

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.

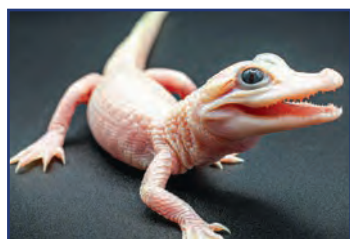
What we do know is in 1807, in Charleston, Phillippe married Dorothee Desmottes. It is said there, he had a medical practice and was involved in large-scale farming. However, historical city directories list him as a "segarr" maker, an older spelling of the word cigar.

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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Saving Sunsets

Indian Rocks Beach resident Bill Woerner uses his photography to capture amazing sunsets.

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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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Meet the Chef

From hotels to cruise ships to the Bahamas, this local restaurateur brings a world of experience to his area eateries.

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CREDITS



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INDIAN ROCKS BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD NEWSLETTER

Inside, you will find articles and local information about the nearby area. We call it Neighborhood News because it is primarily about our neighborhood, Indian Rocks Beach. This newsletter is printed every other month and mailed to every occupied house in the city.

Do you need another copy? Ask for them at USA Grocers, CVS Drug Store, Beach Welcome Center, City Hall, and Indian Rocks Beach Library.

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!



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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
- First Chance 5k Caddy's Indian Shores 1
- City Offices Closed 1-2
- Epiphany 6
- St. Pete Comicon 6
- Dunedin Art Show 6-7
- Orthodox Christmas 7
- NCAA Football Finals 8
- Public School Reopen 8
- City Commission Meeting 9
- Bluff's Business Assn Mixer 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
- City Offices Closed 15
- St. Pete Power and Sailboat Show 18-20
- John's Pass Seafood Fest 19-21
- Pinellas Tacofest 27-28
- Pirate Invasion at Caddy's Indian Shores 27

FEBRUARY

- Black History Month Begins 1
- Groundhog Day 2
- Dunedin International Film Festival 1-4
- Pinellas Medieval Fair 3-4
- NFL Pro Bowl 4
- 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
- Winterfest on the Rocks 17
- President's Day 19
- MLB Spring Training Begins 22
- St. Pete Seafood and Music Fest 23-25
- Sea-Blues Fest Coachman Park 24-25
- Leap Day 29

MARCH

- Women's History Month Begins 1
- Groundhog Day 2
- International Women's Day 8
- Daylight Savings Time Begins 10
- St. Patrick's Day 17
- Good Friday 29
- Easter Sunday 31



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Did You Know

DUNE RESTORATION CONTINUES Hurricane Idalia caused severe erosion on Pinellas beaches, washing away dunes and as much as four feet of the beach's height in some places. Pinellas County has hired a contractor to build dunes to protect homes and infrastructure from future storms. Without the dunes, beachfront properties would be directly exposed to storm surge, which is an extremely destructive wall of water pushed by storm winds.

The project will be completed in two phases. The emergency protection phase is currently in progress and, in a few years, the second phase will be full renourishment. This will bring the beach height to five feet above sea level.

The sand for this project is sourced from state-approved mines that are tested to ensure cleanliness and compatibility with local beaches. The \$90 per ton cost is being paid for by the Tourist Redevelopment Tax that is charged every time someone stays in a Pinellas County hotel.

INDIAN ROCKS ROAD CONSTRUCTION The Indian Rocks Road project has been divided into three phases. Everyone is relieved to see that Phase 1, from Mehlenbacher Road to Poinsettia Road, is complete. The good news is residents will have a nice break from the road closures on Indian Rocks Road before the next phase begins.

Phase 3 - Carl Avenue to Belleview Boulevard, will be next and is in the design phase with an estimated groundbreaking of the summer of 2025.

Phase 2 - Poinsettia Road to Carl Avenue, is anticipated to begin shortly after Phase 3. Further details will be announced as they become available.

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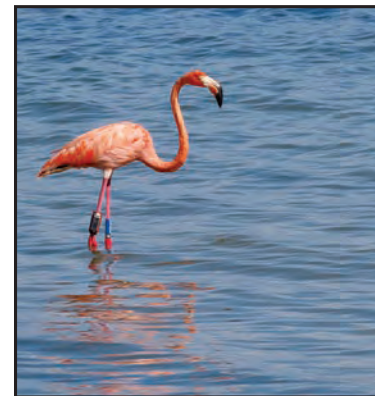
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FLAMINGO BANDING

Late August's Hurricane Idalia surprisingly 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 bird's 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.

OUR NEXT ISSUE IS MARCH 1 If you need another copy of this newsletter, you may pick up one up at the Beach Art Center, Library, Beach Welcome Center, USA Grocer or CVS. Read this issue and others at BeachNewsletters.com.

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 ClerwaterSea-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.

THROW THE PAPER OUT Christmas wrapping paper often is not recyclable. Usually it has a shiny or laminated coating on the paper. Many times it can not be recycled because of the materials that are used to make it. The paper is commonly dyed, laminated or contains colored shapes, glitter and plastics, which all contaminate recycling. It may be so thin, it gets tangle in equipment. Many times the paper still has tape attached to it, also making recycling difficult. So just to safe, throw it out.

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.

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.



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25 LESSONS LEARNED OVER 50 YEARS-PART ONE

by Ray Ferrara, ProVise Management Group

As one goes through a career, you accumulate wisdom from others and sometimes you create a few pearls yourself. This is first of two-part series about twenty-five pieces of wisdom to ponder as you think about financial planning, goal setting, saving and investment management.

Financial planning is the glue that brings it all together. Everything else, including investing, is a subset of the plan. Pick a competent and ethical financial planner that has good tableside manners much like you want a doctor with good bedside manners.

There are many credentials financial planners have, but the CFP® designation is the gold standard. They are required to work as a fiduciary acting in your best interest. Never take any action or invest in anything that you do not understand. If you have doubts, follow your instinct to walk away.

The more that someone pushes a product or an idea, the more likely it is better for them than it is for you.

While taxes are an important consideration when making or selling an investment, it is economics that are most important.

If a financial decision does not add value to your life, why do it? If you do not see value in an investment going forward sell it no matter the profit or loss.

Over a long period of time, more of your return comes from asset allocation rather than investment selection.

Rebalance your asset allocation annually, at least. This means you sell some of your winners to buy some of your losers. It forces you to sell the things that went up (high) and buy those that went down (low). What a concept.

Do not fall in love with your investments and, most importantly, do not fall in love with a deal regardless of you being the buyer or seller. Emotions have no place in the room.

There is nothing wrong with saying, "No". Never feel obligated to do anything that does not "feel" right/good.

We are all going to make mistakes, so cut your losses early. Do not hope for the impossible to bail you out.

If you have others to add to the list, please send them to Ferrara@ProVise.com. We always offer a complimentary consultation in either our Tampa or Clearwater office or by Zoom. Do not pass up a good opportunity.

V. Raymond Ferrara, CFP®, Chair and CEO

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ABOUT TOWN: BILL WOERNER STAYS FOCUSED ON IRB SUNSETS

By Diane Daniel, Local Author

Most evenings, you will find Bill Woerner at the shoreline or on the Belleair Causeway ready to capture another glorious Indian Rocks Beach sunset.

His motto: Get there early and stay late. First there's the golden hour, just before sunset, when the low sun gives the sky a warm glow, followed by the cooler tones just after the sun dips below the horizon. Then, of course, there's the often-amazing afterglow.

"The afterglow is everything," Woerner said. "By then, some people are already on their way home."

Woerner, 63, and his wife, Susan, moved to the area seven years ago from Long Island's south shore. They had already visited the area frequently to see their daughter, who lives in Clearwater. They now have two granddaughters.

Since arriving here, Woerner has become one of Indian Rocks Beach's unofficial photographers. The captivating, colorful images he posts on local Facebook groups attract a flurry of comments and likes, and he has had commissions from local publications. His photos will also be featured on the city's upcoming revamped website.

Growing up, Woerner loved snapping pictures of family and friends. When he joined the Navy as a young man, sailing the waters of the Caribbean, Mediterranean and Asia, his desire to capture beauty around the world was fully ignited. He was especially drawn to Hawaii, where he was stationed for a time.

When Woerner returned to Long Island, he joined a group of local photographers called the Sunchasers, who introduced him to sunrise photography. They encouraged him to learn

advanced skills to match his natural talent for framing and composition. He followed their advice and headed down a more professional path, though he still prioritizes awe and enjoyment over competitions and cash.

Until he moved to Largo, Woerner painted houses for work. Once here, he joined the "beach crew" at IRB Chairs and dove into perfecting his sunset photos. A sports lover, he played softball with the Indian Rocks Beach senior league for several years. He also kept pace with the local skim boarders (while shooting photos) enough for them to call him one of their own.

Woerner shoots with a Sony mirrorless camera and spends a lot of time on post-processing. He wants his photos to exude what he calls "the aloha spirit."

"I want it to look exotic and for you to feel like you could step into the picture," he said. "Mostly I just want you to appreciate this amazing world."

Another thing Woerner loves about shooting sunsets are the people around him. "We're all feeling the same spirit," he said. "Everybody's on the same team, no matter what they do in life."

For Woerner, no matter how spectacular one sunset is, "it's always about the next one."

Diane Daniel, founder of www.vacationdonations.org, always stays for the afterglow.



Bill and Susan Woerner

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WHAT IS THE EPIPHANY?

The Christian holiday Epiphany is celebrated around the world on January 6th. Local residents usually think of Tarpon Springs, when someone mentions, it because their large celebration has been held for over 100 years.

Christians have celebrated Epiphany since the end of the second century. It marks two Christian occasions when Jesus Christ's divinity was manifested, 1) when the three wise men or Magi, visited the infant Jesus in Bethlehem, and 2) when John the Baptist baptized him in the River Jordan. While a public holiday in many countries, it is not one in the U.S., Australia, Canada, and the U.K.

Epiphany, on January 6th, is twelve days after Christmas and marks not only the end of the Christmas holidays, but the beginning of the season leading up to Lent, which varies in length because it is dependent on the date of Easter.

The Tarpon Springs celebration is steeped in history. Epiphany has been celebrated in Greece for hundreds of years and Greek settlers brought their traditions with them. The first small Tarpon Springs observance was held in 1903. Over the years it has grown into a three-day event.

St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral, built in 1906, is home to today's event. It is celebrated very similarly to the way it is still celebrated in Greece. Greek tradition calls for the immersion of the cross in the spring bayou on Cross Day, as some call it.

On the morning of the Epiphany, two large, six-foot candles, are lit in ceremony with a church service at sunrise. A colorful procession begins after the sanctification of the waters (called Agiasmo) at noon, led by a grand marshal and followed by military color guard, police, various Greek clubs and societies. A dove bearer, that since 1935 has traditionally

been a young girl, wearing a black robe carries a white dove with a blue ribbon tied around its leg.

Once the procession reaches Spring Bayou, people line the water's edge while teenage boys, ranging in age from 16 to 18, stand ready in small boats anchored in a semi-circle in the center of the spring.

The Priest blesses the waters, the white dove is released, and the Priest then throws the gold cross into the water. All the young men dive into the spring to retrieve it.

The diver who captures the cross returns it to the Priest who then blesses the young man. Whoever retrieves the cross is said to have good fortune and divine beneficence.

Everyone returns to the church where the public is allowed to kiss the cross, place flowers on a special silver tray ,and leave donations, a portion of which is given to the boy who retrieved the cross.

Bottles of blessed water are distributed, that parishioners use to bless their homes or their boats. They believe these blessings protect the city from hurricanes because St. Nicholas, the patron saint and the protector of all seamen, will protect the city and its residents.

Following the close of religious events and ceremonies, the public gathers at the Glendi Festival area where they eat, drink and dance. That night there is an Epiphany Ball.

2024 will be the 118th Celebration of the Epiphany in Tarpon Springs. St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Cathedral is located at 36 North Pinellas Avenue in Tarpon Springs.



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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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Bar & Restaurant News



NEW PIZZA RESTAURANT

Little Italian Pizza recently opened in Clearwater. Already a hit with the locals, Little Italian offers authentic hearth baked pizzas, fresh salads, delicious pastas, and sandwiches.

Owners Chris and Denise Noyes are not new to the pizza business. Chris has been making and baking pizzas for over 50 years and he and his wife owned a small chain of Little Italian Pizzas in the Chicago area for twenty years. Chris describes his authentic hearth baked pizza as an "hearty Midwest pizza". His customers describe it as the "Best Pizza Ever!"

"It would be hard for you to find a pizza like this in Florida, I did not open this place to be like everyone else," Chris says.

Bring your appetite! The portions are huge, and everything is reasonably priced. The pizza dough and sauces are all made in house using authentic old world Italian recipes. They are in a free-standing building with plenty of parking and handicap accessible at 1791 S. Highland Ave on the Clearwater / Largo line, between Rosery and Belleair Roads. They are open Tuesday through Saturday 11 am to 9 pm for dine in and carry out; they do not offer delivery. They serve beer and wine. Call 727-223-9183 or order online at LIPIZZAFLA.com.



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SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE AT DUNEDIN MIX

This new mixed-use, New Orleans inspired food hall and retail space is opening soon at the corner of Skinner Blvd and Broadway, at 990 Broadway. The 10,000 square-foot, two-story space will feature an indoor courtyard, a "French industrialist/mixologist" carousel bar and provide flavors that will suit any palate. Vendors include:



Huli Bowl & Rotisserie: Chef Jason Cline will provide a taste of the Pacific Islands with Polynesian cuisine featuring Poke Bowls and Hawaiian BBQ chicken.

Al Dente Homemade Pizza & Pasta: In keeping with their Venetian roots, Chef Paolo and Patty Polo will make bread and pastas daily. All dishes are made from scratch.

At Spoons: Chef Shawn Leary will offer globally inspired tapas, such as the Peruvian ceviche, Japanese dumplings, and Maryland crab cakes.

The Green Table Smash Box: vegan smash burgers and milkshakes.

Circle 1852 Carousel Bar: The highlight of the food hall, it is reminiscent of New Orleans' Hotel Monteleone. With 21 seats, the slow moving carousel offers craft cocktails.

Visit www.dunedinmix.com.

Bar & Restaurant News

TURKISH RESTAURANT OPENS!

Simply called the Turkish Mediterranean Cuisine, it opened November 1st. Owned by Thomas



Dogantekin, the menu specializes in authentic Turkish and Mediterranean food. Dogantekin and his entire staff are Middle Eastern. They are open for lunch and dinner in the building formerly Suncoast Cafe, 1921 West Bay Drive, Largo. Their phone number is (727) 270-7114.

NOW OFFERING CATERING Clean EatZ Café Belleair Bluffs caters. For your upcoming holiday events, business lunches, sporting events, game days, or anytime you are feeding a crowd, order a party-size portions of their:

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Clean EatZ celebrated its official ribbon-cutting with the Bluffs Business Association in November.

ANNIVERSARY AT HURRICANE EDDIE'S Hurricane Eddie's IRB rang in the New Year by celebrating two years on Indian Rocks Beach. Now with a full menu, it is a great place to watch a game or hang out with friends before or after enjoying a magnificent sunset. With open garage-style doors and a full patio, it is the perfect atmosphere to relax with your four-legged pals.

Owner 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.

HALT AT THE HOLIDAY INN The former Brewmasters Steakhouse at the Holiday Inn Harbourside was finally about to get the facelift it has been waiting for, but that has now been put on hold. Three buildings of 20, 38, and 54 hotel units (a total of 112-units) were proposed, with the tallest set at 85 feet. A parking garage and outside parking lot along with the redevelopment of the long-closed steak house were also in the proposal. Locals had concerns about traffic, overcrowding, and the height of the proposed largest building. Robert Williams, attorney for Gulf Coast Marina Partnership Limited, says they are open to revisions to their proposal and want to make this project work.

MASON'S FAMOUS LOBSTER ROLLS Opening in the Bonefish Plaza in Belleair Bluffs, this new restaurant specializing in lobster sandwiches is under construction. There is no announced opening date yet. Mason's originated in Annapolis, Maryland in 2014. There is another one, nearby, at 501 1st Avenue North in downtown St. Petersburg.

Get more information at MasonsLobster.com.

RESTAURANT NEWS WANTED If your restaurant has news or an upcoming event we can include in this News Magazine, please e-mail Pete@MagriffProductions.com or call (813) 239-6862.



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ERWIN SCHEURINGER FROM AUSTRIA TO BELLEAIR BLUFFS

By Bob Griffin

Most people know Erwin Scheuringer as the owner and chef of E&E Stakeout in Belleair Bluffs. Although he did get his start in a hotel restaurant, he really learned his craft on a cruise ship.

Scheuringer was raised in Austria. In 1972 at the age of 16, he accepted a three-year apprenticeship in a boutique Austrian hotel.

"They taught me everything I needed to know about cooking," he says. "It ranged from planning to preparing the food to serving it. I took classes during the day and worked at night. I was paid \$50 per month, plus received room and board at the hotel. They also paid all my school costs."

At the age of 19, after finishing his training, he was quickly hired to be a chef in training with HOLLAND AMERICA Cruise Lines. The company was based in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Holland America, founded in 1873, was one of the earliest cruise lines.

Scheuringer's first assigned was on the SS Rotterdam, also known as "The Grande Dame." It was built in 1958 and in 2010 the ship was retired and converted into a permanent floating hotel in Rotterdam.

"When I started, it was the third largest ship in the world. It seems small by today's standards. It only carried 1,000 passengers and had a crew of 500. I was one of 50 chefs."

"That is where I learned the art of fine dining and planning," Erwin explains. "Each morning we had a meeting of all the chefs. It was every morning - at 7am. In those days, they didn't have any time dining. We had three assigned dinner services.

At each meeting we reviewed how many people might be dining at each service, and based on what was available to serve, how much we would need to prepare. When we had prime rib or lobster, we might have as much as 600 pounds to prepare for that dinner," Scheuringer adds.

In 1977, after three years with Holland America, Scheuringer's ship visited Bermuda. His head chef told him about a nice restaurant on the island he might like to try. There he met Eugen Fuhrman, the co-owner of a Bermuda restaurant called The Lobster Pot, which had been open about five years.

"In the beginning, we had trouble communicating. But once I learned that Eugen also spoke German, we just hit it off," remembers Scheuringer.

"I found Erwin knowledgeable, and easy to get along with," adds Fuhrman. "He seemed to know a lot about food and the restaurant business."

At the end of his tour contract, which was only about a month later, Scheuringer resigned from Holland America and joined Fuhrman at the Lobster Pot in Bermuda as the head chef.

A year later, in 1978, Fuhrman moved to Florida, Redington, to be exact. He opened the same "Lobster Pot" concept with partner Fritz Reiter. They invited Scheuringer to join them, as chef. As soon as he could get a visa, he too moved to Florida.

Fuhrman, Fritz and Scheuringer worked together at the restaurant and after many changes to "The Lobster Pot" Bermuda concept the Redington Beach restaurant became very successful.

By 1984, Fuhrman wanted his own restaurant. He found a location in Belleair

Scheuringer had never been a partner before. He quickly found there was more to do than just supervising the kitchen and planning the menu. Lots more!

The restaurant was scheduled to open on Labor Day of September 1985 - but Hurricane Elena had other plans for them. The opening was postponed a week, and after the storm past, since the restaurant suffered no damage, they opened Sept 7th.

By 1990, Fuhrman decided it was time to add another restaurant and that would mean a change to his business model. He couldn't be as hands on as he had been. He stepped back from the day-to-day restaurant operations and Scheuringer became the managing partner for Eugen's.

They decided to change the name of the restaurant to Stakeout Grill and added the southwest theme to the menu. After they discovered someone else had the rights to that name, they added the "E&E" and it officially became E&E Stakeout Grill.

In 1992, they bought "La Cave" on Indian Rocks Beach. After an extensive remodel, it was reopened as "Guppy's on the Beach." Fuhrman added Scott Bebell as the managing partner & chef.

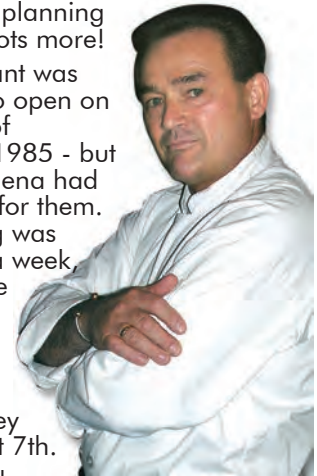
Later a third restaurant, Mystic Fish Seafood Grill & Bar was added in Palm Harbor. Scott Bebell's brother Doug is the partner/chef.

A few years ago, Scheuringer purchased and now manages The Plaza Shopping Center where E&E Stakeout is located.

In September, E&E Stakeout celebrated 38 years in Belleair Bluffs. And after working together for 46 years - "We still get along," Fuhrman says with a smile.

To celebrate the restaurant's anniversary, Scheuringer and his wife, Lucy, went back to where it all began. They took a cruise, only this time it was to Norway.

E&E Stakeout is located at 100 Indian Rocks Road North, in The Plaza 100 Shopping Center. Get more information and see their menu at www.EEStakeoutGrill.com.



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Bluffs and called his first restaurant, "Eugen's Restaurant." He asked Scheuringer to be his partner & chef.

"When it first opened, the Belleair Bluffs restaurant was half the size it is today," remembers Fuhrman. "We bought it from two ladies from England. It was really more of a 'tea room' than a restaurant. There was a laundromat next door, which we later acquired. That allowed us to almost double the size of the restaurant,"



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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 "Cougars of Florida" 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 is 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.

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 in a local art show, but primarily she sells her art on her website:

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 KatSlaven@Gmail.com.



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Business Briefs

PALM LEGAL CELEBRATES THIRD ANNIVERSARY



Palm Legal, PLLC goes into the new year in its third year of business serving local clients. Owner and Managing Attorney, Allie DeVore, lives and works in Indian Rocks Beach where she helps businesses, nonprofits and estate planning clients plan and protect the things most important to them. Allie provides businesses with legal services such as formation, contracts, and ongoing counsel. She helps local nonprofits with formation and obtaining tax-exempt status. Her estate planning services guide clients in accomplishing their unique goals.

Palm Legal is mobile and happy to meet at client's homes or places of business. When Allie is not working, you can find her around town with her family, volunteering with GreenTown Kids, and playing tennis. Reach her at PalmLegalFlorida.com; Allie@PalmLegalFlorida.com, or at (727) 480-3907.

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2024 CLEARWATER MARINE AQUARIUM CALENDARS

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.

NEW FISHING STORE OPENS

Local residents Steve and Heather Hunsucker, owners of Reel Deal Sportfishing based in the Clearwater Beach Marina, have opened The Reel Deal Outpost. The new store, located at 1890 West Bay Drive in Largo sells 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](https://www.facebook.com/ReelDealOutpostLargo) for updates.

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Many anglers fish solely for sport and return their prizes back into the water. Most do not realize that even "catch and release" can have a damaging effect on the fish. Barotrauma occurs when fish caught at a depth greater than fifty feet are brought to the surface leading to an expansion of gases in the swim bladder. This can cause damage to internal organs and can be fatal without appropriate mitigation efforts. There are two types of tools available to help return fish to the bottom safely and increase their chance for survival. Last February, the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission approved a rule requiring the use of these tools and that they be rigged and ready on any vessel fishing in state waters.

Venting tools are sharpened, hollow instruments that treat barotrauma by releasing expanded gas from the swim bladder, enabling the fish to swim back down. Fillet knives, gaffs, and ice picks are not suitable venting tools and should never be used. Venting tools are inserted 1-2 inches behind the pectoral fin at 45-degree angle allowing trapped gases to escape.

Descending devices are used to safely return fish to depth, where the increased pressure will recompress the gas accumulated in the swim bladder. There are three categories of descending devices: mouth clamps, inverted hooks, and fish elevators.

Descending devices and venting tools should only be used when fish show one or more signs of barotrauma, such as bloated belly, bulging eyes, or distended intestines. Once familiar with the use of these tools, anglers can easily ensure the proper release of fish caught at depth. For more information, visit ReturnEmRight.org or MyFWC.com.

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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. 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.

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.

This year, to let even more people know about what we do, we launched 56: A Pinellas County Sheriff’s Office Podcast, to great success. I encourage you to follow us on social media and listen to our podcast. I look forward to 2024 and another year of leading the way for a safer Pinellas.



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Community News



BEACH ART CENTER

Submitted by Patricia Thomas, Volunteer

Save the Date – Saturday, March 2nd Join us for “A Night on the Rocks!”

“A Night on the Rocks” will be a community art fundraising event that you won’t want to miss. Indulge yourself with delicious food from local restaurants, wine, and spirits.

Enjoy art and artists from around Tampa Bay, live music, and mingling with neighbors while you bid during our live and silent art auction.

Not only is this an opportunity for gaiety, it is a chance to demonstrate your support and commitment to our local community art center.

Tickets are \$50 through Feb 14th and \$75 after Feb 14th. They are available online or at the Beach Art Center. Information on tickets and sponsorship opportunities is available on our website, BeachArtCenter.org/Gala.

The Beach Art Center is a 501c3 not for profit. While this event will be a ton of fun, the reality is that fundraisers like this are also a critical part of our annual budget and without the generous support of our local businesses and community, we wouldn’t be able to continue our mission here in Indian Rocks Beach. We are extremely grateful to all who support our work at the Beach Art Center. If you have any questions, you can reach us by phone or email at Info@BeachArtCenter.org.

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Community News

IRBHOME

Submitted by Marybeth Dunn

After a 3-year hiatus due to COVID, the IRBHome Holiday Home Tour, sponsored by Plumlee Gulf Beach Realty, made a triumphant return this year. The event proved to be a massive success, featuring exciting new elements such as live music, artist displays, and an exclusive VIP Experience. Attendees enjoyed a delightful Jolley Trolley ride, making a special stop at the Church of the Isles for a catered lunch by ClearSky on Park. Six beautifully decorated



homes and three comfort stops were featured on the tour. Proceeds benefit the Beach Art Center and various community projects.

IRBHome partnered with Century 21 Beggins to host another successful Joy Drive. Donations were made to the Beach Community Food Pantry, Silver Santas, Shepherd's Village, Miracle by the Bay, and Healthy Starts.

We proudly sponsored a team as a part of Wreaths Across America, at Bay Pines National Cemetery. The mission was to Remember and Honor our veterans by placing Remembrance wreaths on the graves of our nation's fallen heroes. Each veteran's name was spoken aloud, making it a profoundly moving experience.

Be on the lookout for some changes this year, as the Taste of IRB moves to April 24th, taking the place of BeachFest.

Our heartfelt gratitude goes to our sponsors, volunteers, and patrons whose support for our events enables us to raise funds for these meaningful causes.

BEACH COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

The Beach Community Food Pantry (BCFP) has been providing food for anyone who needs it since 2008, and they rely on donations to successfully provide assistance to the community. Supplies are running low, and the BCFP is requesting donations of canned goods, paper products, fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as monetary donations. Donate online at OnRealm.org/CalvaryIRB/-/form/give/bcfp.

The BCFP also needs dedicated volunteers in several areas. You can volunteer to help sort and shelve food, process inventory or assist individuals with their food selection on Wednesday mornings from 9:30am-12:15pm and Thursday evenings from 4:30pm-7:15 pm.

Strong volunteers are needed to unload food deliveries Mondays at 1:30 pm and Thursdays at 10am and to bag the USDA food deliveries every second Thursday of the month.

Drivers are needed to pick up donations from community partners in Tampa and Clearwater using the BCFP van.

For more information on the BCFP and how you can help visit BCFoodPantry.org.

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Community News

VACATION DONATIONS

Vacation Donations is holding a food drive in multiple locations in Indian Rocks Beach on Saturday morning, February 24th. Food from departing vacationers will be collected by volunteers stationed at as many points as possible throughout the city. See details in the News section at www.VacationDonations.org. If you or your business wishes to sign up to be a drop-off point, please contact Diane Daniel at (727) 201-2333 or VacationDonations@Gmail.com.



BELLEAIR WOMEN'S REPUBLICAN CLUB

Submitted by Sandra Sockwell

Belleair Women's Republican Club (BWRC) will meet on February 9, 2024, at Belleair Country Club, One Country Club Lane, Belleair, Florida. Social time begins at 11:30, with luncheon and program at noon.

There will be a panel of speakers, who are all running for office in Clearwater, whose election is in March: Bruce Rector, running for mayor; and Ryan Cotton, Mike Mastruseria, and Mike Mannino, all running for city council. They will each have a brief time to address the meeting attendees.

Mail checks for \$37 for the meal & \$25 for 2024 membership dues (if you haven't paid yet) by January 31st to: BWRC P.O. Box 4722/Seminole, FL 33775-4722. Unfortunately, walk-ups cannot be accommodated.

CHANGES ON THE CITY COMMISSION

Janet Wilson was named as interim commissioner, filling the seat vacated by Joe McCall after his resignation in October. Wilson brings the experience of a 39- year career as an educator in Ohio, having taught students in various grades and serving as a school principal. She has been a resident of Indian Rocks Beach since 2019.

Commissioner Lan Vaughn also resigned effective December 31st. The City Commission issued a Notice of Upcoming Vacancy for City Commissioner to provide an opportunity for all interested applicants to submit resumes and qualifying documents for consideration for a potential appointment.

Applicants will be interviewed at a special commission meeting on January 9th at 4pm and the selected commissioner will be sworn in at the regular commission meeting on January 9th at 6pm.

CLEARWATER COMMUNITY SAILING CENTER

They are having a fundraiser to raise \$10,000 to build a storage shed to store windsurfing gear. They previously kept it in a trailer on property, but Hurricane Idalia destroyed it. The gear is currently being kept out in the sun. Visit ClearwaterCommunitySailing.org and click on the Support CCSC - New Windsurfing Trailer to donate.

They also have annual and seasonal membership options as well as boat rentals, sailing lessons, facility rentals, and summer camps for kids. For more information, visit ClearwaterCommunitySailing.org.

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INFLATIONARY IMPACT ON HOUSING COSTS

By Tom Smith, Classic Florida Dream Homes

I hear it every year as the northern snowbirds return to Florida. Many have come by our model home each year considering a new Florida home. "Why does the home cost 10% more than last year?" is a common question I am asked. Quite simply, uncontrollable inflation has a major impact on the cost of labor and materials, not to mention increased government regulations and impact fees that have to be passed on to the consumer. Additionally, a very important factor is supply and demand economics. Many more families now desire to live in the beautiful state of Florida. With very limited waterfront lots available, costs will always increase due to there being more demand than supply. Whether a family is considering an existing waterfront home that is 60-70 years old, or a new raised home constructed to the 2023 Florida Building and FEMA standards, inflation continues.



Something that many do not realize is that existing older homes along the Intracoastal, not raised to FEMA standards to avoid hurricane damage, are selling for about the same cost per square foot of living area as a new home costs today. Additionally, these older homes do not have elevators and updated plumbing and electrical systems, and need substantial remodeling. Our customers that purchased within the past few years tell me they cannot believe the value of their home now compared to when they purchased it a very short time ago. Purchasing a new home can be a better investment than the stock market, many believe.

Will this trend continue? Some contend that the short-term slowdown in the economy nationwide might lower housing costs in Florida. History has proven this not to be the case. Yes, we had a crisis in 2008 due to a very unstable mortgage industry, but today, in Florida, we find most of our home purchasers to be cash buyers. Pinellas waterfront home prices seem to stabilize for short periods, but then the sale prices increase. Many believe this inflationary trend will actually increase substantially in the next few years. With the increased influx of northerners now deciding to make Florida their home, it seems inevitable that this large inflationary increase will continue each year. That is why so many families that are not quite ready to move here decide to buy now to avoid the large dollar increase in housing costs in coming years.

Classic Florida Dream Homes is now purchasing older outdated homes along the Intracoastal for tear down and construction of new homes. Again, the cost per square foot of living area is the same for a new home with all the bells and whistles desired today. Remodeling an older home that has not been raised to FEMA standards always causes sleepless nights during hurricane season.

By appointment only, for qualified prospects, we have a waterfront home on the Intracoastal that is our present model for customers to visit and review. We are very realtor-friendly to assist with a new home purchase, so any real estate company that has an interested party is invited to call for an appointment. Invest in your Florida dream now! Call (727) 404-1347 or visit ClassicFloridaDreamHomes.com.

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Community News

ROTARY CLUB OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH

Submitted by David Kline

For the 21st consecutive year, the Rotary Club of Indian Rocks Beach held the Big Game Raffle Grand Prize Drawing on Sunday, December 10th at Slyce Pizza Bar.

We wish to express our gratitude to our friends at Slyce, who have hosted our drawing for many years, for providing excellent service and tasty appetizers for the crowd. Thank you Slyce!



The Grand prize winner took home two tickets to the 58th edition of football's biggest game, this year to be held at the amazing Allegiant Stadium in Las Vegas in February 2024. Included in the Grand Prize package is a 4-night stay in Vegas and \$1000 in spending money. Four other lucky winners won cash prizes of \$1000, \$500, \$300, and \$200. Congratulations to the following winners:

- Grand Prize Winner: Larry Munday
- Second Prize: Dana Baker
- Third Prize: Mike Paonessa
- Fourth Prize: Lara Capps
- Fifth Prize: Bo Ream

We wish to thank all of those who supported our fundraiser with the purchase of our raffle tickets. Without your help we could not "do good in the world." The net proceeds of this event and our other fundraisers, Rotary Runs the Beach and the Annual Pancake Breakfast go entirely to the support of the many humanitarian projects that we fund each year, including Pinellas County Sheriff's Holiday Meals project, Third Grade Dictionary Project, Polio Plus Eradication Program, S4TL (a student based Leadership Development Program), R.O. Jacobson High School Interact Club, the Lou Gregor and John Todia Scholarship programs, Rotary's Camp Florida, the ShelterBox Program and many others.

If you have some spare time and a desire to 'do some good in the world,' we encourage you to visit us during one of our weekly meetings. We meet every Wednesday from 7:15 to 8:15 am at Crabby Bills Main Restaurant for breakfast. We always have a fun, relaxed atmosphere with good information and even better camaraderie. For more information, call David Kline at (727) 418-1673.

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. The contest is open until February 28, 2024. Visit MyFWC.com/News/All-News/Fish-Art-923.



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Community News

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.

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 November 1st 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. For more information, send an e-mail to Office@ClearwaterYachtClub.org, call the Yacht Club's office at 447-6000, or visit ClearwaterYachtClub.org,

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH LIBRARY

The library is open Mon-Fri from 10am-4pm. They host the "On the Rocks Book Club" on the last Tuesday of the month at 4pm in the library. For more information on the club and book selections, contact the library at (727) 596-1822.

Pre-readers' story time is on Wednesdays 11:30am. Join them for a story, songs, and activities.

The library is located at 1507 Bay Palm Blvd.



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Community News

GREENTOWN KIDS

Submitted by Allie DeVore

Happy New Year! GreenTown Kids (GTK) goes into its seventh year of serving Indian Rocks Beach and the local schools as a 501(c)(3) environmental nonprofit dedicated to creating a green town. This past year, GTK hosted four quarterly beach cleanups for the community of Indian Rocks Beach where over 250 volunteers helped pick up over 230 pounds of trash off the beach. GTK also runs the IRB Community Garden where community gardeners and members of GreenTown Kids plant and harvest fruits, herbs, and vegetables all year long. Along with the community garden, GTK also worked with the first grade classes at Anona Elementary School to plant garden boxes with strawberries and beans, and several kindergarten and third grade classes to plant sunflowers to take home.



Join us for the Clean Beach, Clean Slate Beach Cleanup on Sunday, January 21st from noon-2pm at the 17th Ave Access.

GreenTown Kids is a 501(c)(3) public nonprofit. The support of volunteers, members and donors furthers our mission. Your donations may be tax deductible. To become a member or donate, visit GreentownKids.org or Zelle us at GreentownKids@gmail.com.

CALVARY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

The Calvary Episcopal Concert Series continues in 2024 with the following performances:

- Gabriel Johnston Organ, Piano, and Harpsichord Concert January 20th at 2pm
- American Guild of Organists Lenten Concert February 27th at noon
- Bell Workshop and Concert March 5th at 2pm

Concerts are free and parking is limited. For more information, visit CalvaryIRB.org/Concerts.

Winterfest on the Rocks returns for its 19th annual appearance on Saturday, February 17th from 10am-4pm. This family-friendly event will include arts and crafts vendors, children's activities, entertainment, food, and more. There will be indoor and outdoor activities, and the event will be held rain or shine.

COMMUNITY DENTAL CLINIC

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

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. To learn more or to volunteer call (727) 216-6155 or visit CommDentalClinic.org.



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Community News

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Submitted by Nan Jensen

Have you ever wondered where all the sand that covers Florida beaches comes from? Did you know that Three Rooker Island was just a sandbar some fifty years ago? If you're curious about these questions and more, you should visit the Indian Rocks Historical Museum and check out their newest display called "The Shifting Sands." This display will answer your questions and may even dazzle you. The exhibit features a beautiful video created by local beach historian R.B. Johnson and cinematographer Phil Hanna. It tells the intriguing story of how the dunes helped save our beach during Hurricane Idalia and shows the damage up close and personal. The video also provides a bird's-eye view of barrier islands only accessible by boat. The display is open now. You can find the Indian Rocks Historical Museum at 203 4th Ave. Indian Rocks Beach. It is open Wednesday - Saturday from 10am to 2pm.

MILITARY ORDER OF WORLD WARS

The Clearwater Chapter of the Military Order of World Wars meets the first Tuesday of each month at the Dunedin Golf Club, 1050 Palm Blvd, Dunedin. Social hour is at 11:30am followed by lunch and a short program. Active duty, retired or former Military Officers and their spouses are invited to attend. The MOWW Clearwater Chapter invites those interested to RSVP for lunch by emailing Col. Brian K. Smith at SmithBK@comcast.net.

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 10am-3pm. 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 www.paahc.org. See you there!

New Year, New Real Estate Needs!

2024 is a great time to get started on achieving your real estate goals. Whether it is buying or selling, the Natalie Scott team is here to guide you along the way.



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Community News



ACTION 2000

Submitted by Daryl Frahn

Signature Project Restoration Since 2017, the A2K butterfly garden at City Hall has been a jewelry box of color and a haven for butterflies and pollinators. The floodwater of Hurricane Idalia left its stamp on this precious landscape. After several weeks of clearing the debris, removing destroyed plants and trimming, it is starting to come back to life. In the new year, we'll be restoring the garden with Florida native plants, once again creating a paradise for pollinators and our winged friends.

What's New for 2024? Now that the holidays are behind us, A2K will get back to work. The January meeting will focus on setting our project maintenance and Service Saturday dates, identifying our 2024 beautification and preservation priorities, and turning those great ideas into action!

A2K Celebrates 25 Years! 2024 marks the 25th anniversary of IRB Action 2000! Born out of City Visioning Sessions in the late 1990s, we have been working hard to preserve and beautify our quaint beach community. Donations from our Oktoberfest sponsors, grants and collaborative efforts have enabled our successful projects. You can see changes across IRB – 10th Ave mini park, Kolb Park gazebo, butterfly garden, handsome pedestrian shelters, historical tour and markers, preservation awards, public art, and more!

Volunteerism and community pride are at the heart of what we do at IRB Action 2000. We're committed to making a difference in our community, and it shows! Stay tuned for information about the May anniversary celebration plans!

IRB – Discover the Charm As the days get cooler, are you looking for something fun to do? Take a stroll and learn more about the history and stories of Indian Rocks Beach. Walk Indian Rocks Beach is a free self-guided audio app designed to be downloaded to a smart phone or tablet.

The app was created by A2K and the IRB Historical Museum in collaboration with the Florida Humanities Council. VisitWalkIndianRocksBeach.com

About A2K - A2K is a non-profit community organization that has been serving Indian Rocks Beach for 25 years! We work to preserve the unique small-town character of IRB while continually beautifying our public places for all to enjoy. We invite you to be a part of A2K. Join us at our monthly meetings at City on the second Monday of the month at 6:30PM.



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Community News

CLOTHES TO KIDS - CTK

School is back and CTK is serving a record-breaking number of children (up to 50 kids a day), and have major shortages of elementary school clothing for both boys and girls sized (XS-XXL). Donations can be dropped off between 9 am and 4:30 pm Monday-Friday at Clothes To Kids' three convenient store locations:

Clearwater: 1059 N Hercules Ave, Clearwater, FL 33765
 Tampa: 5011 W Hillsborough Ave, Tampa, FL 33634
 St. Petersburg: 2168 34th St S, St. Petersburg, FL 33711

Please donate new or quality used clothing to Clothes To Kids today! Clean those closets and ask your friends, neighbors, corporation, or your places of worship to help. We are asking the community to please donate elementary boy and girl clothing to help us clothe the children in both Hillsborough and Pinellas County. Their goal is for every child to go to school with new or quality used clothing so that he or she has the confidence and self-esteem needed to achieve academic success. Your donation matters – clothes matter!

Clothes To Kids, is a nonprofit organization, that last school year distributed 15,766 full school wardrobes.

ISLAND ESTATES YACHT CLUB

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.

WELCOME NEWCOMERS CLUB

This club is open to the women of Pinellas County; all are welcome to come and socialize. Luncheons are held the first Tuesday of each months at Belleair Country Club with a guest speaker or other entertainment. Please contact Mary at (727) 709-9906 with any questions.



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