them at the Chamber of Commerce, History Museum, Community Center, Library, and the UPS on Main St.. We hope you enjoyed our magazine. We want your input. Did you like this issue? What suggestions do you have for future articles? Call or email us.

Keep up to date with your local news; follow us on Facebook at Neighborhood News Magazine.

Thank you for reading,

Lora & Pete Magnani 813-239-6862
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SEE YOU AGAIN IN MARCH!

CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS & EVENTS

As always, this is subject to change.

JANUARY

Happy New Year

Property Tax Bills Mailed 1
New Year's Day 1
Relia Quest Bowl Game Tampa 1
Epiphany 6
St. Pete Comicon 6
Dunedin Causeway Cleanup 6
Dunedin Art Show 6-7
Orthodox Christmas 7
15th Annual Kiwanis Adventure Run 8
NCAA Football Finals 8
Public School Reopen 8
City Commission Meeting 11
Johns Pass Seafood Festival 19-21
St. Pete Bacon and BBQ Fest 13-14
Pinellas Chemical Collection Event 13
Peace Memorial Church Concert 14
Martin Luther King Jr. Day 15
Public Schools Closed 15
St. Pete Power and Sailboat Show 18-20
John's Pass Seafood Fest 19-21
City Commission Meeting 25
Pinellas Tacofest 27-28

FEBRUARY

Black History Month Begins 1
Groundhog Day 2
Dunedin International Film Festival 1-4
Pinellas Medieval Fair 3-4
NFL Pro Bowl 4
City Commission Meeting 8
Florida State Fair 8-19
Dunedin Mardi Gras Parade & Fest 10
Chinese New Year 10
St. Pete Fine Art Fest 10-11
Super Bowl LVIII 11
Fat Tuesday 13
Ash Wednesday 14
Valentine's Day 14
Hope Spot Festival Edgewater Park 17
President's Day 19
City Commission Meeting 22
MLB Spring Training Begins 22
St. Pete Seafood and Music Fest 23-25
Sea-Blues Fest Coachman Park 24-25

MARCH

International Women's Day 8
Daylight Savings Time Begins 10
St. Patrick's Day 17
Easter Sunday 31

ODET PHILIPPE, Continued

In 1822, Philippe filed for U.S. citizenship while still in Charleston. Having financial difficulties, he and his family left Charleston on "The Ney," his large schooner named after one of Napoleon's marshals. They eventually settled in the Indian River area (today's Ft. Lauderdale). Philippe was befriended by the local Indians who taught him to farm citrus and other tropical fruits including mangoes, guavas, and avocados. They also taught him the medicinal value of locally grown herbs.

Warned of an Indian uprising, he and his family sailed to Key West in 1829. There, he set up a medical practice and established one of Key West's first cigar factories. By 1833, Philippe had been appointed Justice of the Peace for Monroe County, which included the entire Florida Keys.

In Key West, Philippe encountered Captain John Gomez, a well-known pirate who frequented the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. It was said, Gomez actually captured Philippe and forced him to treat his sick crew. He treated them with herbs and other medicines, all things he had learned from the Indians. During this time, Gomez showed Philippe a map of the west coast of Florida and a bay known as La Bahia del Espiritu Santo—Tampa Bay. He told Philippe it was "the finest place I've seen in this world."

Shortly after, Philippe left Key West. There are many theories as to why he left Key West—one is his relationship with the pirates was catching up with him. His wife Marie had become sick or possibly mentally ill and he left her behind. She died about ten years later and is buried in the Key West Cemetery. Philippe, now traveling with his two daughters, Elizabeth and Melanie, sailed north to Tampa, the place he heard about from Gomez – "the finest place in the world."

When Philippe arrived in Tampa about 1835, Florida was still a territory and central Florida was a wilderness with no roads or even wagon trails. The land was heavily covered with forests, palmettos, dense shrubs, and tall grasses. Tampa was a very small town with its own fort—Fort Brooke.

Records show in 1839 Philippe bought three parcels of land on Tampa Street for \$100. On these lots, he erected two billiard parlors and pinball alleys to entice the soldiers at Ft. Brooke. Records also show that he owned an oyster house, two slaves, a horse, four mules, five cows, six calves, hogs, hunting

dogs, and a wagon.

He discovered a more remote safe harbor in the northwest corner of Tampa Bay – today's Safety Harbor and moved his remaining family there by boat around 1840. He chose to settle near the shore "at the point, the head of the bay" near a large existing Indian mound. There, he built a house from the surrounding pine and oak trees and named it "St. Helena," after the island upon which Napoleon was exiled.

The site, just north of the Town of Safety Harbor was a long-abandoned camp for the Tocobago Indians. Today it is Pinellas County's Philippe Park. The well preserved Indian Mound is there even today, within the park's boundaries. In 1880, it was recorded to be twenty-feet high, one of the tallest found in Pinellas County.

The U.S. Census for 1840 lists Philippe in Hillsborough County, which at the time included the Pinellas Peninsula. Only nineteen other "head of households" were listed in that Census on what would be the Pinellas Peninsula.

Taking advantage of the new Armed Occupation Act of 1842, Philippe claimed the 160 acres where he already lived. He filed a land claim on November 1, 1842, for land on "Worth's Harbor" at the head of Old Tampa Bay.

Having learned about citrus farming when living in the Indian River area, he began planting oranges, limes and a large citrus fruit known as pomelo. Later he added tangerines, sapodillas, mangoes, guavas, lemons, and avocados. He also grew tobacco with seeds he brought from Key West and Cuba.

Philippe readily shared his knowledge and even seedlings with other settlers. He grew grapefruit from seeds and developed a method of budding and grafting to improve his crops. It is believed he was the first citrus farmer to plant trees in rows — something common today. The Indian mound was said to be covered in citrus trees.

Traveling to Tampa regularly, Philippe sold his citrus, vegetables, and cattle to the troops. He started a one-man cigar making business and today is recognized as Tampa's first cigar maker, way before there was an Ybor City.

Philippe and his family lived through the famous "Gale of 1848," a hurricane that hit the Tampa Bay area in September and is estimated to be a category two. They are said to have survived the storm and subsequent flooding by staying on top of the Indian mound until the waters receded

The hurricane destroyed the house, killed their citrus grove, and nearly washed away part of the Indian Mound. When he rebuilt, Philippe moved his house to higher ground on the south side of the mound.

Philippe's second home was larger. Still living with his two daughters, the house had two rooms in the front, separated by a hallway and another one in the back. The two front rooms were bedrooms occupied by the girls; Philippe slept in a loft above the large back room. That house remained standing until 1916.

His youngest daughter Melanie, married Richard J. Booth, a Seminole Indian War veteran, in 1852. On August 4, 1853, they had a son, Odet "Keeter" Booth, the first non-native child born on the Pinellas Peninsula.

During the Civil War from 1860-1864, Federal troops blockaded Tampa Bay. Philippe and his family spent the war in the Brooksville area, returning when the war was over.

Philippe died in 1869, and was buried on his homestead - today's "Philippe Park." His grave's exact location is unknown.

Odet Philippe can certainly stake his claim as the founding father of Safety Harbor and possibly Pinellas County. He is credited with introducing the grapefruit tree and its fruit to Florida. He was inducted into the Citrus Hall of Fame in 1963. He is recognized by many as Tampa's first cigar maker in a community once known as "Cigar City."

However, there is another version of Odet Philippe's life. As a man known to have dark skin and African features, many theorized Philippe was actually the slave of a French landowner and came to America from Haiti not the Bahamas. He wasn't born in France, but in Africa, and slipped into American life as a free man when he arrived in Charleston. It is also theorized he was a slave trader and was known to own slaves. If he had been a slave, he certainly would have wanted to keep that a secret. The truth? Since his early history is just word of mouth, passed down through the generations, no one will ever really know.




Marker at Philippe Park in Safety Harbor

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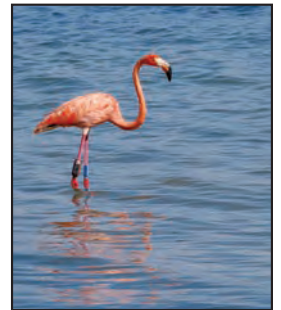
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Did You Know



WITCHES FOR CHARITY The Witches of Dunedin surpassed their goal and raised \$10,614 for House of Mercy and Encouragement Foundation. This Dunedin-based 501(c)(3) non-profit organization is dedicated to faithfully providing mental health and educational services to children and their families by encouraging caring, compassion, and a sense of well-being in a welcoming and comfortable environment.

FLAMINGO BANDING Late August's Hurricane Idalia surprising brought - flamingos! One flamingo, Peaches, was rescued, and successful rehabilitated by the Seaside Seabird Sanctuary. Before being released, Peaches was tagged with a band that will provide the birds' location information. Peaches' band created some community concerns, but be assured, all is well. Audubon Florida says, "More than 1.2 million birds are safely banded each year in the U.S., as well as over 1,000 flamingos globally. The bands are specifically designed to ensure comfort and cause no health or well-being issues for the species. Although it may seem bulky, the band is not heavy, working off solar panels to prevent the need for a heavy battery."




The data obtain from the satellite transmitter will allow scientists to follow these flamingos and see how they are faring outside their normal area.

MAYOR TO LEAD CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Julie Ward Bujalski was selected in December to become the new president of the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce. She was one of eleven nationwide candidates in the search to replace outgoing president/CEO Pam Pravetz, who was hired in 2018. Bujalski served as city commissioner for eight years and has been the city mayor since 2014.


OUR NEXT ISSUE IS MARCH 1 If you need another copy of this newsletter, you may pick up one up at the Chamber, Rec, Hale, and Fine Art Centers, UPS on Main, and Library. Read this issue and others online at BeachNewsletters.com.



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and More...

CLEARWATER SEA-BLUES FESTIVAL RETURNS

After a brief hiatus during Coachman Park's renovation, the festival returns to its original home Feb. 24-25. Jam out to soul-stirring music from national recording artists, shop local market vendors and enjoy delectable seafood, craft beer and wine from area businesses at Coachman Park. The two-day outdoor festival, set against the backdrop of the city's newly renovated waterfront park, will showcase five musical acts starting at 2pm each day.



The Clearwater Sea-Blues Festival presented by Visit St. Petersburg Clearwater is a free event. Tickets are not necessary for general admission. For those looking to elevate their experience, VIP tickets and reserved seating are available starting at \$20. A portion of ticket sales will be donated to the Clearwater-based charity Homeless Empowerment Program. For tickets and information, visit MyClearwater.com/EventsAndMeetings and click on ClearwaterSea-Blues Festival 2024.

HOLIDAY LIGHTS IN THE GARDENS RECOGNIZED

The annual fundraiser at the Florida Botanical Gardens placed 9th in USA TODAY's 10Best Awards for Best Botanical Gardens Holiday Lights. The daily newspaper asked a panel of experts to nominate their favorite light displays at botanical gardens throughout the U.S., then readers voted for their top picks. During the event, the Gardens sparkle with one million twinkling LED lights in a multitude of colors. Vibrant laser lights and lighted figures round out the display. Last year's exhibit ran from November 24th through December 31st.

SEA TURTLES RESCUED In a collaborative effort with the New England Aquarium, the Clearwater Marine Aquarium welcomed the arrival of sixteen critically endangered Kemp's Ridley sea turtles on Dec 5. These turtles were severely impacted by the frigid waters of New England, experiencing a condition known as "cold stun." Kemp's Ridley sea turtles are the most endangered species of sea turtle.

AMBULANCE MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM Enrollment applications are open for the 2024 Sunstar FirstCare Ambulance Membership. Residents are encouraged to enroll now to receive a full year of financial help with out-of-pocket expenses for ambulance transportation.

The estimated average cost of a single ambulance transport is \$943. Annual membership fees for the Sunstar FirstCare Ambulance Membership plan are \$86 for a Single Membership and \$129 for a Family Membership. Membership covers 100% of expenses associated with deductibles and co-payments and 50% of medically necessary trips denied by insurance. Uninsured members receive a 20% discount on medically necessary ambulance transportation. In 2022, the membership plan saved residents an average of \$175 per transport.

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THE REAL PIRATES OF FLORIDA

By Pete Magnani

As Gasparilla approaches, the folklore surrounding Jose Gaspar begins to resurface despite a lack of evidence that the legendary pirate ever existed. Literature frequently associates the golden age of piracy with the Caribbean Sea and its islands. New Providence, Kingston, Port Royal, and Tortuga are among the infamous pirate strongholds that history and Hollywood have enshrined. However, Florida and the entire Gulf Coast saw their share of seafaring marauders.

Ponce de Leon landed on the east coast of Florida in 1513 and claimed it for Spain. St. Augustine was established as a resupply port for Spanish merchant ships, and their valuable cargo brought pirates to the Atlantic coast. Additionally, England, Spain, and France sent privateer ships to finance war efforts. They operated almost identically to the pirates roaming the Atlantic and Caribbean, except they did so under the authority of their sovereign. Privateers used decommissioned naval ships or repurposed cargo vessels to seize merchant ships laden with riches. These "prizes" were then brought to a port where the ship and goods were sold. Profits were divided among the ship's owner, captain, and crew. Privateers also sent a share to the government that sanctioned them. During the 16th and 17th centuries, Spanish colonials mined gold, silver, and precious gems in Mexico and Peru. They shipped these valuables back to Europe with the first leg of the journey bringing them across the Gulf of Mexico and through the Straits of Florida. The largely ungoverned islands of the Antilles and West Indies made convenient hideaways for pirate fleets, and the waters of the Caribbean and Atlantic made prime hunting grounds. The Spanish, British, and French also battled each other over territory and religion during this time, and all three governments commissioned privateers to fund those efforts.

In the early 1700s, efforts began to combat piracy in the Caribbean. The British government passed the Transportation Act of 1717, which included a provision concerning suppression of piracy and affirming capital punishment upon conviction. Previously, the crime was considered a relatively minor offense, with pirates only facing punishment if they were caught and returned to Europe to face trial. The British Parliament established commissioners in the colonies with the ability to bring pirates to trial, resulting in the execution of nearly six hundred buccaneers between 1716 and 1726. This crackdown pushed the pirates out of the Caribbean and into safer waters.



Louis Michel-Aury served on privateer ships under the banner of France during the early 1800s. Eventually, he assumed command of his own ship and fought under Venezuelan authority in the Spanish American Wars for Independence. In 1816, he was appointed the Governor of Galveston where he established a privateering base for attacking Spanish ships in the Gulf of Mexico. Aury left Galveston in 1817 on an expedition to Mexico, and in his absence, Galveston and much of the northern Gulf Coast fell into new hands.

Upon his return, Aury discovered he was unwelcome in Galveston, and briefly established a new base at Fernandina on Amelia Island. The U.S. intended to annex Florida, and on December 23, 1817, a U.S. Navy fleet took control of the island. Aury headed south and continued plundering and privateering until 1821, when he passed away at 33, reportedly striking his head after a fall from his horse.

Brothers Pierre and Jean Lafitte came to the New World from France around 1800, settling in New Orleans. They established legitimate businesses, but also operated as pirates in the Gulf. The United States Congress passed the Embargo Act in 1807, effectively banning trade with other countries. The Lafitte brothers saw an opportunity set up a smuggling network to bring foreign goods into the U.S.



Portrait of Jean Lafitte

As displaced Caribbean pirates moved their operations into the Gulf of Mexico, they needed strongholds to offload their spoils along the coasts of Florida, Louisiana, and Texas. One such location was Barataria Bay in southeastern Louisiana between Grand Isle and Grand Terre. The Lafitte network was a perfect means for the marauders to fence their prizes. They fortified Barataria and it was mainstay for pirates until it was taken by the U.S. Navy in 1814.

The brothers functioned as spies for Spain during the Mexican War of Independence beginning around 1815. It was in this capacity that Jean Lafitte was sent to Galveston in 1817. During Aury's absence, Lafitte took control and fortified the island. His operation ran successfully until one of his captains attacked an American merchant ship. A U.S. Navy schooner was dispatched to Galveston, and Lafitte abandoned the island. He continued taking prizes in the Gulf and the Caribbean until he was fatally wounded in battle with two Spanish warships off the coast of Honduras.

The 1830s brought the beginning of a sharp decline in piracy in the Gulf of Mexico. The U.S. and other nations realized the revenue losses associated with the trade and focused naval efforts to combat it. Despite fading into folklore and foreign news broadcasts during the 20th century, the 2000s saw a resurgence in piracy in the Gulf of Mexico. Hundreds of raids occurred in the Gulf between 2015 and 2020 to both merchant ships and oil platforms. Instead of plundering precious metals and gems, modern-day pirates steal oil barrels and hold ships for ransom. Cooperative efforts between the Navies and Coast Guards of the U.S. and Mexico seem to be stemming the tide. Pirates still exist, and not only during Gasparilla. ■

CLEARWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY CELEBRATES BELLEVIEW-BILTMORE

The "White Queen of the Gulf" with its shining white paint and green shingle roof was not always painted white. This is one of the many discoveries in the CELEBRATING THE BELLEVIEW-BILTMORE Exhibition at the Clearwater Historical Society Museum open through February 10.

The Exhibit Committee, in partnership with the Belleview Inn, has highlighted one of the most famous, and controversial, Clearwater landmarks. Photographs of the hotel's construction, luxurious furnishings, famous guests, and artifacts from the resort's heyday are all featured.

Opened by railroad tycoon Henry B. Plant in 1897, the Belleview-Biltmore once was 350,000 square feet. It had many lives serving as a grand resort, one time lodging for WWII servicemen, and a destination for first-time tourists to Florida's West Coast. Over a century of guests entered its doors and that continues today in the 35-room Belleview Inn opened in 2018.

The Clearwater Historical Society, established in 1978, with a mission to educate, collect, preserve exhibit and promote the people, culture and events of Clearwater's rich past celebrates the Belleview-Biltmore's role and influence in local history. The exhibit is open Thursday, Friday and Saturday 10 am – 2 pm at the Clearwater Historical Society Museum 610 S. Fort Harrison Ave, Clearwater. Admission is by donation and free parking is available. For more information, call 727-754-8019 or e-mail clearwaterhistoricalsociety@gmail.com.

ORIGINAL HOOTERS DONATES OVER ONE MILLION DOLLARS

During Hooters 40th Anniversary Breast Cancer Research benefit concert, representatives from the Original HOOTERS presented a donations of \$825,000 to Moffitt Cancer Center and



\$250,000 to Morton Plant Mease Hospital. The Original Hooters Co-Founders Ed Droste, Gil DiGiannantonio, Dennis Johnson and CEO Neil Kiefer presented a combined total of \$1,075,000 in donations.

Part of the money was raised during their annual "Give a Hoot" Campaign through in-store donations and calendar sales in honor of Kelly Jo Dowd. Dowd, a Hooters Girl and eventual Hooters manager in Palm Harbor, lost her life to this awful disease. Her mission was to advocate for early detection amongst her Hooters family and they are fulfilling her wish through this campaign, which has raised almost \$10 million nationwide.

The Moffitt Cancer Center donation is being used to help fund a clinical trial using an immune response to target mutations in women with metastatic breast cancer. Hopefully, this vaccination against common mutations will extend women's survival rates.

The Morton Plant Mease Hospital donation will help fund their Mammography Voucher Program that reduces barriers low income Pinellas County women under 50 face in obtaining breast cancer screenings, diagnostic exams, and treatment.

The Original HOOTERS and the City of Clearwater, held the benefit concert for Breast Cancer Research at The Sound at Coachman Park with the Grammy award-winning band Chicago in October. Proceeds from the concert were also donated to the two organizations.

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OUR CHILDREN HAVE RIGHTS RECOGNIZED (OCHR) OCHR received AMPLIFY Clearwater's "Community Spirit Award" recognizing

Business Excellence. This recognition pays tribute to an organization, that although small, makes a big difference in the lives of others. They are

committed to corporate social responsibility and dedicated to making the Tampa Bay Region a better place to live, work, and play. Nonprofits and for-profits alike can participate in this award. "We're honored to have been included at the AMPLIFY Clearwater Stellar Awards with many outstanding organizations across Tampa Bay," said Jake Hornstein, Co-Founder & COO for OCHR. "Joining the chamber is one of the best business decisions we've made. We're grateful to everyone who has supported our mission to "Protect the rights of children to have access to their parents by providing education, resources, and support services for successful co-parenting strategies".

NEW HOTEL SOON

Clearwater Beach will soon have another 240-room luxury hotel. Ocean Properties, the developer of Opal Sands, will also own the new Opal Sol across the street. Ocean Properties already owns over 125 other hotels.



The project includes another parking garage and a pedestrian bridge connecting the two hotels.

The new hotel will have two restaurants. "Drift" will be the main restaurant offering seafood and steaks. "Currents" a smaller restaurant will be on the pool deck.

"Sometime this month, they will install the pedestrian bridge over South Gulfview Blvd.," says Jeff Cantor, General Manager of Opal Sands. "They will close the road for a day or so while the massive overpass is dropped into position. It will likely take another month to finish the bridge."

The new hotel, located at 430 South Gulfview Blvd. is projected to open in about 15 months – early 2025.

NEW FISHING STORE OPENS

Local residents Steve and Heather Hunsucker, owners of Reel Deal Sportfishing based in the Clearwater Marina, are opening The Reel Deal Outpost. The new store, located at 1890 West Bay Drive in Largo will be selling Reel Deal fishing apparel and merchandise in the store and online.

They will be broadcasting weekly Reel Deal podcasts with Captain Steve and guests from the shop. They plan to showcase goods from local artists in the store and online with monthly pop-up parties. Follow them on Facebook at reeldealoutpostlargo for updates.




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Business Briefs



ANNIVERSARY FOR BIG FROG Big Frog Custom T-Shirts & More, a pioneering name in personalized apparel and franchising, celebrated its 15th business anniversary. For a decade and a half, Big Frog has been at the forefront of delivering high-quality, custom-designed apparel to communities across the United States, with recent expansion into Canada.

Big Frog co-founders Tina Bacon-DeFrece, Ph.D. and Ron DeFrece, along with a full complement of Big Frog Franchise Group team members, accepted recognition at the Dunedin City Commission Work Session on November 14th, where they were presented a Certificate of Appreciation in recognition of Big Frog being a cornerstone of the community for 15 years. Visit their website at BigFrog.com

NEW LOOK FOR THE NEW YEAR

Ladies, are you looking for something fresh to wear in 2024? Come by the new Kesala Boutique located in multipurpose building, Image Studios, inside the Dunedin Commons apartment complex off Patricia Avenue. Owner Amber Haas, a Minnesota native, moved to Dunedin last April. After a nine-year career teaching middle and high school students, she decided to follow her passion of being a women's apparel fashion consultant and boutique owner.



Kesala Boutique opened on December 7th and is described by Haas as mix of "contemporary, modern edge, yet casual apparel". The boutique offers everything from trendy, everyday wear to cocktail dresses and affordable jewelry. It is located at 2101 Multrees Crossing, Suite 103 Studio 117.

2024 AT THE CLEARWATER MARINE AQUARIUM

Prepare for the new year with the new Clearwater Marina Aquarium calendar. Enjoy an inspiring look at CMA's resident animals and other amazing marine life all year long. The calendar includes important holidays, animals rescue dates, birthdays, photos, and more!

Receive a copy of their 2024 calendar with your gift of \$24 and help support our rescue and conservation efforts throughout the year. Order it at www.CMAAquarium.org, on the Shop tab

BUSINESS NEWS WANTED If you have news for this Magazine, e-mail Pete@MagriffProductions.com or call (813) 239-6862.

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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

From the Desk of Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

As the year comes to a close, I want to take a moment to look back on 2023 at the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO). We had some trying times, but overall, 2023 has been a year of progress and success.

Our Cold Case Unit has had a great year, using a combination of good, old-fashioned police work combined with cutting edge technology to solve cases. A deep dive into the 1987 homicide of an elderly woman led to new DNA analysis of evidence found at the scene. From there, we made use of the new field of genetic genealogy to search DNA databases and generations-old family records for a lead to the person who matched that DNA. A lot of hard work and a little luck led to the February 2023 arrest of a suspect in Mississippi.

Law enforcement can't work without the support and cooperation of the community. PCSO has been searching for the missing person Robert Helphrey since he vanished in 2006. But despite our best efforts, it took a partnership with Sunshine State Sonar and Recon Dive Recovery, independent volunteer groups who dedicate their free time to searching Florida waterways for missing persons. In collaboration with our Cold Case Unit, they finally located Helphrey's missing vehicle, with his remains inside, in April 2023. His grieving family finally has closure.

We had a brush with tragedy in March 2023 when K-9 Corporal Matt Aitken was ambushed and shot three times by a suspect he and K-9 partner Taco were tracking. As Taco jumped on the suspect to save his handler, Sergeant Jake Viano, who was following Aitken on the track, confronted and shot the suspect. Aitken is now on the road to a full recovery.

This has been the Year of the Bloodhounds. In 2022, when we were unable to find the cold trail of the suspect responsible for Deputy Michael Hartwick's death, we called in bloodhounds from a neighboring county. That made me realize we need bloodhounds of our own. Since January, we've watched ours grow from little wrinkled puppies to the mighty trackers they are today. Now that they are on the street their main job will be to find missing people – children or the elderly who have wandered away. Unlike most bloodhounds, ours have been taught obedience, so instead of jumping up on a scared child or frail elder they'll quietly sit still to alert their handler.

In August 2023 we were faced with the possibility of a direct hit from the Category 4 Hurricane Idalia. Though its path turned to the north, Pinellas County got significant storm surge flooding. As soon as the storm passed PCSO sprang into action, launching our helicopter and deploying our high-water rescue vehicles and every available deputy to help those in danger. Though there was considerable destruction of property, we were fortunate to have no loss of life in Pinellas. Hurricane Idalia was another reminder that we must always be prepared.

PCSO has been prominent in both local and national media this year. Our social media reach has expanded exponentially, and the print and television media have picked up on many of our positive stories. Prominent among them was the exciting moment when two of our marine deputies stopped a high-speed runaway boat by leaping onto it. It was a scene straight out of a movie, and just one small example of the great work our brave and highly trained members do.

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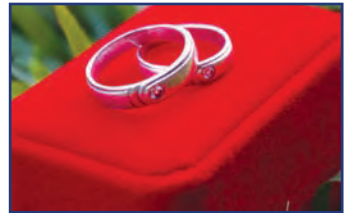


Valentine's Day has become a Hallmark holiday, but the historical origins of the festival vary by account. The consensus attributes the day to the Feast of St. Valentine; however, it is uncertain who Valentine actually was. There were several Christian martyrs who bore that name and the record has become intertwined with folklore as to their histories.

One account describes Roman priest Valentinus, who was condemned to death for his faith. While awaiting execution, he restored sight to the blind daughter of his jailer. Another narrative details Roman emperor Claudius forbidding marriage under the impression that married soldiers would be less effective due to their concern for their wives and children. Valentine, a Roman priest, continued to marry couples in secret and was eventually beheaded for his treason.

The Catholic Church recognizes St. Valentine of Rome as the Patron Saint of engaged couples, young people, beekeepers, and epilepsy. The modern celebration generally involves greeting cards and gift giving, According to Bustle.com, the most popular gifts are chocolates, flowers, and jewelry. Dining out is another staple of the day with steak being the most popular fare followed by lobster, and French or Italian cuisine. Restaurants are usually at capacity for dinner on Valentine's, and OpenTable.com reports nationwide, most reservations are made eleven days before the holiday.

On average, six million couples worldwide get engaged on Valentine's Day, with Hawaii being the most popular location for proposals. Las Vegas averages 600 weddings on the holiday, and for the last fifteen years, the Pinellas County Clerk of the Court has hosted a Valentine's Day



Wedding Ceremony. Each year, the event is held at the Florida Botanical Gardens and provides a wedding ceremony for twenty couples as well as a vow renewal for another twenty. The newlyweds receive a special commemorative marriage certificate and the Clerk waives licensing fees.

Valentine's Day certainly seems to be a romantic date for marriage, however a university of Melbourne study shows that couples married on Valentine's are 45% less likely to be married on their third anniversary than those married on any other day of the year. According to a YouGov.com survey one in fourteen U.S. adults say they have had a relationship end on Valentine's and 12% have broken up shortly before or shortly after.

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ESTATE PLANNING NOW, AVOIDS CRISIS PLANNING LATER

By Edward Castagna Jr. Esquire

Certainly, estate planning is crucial for ensuring your assets are distributed according to your wishes. Here are some reasons:

- **Avoid Probate Issues:** Estate planning can help your loved ones avoid the time-consuming and costly process of probate, ensuring a smoother transition of assets.
- **Protect Family:** Planning ahead allows you to provide for your family's financial security, especially in cases of unexpected events or accidents.
- **Minimize Taxes:** Proper estate planning can help reduce estate taxes and ensure that more of your assets go to your beneficiaries.
- **Healthcare Decisions:** It enables you to make important healthcare decisions, including who should make medical choices on your behalf if you are unable to do so.
- **Guardianship for Children:** If you have minor children, estate planning allows you to designate guardians to care for them in case you are not able to do so.
- **Business Succession:** If you own a business, estate planning can ensure a smooth transition of ownership and management to the next generation.
- **Charitable Giving:** It is an opportunity to plan and allocate assets for charitable causes that are important to you.
- **Avoid Family Disputes:** Clear estate planning documents can help prevent family conflicts and disputes over inheritance.
- **Asset Protection:** You can protect your assets from creditors or lawsuits through proper planning.
- **Updating Your Current Estate Plan:** If life changes have occurred which may affect your estate plan.
- **Peace of Mind:** Lastly, estate planning provides you with peace of mind, knowing that your affairs are in order and your loved ones are provided for.



Our attorneys are available for a complimentary half hour consultation to address any concerns you may have. We encourage you to contact us and embark on the journey of securing your legacy.

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A WHITE WINTER IN THE WETLANDS

By Lora Magnani, Publisher

Wrestling alligators is often associated with Florida. But, have you ever seen a white alligator? Probably not, because there are only seven in the world.

Gatorland Orlando welcomed the eighth white leucism alligator on December 7th, the first ever to be born in captivity. The 19.2-inch, 3.4-ounce, all-white female "grunt" cracked out of her shell and entered the world back in August. She was born along with a twin brother; however, he did not inherit the same coloring. Both babies were given a clean bill of health by Gatorland's veterinarians.

"This is beyond rare," says Mark McHugh, President and CEO of Gatorland "It is absolutely extraordinary."

Leucistic alligators are similar to their Albino counterparts, but there is a distinction. Leucism is a condition that involves a partial loss of pigmentation, whereas Albinism is a complete lack of melanin, which is the pigment that gives feathers, skin, hair, and eyes their color. Albinos have eyes that are pink or pale in color and leucistics have crystal blue ones. Leucistic alligators usually have the same coloration as normal American Alligators but have white or lighter color patches on their bodies and in some cases, are white with dark patches. These alligators cannot sunbathe like dark green, camouflaged American Alligators because they are prone to sunburn. They are believed to be the rarest of American Alligators in the world.

The little fair-skinned lady descends from a nest that was discovered in the swamplands of Louisiana over 36 years ago. Her father, Jeyan, was one of seventeen alligators from that nest of leucistic gators in Louisiana. Her mother, Ashley, is of normal, dark green coloring but carries the leucistic gene.

The park plans to begin displaying the new babies in early 2024. "These are incredibly special animals in the reptile world," states McHugh. "We are being very careful with their safety and security."



Gatorland Orlando sits on 110 acres and has one of the largest collections of rare leucistic white alligators. It is also home to over 2,000 American Alligators. This is where some of the new hatchlings' kin reside. Brothers Feros and Trezo call the White Gator Swamp exhibit home.

There is more to the park than these magnificent reptiles. It also features a petting zoo, zip-line, aviary, animal shows, and off-road adventures. If alligators are not your preference, the park also has crocodiles, birds, snakes, tortoises, capybaras, wild cats, and other critters.

The twins have not yet been named, and Gatorland has asked their Gator-fans to help out with this. Some of the suggested entries for the white female are Marshmallow, Snow, Pearl, Ice, and Ivory. A few combination names for the pair have been suggested, including Elsa & Olaf and Grits & Gumbo. Visit Gatorland's Facebook page to see what names are chosen.

Gatorland Orlando is located at 14501 S. Orange Blossom Trail Orlando, FL 32837. Call (407) 855-5496 or visit their website at Gatorland.com for tickets and information.

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CITY UPDATE

By Commissioner Robert Walker

As we stand on the threshold of a New Year, it is a time of reflection and anticipation, a moment to pause and ponder the path we've traversed and the journey that lies ahead. The past year has been a tapestry of experiences, a blend of challenges and triumphs, sorrows and joys, lessons learned, and dreams fulfilled. It is in these moments that we find the essence of our resilience, the core of our humanity, and the true meaning of hope.



The New Year brings with it a sense of renewal, a chance to reset our goals and redefine our aspirations. It's a time to dream bigger, aim higher, and pursue our ambitions with renewed vigor. The goals we set are not just milestones to be achieved but beacons that guide our path, illuminating the way forward through the darkness of uncertainty. They are the tangible manifestations of our deepest desires, the physical embodiment of our innermost dreams.

As we embark on this journey into the unknown, it is important to carry with us the spirit of thankfulness. Gratitude is not just about appreciating what we have; it's a mindset, a way of seeing the world that acknowledges the good in our lives, even amidst trials and tribulations. It's about recognizing the people who have stood by us, the unexpected blessings that have graced our days, and the small victories that have propelled us forward. Thankfulness is the foundation upon which we build a life of fulfillment and contentment.

The lessons of the past year are perhaps the most precious gifts we carry into the New Year. Each challenge we've faced, each obstacle we've overcome, has imparted invaluable wisdom, shaping us into stronger, more resilient individuals. These lessons are the compass that guides us, helping us navigate the complexities of life with a clearer perspective and a deeper understanding. They teach us about perseverance, humility, and the transformative power of a positive attitude.

At the heart of our New Year's journey are the relationships that enrich our lives. The bonds we share with family, friends, and loved ones are the threads that weave the fabric of our existence. These connections give our lives meaning, infusing our days with joy, comfort, and a sense of belonging. In the coming year, let us cherish these relationships, nurture them with care and intention, and never take for granted the love and support they provide.

As we step into the New Year, let us do so with hope in our hearts and dreams in our sights. Let us embrace the possibilities that await, confident in our ability to face whatever comes our way. Let us be guided by gratitude, enriched by the lessons of the past, and strengthened by the bonds of our relationships. And above all, let us remember that every new day is a chance to make a difference, to be a better version of ourselves, and to contribute to a world that is kinder, more compassionate, and more connected.

Here's to a New Year filled with hope, growth, and endless possibilities. May it be a year where we rise above challenges, seize opportunities, and realize our fullest potential. May it be a year where we live with purpose, love with all our hearts, and make a positive impact in the lives of those around us. Happy New Year!

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People You May Know In Our Community **Kathleen Slaven - A Clearwater Nature Artist**

by Bob Griffin, Publisher

"Pretty much everything but people." That is how Kathleen Slaven describes the subjects of her art.

Slaven, a Clearwater Beach resident, says, "I like to draw animals—all kinds—from bugs to birds. I draw and paint the animals I see; those that live all around me."

Slaven was born in Guam. As a child, her family moved frequently. While in high school, she took an interest in sketching and painting. She settled in Clearwater Beach in 2007.

After she moved to Clearwater Beach, she helped create a series of calendars featuring the beauty of older area women. It was called the "Cougar Women of Tampa Bay" and was a fund raiser for the Clearwater Marine Aquarium.

"My love and interest of Nature began as a child, when I started feeding the backyard birds, squirrels, chipmunks, and such, in each state my family lived in," Slaven explains. "I became interested in drawing at an early age; however, I eventually put my art to the side while I pursued other interests. I was a makeup artist, for over 20 years."

"My dear aunt was a significant artist," Kathleen recalls. "That must be where I inherited my 'art gene.' In 2017, I reconnected with my creative side and began sketching from some of my old photographs," Slaven continued. "I completed a few courses at Dunedin Fine Art Center and was gratified to win an award in the first Exhibition I entered."

Since living in Clearwater Beach, she has fallen in love with the tropical birds that are always in her backyard; they are a favorite subject for her work.

"I am truly fortunate to have a studio in my home that overlooks the Mandalay Channel. It has perfect lighting, and the scenery changes every day," she says.

Slaven paints what she likes and what she sees – birds, a lot of birds - herons, osprey, sea gulls. But she also loves painting other animals, too — dogs, cats, even horses. "I had a horse for over 20 years, so I love painting them," Kathleen says. "I have three large cats, now. They are always a fun subject"

For some reason, I love bugs, too," Slaven adds. "In fact, the logo on my business cards and my website is a dragonfly."

After a brisk walk on the beach, and maybe some yoga, Slaven works every morning. She primarily works in graphite pencils and oil-based colored pencils, but dabbles a bit in pen and ink and even watercolor—but pencil is her forte.

"It takes a long time to finish a drawing—sometimes it can take as long as two months."

"The hardest thing in this field is not creating the art, it is deciding how much to charge for it," Slaven says. She is reluctant to quote her prices.

"My art sells from as little as \$50 to well over \$500. It depends on the size



and the details - I produce big and little things. Also, is it an original or a print? Sometimes my art is on an object that is not going to be framed - I produce a line of Christmas cards. The most expensive thing I ever sold was \$700."

This year, her entry to Tampa Bay Magazine's Photography Contest won a placement in the September issue. It was her second time. She also participates in the well-known annual art fund raiser, "Martinis and Matisse" in Clearwater. It is by invitation only and she has been invited back four times. Her art also is displayed in the exam rooms of the Bluffs Animal Hospital.

Occasionally, she will participate a in local art show, but primarily she sells her art on her Web site: www.KathleenSlavenArt.com. She also keeps busy with commissioned pieces; people request her pet portraits.

When she is not creating art, she is promoting the art community. She is on the Board of Director for Clearwater Arts Alliance, a member of the Colored Pencil Society of America, as well as the Miniature Art Society of Florida.

You can call her at 813-215-8528 or e-mail KSlaven@Gmail.com.



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Bar & Restaurant News

NOW ON AMAZON PRIME

There were cameras and lights all over Downtown Dunedin in 2022 while crews were filming R.A.D.A.R.: The Adventures of the Bionic Dog. This fun, family film stars Dean Cain as the mayor and Beck, a Belgian Malinois from Plant City. Jody Pucello, owner of the Wild Iris Café, also made an appearance as Larry the cook. If you know Dunedin, you will recognize most of the scenes. The film is now available for streaming on Amazon Video, DIRECTV, Apple TV, and others.



DUNEDIN INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL

The Dunedin International Film Festival is February 1st-4th. "Taste of Love," which was filmed two years ago at several locations in Dunedin including The Wild Iris Café and Sea Sea Riders Restaurant, will be shown at 8pm on Friday, February 2nd at HOB Brewing Company. R.A.D.A.R.: The Adventures of the Bionic Dog will be shown Saturday, February 3rd at 6:15pm, also at HOB. Members of the cast and crew will be attending the screening. There will be an actor's panel prior to the show beginning at 3pm.

COFFEE AND CBD Crave Wellness opened at 428 Patricia Avenue in November. This is no ordinary coffee spot. Here you can sip on some coffee or tea while browsing their large inventory of CBD goods. They offer everything from chocolates, caramels, and other edibles to seltzers, supplements, and tinctures. They even have items for your four-legged friends that suffer from pain or anxiety. Swing by and say "High." Follow them on Facebook or check out their website at CraveWellness.com.

HOUNDS AND HUMANITY AT HOB Gold Coast Greyhound Adoptions, Gulf Coast Chapter, will be hosting a meet and greet at HOB Brewing Company from noon-2pm on Sunday January 21st. Gold Coast is a non-profit volunteer organization that is dedicated to the placement of retired racing greyhounds into loving, caring, and qualified homes. It is their mission to educate people on the temperament and gentle nature of the greyhound breed. Come by and have a beer with one of the retirees. Follow them on Facebook or visit GulfCoastGreyhoundAdoption.Org.

HOB is also helping the local community through its HOB Giveback program. By partnering with other charities such as Pack-a-Snack and Good Neighbors, the HOB Give Back feeds hundreds of families every week. Whether it be through the 11am Free Food Giveaway at the Brewery every Saturday morning, making deliveries to those that cannot get out or packing snacks for needy school kids and their families, the HOB Give Back looks to make a real difference in the lives of those that need it most.

HAPPY ANNIVERSARIES Hurricane Eddie's on the Causeway will turn seven on January 11th. The Honu Restaurant and Tiki Bar will celebrate its eighth anniversary on February 2nd and 3rd. Rosie's Tavern turns fourteen this year, Jason Seibert purchased the pub in March of 2023. Kassie Schmidt will celebrate one year as owner of Salty Soul Island Kitchen (formerly Pearly's Beach Eats). She purchased the establishment last February.

Bar & Restaurant News



NEW VENUE ON CLEARWATER BEACH When the Brown Boxer on North Clearwater Beach closed its doors last October, locals wondered what would replace the popular eatery and bar. The restaurant, nightclub, and arcade were closed for two months, and reopened on December 21st after a complete renovation. The new downstairs restaurant, Salt House, offers delectable plates, hand-crafted cocktails, and live music. They have over forty televisions throughout the establishment, great for the avid sports fan to watch their favorite games with friends and family. After sunset, patrons can head upstairs to the renovated nightclub, Salt Social, for dancing, bottle service, and music from the area's top DJs. If you are feeling competitive, Salt House Arcade offers classic and contemporary games and prizes. Visit their website SaltHouseSocial.com or follow them on Facebook for upcoming events and their new menu. Salt House is located at 483 Mandalay Avenue.

NEW EDDIE'S AND STIX Local restaurateur Tom George has recently expanded his bar and restaurant portfolio to include a new Eddie's Bar & Grill and STIX Billiards Bay Pines at the former location of The Sports Bar & Grill at 9685 Bay Pines Boulevard. Find them on Facebook for more information.



BEACHSIDE BEACH STROLL CHALLENGE Beachside Hospitality, one of Clearwater Beaches largest restaurant groups, has introduced the "Beach Stroll" Challenge. Participants pick up a "passport" at one of their restaurants and start walking. Spend a minimum of \$10 at each restaurant and they will punch your passport. There is no time limit and no specific route. When you visit your last location, turn in your passport, and receive an exclusive "Stroll Challenge T-Shirt." These shirts are not for sale, the only way to get one is to complete the challenge. More details are available at their participating restaurants: Crabby's Hideaway, Salty Crab, Crabby's Dockside, Crabby's Bar & Grill and Salty's Island Bar & Grill.

RESTAURANT NEWS WANTED If your restaurant has an upcoming event, we want to include it here. Email Lora@MagriffProductions.com or call (813) 361-7376.

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WHISKEY TASTING SERIES



The Dunedin chapter of the New World Celts has announced a six-event schedule for their annual Whiskey Tasting Series. The annual fundraiser is hosted by "Scotch with Bob and Matt." The YouTube Channel series features tastings of several types of whiskeys from around the world. It also highlights various restaurants throughout Dunedin with the chefs of each venue expertly pairing their small plate creations with the select whiskeys.

attending the event, Corporate and Individual Sponsorships are also available. Sponsorships are a fantastic way to show your support for Dunedin's Celtic Arts.

Tasting Series Venues

- January 20th at The Living Room-Scotch Whisky
- March 2nd at Pisces Sushi-Japanese Whisky
- May 18th at Marguerite's Café & Catering-Scotch Whisky
- July 20th at Dunedin Smokehouse-Bourbon Whiskey
- September 14th at Flanagan's Irish Pub-World Whiskies
- November 9th at Dunedin VFW Post 2550-Scotch Whisky

Sponsorship Levels

\$1,500 – Robert the Bruce Level – Two (2) Tickets to each of the Six (6) tasting events, complimentary Special Pour and prominent Name Recognition at each event and online media.

\$500 – William Wallace Level – One (1) Ticket to Three (3) select tastings, complimentary Special Pour and Name Recognition at each of the three selected events and online media.

\$150 – Flora MacDonald Level – Single Event Sponsor - Complimentary Special Pour and Name Recognition at each event and online media.

All tickets and sponsorship opportunities are currently available on www.EventBrite.com by entering New World Celts in the EventBrite search bar.

Call (727) 656-8668 with questions regarding event sponsorship. Visit DunedinNWC.com for more information on the Whisky Tastings, or about the New World Celts, a charitable organization promoting Celtic arts and culture in the New World.

The Tasting series benefits the Dunedin Chapter of the New World Celts, a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that rewards the talents of those individuals or non-profit organizations who demonstrate an interest in learning and promoting Celtic culture and heritage in the community. To that end, the Chapter offers financial assistance in the form of scholarships and sponsorships to aid those in their endeavors.

Many of Dunedin's Highland dancers, musicians and Highland Game athletes have received financial assistance through the scholarship program. This year, nearly \$25,000 has been awarded to members of the Dunedin Celtic Arts community. The Tasting Series is an important fundraiser for the New World Celts. Along with the ticket sales from those



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In Case You Missed It
HOLIDAY SEASON EDITION

Community News

HALE SENIOR CENTER

Submitted by Brett Montegny

Senior Awareness Fair: Friday, January 26 9am-12 pm. Free to attend; lunch provided. Browse over 50 local businesses and organizations providing resources for seniors including healthcare, medical equipment, exercise, beauty, nutrition, legal and financial services, recreational activities, retirement living, and more. Presented by Dunedin Parks & Recreation.

Broadway Musicals Explained: Learn from Ellen Katz, a Broadway "Edutainer," during her live presentation in costume as she teaches and entertains using musical clips, fascinating history, and enjoyable anecdotes. Mondays 12:30-2:00pm January 29: Hello Dolly, February 12: Phantom of the Opera, March 11: Fiddler on the Roof, April 8: Chicago \$5/day, must register by the Friday before.

Identity Theft Seminar: Are you seeing suspicious activity on your credit card, receiving unfamiliar bills, or had your tax return filed in someone else's name? These may be signs that you are a victim of identity theft. Identity theft happens when someone steals your personal or financial information and uses it without your permission to commit fraud and other types of crimes. In recognition of Identity Theft Awareness Week, an investigator with Pinellas County Consumer Protection will speak about how to detect identity theft, protect against it, and how to recover if you fall victim. The seminar will be held on Tuesday, January 30 at 10am with free admission.

Laughter Wellness Gang: Don't miss this hysterical experience that will heighten your awareness of the therapeutic benefits and restorative values of laughter. This program involves prolonged voluntary laughter and is based on the scientific evidence that voluntary laughter provides the same physiological and psychological benefits as spontaneous laughter, including cardiovascular health and mood. Led by Kelly Siegel of Empath Health on the first and third Wednesday of each month at 10am. Admission is free.

Advanced Directives Seminar: What kind of medical care would you want if you were too ill or hurt to express your wishes? An advanced health care directive, also known as a living will, personal directive, advance directive, or advance decision, is a legal document in which a person may specify what actions should be taken for their health if they are no longer able to make decisions for themselves. Presented by Attorney Slade Dukes on Tuesday, January 23 at 10am. Admission is free.

The Dunedin 3 O'clock Big Band Dance & Concert: Enjoy live music, solos and dance styles including swing, ballads, waltzes, polkas, and Latin music. This 18-piece Big Band is led by Bob Springer, who previously led the US Air Force Band and played in Broadway Shows for over 20 years. This season features the music of the 30's, 40's, and 50's. Wednesdays at 3pm (doors open 2:30 pm). Admission is \$5. January 17th: Music of Glen Miller, February 21st: Music of Benny Goodman, March 20th: Music of Woody Herman, April 17th: Music of Count Basie.

CITY OF DUNEDIN

The City is holding a second Community Workshop for Strategic Planning on Tuesday, January 16th. The Division of Strategy & Sustainability plays a pivotal role in fostering and strengthening both internal and external relationships within the City. Their primary mission is to develop and advance strategic goals and objectives, propelling the City toward becoming a High Performing Organization. They oversee the City-wide strategic planning process, alignment, coordination, and implementation. Working collaboratively with all Departments, Divisions, and Staff to understand how their roles contribute to the overall plan. They strive to promote a culture of innovation and implementation, moving the City into the future. Establishing a critical relationship to advance legislative advocacy and employing metrics and data analytics to define and track key performance is a goal of the Division and establishes progress within the City.

PEACE MEMORIAL CONCERT SERIES

The Peace Memorial Concert Series presents Celebrate Sinatra on January 14th at 3pm. Enjoy a popular music program of favorite tunes from the Great American Songbook and many made famous by Frank Sinatra, performed by vocalist Bryan Hughes and his band The Crew. You will hear "Fly me to the Moon," "Mack the Knife" "Pennies from Heaven" and many more. Seating is first come, first served. No tickets required, but an offering will be taken (\$5-\$10 minimum suggested). Doors open at 2:30.

The Church is located at 110 S. Fort Harrison Ave in downtown Clearwater. For more information, visit PeaceMemorialPresbyterian.org or call Timothy Belk at (800) 479-8846.

STUDIO 1212 ART GALLERY

Entering its 53rd year and named best small art gallery cooperative by Tampa Bay Magazine two years in a row, Studio 1212 Art Gallery invites the public to a free opening reception on Sunday, January 14th from 1-4pm. Meet the artists, enjoy wine, light refreshments, and live music while viewing the new "Bits & Pieces" Art Exhibit. The Gallery also offers unique, hand-made items such as jewelry, small handbags, journal books, note cards, tote bags, small art originals and prints and more. This exhibit runs through February 25th and is open Wednesday-Sunday from 11am-3pm. View additional art and gallery events at Studio1212.org.

DUNEDIN PARKS AND RECREATION

On January 13th, enjoy a free breakfast while listening to keynote speakers, the Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church choir, and readings of the winning student essays about diversity. Then march to Pioneer Park to enjoy live entertainment celebrating the life and works of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The Unity Breakfast will be held from 8:30-10:30am at the MLK, Jr. Recreation Center located at 550 Laura Lane. The March & Entertainment will be from 10:30am-12pm at John R. Lawrence Pioneer Park, 420 Main Street.

This event is presented by Dunedin Parks & Recreation, in partnership with Dunedin Public Library and Shiloh Missionary Baptist Church. For more information, visit DunedinGov.com/Activities-and-Recreation/Parks-Recreation.

Community News

CLEARWATER YACHT CLUB

The Club is one of the oldest yacht clubs in the country, continuing the long-standing tradition the world over. You don't need a boat to join in the fun at CYC in Clearwater Beach. Many members don't have boats. Their social activities center around parties in their restaurant or at their Tiki Bar.

Their Winter membership opportunity runs through March 31st. It has no initiation fee and monthly dues are \$250. Winter Club Members can use the pool, tiki bar, dining room and other amenities at the newly remodeled club. Members can also enjoy day dockage on the club's brand new docks. Best of all, you can meet new people. Send an e-mail to Office@ClearwaterYachtClub.org, call the Yacht Club's office at 447-6000, or visit ClearwaterYachtClub.org, for more information.

DUNEDIN COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Submitted by Gordon Thomas, Flotilla Commander

The Dunedin Coast Guard Auxiliary is offering Boat Safety courses and Basic Navigation courses at the Dunedin Marina, located at 51 Main Street.

The next Boat Safety courses are January 13th and 14th, February 10th and 11th, and March 9th and 10th from 9am-1pm.

The next Basic Navigation courses are January 27th, February 24th, and March 30th from 9am-noon.

The Boat Safety course includes emergencies, operating your boat, legal requirements, weather factors, and more. Graduates will receive a Florida state certification card.

The Navigation course teaches plotting a simple course, locating positions, true course versus magnetic course, and other navigation factors. The course supplies rolling rulers, dividers, and a chart.

The fee for either course is \$50 and is taught by certified instructors. We also offer free vessel safety exams at your boat location or home resulting in a safety sticker for your boat.

You may contact us at (727) 736-1191 or PublicEducation1110@gmail.com.

DUNEDIN NEWCOMERS CLUB

Submitted by Rosemary O'Hara

The Dunedin Newcomers Club is a face-to-face social network established 64 years ago that welcomes people who are new to the area, newly retired, or who now have the time to explore the region, attend monthly luncheons and participate in our many fun activities. Our purpose is to introduce residents to what's special about Dunedin and northern Pinellas. And don't be fooled by the name. Some of us have lived here for more than 30 years.

We meet once a month for lunch, with a guest speaker or fun program. Some recent topics include how the Tampa Bay Times is responding to the challenges facing metro newspapers; Dunedin's Sister City relationship with Stirling, Scotland; and the shorebirds of Florida's West Coast. We also organize field trips that offer interesting peeks behind the scenes, we host a book club, Mexican Train get-togethers and a theater group. Though we are almost exclusively female, we're open to all.

For more information about joining, contact publicist Rosemary O'Hara at RosemaryO'Hara14@gmail.com.

FLORIDA BOTANICAL GARDENS

Submitted by Allie Fisher

The Pinellas African American Heritage Celebration (PAAHC) will be returning to the Florida Botanical Gardens on Saturday, February 24th from 10 a.m. - 3 p.m. Showcasing Black history and culture, the goal of this one-day festival is to exhibit the diversity within Pinellas County. Visitors will get to experience historical exhibits



and presentations, shop a mini market of Black-owned businesses, watch live performances, and more. There will also be food vendors on site, so come hungry! Be sure to stop by our neighboring Pinewood Partners, Creative Pinellas and Heritage Village, for even more activities during the event. At Creative Pinellas, check out their Gallery Walk to see artwork from various talented local artists and Pinellas County Schools students. At Heritage Village, take a stroll through historical exhibits preserving Pinellas County History. For more information on the PAAHC, visit PAAHC.org. See you there!

TFO NORTH SUNCOAST ASSOCIATES

The Florida Orchestra's internationally acclaimed Music Director, Michael Francis, will be the featured guest at the 30th Annual Bravura Brunch, presented by The Florida Orchestra North Suncoast Associates (TFONSA). The event will be held Saturday March 2nd at 11am in Edinburgh Hall at the Innisbrook Golf and Spa Resort. The Brunch benefits The Florida Orchestra's music and education and community programs across Tampa Bay.

Maestro Francis, now in his ninth year with The Florida Orchestra (TFO), is recognized for sharing the power of music through his conducting and giving engaging talks about the hidden truths in music, as well as his extensive educational work with young musicians. In addition to his role with TFO, he is Chief Conductor of the Deutsche Staatsphilharmonie Rheinland-Pfalz and a popular guest conductor for major orchestras in the U.S., Europe, and Asia. Formerly the principal double-bass player with the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO), he came to prominence as a conductor in January 2007, when he stepped in for Velery Gergiev and John Adams with the LSO.

The Bravura Brunch offers a gourmet brunch, silent and live auctions, great music and fun surprises. Co-Chairs of the event are Dr. Patricia Donohue of Palm Harbor and Lynda Olander of Safety Harbor, also president of TFONSA. For information about tickets or sponsorships, visit TFONSAfonsa.org or contact Patricia Donohue at DrPat0111@gmail.com or (727) 517-6663. Tickets start at \$95.00.

Community News

DUNEDIN YOUTH GUILD

Submitted by Becky Holt

The Dunedin Youth Guild would like to thank our community for a very prosperous 2023 as we look forward to an even bigger and better 2024! Last year, the Dunedin Youth Guild awarded \$50,000 in scholarships to Dunedin students, and we would like to assist them even more this year. Our upcoming 51st Annual Scholarship Luncheon and Fashion Show on March 2nd will be a fun and exciting way to help raise money for our scholarship fund. Tickets can be purchased by visiting our website at dunedinyouthguild.org or from any Dunedin Youth Guild member.

If you would like to stay informed about this and other activities that the Dunedin Youth Guild members are involved in, please visit our website at www.dunedinyouthguild.org or find us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/DunedinYouthGuild](https://www.facebook.com/DunedinYouthGuild).

An even better way to find out what the Dunedin Youth Guild members are currently planning is to join us at our monthly meetings. We meet September through April on the third Tuesday of each month at 7 pm at Faith Lutheran Church at 1620 Pinehurst Road. We enjoy meeting our community and you do not need to live in Dunedin to join our organization. Everyone is welcome!

The Dunedin Youth Guild is a tax-exempt 501 (c) (3) organization.

DUNEDIN FINE ARTCENTER

It always seems like an invasion, albeit a small and very beautiful one, when the Miniature Art Society of Florida's Annual Competition opens for exhibit at the Dunedin Fine Art Center. This exhibition will run from January 14th to February 4th. On display will be a collection of over 600 artworks featuring the society's renowned Permanent Collection of more than 100 miniatures. With submissions from 24 states and seven countries, the show promises a delightful diversity of subject matter and framing styles.



Also on exhibit at the DFAC from January 14th-February 25th are:

Come Closer-Works in Miniature A Community Call for entries for tiny artworks in all media

Timeless: DFAC Jewelry Showcase Celebrating 30 years of jewelry instruction

Wallace McGuire: Drawn Together Enjoy this gallery of friends, drawn over time

Exhibition hours are Monday-Friday from 10am-5pm, Saturday from 10am-2pm, and Sunday from 1-4pm. For more information, visit DFAC.org.

STIRLING ART STUDIOS AND GALLERY

Stirling Art Studios & Gallery will present the Creative Artist Guild as their January show. A reception to meet the artists will be held on Saturday, January 13th from 11am – 4pm and refreshments will be served.

They will present the Paste Society as their February show, with a reception to meet the artists on Saturday, February 10th from 11am – 4pm. Refreshments will be served.

ROTARY CLUB OF DUNEDIN WATERSIDE

Submitted by Bruce Zeichner

Join us for an inspiring and complimentary evening as we welcome Jenny Goad, a luminary in community service and the force behind Palm Harbor Cares. As the Executive Director and Founder, Jenny has made significant strides in empowering local charities and fostering community solidarity. Jenny's dedication to the community has been recognized with the prestigious Citizen of the Year award by the Greater Palm Harbor Chamber of Commerce. This accolade is a testament to her exceptional work in going beyond boundaries to unite and uplift local agencies and individuals.

Founded during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, Palm Harbor Cares emerged as a beacon of hope. The organization, under Jenny's leadership, has innovated ways to support local nonprofits through initiatives like 100 Who Care, Nonprofits Connect, and Children Who Care.

Founded during the challenging times of the COVID-19 pandemic, Palm Harbor Cares emerged as a beacon of hope. The organization, under Jenny's leadership, has innovated ways to support local nonprofits through initiatives like 100 Who Care, Nonprofits Connect, and Children Who Care. Learn more about Palm Harbor Cares at PalmHarborCares.org. The event will take place at 6:30pm on January 10th at The Nest at Caracara, 730 Broadway.

On January 24th, we welcome Megan Risser, a passionate advocate for community welfare and an expert in nonprofit marketing and donor management. Megan, the Marketing & Donor Database Coordinator for the Homeless Empowerment Program (HEP), will share her invaluable insights and experiences in the non-profit sector.

Megan's journey is driven by her profound love for relationship building and a deep sense of empathy. With a skillset that spans effective writing to compelling public speaking, Megan has been instrumental in forging strong relationships with key stakeholders and articulating the mission of HEP to the public. Her dedication to the well-being and success of her community sits at the heart of everything she does.

Founded in 1986, HEP stands as the most comprehensive social service agency in the Tampa Bay area. It provides a holistic approach to addressing homelessness, offering housing, food, clothing, and support services to low-income families, individuals, and veterans. With a 353-bed facility, HEP is a beacon of hope, offering emergency, transitional, and permanent housing, along with critical support services. Learn more at www.HEPempowers.org. The event will be held at 6:30pm on January 24th at The Nest at Caracara, 730 Broadway.

Admission to both events is free. For more information or to RSVP, visit the Dunedin Waterside Facebook page. Please contact Mary at (727) 709-9906 with any questions.

FLORIDA STATE FISH ART CONTEST | FEB. 28

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, in partnership with Wildlife Forever, is excited to announce that the 25th Anniversary Fish Art Contest is now open. Students in kindergarten through 12th grade can compete in this free contest to win state and national honors and prizes. It is open until February 28, 2024. For more information, visit MyFWC.com/news/all-news/fish-art-923.



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Community News

ISLAND ESTATES YACHT CLUB

Submitted by Scott Lefebvre

The Island Estates Yacht Club (IEYC) closed out 2023 with three of our favorite events: the Annual Meeting and Member Recognition Banquet on November 5th, the Change of Watch on December 1st, and the annual New Year's Day Brunch on January 1st.

The 2024 IEYC Flag Officers and Board of Directors were voted in by membership at the Annual Meeting. The 2024 IEYC Flag Officers and Board of Directors were seated at the Change of Watch. Commodore Scott Lefebvre will continue to lead the IEYC in 2024. Don Prokes relieved James Ostrosky as Vice Commodore; Nancy Besley relieved Patricia Ostrosky as Treasurer, and Mary Reinhardt continues as Secretary. Social Committee Chair Bunni Lefebvre continues another year with IEYC 2024 Board of Directors and is joined by Ted O'Brien and Sara Speck. With Past Commodore Gene Traupman moving out of the area, the board is joined by Scott Moncrieff as Past Commodore and Parliamentarian.

The Island Estates Yacht Club was officially started in 1975. We are an incorporated not-for-profit club whose mission is to foster fellowship among its members.

The IEYC planned events are always listed on our website at www.IslandEstatesYC.org. Reservations are required for all events and guests need to be sponsored by a member.

Membership in the IEYC is a one-time \$200 initiation fee and \$200 per calendar year for a family and \$100 for a single membership.

You don't need to live on Island Estates, or own a yacht, to be a member of the IEYC. For more information, email IslandEstatesYC@Gmail.com.

HOMELESS LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE

You can help secure vital funding and inform public policy aimed at ending homelessness by volunteering with The Homeless Leadership Alliance of Pinellas at the Point In Time Count event on Thursday, Jan. 25.

The Point In Time Count and Survey is an annual, national event that provides a snapshot of those experiencing both sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in Pinellas County.

As a volunteer, you will survey individuals and families experiencing homelessness at locations such as meal sites and bus stops. Three-hour shifts begin at 6 a.m. and end at 7 p.m. A short, mandatory training will be offered daily, both virtually and in person, in early January. Register to volunteer by Wednesday, Jan. 10 at www.bit.ly/2024PIT.

Data collected during the event will be sent to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and will help secure millions for vital resources including affordable housing; guide local planning efforts; and inform public policy at the local, state, and national levels.

Pinellas County Government supports The Homeless Leadership Alliance's goal to prevent, divert and end homelessness in Pinellas County through funding and partnership in the Pinellas Continuum of Care.

To learn more about the Point In Time event, visit www.PinellasHomeless.org/pit.

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BLUE'S GREENS

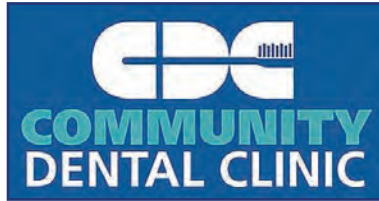


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TEN YEARS OF DENTAL CARE

The Community Dental Clinic (CDC) of Clearwater and Pinellas County is proudly celebrating their 10th Anniversary.



The CDC is an independent nonprofit organization and offers urgent dental care and comprehensive dental services including exams/x-rays, cleanings, fillings, root canals, and extractions for adults in our community who do not have dental insurance or the financial resources to access the care they desperately need. Without access to care, treatable dental issues can lead to serious overall health problems. Their goal is to improve the dental health and quality of life of our patients, reduce the number of missed work days, and preclude unnecessary ER visits.

In 2011, The Salvation Army, Clearwater Free Clinic and ARC of Tampa Bay realized through a social service needs survey that the number one health care need in Pinellas County was access to NO COST dental care for low-income, uninsured residents. Together these three organizations collaborated to fund the start of the Community Dental Clinic. Their doors opened in 2013.

2022 saw a tremendous impact:

- The total number of unique patients documented in 2022 was 775
- The total number of face-to-face patient visits in 2022 was 2556
- Number of procedures performed in 2022 was 8,978
- Total value of NO COST dental care provided in 2022 was \$1,264,863
- The Community Dental Clinic Community Impact is over \$6.5 million of no cost dental services since 2013.

Why we do what we do?

- In the U.S. every fifteen seconds someone visits an Emergency Room (ER) for dental care.
- In Pinellas County alone this equates to \$5 million in ER costs.
- One in every four adults have cavities or worse.
- 46 percent of Florida residents have no dental insurance because they cannot afford it.
- Addressing dental needs improves overall health, self-esteem, and creates a path to better career opportunities.

To learn more or to volunteer, contact them at: 727-216-6155 or www.commdentalclinic.org

Please save the date! Friday April 19th 2024 is their Red Whites & Bites fundraiser. This delightful evening of wonderful wines, delicious food, music & more is the Community Dental Clinic's largest fundraiser of the year. Enjoy the popular Wine Drawings featuring more than 70 bottles of Classic, Feature, and exclusive wines valued \$50 to \$2500.

By sponsoring Reds, Whites & Bites Wine Event & Fundraiser you will make a difference in the lives of the working poor, the disabled, veterans, and senior citizens who have nowhere else to go. More event details coming in January 2024!

Please look for exciting new announcements in the coming weeks for the CDC.

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