

# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

including Sand Key and Island Estates

Magazine

## CARL FISHER AND THE TAMAMI TRAIL

By Bob Griffin, Local Historian

America is a nation of roads. Roads keep us connected, allowing us to freely pass across state lines. Roads allow us to visit family, travel to unfamiliar places, and to see the country. Zipping down the highway in an automobile can be one of the most relaxing weekend experiences.

The Tamiami Trail is a highway that runs from Tampa to Miami. It is the southernmost part of US Highway 41, which begins at Florida's state line. It runs down the west coast of Florida before crossing the state and running directly into downtown Miami. Few people know its origins – it began with Carl Fisher the founder of the Indianapolis Speedway.



Carl Fisher, who established the original "Brickyard" Indianapolis Speedway, was a major Miami Beach developer. Born in Indiana, Fisher was addicted to speed at an early age, both while running and on bicycles. With the popularity of the automobile, his obsession turned to cars. Fisher bought the first automobile in Indianapolis. It was a French made, three-wheeled De Dion Bouton with an internal combustion engine. Before long, he was racing motorcars at local fairgrounds and area dirt racetracks. In 1904, at the age of 30, Fisher set the world speed record on a 2-mile dirt track - 60.6 miles per hour. Fisher establishing Indiana's first car dealership, "Carl Fisher Automobiles" which featured both passenger cars and trucks. It was possibly the first auto dealership in the United States.

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**CREDITS**



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**CLEARWATER BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS**

Inside, you will find articles and local information about the nearby area inside. We call it Neighborhood News because it is about your neighborhood - Clearwater Beach. It is mailed to the entire 33767 zip code including Island Estates and Sand Key - about 6,000 households, six times a year.

You can pick up additional copies at the Beach Chamber Office, The Beach Rec Center, Shorty's Gourmet Deli, Sand Key Realty or the Island Estates UPS.

We hope you enjoy our newsletter and we want your input. Did you like this issue? What suggestions do you have for future articles? Call or email us with your comments, or take our online survey at [beachnewsletters.com](http://beachnewsletters.com).

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

Thank you for reading,  
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**CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS & EVENTS**

**APRIL**

- April Fools' Day 1
- Alabama at the Sound 5
- Dunedin Highland Games 6
- Classic Car Show Heritage Village 6
- Holocaust Remembrance Day 12
- Purina Pro Dog Challenge 12-13
- Tampa Bay Blues Fest Vinoy 12-14
- Paw Fest Largo Central Park 13
- Pinellas Park PepperFest 13
- North County Recycling Event 13
- Sugar Sand Festival Ends 14
- Patriots' Day 15
- Income Taxes Due 15
- Taste of IRB 20
- Great American Cleanup 21
- Mainsail Art Festival Vinoy Park 20-21
- Earth Day 22
- Administrative Professionals Day 24
- Public Schools Closed 26
- King of the Beach Fishing Tourney 25-27
- Sunscreen Film Festival 25-28

**MAY**

- National Tourism Month Begins 1
- Stone Crab Season Ends 1
- May Day 1
- Hurricane Preparedness Week 1-7
- Kentucky Derby 4
- Cinco de Mayo 5
- National Nurses Day 6
- Teacher Appreciation Week 6-10
- Historical Society Fish Fry 10
- Diana Ross at the Sound 9
- Postal Workers' Food Drive 11
- Mother's Day 12
- Armed Forces Day 18
- Safe Boating Week 22-28
- Clearwater Beach Pool Party 24
- Trinity Sunday 26
- Memorial Day 27
- Last Day of Public School 29

**JUNE**

- No Fertilizing (June -Sept) 1
- Hurricane Season Begins 1
- Blue Crab and R&B Fest Tropicana 1
- Father's Day 16
- Summer Solstice 20



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# Did You Know



**CHANGES COMING AT THE AQUARIUM** In February, Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA) announced a multi-year plan of expansion encompassing strategies to welcome new wildlife, create habitats, and launch global conservation efforts. The first of these additions is the Manatee Rehabilitation Center opening this spring. The new center will allow CMA to accept the influx of manatees needing critical care.

Internationally, CMA will be breaking ground this summer on a Belize Marine Rescue and Educational Center. CMA Research Institute (CMARI) has rescued and released manatees for twenty years in Belize, which has the highest density of Antillean manatees in the world.

CMA will welcome many new marine ambassadors, including manatees, sea lions, sharks, penguins, albino alligators and additional dolphins. To provide world-class healthcare to these new residents, there will be a significant renovation and expansion to their animal hospital.

**HOW DID APRIL AND MAY GET THEIR NAMES?**

There are several theories on the origin of April's name. One is that it derives from the Latin *apriore*, which means "to open," referencing the Spring blossoming of trees and flowers.

Another theory follows the naming of months after mythological deities. April could derive from Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love and beauty, whose festival begins in April.

The month of May got its name from Maia, who appears in both Greek and Roman mythology. The Greek Maia was one of the seven sister-nymphs of the Pleiades. They were the companions of Artemis, goddess of the hunt. Maia gave birth to Hermes, god of travelers, merchants, and thieves. His father was Zeus, the king of the gods.

In Roman mythology, Maia was the goddess of growth, which might explain her association with this springtime month. She was considered a nurturer and earth goddess.

**WATCH YOUR WATER USAGE** Despite a rainy winter, Tampa Bay Water asks residents to continue water-saving habits as the region heads into its spring dry season.

El Niño rainfall, cooler weather and watering restrictions have helped thwart overwatering in the Tampa Bay area; however, regional water demands in February averaged about 189 million gallons per day – nearly two million gallons per day higher than in January.

Tampa Bay Water is asking residents to cut water use by 5%. Outdoor watering in Pinellas County is limited to one day per week. Residents can find their watering day at MyWaterDay.org.

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**RARE GATORS GET THEIR NAMES** After a month of public input, Gatorland Florida announced the new names of the twins born at the park last summer. The leucistic female was named Mystic and her brother named Mayhem. Leucistic alligators are recognizable by their white skin and blue eyes and are sensitive to sunlight.

Gatorland is building a special exhibit for the siblings with a spring opening anticipated.

**PINELLAS CHARITY GETS A BOOST** In February, Pinellas County Tax Collector Charles W. Thomas presented Clothes to Kids in Clearwater with a \$3,296 donation.

Each year, tax collector employees nominate and vote for one local nonprofit organization to fundraise for all year long. Clothes to Kids received the most votes for 2023 and employees raised funds internally for the organization with various initiatives.

Along with the cash donation, the tax collector offices also held a sock drive in 2023, and the public was invited to help support the cause. As a result, over 2,000 pairs of socks were collected to help build wardrobes for 409 Pinellas County students.

Clothes to Kids serves Pinellas and Hillsborough counties by providing new and gently used clothing to low-income or in-crisis school-age children, free of charge. They provided over 350,000 wardrobe items to kids in 2023. Find more info about Clothes to Kids at [clothestokids.org](http://clothestokids.org).

The tax collector team voted to support Suncoast Animal League throughout 2024. For more information about that fundraising campaign as well as the other charitable organizations they support, visit their website at [PinellasTaxCollector.gov/community-involvement](http://PinellasTaxCollector.gov/community-involvement).

**ST. PETERSBURG COLLEGE RECOGNIZED** U.S. News & World Report has again ranked St. Petersburg College's (SPC) online bachelor's programs first in the Tampa Bay area.

The 2024 study listed SPC first in the Tampa Bay region in two categories: Best Online Bachelor's Program and Best Online. [PinellasTaxCollector.gov/community-involvement](http://PinellasTaxCollector.gov/community-involvement).

**OUR NEXT ISSUE IS JUNE** If you need another copy of this magazine, pick up one up at the library, rec center, or the UPS Store on Island Estates,. Call (813) 361-7376 if you need more than a few.

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# The Tamiami Trail, Continued



Carl Fisher

Carl Fisher was a prolific salesman with a talent for showmanship, or ballyhoo, as it was called, which he used to promote his dealership. One idea was to build a major racetrack in his hometown. With two partners and \$75,000, he created the "Indianapolis Motor Speedway." The first race, on a dirt track, was to be a three-day, 300-mile endurance event but it became a race around ruts and potholes and ended after 235 miles with the death of five - three racers and two spectators.

Fisher rebuilt the track with 3.2 million glazed, hand-laid bricks, adding higher protective walls. The remodeled speedway opened in 1909. 80,000 spectators turned out to watch the first "Indianapolis 500." Over the next half century, this racing event has turned into the "largest single-day sporting event in the country," drawing more than 150,000 fans to what became known as "the Brickyard."

What has this got to do with The Tamiami Trail? In 1912, at a meeting in Indianapolis with other car industry leaders, Fisher proposed building an east-west highway from New York's Times Square to San Francisco's Lincoln Park. Billed as, "a road across America," he proclaimed, "let's build it before we are too old to enjoy it."

Fisher came up with a plan to fund the project. He persuaded the car makers, dealers, suppliers, and even jobbers to contribute a small percentage of their annual sales to a construction fund to be used once the fund reached \$10 million. At the time, states spent little to no money on road construction. Most of the nation's roads were still dirt and as a result, were muddy and many times almost impassable in a horse-drawn carriages, much less in automobiles. Henry Ford, owner of Ford Motor Company, refused to contribute believing governments would build the roads.

When the road originally referred to as the "Coast-to-Coast Rock Highway," was completed it became known as the "Lincoln Highway," and was mostly completed in 1915. Interstate 80 runs parallel to this highway today. The project was the motivation behind the National Interstate Highways Act of 1956, created under President Dwight Eisenhower.

In 1910, at the invitation of a Miami developer, Fisher and his wife visited Miami Beach, which required them to take an exceptionally long train ride from Indianapolis. Fisher fell in love with the area and immediately started buying land on what was really just a sandbar. Following his Lincoln Highway project, Fisher proposed a link from Chicago and upper Michigan to Miami, what he called the "Dixie Highway." In reality, it was a pair of roads—an east and a west route converging in Miami. Because of the parallel roads, it would cover 5,786 miles, far longer than his east-west highway. The project was estimated to take over a decade to complete.

In 1915, the Florida State Road Department was created. That April, at an informal meeting between the presidents of the Ft. Myers and Miami Chambers of Commerce, building a new highway was discussed. The goal of the plan was to create a hard-surfaced road connecting Tampa and Miami called the "Tamiami Trail."

Building a road through the Everglades proved more difficult than expected, and in 1922 the state ran out of funds.

Entrepreneur Barron Collier offered to finance the completion of the highway, he wanted access to the wealth in the Miami area, but his offer came with a catch - the state would have to create a new county named after him. Collier County was carved out of Lee County. In exchange, Collier paid for the dynamite to break up the swamp land and the workers and oxen needed to dredge the area and build the road high enough to prevent flooding. The men worked in the swamps during Florida's 95 plus degree summers, battling mosquitos and alligators.

In 1923, while construction was still underway, Fisher organized a fifteen car caravan, which he called "the Dixie Highway Pathfinders" to travel to

Miami. They arrived in October with Fisher in the lead car, of course. It was no accident he planned the highway to end in Miami. Fisher had plans to move from being a car salesman to being a real estate developer - in Miami!. He established himself in Alton Beach; it was later to be incorporated as Miami Beach.

Originally intended to be one thoroughfare, the highway was officially designated two U.S. Highways. The north-south portion became U.S. Highway 41, and the east-west portion was designated U.S. Highway 94. In 1949, the U.S. 94 moniker was decommissioned, and the entire route became U.S. 41.

The final segment of the Tamiami Trail was completed in April of 1928 and is considered to be one of the largest influences on the Florida's tourism industry.

In the early 1960s, Interstate 75 opened following a similar path to US 41 ending in Tampa. By 1970 it was agreed the Interstate would be extended to Naples and across the state to Miami of US 41. The portion of I-75 from Naples to Miami is what we call "Alligator Alley." In the late '60s while the Interstate was being planned, the American Automobile Association (AAA) referred to it as an "Alligator Alley." They believed it would be unused and merely an "alley for alligators." However, alligators are often seen in the waterways along the road and the nickname stuck. The state officially adopted the name "Alligator Alley" in 1966.

In 2003, US 41 from Naples to Miami was renamed the "Windows to the Gulf Waters Scenic Highway" under the Florida Department of Transportation's Scenic Highway Program. A \$60 million Federal Highway Administration grant was awarded to fund the Tamiami Trail Next Steps project improving water flow into the Everglades National Park.



Tamiami Trail Next Steps Construction

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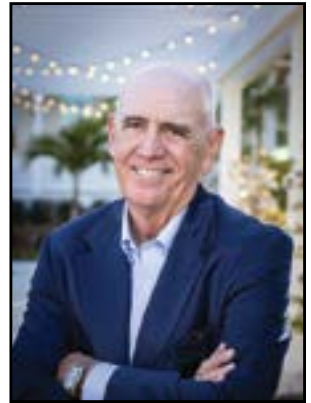
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**IT'S A FAMILY THING - \$80 TRILLION**

by Ray Ferrara, ProVise Management Group

An integral part of any financial plan is an estate plan developed in anticipation of death. Who gets what, when does it happen, and how it happens should all be covered. Some clients want to rule from the grave and create elaborate detailed trusts while others prefer to leave things up to the heirs completely. Neither is right or wrong, they are simply different. First, let's chat about the documents. At a minimum, they should include a Will, perhaps a Living Trust, Power of Attorney, Healthcare Surrogate, and Living Will. Additional trusts may also be included depending upon the financial complexity. No matter how well one prepares, dealing with an estate is complex and often leaves heirs wondering what good old Mom and Dad were thinking. You have probably seen the commercial where the cat inherits the summer home. What?



We encourage clients to have a discussion with the family about the estate at whatever level of detail they find comfortable. Some are willing to just lay it all out there while others want to keep things tight to the vest. Again, no right or wrong...it is what you are comfortable sharing.

According to Cerulli, 35% of those surveyed recently could not imagine having a conversation with the heirs. When you consider that over the next twenty years it is estimated that \$80 trillion will pass from one generation to the next, there is much that could be said and done to help the heirs understand Mom and Dad's plan, values, and love.

One way to have this conversation is a family meeting to help explain the estate plan and often we are asked to facilitate these discussions as they can be emotional and stressful. It isn't just about money. Will they inherit it outright or in trust? Which is better? Why? What happens to the family business? Personal property, like jewelry, artwork, collectibles? Is the money going to charity? Again, the details are up to Mom and Dad. While it is not necessary to do this every year, it is important to do it every three to five years as "stuff happens" and plans may change.

If you would like to chat about your estate plan and perhaps a family meeting, take advantage of our complimentary consultation in our Clearwater or Tampa office or by Zoom. Be safe and be well.

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## AREA RESIDENT FINDS A SECOND CAREER AS AN AUTHOR

For over twenty years, Linda Hansen was the executive director of a nonprofit that assisted burn victims and their families before starting her own camp for burn-injured children. The camp, which brought in children from Missouri, Kansas, and Illinois, was funded completely through donations and grants. The nonprofit also established a juvenile firesetter program as well as two fire safety houses used by local fire departments for training.

When Hansen and her husband Gary retired and moved to Florida in 2015, her friends were curious as to how she intended to fill her newfound free time "Between running the organization, beating the drum for donations, and writing grants, I had been working more than sixty hours a week," Hansen said. "People asked what I was going to do, and I told them I was retiring!" Three years later, Hansen decided she needed a hobby and began learning watercolor painting at the Beach Art Center in Indian Rocks Beach.

The pond next to Hansen's Largo home provided a multitude of subjects for her newfound art. Mostly, she painted the various wading birds that fed in the pond, but one day she observed a newcomer – a North American river otter. Hansen named him Otto, and he came to visit the pond every few days.



In 2019, Otto stopped coming to the pond, and the Hansens assumed he had moved on or passed away, then one day they got a surprise. Otto reappeared, and they quickly realized he was in fact not a "he." The otter had returned to the pond with her two pups.

Word spread quickly, and soon crowds of onlookers came to the pond for a glimpse of Otto and her children. Hansen would go out and chat with the visitors, and many asked her questions about otters, leading her to research the mammals. She soon became something of an expert, and her neighbor prompted her to write a book. Hansen obliged, penning the children's book "Otto the Otter: A Big Surprise" and illustrated it with her own watercolor artwork.



Hansen self-published "Otto" and began visiting local schools to read the educational story to children. A year later, the same neighbor that suggested Hansen write the book, found a collarless dog wandering the neighborhood. The Hansens took the pup in while they tried to locate his family. They were unable to find them, and eventually the dog was adopted by a friend of theirs with whom he quickly bonded. Hansen had the content for her second children's book.

"Little Lost Dog Looking For His Home" tells the story and stresses the importance of tagging and microchipping pets. "Without them, we have no way of getting these pets back to their home," said Hansen. "Vaccinations are mandatory, microchips should be also."

Hansen also self-published the second book and has worked hard to get both in retail locations. They are available on Amazon and Barnes & Noble, but readers can get an "ottergraphed" copy and learn more about the author online at [LindaHansenAuthor.com](http://LindaHansenAuthor.com).

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# Bar & Restaurant News



**CLEVELAND STREET MARKET** A new multipurpose food and drink hall opened in Clearwater at 1011 Cleveland Street in the new Cleveland Street Market. The first tenants are Deja Brew Coffee, Top Nosh Street Food, Tap Haus on Cleveland, Jersey Dogs, Machi BoBa Tea, and The Smokin' Cuban BBQ-Fusion.

Deja Brew offer a variety of coffee drinks with breakfast sandwiches, pastries and baked goods. Top Nosh is described as "comfort food with a twist," serving a variety of burgers and mac n' cheese dishes. Tap Haus on Cleveland offers 32 beers and 64 wines. Customers are assigned a card that they scan at self-service taps. Jersey Dogs will offer Sabrett hot dogs and disco fries.

Machi BoBa Tea, a neighborhood boba spot specializing in Taiwanese drinks such as fresh milk teas with boba (tapioca pearls), coffee, and smoothies.

Smokin' Cuban serves BBQ-Cuban fusion cuisine and recently won the "World's Best Popular Cuban Sandwich" award at the 12th annual Cuban Sandwich Festival. Their sister company the SALT smokehouse will also be featured here.

Aloha to Go is predicted to join the venue, bringing traditional Hawaiian cuisine to the Gulf Coast. The menu at their other Pinellas locations features Huli Huli chicken, Kailua pork, and Ono teriyaki beef.

If you are looking to do something other than drink or eat, rent out one of the virtual Top Golf suites for your group and play a few rounds. There is also an outdoor courtyard where guests can bring their four-legged companions. For more information follow Cleveland Street Market on Facebook and Instagram.

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**TASTE OF LEBANON** Sahara Mediterranean Fine Wine & Food, formerly known as Café Sahara, opened in 2017 by owner Soha Farah at 1901 West Bay Drive, Largo, in the Village Plaza. They are an independently owned and female led company that specializes in fresh Lebanese and Mediterranean cuisine. Some of their fan favorites consist of falafel, gyros, kafta kabobs, chicken kabobs, kibbie with London Broil, hummus and baba ghanoush. They have a large variety of European wines and offer wine tastings from different regions. They can accommodate private parties and corporate events. For more information follow them on Facebook or call (727) 216-6221.

# Bar & Restaurant News

## RESTAURANT RECOGNIZED

Mio's Grill and Café in St. Petersburg was recently awarded 12th place on Yelp's Top One Hundred Places to Eat in the U.S. The restaurant, specializing in Turkish and Greek cuisine, won over Yelpers with its baba ghanoush, falafel, Greek salad and baklava.

Without trekking to St. Pete beach-area diners can now enjoy Mio's cuisine while sitting on the water on Sand Key where Chef Borah Calsikan opened his second location. The restaurant is in The Shoppes of Sand Key at 1261 Gulf Blvd.



## NEW COFFEE SHOP COMING TO INDIAN ROCKS

Grove Coffee Shop is replacing what was the Salt Public House at 1309 Gulf Boulevard next to Nekton Surf Shop. This will be the sister store to Grove Surf + Coffee Shop in St. Pete Beach on the corner of Gulf Boulevard and Corey Avenue.

Grove will be an inviting space for friends to meet and enjoy a cup of coffee, tea, or a tasty treat. They will offer a rotating selection of pastries including muffins, croissants, galettes, coffee cake and cookies.

The St. Pete shop is a mixed concept space featuring a retail surf shop and a specialty coffee bar. The Indian Rocks Beach store will focus on the coffee bar and not retail. The owners hope to open in April.



## NEW HOTEL AND RESTAURANT

The Hiatus Hotel at 385 South Gulfview Boulevard planned to begin accepting reservations for June but completed construction early and is now open. The hotel is part of the Curio collection by Hilton.

The on-site rooftop restaurant, Ocean Seven Restaurant, provides world class chef's menu that combines Caribbean and Florida flavors prepared using modern French and American techniques. Enjoy one of their artisanal hand-crafted cocktails or a glass of wine chosen from their expertly chosen collection all while taking in the views of the ocean. Visit Hilton.com for information and reservations.

**RESTAURANT NEWS WANTED** If your restaurant has news or an upcoming event we can include in this News Magazine, please e-mail Lora@MagriffProductions.com or call (813) 361-7376.

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# Migrating, Mating, and Multiplying



By Lora Magnani, Publisher

Spring is here and love is in the air, or is that just hormones? From March through October, many Florida animals migrate, mate, nest, and birth their young. Residents and visitors should take precautions during this time and learn how to stay safe and not interfere with Mother Nature. Here are a few animals to watch for.

The American Alligator's mating season begins April 1st and continues through June. When the colder months have passed, and the gators' body temperatures have risen, so have their libidos. Males can be extremely aggressive during this time, and females become territorial protecting their nests and young. Florida has over one million alligators in its lakes, rivers, and brackish waterways, and people are more likely to come across them during these months. Be careful walking pets and allowing children near water, especially between dusk and dawn, when alligators are hunting for food. If you come across a gator, remember to keep a safe distance of at least 30 feet or more. Never feed an alligator, it is dangerous and illegal. Gators can become accustomed to humans and associate them with food.

With the warmer water on the way, Florida manatees will begin to move out of their winter lagoons and into intracoastal waterways. Their mating season begins in March and ends in September. Don't be surprised if you see a group of ten to fifteen manatees grunting and splashing around in shallow coastal waters. Females are pregnant for 11-12 months. Once they have given birth, they are ready to mate again. This means where there is a female cow her young calf is probably nearby.

Spring and Summer are also peak times for boating, meaning manatees are more prone to injury and death. To avoid incidents, boaters must follow posted speed limits, many of these are seasonal to reflect manatee migration patterns. It is illegal to feed, harass, harm, annoy, pursue, molest, hunt, wound, shoot, or kill a manatee. Clearwater Marine Aquarium's new Manatee Rehabilitation Center opening this Spring.



Watch out for sea turtles as well, March through October is their nesting season. Females begin to come ashore during this time to bury their eggs. Never disturb sea turtles' nests. It is illegal and can harm the eggs. It is important to remember

to keep the beaches free of obstacles such as holes, sandcastles, and beach furniture, giving mother and hatchlings a clear path to the water. It is also important to keep shorelines dark and quiet. Artificial lights and loud noises can disturb nesting females and cause hatchlings to become disoriented when they emerge from the sand. Never attempt to handle sea turtles or hatchlings. If the turtle seems disoriented, stranded, or injured, call the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at (888) 404-3922.

The sea turtle's land-loving cousin, the Gopher tortoise, is another animal on the move during this time. Gopher tortoises are the only tortoise native to Florida. They nest in the open in sunny locations, within a soft mound of sand with a half-moon entrance known as an apron. Gopher tortoises and their homes are protected by state law and are considered a threatened species. Honeymoon Island State Park is known for its gopher tortoise population.

Florida Bobcats' mating season is August through March, peaking in January and February. Beginning in April you can expect more sightings of these tailless kitties since females will be hunting to feed and teach their young. The cubs are weaned in about two months and the "dam," or mother bobcat, will teach them to hunt and defend themselves for eight to eleven months before sending them out into the world. Bobcats are abundant in Florida and have been found in all 67 counties.



Coyotes are most active during the warm summer months, particularly March through August when they are raising their young and searching for food. Avoid walking dogs from dusk to dawn and use a retractable leash. If approached by a coyote, immediately use a noisemaker or shout at the coyote while waving your arms. Human attacks are rare, but as coyotes become less weary of humans it is best to take precautions.

Bouncing baby birds are hatching now as well. Seabirds and shorebirds will build shallow nests on the beach made of shells and sand that are well camouflaged. Do not get too close or touch these birds or nests, this can cause the mother birds to become agitated and temporarily abandon the eggs and chicks. This leaves their young vulnerable to predators, the sun, and foot traffic. Wading birds, such as herons, egrets, and pelicans are also nesting in the mangroves and trees on islands.

With all these Florida animals on the move and multiplying, keep watchful and be careful. If you see an animal in distress or becoming a nuisance do not approach it but call Florida Fish and Wildlife at (888) 404-FWCC. For more information, visit [MyFWC.com](http://MyFWC.com).

## THINGS TO DO NEARBY: OLUSTEE BATTLEFIELD HISTORIC STATE PARK

By Bob Griffin, Historian

Most Floridians have never heard of the Olustee Battlefield, but it is of great historical significance. Located in the Osceola National Forest, it is west of Jacksonville, just off I-10, near Lake City. It is about 200 miles north of Tampa Bay, a three-hour drive. I recently traveled to North Florida and spent a morning at the site of this historic Civil War battlefield.

Olustee is not a city, it is an unincorporated area of Baker County. At one time, the area was a small town called Olustee Station. The word Olustee is from the Creek Indians and means "black water," describing the Olustee Creek. The three-acre Olustee Battlefield Historic State Park is unique as it is surrounded by the Osceola National Forest, which is also headquartered there.

Olustee is the site of the only major Civil War battle fought in Florida. It was one of the bloodiest battles of the war — over 2,800 soldiers died. Thousands more were wounded.

Florida, acquired in a trade with the Spanish in 1821, became the 27th state in 1845. At that time, the politics of enslavement were coming to the forefront. As states were admitted, they either declared to support enslavement or to be a free state. Florida was considered a "slave state" although Florida's slave population was a fraction of the other southern states. The state had few cities, which were primarily along the coast, such as St. Augustine, Key West and Pensacola. Those not living in cities were very poor farmers and cattlemen, living in frontier-like conditions.

The Civil War began shortly after Lincoln's election, when southern states began to secede from the U.S. Florida, the third southern state to do so, seceded on April 22, 1861. It was always the Confederacy's least populated state. The 1860 Census suggested 140,000 people lived in Florida, 63,000 (45%) were "free blacks" or slaves. Florida's estimated base of young white men ages 18-35 available to serve in the military was only about 15,000.

Florida would prove to be significantly important to the Confederacy's cause as the state could provide food - primarily cattle - to the Confederate forces. The center of the Panhandle between Jacksonville and Tallahassee had the best farmland. It was also where Florida's rich plantation owners, who supported the war, lived. It was serviced by a railroad running from Jacksonville's port to Cedar Key.

Governor John Milton, a major

plantation owner in Marianna, hated the "Lincoln Government" and fiercely tried to meet the "manpower quotas" demanded by Jefferson Davis, the President of the Confederacy. His "involuntary service" draft helped send 15,000 young men to the

Confederate Army. One-third, or about 5,000, would die. Milton mandated Florida farmers switch their crops from profitable cotton to food to support the war effort.

Ranchers were forced to stop selling their cattle to Cuba, and instead supply the Confederate troops. This was not popular among the herd owners, and they formed their own army, known as the "Cow Calvary," to protect their herds.

The Confederates used the center of Florida as an avenue to transport the food and cattle to Georgia, and the Union Army knew this, setting up the Battle of Olustee on February 20, 1864, about a year before the Civil War ended.

On February 15, Union troops entered Florida through the port of Jacksonville. After securing the town, they marched west, along the railroad line. The Confederacy's primary Florida military base was in Lake City. Confederate forces learning of the approaching troops requested help from Southern Georgia.

On the morning of February 20th, a Union regiment of 5,500 men, led by General Truman Seymour, received little resistance, until they approached Olustee. 5,000 Confederate soldiers, led by General Joseph Finegan, lay in wait, hiding among the palmettos and pine trees.

For a day and a half, the two armies battled. When it was over, 2,807 soldiers were dead - 1,861 Union and 946 Confederates. Thousands more were injured. The Union troops retreated to Jacksonville where they stayed until the war's end. The Confederates kept control of Florida's interior.

The only major Civil War battle fought on Florida soil was clearly a victory for the south. It caused the Northern authorities to question the necessity of further Union involvement in the "insignificant" state of Florida. The Civil War ended fourteen months later on April 9th, 1865, with General Lee surrendering to General Grant at



the Appomattox Courthouse. When the announcement reached Florida's Governor John Milton, he traveled home to Marianna and killed himself with a shotgun. Abraham Lincoln was assassinated on April 14.

Florida surrendered on April 26 and by May 10 Tallahassee was occupied by Union troops. Florida's Civil War soldiers returned to their farms and cities and began to rebuild their lives. Francis Hendry, one of Florida's largest cattle owners and the Commander of the Cow Calvary, said, "Thank God it's over—one way or the other."

In 1909, the site of the Olustee Battlefield became Florida's first State Park when the Florida Legislature bought its three acres to build a commemorate memorial. In 1912, the surviving veterans of the battle gathered to dedicate the memorial.

Each February, there is a Civil War Reenactment on the weekend corresponding to the date of the battle. It draws over 10,000 thousand participants and watchers. For specific details, visit [BattleofOlustee.org](http://BattleofOlustee.org).

Three U.S. Colored Troops took part in this battle, including the now famous 54th Massachusetts. Originally commanded by Col. Robert Gould Shaw, it was made famous by the 1989 film "Glory." While the movie doesn't mention the Battle of Olustee, portions of the movie were filmed in the park.

The park is located at 5815 Battlefield Trail Rd, Sanderson, Florida. Admission is free, except during reenactment weekends. Visitors can enjoy a picnic or take a walk along the mile-long trail with interpretive signs explaining how the battle progressed. There is also a museum on site with a 20-minute film describing the battle. The park is open from 8am until sunset; the museum is open 9am to 5 pm. For more information, visit [FloridaStateParks.org](http://FloridaStateParks.org) and [FloridaHikes.com/Olustee](http://FloridaHikes.com/Olustee).

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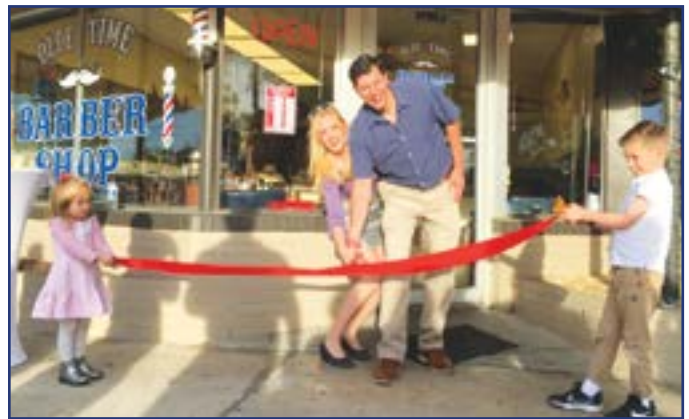
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# Business Briefs



**NEW OLDE BARBER SHOP** Irena Nolasco, owner of Stefanec's South Barber Shop at 772 Indian Rocks Road North in Belleair Bluffs, bought George's Barber Shop in Largo on February 20th. George's has been in business for over 45 years. Irena says it will maintain the nostalgic feel of a true, old fashioned barber shop, but with the new name "Olde Time Barber Shop." It will offer \$20 haircuts with a \$5 discount for seniors - cash only. The hours will be Tuesday through Saturday 8am-3pm. Irena will remain at Stefanec's.

Olde Time Barber shop is located at 11965 Indian Rocks Road and can be reached at (727)315-4900. Follow them on Facebook at Olde Time Barber Shop.

**PLANT CLOSURE** The Coca-Cola Dunedin plant at 427 San Christopher will close at the end of spring. Layoffs will begin in April with 198 terminated employees projected by the end of May. Employees were notified of the closure in February. In 2020, Coca-Cola announced their intent to close the plant and move their operations to a third-party operator, Peace River Citrus Products, in Bartow.

Coca-Cola determined the Dunedin plant, opened in 1945, would be too expensive to update and maintain. The company believes that moving to the Bartow location, a newer facility that recently underwent a \$98 million expansion, will allow them to modernize their manufacturing capacity. The transition should be complete by July.

**COMING SOON** The rumors are true, it is finally happening, Trader Joe's is coming to North Pinellas. You will no longer have to make the drive to St. Petersburg or cross Tampa Bay to shop at the popular neighborhood grocery store chain. At Trader Joe's, you will not find many branded items. Instead, you will discover a store full of unique and interesting products, along with everyday basics under the Trader Joe's label. The new store will be located at 33591 US HWY 19 N in Palm Harbor north of Tampa Road. Staff is working hard to have it open in 2024. Check for updates on TraderJoes.com.

**GAS UTILITY SOLD** Established in 1923, Clearwater Gas System has been providing gas services to the Suncoast area for over one hundred years. It is ranked the fourth largest municipally owned gas system in Florida and 34th out of 1,000 in the US.

The Clearwater city council members put the utility on the market last May and approved the sale of Clearwater Gas System's LP/Propane operation to Suburban Propane last month. The transfer of ownership will take place in April.



# Business Briefs



**SEASONAL RENTALS FOR SENIORS** The Oaks of Clearwater is more than just a retirement and assisted living home, it is an all-inclusive lifestyle for the 55 and older community that sits at 420 Bay Avenue adjacent the intercoastal waterway in Downtown Clearwater. They offer independent living, assisted living, memory care and skilled nursing depending on the level of care one needs. They also have activities such as weekly outings for residents, dances and themed luncheon parties, The staff teaches residents beneficial technology information, hosts bingo and card games, art classes, and more. For individuals wanting to snowbird, The Oaks now offers monthly and seasonal rental plans. Visit their website at [TheOaksofClearwater.com](http://TheOaksofClearwater.com) or call (727) 445-4069 for information.

**SAM ASH STORE CLOSING** After 100 years and four generations, the largest family-owned music store is closing 18 of their 44 locations. Austrian immigrant Sam Ashkynase, founder of Sam Ash Music, opened his first store in Manhattan in 1924. The 18 closures include flagship locations like the Manhattan and Hollywood stores. The iconic Clearwater branch, housed in its distinctive dome-shaped building at 923 McMullen Booth, is also closing. Sam Ash cites the online gear boom and the difficulty of running physical stores in a digital age as the reason for the closures. The North Tampa store at 13133 N. Dale Mabry will remain open.

**NEW NAME FOR THE SOUND** In March, the new amphitheater at 255 Drew Street in Downtown Clearwater got a new name, "The BayCare Sound." Clearwater officials approved the deal with BayCare Health System to rename the 9,000-person venue (4,000 covered seats and 5,000 in lawn space) for \$5.45 million over ten years. Clearwater is the home to BayCare's corporate headquarters, and the healthcare system already has the naming rights to the BayCare Ballpark, home of the Philadelphia Phillies spring training and Clearwater Threshers minor league team. The deal includes two 10-year renewal options totaling a potential thirty years. The consulting group Superlative was hired in 2022 to value the park's assets and seek out naming partners. The group says that the deal could bring \$22.5 million to the city over the term to help cover the \$84 million that was spent on renovations to Coachman Park. In addition to music concerts, outdoor markets, and other events, BayCare intends to offer free wellness screenings, vaccinations and educational events in the park.

## WHY IS MEDIATION THE SMART PATH TO RESOLUTION?

By Jake Hornstein and Greg Hill,  
Our Children Have Rights .Org (OCHR)

Mediation is an increasingly popular method when resolving child custody disputes. When cases involve domestic violence, child abuse, or child neglect, mediation is generally not appropriate. Absent those circumstances, mediation is widely used when resolving disputes for unmarried or divorcing parents navigating child custody. At OCHR, we focus on better educating and equipping parents to make informed decisions, while avoiding major mistakes. Here are some reasons why mediation, instead of litigation, is the smart path to resolution.



**Less Expensive:** One of the most expensive aspects of any legal proceeding is spent on attorneys going to court and preparing for court. Obtaining a chunk of undivided court time can be difficult. Cases are frequently prolonged for further proceedings. More court visits equal more money spent on fees. In mediation, the cost of one mediator is generally shared, usually on a flat fee basis. Approximate Total Cost of Mediation: \$500.00 - \$2,500.00. Approximate Total Cost of Litigation: \$32,700.00+.

**Quicker Resolution:** In some cases, mediation can be resolved in 1-2 days! Litigation can take months, even years, depending on the issues at hand, and the usually jammed packed court calendar.

**Collaborative & Cooperation:** Defining the process with this mindset can be helpful as it may allow both parties to be more receptive to listening and considering each other's opinions. Litigation is contentious and puts people on the defensive. Mediation helps refocus on the issues and remove hostility.

**Education & Enlightenment:** Mediation helps educate both sides on the issues the other finds important. Mediation helps bring the conversation to the forefront, making this the focus to help move things forward. Mediation can be utilized for the entirety of the dissolution matter. Or it can be a great option for narrowing the issues while creating a parenting plan that works for both sides.

We're fortunate to have relationships with reputable certified mediators that we trust referring parents to. In Florida, we recommend Clearwater-based Jill St. Louis, founder of Successful Solution. To learn more about Jill, or to schedule a free consultation, visit [www.SuccessfulSolution.com](http://www.SuccessfulSolution.com).

OCHR is a Pinellas based nonprofit that helps parents more seamlessly navigate their child custody and co-parenting journeys, at no cost to the family. We were recently recognized with the AMPLIFY Clearwater "Community Spirit Award". Support of our mission is vital, and we kindly ask our community to consider a financial contribution to our mission.

Most importantly, if you, or someone you know, needs our assistance, we're here for you. We're on a mission - to protect the rights of children to have access to both responsible parents by providing education, resources, and support services for successful co-parenting. Why? Because Our Children Have Rights.

Contact Jake at [JakeHornstein@OurChildrenHaveRights.com](mailto:JakeHornstein@OurChildrenHaveRights.com) or [www.OCHR.Org](http://www.OCHR.Org). Visit [OurChildrenHaveRights.org/donate](http://OurChildrenHaveRights.org/donate) to help support our mission.

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## LOCAL ARTIST FUSES ENGINEERING WITH ART

By Pete Magnani

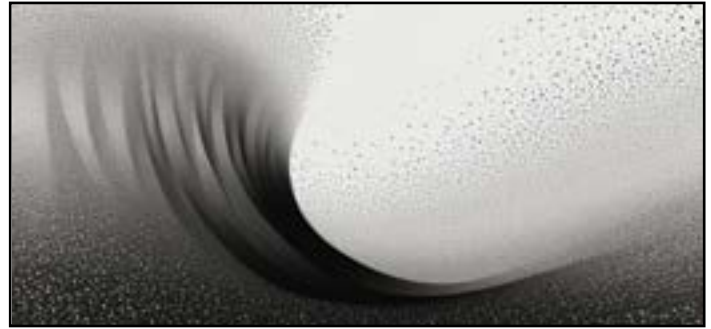
On February 22nd, Creative Pinellas held an opening reception for Nature Pix, a multimedia exhibition by Mikhail Mansion. The artist and software engineer combines computer code with sculpture to “celebrate the creative synergy between nature and technology.” The free exhibit will be displayed at The Gallery at Creative Pinellas, 12211 Walsingham Road in Largo through April 21st.

Early in 2023, Mansion was named Creative Pinellas’ Artist Laureate and given a professional artist’s grant. He envisioned creating an “exquisite data sculpture” driven by wind. “The exhibit is looking at nature through the lens of the computer,” says Mansion. Cameras and weather sensors placed in the nearby Florida Botanical Gardens capture images and data from the wind, water, and sky. The data is fed through a network into the gallery and transmitted into monolithic sculptures that are custom-made LED screens. The gallery floor is transformed by a grid of thirty-nine four-foot by four-foot LED panels into a digital canvas that displays data-driven images.

Speakers throughout the gallery provide an audible complement. “It is a sound sculpture as well,” says Mansion. “There is a real-time presence in spatial audio, so you will be hearing the wind represented in different sounds that move around the gallery space.”

The digital exhibit is surrounded by more than fifty new pieces of Mansion’s visual art. These are a blend of his hand-drawn works and what the artist calls “creative coding,” using the computer as a creative medium to generate art.

Born and raised in St. Petersburg, Mansion studied at the



University of Tampa and the Rhode Island School of Design. He began his career in the U.S. Air Force working on weapons design but became uncomfortable with the potential consequences of his work. Mansion’s engineering background translated well into his primary medium of algorithmic and generative art.

In 2021, Mansion co-founded Fairgrounds St. Pete, an art and technology museum celebrating original Florida stories. His work has been exhibited at venues such as the Smithsonian Design Museum, Miraikan - The National Museum of Emerging Science and Innovation in Tokyo, and the Pyongyang Winter Olympics. He plans to move to Japan this summer to finish his Ph. D. at the University of Tokyo. Mansion published a series of articles on the Creative Pinellas website explaining digital and algorithmic art, as well as using computer code as a creative medium. You can find them at [CreativePinellas.org/Artist/Mikhail-Mansion](http://CreativePinellas.org/Artist/Mikhail-Mansion).

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### TEN YEARS OF SUGAR SAND

The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival returns to bright and beautiful Clearwater Beach through April 14. Fourteen world-class artists craft elaborate sand sculptures from Clearwater’s internationally famous sugar sand.

The Sugar Sand Festival is a 17-day beach wide celebration of Clearwater Beach’s two most notable natural assets: our sugar sand and sunsets. Fourteen master sand sculptors use 1,000 tons of Clearwater Beach sand to create a walk-through art exhibit housed in a 21,000-square-foot structure. The event also raises money for the community and supports the educational initiatives of the Sunsets at Pier 60 Festival.



Lisa Chandler, founder of the Sugar Sand Festival, was introduced to the concept of a walk-through sand sculpture exhibit more than fifteen years prior to the debut of the first Sugar Sand Festival. She and her husband Steve have been business owners on Clearwater Beach for over thirty years and serve in volunteer capacity for both Sugar Sand & Sunsets at Pier 60.

The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival is the largest destination event on Clearwater Beach attracting over 200,000 visitors over 17 days and has a \$30,891,163 economic impact to the community. Sponsorship and activation opportunities are available.

General admission to the sculpture exhibit will be \$14 per person and free for children 3 years old and younger. Discounted tickets for military personnel, police officers, firefighters, teachers and healthcare workers can be purchased for \$10 each on “Frontline Fridays,” which are April 5th and 12th. These discounted tickets will be available at the gate only with proper identification. All other tickets can be purchased online at SugarSandFestival.com.

New this year is “Timeless Tuesdays.” Visitors aged 60 and older can enjoy a discounted ticket price of \$12 each on Tuesdays: April 2nd and April 9th.

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## TURKISH COFFEE: A FLAVORFUL JOURNEY THROUGH TIME

By Melis Sinoglu, Co-Owner of Mio's Grill and Cafe

Turkish coffee, with its rich aroma and centuries-old brewing method, serves as a captivating window into the cultural tapestry of Turkey. Beyond being a mere beverage, Turkish coffee is a testament to tradition, history, and social connection, weaving its way through the annals of time with each aromatic sip.

Legend whispers of the moment when coffee first graced the shores of Istanbul during the vibrant days of the Ottoman Empire. Stories tell of Özdemiş Pasha, the Ottoman governor who, enraptured by the brew during his travels in Yemen, brought back the mystical beans to Istanbul. Thus began the love affair between Turkey and coffee, a romance steeped in the rich history of empires and cultures.



What sets Turkish coffee apart is not just its taste, but the theatricality of its preparation. Finely ground coffee beans are ceremoniously combined with water and sugar, if desired, then brought to a gentle boil. The result is a thick, velvety concoction, rich in flavor and steeped in tradition, poured into delicate cups and served with a flourish.

But Turkish coffee is more than just a drink; it is an experience, a ritual that transcends time. Enter the bustling alleys of Istanbul, where the aroma of freshly brewed coffee mingles with the sounds of lively conversation. Here, nestled amidst the labyrinth of streets, are the legendary Turkish coffee shops – the kiraathanes.

Once the haunt of scholars and poets, these coffeehouses have borne witness to the ebb and flow of history. Here, beneath the dim glow of lanterns, intellectuals debated philosophy, merchants struck deals, and revolutionaries plotted change. The kiraathanes were more than just places to drink coffee; they were sanctuaries of culture and conversation, where ideas flourished over the bubbling brew.

As time marched on, Turkish coffee retained its allure, evolving from a local delicacy to a global phenomenon. Today, the echoes of history resonate in every cup, drawing coffee connoisseurs from around the world to experience its magic.

Turkish coffee is more than just a beverage; it is a journey through time and culture, a testament to the enduring spirit of a nation. From its humble beginnings in the palaces of the Ottoman Empire to the bustling streets of modern-day Istanbul, Turkish coffee remains a symbol of tradition, community, and hospitality. With each sip, we pay homage to the centuries of history encapsulated within this humble brew, keeping alive the legacy of Turkish coffee for generations to come.

For those eager to experience the enchantment of Turkish coffee firsthand, Mio's Grill & Cafe on Sand Key in Clearwater beckons. Nestled amidst the serene surroundings, the Cafe offers an authentic taste of Turkish coffee, crafted with the same care and tradition that has defined this cherished brew for centuries. Join us at Mio's Grill & Cafe, where each cup of Turkish coffee is a journey to the heart of Turkey's vibrant culture.

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# JUST DO IT, BECOME A BIRD NERD

By Lara Milligan, Natural Resources Agent UF/IFAS Extension Pinellas County

“So, there I was minding my own business...”

When these words came out of my teacher’s mouth, we all dropped our pens and tuned in; it was story time! Mr. Weinrich was not only one of the most inspirational, funny, and captivating teachers I ever had, he was also a total bird nerd. As a high school student, I did not think birding was cool. I didn’t get the attraction or the draw. But, as any incredible teacher can do, Mr. Weinrich inspired me to become a bird nerd too. And I’m here to say it is cool! While I’m no Mr. Weinrich, I’m hoping to inspire you today to start your journey to the amazing world of birds.

From large to small, there are birds of all shapes and sizes you can observe. In Pinellas County, in 2023, there were 127 distinct species documented on iNaturalist.org. From 2015-2023, there were 416 species sighted in Pinellas County according to eBird.org.

Birding is a hobby you can do anywhere, any time of year. Pinellas County is blessed with migrants in the fall and spring too, so just when you think you’ve got your resident birds down, a flash of yellow passes by and it’s a bird you’ve never seen before - a migrant!

Once you learn to identify one bird by its call or characteristics, it’s likely you will want to learn more! One becomes two, two becomes four, and the learning never stops. It’s a way to enjoy nature, build a connection with your local environment, and seek out new opportunities to go birding in places you’ve never been. Speaking of places you’ve never been, did you know there is something called the Great Florida Birding and Wildlife Trail? There are 15 sites within Pinellas County alone! We may be the most densely populated county in the state, but we still have some amazing wildlife wonders to see.

So, use your eyes to observe or your ears to listen. If you see a bird, take note of its size, color, any distinct markings, time of year, and habitat. It’s fun to learn bird calls too. You can know what is nearby just by learning which species make which calls. There are endless resources to help you start identifying birds once you gather some information. You can download a smartphone app or pick up some field guides to get started. I am always here as a resource as well. If you’re able to snap a picture or record some audio, I would love to try to help you identify the birds you’re observing.

The best news is this is a hobby you can do for free, at least to start. I highly recommend binoculars if you’re going to get into identifying our smaller songbirds. For me, I always have binoculars within reach because you never know when you will see something cool. Happy Birding!

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**CINCO DE MAYO**

Margaritas, mariachi and mole are what the Cinco de Mayo party is all about. Many assume it commemorates Mexico's independence; however, Cinco de Mayo celebrates the country's victory over the Second French Empire at the Battle of Puebla in 1862, known as El Dia de la Batalla de Puebla. In this battle, the Mexican army of 2,000 soldiers was outnumbered and poorly supplied. They fought from dawn until the early evening when they conquered the 6,000 strong French military.



The holiday is celebrated in the state of Puebla where the battle was fought and not throughout Mexico. It is frequently confused with El Dia de la Independencia, Independence Day, which is celebrated September 16th kicking off Hispanic Heritage Month that runs through October 15th.

In 1862, Mexican President Benito Juarez declared the anniversary of the battle to be a national holiday. The first Cinco De Mayo fiesta in the United States took place in Columbia, California when miners celebrated with food, drinks and a banquet. In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt officially recognized Cinco De Mayo by creating the "Good Neighbor Policy," which was aimed at establishing positive relationships and exchange with Latin American nations.

Americans use this day to celebrate Mexican history and culture, especially in areas with large Mexican American populations. Denver, Colorado is said to have one of the largest "Cinco De Mayo Festivals" nationwide, with celebrations over two days featuring parades, carnivals, and taco eating contests, pulling in an estimated 400,000 people.

If you are looking for a place to celebrate locally, check out a few of these popular bars and restaurants:

- Jake's Coastal Cantina and VIP Mexican Cuisine on Indian Rocks Beach
- Los Amigos, Sante Fe Mexican Grill, and Carmelitas's Mexican in Largo
- Marina Cantina, Senor Tequilas, and Pan Filo on Clearwater Beach
- Casa Tina Mexican Restaurant (block party), Senor Rita's Tequileria, and Carmelita's in Dunedin
- Salty Lime Cantina in Palm Harbor

**END OF AN ERA**

When George Jenkins opened the first Publix store in Winter Hven in 1930, he strived to set his "food Palace" apart from the competition. His vision included air conditioning, electric eye doors, terrazzo floors, and the unique weighing scales. Jenkins claimed more than 5 million customers stepped up to the scale during Publix's first year in business.



After nearly 75 years, the Toledo scales near the front doors at Publix are becoming a thing of the past. The manufacturer ceased production on the iconic scales in 2015, and despite having its own repair facility, Publix is phasing them out due to a lack of available parts.

The scales will remain at legacy locations while they function, but will not be installed in newly-opened stores.



## SAILABILITY HELPS MAKE SAILING A SPORT FOR ALL

By Pete Magnani, *Publisher*

When Claudia Nabel moved to Dunedin from Brooklyn in 1993, she had never been on a sailboat and had no knowledge of the sport. After a friend suffered a head injury at work, he began volunteering at the St. Petersburg Sailing Center, which hosts sailing clinics for Paralympians. Nabel, a retired nurse, offered to help. It was through her volunteering at the center that she met Alder Allensworth.

In 1990, Allensworth was diagnosed with adenoid cystic carcinoma of the lacrimal gland, or tear duct. Despite being given a ten percent chance of survival; she beat the odds but lost her left eye. A sailor since childhood, she returned to the water soon after her recovery.

Ten years later, Allensworth sailed from the Gulf of Mexico around the tip of Florida, and north along the Atlantic coast to raise money and awareness for sailors with disabilities. She sailed 1,200 miles in a 12-foot dinghy and returned to Pinellas County, determined to start a local sailing program for people with disabilities.

In March of 2001, Allensworth, Nabel, and a small group of like-minded people founded Sailability Greater Tampa Bay with the vision that with proper support, physically challenged individuals could sail. At this point, the fledgling, all-volunteer group had no boats and limited funds.

Chris Mitchell grew up in Melbourne, Australia sailing Port Philip Bay on rafts he made into sailboats using his mother's broom handles and bedsheets. He designed and built his first catamaran by age twelve and later a 25-foot cruising yacht. He spent twenty years in Southeast Asia building and modifying boats.



Mitchell envisioned a small sailing vessel on which people of any ability could learn and enjoy the sport, and he designed and built the first Access Dinghy. Sailors on this 7-foot-long boat sat in deck chair at the rear of the vessel facing forward and steered with an intuitive joystick. Its inherent stability and limited sail gave it great stability, and it quickly became the vessel of choice for both novice sailors and those with disabilities.

Sailability's founders reached out to Mitchell and asked if he would send them three boats to start their program, which they would pay for in the future through fundraising. He agreed and sent three Access Dinghies. "By the time the boats arrived from Australia, we had raised enough to pay for them, and we ordered three more," said Nabel. Sailability had their boats, but still had no home.

The Clearwater Community Sailing Center (CCSC) on Sand Key has roots stretching back to the 1950s when the Clearwater Optimist Club got permission from the City of Clearwater to build a "Pram Shed" on Clearwater Beach

to store their fleet of small sailboats. After the Optimist Club dissolved, a sailing organization called the Windjammers got permission from the city for the use of property on Sand Key to build a community sailing center.

Originally run by the City of Clearwater, the CCSC evolved into a privately-run 501c3 charity, and Sailability was given a home at the Center.

Over the years Sailability acquired more vessels, including dinghies, a 23-foot Ensign sailboat, and a wheelchair accessible pontoon boat. "All of these boats have been adapted for people that have special needs," said Nabel. "At one point in the program, we actually had a ventilator-dependent quadriplegic sailing one of our electric boats using his chin."

As their resources grew, so did their ability to provide access to the water. In 2003, Sailability became the first organization in the State of Florida to provide sailing instruction to Special Olympic athletes. They offer instruction to children with autism, adults who suffered strokes, those with limited mobility due to age or injury, and wounded warriors. They also provide Last Wish Sails to those in hospice.



Since 2012, Sailability and CCYC have partnered with the Never Say Never Foundation to provide a unique experience. Once a year, the Foundation brings young amputees from around the world to Clearwater for "Pirate Camp." The children and their families spend three days learning to sail, kayak, and paddleboard while dressed as pirates, all at no cost to participants.

In accordance with Sailability's mission of bringing the sport of sailing to all, access to programs is not limited to those with physical impairments. Children and adults of all ages and abilities can participate in sailing instruction, regattas, and team building programs.

Sailability is made possible through grants, donations, and the efforts of its all-volunteer staff. Not all volunteers are sailors, there are jobs for anyone who wants to donate their time to ensure that the water is accessible to every person. For more information on Sailability including how to donate or volunteer, or call (727) 489-9468 or visit [SailabilityTampaBay.org](http://SailabilityTampaBay.org).

# Community News...

## SAND KEY CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Submitted by Fred Irwin

The Sand Key Civic Association will be hosting the following individuals at their next three meetings as guest speakers:

- April 3rd - Former State Senator Jeff Brandes, founder of Florida Policy Project (FloridaPolicyProject.com) a non-profit, non-partisan organization will discuss the Florida Property Insurance Laws – the chaos and solutions.
- May 1st - Mike Santiago, VP and Director of Milestone Programs, from UES Structural Engineers, will discuss the new Milestone Law requiring all buildings over 3 stories to conduct an Initial Structural Integrity Reserve Study before Dec 31, 2024.
- June 5th - Steve Mezer, Shareholder with Becher & Poliakoff, (BeckerLawyers.com/Professionals/Steven-Mezer) who is one of the most prominent lawyers in the State of Florida with extensive experience in all aspect of condominium or homeowner issues, will discuss condo and home owner's rights and all aspects of the Florida laws pertaining to an HOA or COA.

All meetings begin at 7pm at the Clearwater Community Sailing Center at 1001 Gulf Blvd in Clearwater.

At each event, you will receive an update from the Clearwater Police Department. Refreshments will be served. Visit [SandKeyCivicAssociation.Wordpress.com](http://SandKeyCivicAssociation.Wordpress.com) for information.

## REMEMBER ME NFP

Submitted by Nan Prevost

Remember Me is a nonprofit for suicide prevention and drug overdose. We are a free Narcan distributor with education. Narcan is used to treat opioids overdoses.

We now offer a free Suicide Bereavement Support Group meeting monthly at the Largo Public Library. Our next meetings will be April 16th, May 28th, and June 25th from 6-8pm. This is a group for survivors of suicide only, meant to be a safe and confidential place to share stories with other survivors.



We are now offering our Paddle for Prevention mental health support group paddle every second and fourth Tuesday of the month from 9am-noon. These paddleboard events are for individuals, groups and families to support mental health with peer-to-peer conversations of their experience with suicide. Visit our website [RememberMeNFP.com](http://RememberMeNFP.com) or call (727) 688-4544 for more information.

"Paws Up for Mental Health" is a free mental health support group for families and caregivers of children ages 6 months -12 years of age. We use music, puppets, dance, and educational materials for brain development and establish a mental health pledge. Participants also receive a free book "Gizmo's Pawesome Guide to Mental Health." Classes will be held at the Largo Public library on April 8th, and May 13th from 10:30-11:15am.

## CLEARWATER YACHT CLUB

Submitted by Holly Fulmer

Clearwater Yacht Club hosted the 2024 Gulf Coast Championship last month with over 120 competitors representing the USA, Canada, and the Caribbean. The sailing off Clearwater is world class, with a variety of sea conditions and weather that attract sailors from all over the globe. The regatta weekend was no exception with strong winds, challenging waves and variable weather forcing the athletes to use all their skills as they raced around a 2.5-mile course. The crowds on Clearwater Beach were able to view the two-day spectacle as the three fleets of Laser sailboats sped around the course.

The regatta was sanctioned by the ILCA Class and is part of their Grand Prix Series. The Clearwater Yacht Club (CYC) relied on a large contingent of volunteers, Race Officers, and Judges from the local area, supplemented by officials from across the US and Bermuda. CYC worked with the Clearwater Community Sailing Center to house and launch the ILCA fleet, which was a beehive of activity from early morning until evening. The event draws a large contingent of coaches, family and friends who learn during their visit why the Clearwater-St Pete area is known for the best sailing in the South. CYC is honored to continue our legacy of sailing in the region by hosting these world class events.

The Clearwater Yacht Club is one of the oldest yacht clubs in the United States. Established in 1911, the Club is located on beautiful Clearwater Beach. Clearwater Yacht Club is a gathering place for avid boaters who enjoy a reputation for fellowship and warm hospitality. In the past, Club members participated as members of the US Olympic and Paralympic Sailing teams. Clearwater Yacht Club is a proud member of the Florida Council of Yacht Clubs and the American Council of Yacht Clubs. For more information, visit [ClearwaterYachtClub.org](http://ClearwaterYachtClub.org).

## CLEARWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Historical Society Museum presents "Trailblazing Women of Clearwater" now through May 18th. This is their fifth year celebrating the women of Clearwater and Pinellas County. Honorees are Karleen F. DeBlaker, Dr. Sylvia A. Earle, Anne McKay Garris, Kellis Jean Milner Glenn, Jeannie Shapiro, Barbara Sorey-Love, and Margaret Word Burnside. The museum is open Wednesday-Saturday from 10am-2pm and is located at 610 South Fort Harrison Ave.

The Historical Society will be hosting its 40th Annual Spring Fish Fry on May 4th from 10am-2pm. For more information, visit [ClearwaterHistoricalSociety.org](http://ClearwaterHistoricalSociety.org).

## DUNEDIN HIGHLAND GAMES

The 56th Dunedin Highland Games and Festival is on Saturday, April 6th from 6-8pm at Highlander Park in Dunedin. Tickets are \$25 at the gate or \$20 online in advance. The event is a celebration of Dunedin's history of Scottish heritage with pipe bands, solo piping and drumming competitions, Highland dancing championships, Scottish heavy athletics competitions, and more. For more information, visit [DunedinSAFoudation.com](http://DunedinSAFoudation.com).



## THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX: TRANSFORMING CLEARWATER'S STREETS

By Beth Daniels, President and Betsy Walch, Creative Projects Director  
Clearwater Arts Alliance

Have you noticed that some of Clearwater's busy corners have undergone a colorful metamorphosis in recent years? Thanks to The Clearwater Arts Alliance's (CAA) innovative project "Thinking Outside the Box," once drab and utilitarian traffic signal boxes have now become canvases for local artists, injecting vibrancy and creativity into the city's urban landscape.



Signal Box at Baymont and Mandalay Avenue, Artist: Christopher Still, Title: "Beneath the Waves" Sponsor: SandPearl Hotel

In 2016, CAA embarked on a mission to bring art to unexpected places, starting with the often-overlooked signal box cabinets at busy intersections. The idea was simple yet powerful: transform these necessary but unsightly structures into eye-catching pieces of public art. After researching the best practices and materials from around the state, CAA initiated "Thinking Outside the Box," the first signal box art project in Pinellas County.

To realize this ambitious vision, CAA reached out to the local artistic community. At inception, CAA engaged four local artists to provide captivating images for the initial installations. CAA installed images using a high quality vinyl wrap that will stand up to Florida's outdoor conditions and did some prototype boxes to evaluate the process and materials. The response from the public was very enthusiastic, so CAA forged ahead. In 2017, CAA expanded its efforts and, with funding from the Clearwater Downtown Development Board, installed at least

six more in the downtown core. As momentum increased, the project evolved, and CAA installed a series of images at various entrances into the city and sought sponsors to help defray the costs to pay artists and cover installation costs. As time went on, CAA did further artist calls and the installations now stretch from the northern most part of the city up in Countryside down south to the borders of Largo and Belleair. In one of the most recent phases, CAA has paired artists with neighborhoods where there are few art amenities. Together these residents and artists have created unique images representing their communities, thus fostering a sense of community pride and ensuring a diverse array of artistic expressions. To date, eighteen local artists have had their images showcased on signal boxes. The project has succeeded because of the collaborations with neighborhoods, private sponsorships, city public art grants, and dedicated fundraising and organizational support by CAA. Beyond Clearwater's borders, CAA shared its successful protocols and experience to help both the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance and, more recently, Creative Pinellas, to activate St. Petersburg's and Pinellas County's art-wrapped signal box programs.

"Thinking Outside the Box" has now blossomed into a city-wide art movement. 2023 was a banner year with thirteen new wrappings, including a piece created by a student artist. With over forty signal box cabinets now adorned with unique and vibrant wraps, and another four recycled into yard art, Clearwater has become a gallery without walls. Each signal box tells a different story, showcasing the diverse artistic talents that thrive in the community. The wraps not only serve as a visual treat for residents and visitors but also contribute to the identity and character of different neighborhoods within Clearwater. From abstract designs to nature-inspired scenes, each wrap reflects the artist's individual style while collectively enhancing the city's aesthetic appeal.

In addition to bringing art to the streets, the Signal Box Wrap Project serves as a means of supporting local artists. By paying them for use of their images and providing them with a unique and public platform, CAA helps these artists gain exposure and recognition. The wraps function as open-air galleries, allowing artists to connect with the community and leaving a lasting

impact on the city's cultural landscape. As the Signal Box Wrap Project continues to garner positive attention, CAA remains committed to expanding its reach and is working hard to obtain necessary permits to wrap state and county-owned cabinets within our city limits. If that can be accomplished,

CAA plans to install wraps in many more locations throughout Clearwater, making art even more accessible to all. To support this ongoing initiative and be a part of Clearwater's artistic transformation, CAA invites interested individuals, businesses, and organizations to explore sponsorship opportunities. By partnering with CAA, sponsors not only contribute to the visual enhancement of the city but also align themselves with an artistic and creative community.



Signal Box at Mandalay Avenue and Bay Esplanade, Artist: Brandie Dziegiel, Title: "Nocturne" Sponsor: Clearwater Beach Neighborhood Association

To engage with this vibrant public art scene up close, join CAA on our docent-led public art walks held each third Saturday at 10:30am and 4pm. The next walks will be held on Saturday, April 20th. Participants enjoy a leisurely hour-long stroll in the downtown core while taking in at least twenty unique public art installations: murals, sculptures, art-wrapped signal boxes, pavement art and more. Immerse yourself in the city's rich artistic tapestry while learning about the historic downtown corridor. For tickets and more information, please visit [ClearwaterArtsAlliance.org](http://ClearwaterArtsAlliance.org).

# Community News...

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## ISLAND ESTATES YACHT CLUB

Submitted by Commodore Scott Lefebvre

The men of the Island Estates Yacht Club (IEYC) hosted their annual club event at DeLuca's restaurant in Clearwater on February 24th. This year's theme was Nautical Jeopardy.

The Social Committee has a full slate of events planned for this spring, including a Sunday Brunch at the Island Way Grill, an adventure on the Little Toot out of Clearwater Marina, and a sunset beach party on Sand Key.

The Island Estates Yacht Club (IEYC) was officially started in 1975. We are an incorporated not-for-profit club whose mission is to foster fellowship among its members. Please visit the IEYC website at [IslandEstatesYC.org](http://IslandEstatesYC.org) for more information on the club.

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. Please email [islandestatesyc@gmail.com](mailto:islandestatesyc@gmail.com) if you have any questions.

## CITY OF CLEARWATER EVENTS

### Market Marie

Every second Saturday of the month from 10am-2pm. Start your day by shopping in Coachman Park and supporting local small businesses at Market Marie.

### Purina Pro Incredible Dog Challenge

April 12th and 13th at Coachman Park. This canine athletic event brings together the country's top dogs to compete. Pups will star in various competitions, such as dog diving, flying disc, fetch, agility and more. It is filmed and nationally syndicated.

### Scenes on the Green,

Various dates

Watch a free movie under the stars in Coachman Park.

April 26th at 8pm: Free Willy

May 10th at 8pm: Dora the Explorer

### Social Distortion & Bad Religion With Special Guest The Lovebombs at The BayCare Sound

April 28th at 6pm

### RAIN: A Tribute to The Beatles at The BayCare Sound

May 4th at 7pm

### Clearwater Beach Pool Party

May 24th from 5-7pm

There will be refreshments, pool games and music at 51 Bay Esplanade.

Adult fee: \$6 (without pool card), \$3 (with card)

Youth fee: \$4 (without pool card), \$2 (with)

### Veterans Alliance Memorial Day Festival

May 25th

Honor American veterans at this Memorial Day celebration hosted at Coachman Park.

## 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 month at Belleair Country Club. There is always a guest speaker or other entertainment with cards following for those interested. Please contact Mary at 727-240-5372 with any questions.

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# Community News...



## CHAPEL BY THE SEA

Submitted by Kristen Mann

On February 3rd, the Clearwater community came together to support the largest outreach fundraiser that Chapel by the Sea hosts. Between the participants, generous sponsors, and the exciting auction, the 15th Annual Beachwalk raised close to \$30,000 for its two beneficiaries. This event continues to grow in success and participation every year.

The Palm Pavilion has donated their space as a jumping off location for the Walk for fifteen years in a row and the Chapel is so grateful and thrilled to continue to call them a partner. ClearSky Café caters the breakfast for the participants at the finish line at the Chapel and never disappoints! Bringing amazing energy to the event, once again, was the Pinellas Sheriff PAL Drumline, this year with the addition of cheerleaders!

The recipients of the fundraiser were Hope Villages of America as well as HEP (Homeless Empowerment Program). The two organizations, collectively, do wonderful things to help the community. Hope Villages of America ([HopeVillagesofAmerica.org](http://HopeVillagesofAmerica.org)) focuses on addressing homelessness, housing, and abuse as well as consistently providing a food pantry with special effort around holidays. HEP ([HepEmpowers.org](http://HepEmpowers.org)) offers "a promise of home," where housing and critical support services empower men, women, children, and veterans to get back on their feet and take back their lives. The Chapel is proud to be able to organize a way to support both organizations.

The sponsors are the biggest contributors, and this event wouldn't be successful without them. A very heartfelt thank you to everyone, corporate or individual, who participated. Many of the sponsors have done so for many years and the Chapel and community are so grateful.

The biggest sponsor of the event was the East Shore Resort and Marina, at 473 East Shore Drive. Owners Billy and Terry Day pride themselves on preserving the "original charm of Clearwater Beach." The Days are long-time contributors to the Chapel's fundraiser. This year they went above and beyond in their support. If you haven't had the opportunity to experience this magnetic couple or their lovely resort, make a point to stop by and say hello. You can find them online at [EastShoreResort.com](http://EastShoreResort.com) or read all the raving reviews on [Tripadvisor](http://Tripadvisor.com).

## FLORIDA BOTANICAL GARDENS

Submitted by Allie Fisher

Calling all kids and families — Did you know there are weekly programs held in our Majeed Discovery Garden? Our Children's Garden Educator provides both preschool programs and family programs to the public. Preschool programs consist of story time, imagination time, plant play and sensory exploration. Family programs revolve around reading, sustainability and more! Preschool programs are \$3 per child for Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation (FBGF) members and \$5 for nonmembers. Family programs are \$20 for a family of FBGF members and \$25 for nonmembers. This price includes four people (any combination of kids and adults). All proceeds benefit the FBGF. For more information, visit our website's event calendar at [FLBGFoundation.org/events](http://FLBGFoundation.org/events).



## 8TH ANNUAL REDS, WHITES, & BITES

On April 19th at 6:30pm, the Community Dental Clinic (CDC) will host the annual Reds, Whites, & Bites at the Kapok Special Events Center. This signature fundraiser provides a significant portion of the CDC's operating budget. As the need for dental care continues to rise, so does their need for resources. Honorary Chairs Dr. Lee Ann Brown and Mr. Bradley Meinck, along with the Reds, Whites, and Bites Committee hope you will become a sponsor this year in support of the clinic's efforts to continue providing comprehensive dental health services to the low-income, uninsured of Pinellas County. Join them for an evening of wines, cocktails & delicious bites while experiencing the historic Kapok Tree.

For event details, please visit [CommunityDentalClinic.net](http://CommunityDentalClinic.net) or contact Executive Director Theresa White at (727) 216-6155 ext. 5 or [TheresaA@CommunityDTLClinic.org](mailto:TheresaA@CommunityDTLClinic.org).

## CREATIVE PINELLAS

Submitted by Roman Black

If you live, work, and play in Pinellas County, we want to hear from you! Join us in shaping the future of Pinellas County's arts and culture through this plan by taking a brief survey. We are conducting a countywide cultural plan to support our artists, arts organizations, and residents, as well as the many visitors who come to vacation here. Visit [bit.ly/CurrentACSurvey](http://bit.ly/CurrentACSurvey) to participate.

CURRENT, the Arts Coast Cultural Plan is managed by Creative Pinellas, the county's local arts agency, and funded by Visit St. Pete/Clearwater.

## BELLEAIR BEACH LADIES LUNCHEON CLUB (BLLC)

Belleair Beach Ladies Luncheon Club (BLLC) was founded in 1958 by a group of ladies that wanted to enjoy friendship and local restaurants. The group meets the second Tuesday of the month, October through May.

BLLC is accepting new members. For more information about BLLC, please contact Treasurer, Deborah Hendricks at [dsbrown55@yahoo.com](mailto:dsbrown55@yahoo.com).

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Pinellas County complies with all federal, state and local laws related to persons with disabilities. To request alternate formats of this information, contact the Office of Human Rights at (727) 464-4062 (V/TDD) or email accommodations@pinellas.gov. Funding for this ad was provided by Pinellas County Emergency Medical Services. 1/24

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