

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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FROM FARMER TO TAX ASSESSOR

By Bob Griffin, Local Historian

The process for collecting our property taxes involves many people. The Pinellas County Commission, School Board, and local city governments determine the amount your property is taxed, but it all begins with what the Pinellas County Property Appraiser (formerly known as the Tax Assessor) says your property is worth. The Property Appraiser is charged with establishing the value of every parcel of land in the county. As you can imagine, it is no small job.

Pinellas County was established on January 1, 1912, as Florida's 48th county after a referendum where 1,379 of the 1,884 registered voters voted to approve it. Then Governor Albert Gilchrist appointed Thomas J. Northrup of St. Petersburg to be the county's first Tax Assessor. He was charged with "tracking all taxable property within the county, both real and personal." That first year, Pinellas County's tax roll listed 14,000 taxpayers and 12,313 parcels of property, valued at \$4,854,288.

The Governor also created the office of Voting Registrar (Supervisor of Elections) and Charlie Wilcox accepted an interim appointment to that office in 1916. In 1918, he became the permanent Director and won that department's first election in 1921. Wilcox's job included collecting a one dollar "poll tax" from every voter. After three years, instead of running for reelection, he chose to run for Tax Assessor. He won that election and served for twenty-four years, but not consecutively.



Charlie Wilcox, Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library

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Meet the Artist

Local artist Dee Rodrigues uses glass, sand, and her talent to craft beautiful and unique creations.

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Hidden Gem

Tucked away in Historic Old Northeast St. Pete, Sunken Gardens is an oasis of flora and fauna that dates back to the 1930s.

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Introducing Pension the Police Dog

The Largo police Department welcomes a new member of the force, trained to reduce employee stress and crime victim anxiety.

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CREDITS



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BELLEAIR AREA NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

Inside, you will find articles and local information about the nearby area inside. We call it a Neighborhood Newsletter because it is about your neighborhood. It is mailed to the entire Belleair Area - a total of about 8,000 households - six times a year.

Do you need another copy of this newsletter? You may pick up additional copies at all City Halls, Panera Bread, UPS Store and the Belleair Market. Call (813) 239-6862 if you need more than a few.

We hope you enjoyed our newsletter. We want your input. Did you like this issue? What suggestions do you have for future articles? Call or email us with your comments. Follow us on Facebook for ongoing local news.

Thank you for reading,

Lora and Pete Magnani
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COUNCIL MEMBERS — Vice Mayor Vacant
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Kimberly Shaw Elliott
Vacant • Vacant

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Republican, District 58
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www.Rubio.Senate.gov
Rick Scott 202-224-5274
www.RickScott.Senate.gov

AREA UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE:

Anna Paulina Luna 202-225-5961
Republican, District 13
1201 Gandy Blvd N., St Petersburg

CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS & EVENTS

JUNE

No Fertilizing (June -Sept)
Hurricane Season Begins 1
World Reef Awareness Day 1
1st Responders Night Baycare Ballpark 1
Disaster Prep Tax Holiday 1-14
Blue Crab and R&B Fest Tropicana 1
Belleair Beach City Council Meeting 3
D-Day Remembrance Day 6
Clearwater Garden Club Work Day 8
Hope Expo St Pete 8
World Oceans Day Tradewinds 8
Belleair Commission Meeting 11
US Army Birthday 14
Flag Day 14
Strike Out Cancer Baycare Ballpark 14
CLW Smooth Jazz Ruth Eckerd 14-15
Third Saturdays at Pinewood 15
Father's Day 16
Belleair Bluffs Commission Meeting 17
Juneteenth 19
Bluffs Business Association Mixer 20
Summer Solstice 20
Tampa Bay Boat Show 21-23
St Pete Pride Parade 22

JULY

Freedom Month Tax Holiday 1-31
Fireworks at Largo Central Park 2
Independence Day 4
Bluffs July 4th Picnic 4
Fireworks at Coachman Park 4
Belleair Commission Meeting 9
Bluffs Business Association Mixer 11
Suncoast Ladies Classic St Pete 11-13
Arts and Crafts Bazaar Largo 13
Tarpon Springs Art and Craft Fest 13-14
Bastille Day 14
Belleair Bluffs Commission Meeting 15
National Pet Fire Safety Day 15
MLB All Star Game 16
Christmas in July Baycare Ballpark 19
Third Saturdays at Pinewood 20
Summer Olympics Begin 26
Parents Day 28
Back to School Tax Holiday Begins 29

AUGUST

First Preaseason Football Game 1
US Coast Guard Birthday 4
Fireworks at Baycare Ballpark 17

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Did You Know



NEW STAMPS Two new 68¢ Forever postage stamps will be available in June. Last March, The United States Postal Service (USPS) Stamp Showdown invited social media users to vote for their favorite among eight stamps in a bracket system designed like those used by the NCAA's March Madness. The conservation-themed stamp "Protect Sea Turtles" won first place and will be released on June 11th. The eighteen-stamp sheet features photographs of six unique sea turtle species taken by various photographers.

"Carnival Nights" received second place, showcasing the energy and color of a nighttime summer carnival. These sheets of twenty stamps will be released June 6th.

A panel of stamps featuring images captured by iconic photographer Ansel Adams was released in May. The panel features sixteen of Adams' most famous images in his "straight photography" style, which depicts the scene or subject in sharp focus and detail.

SALES TAX HOLIDAYS Shoppers will have several opportunities to save on sales taxes this summer. The "Disaster Preparedness" holidays will be held June 1st – 14th and August 24th – September 6th and includes items like flashlights, batteries, plastic sheeting, and portable radios. "Back to School" will be July 29th - August 11th with no sales tax on certain school supplies, clothing, learning aids and computers.

July is "Freedom Month," with no sales tax due on admissions to concerts, fairs, and other events. Certain boating, camping, and general outdoor supplies are also tax-free.

The "Skilled Workers" event will take place September 1st – 7th and includes certain tools, safety equipment, and toolboxes used by trade workers.

Each tax holiday has limitations on products and their prices. Visit FloridaRevenue.com/Pages/SalesTaxHolidays.aspx for detailed information.

OUR NEXT ISSUE IS AUGUST If you need another copy of this magazine, pick up one up at all City Halls, Panera Bread, The UPS Store and Belleair Market. If you need more than a few, call (813) 361-7376.

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INTRACOASTAL BOATHOUSE STILL AVAILABLE

The historic property at 81 Gulf Blvd was offered for sale in April and is currently listed at \$2,499,500. The home was built by Harry Ulmer, one of Largo’s pioneers, and was completed in 1912. The original two-story structure featured three boat wells accessed from the Intracoastal Waterway. It was bought by local realtor Norman Bie in 1938 for \$300. Bie remodeled the house, closing off the wells and adding a third story, increasing the home’s size to 3,300 square feet. Bie’s family sold the property last year for 1.5 million.

OPERATION MEDICINE CABINET Drop off your expired or unused medications during business hours at Operation Medicine Cabinet drop boxes located throughout Pinellas County.

Operation Medicine Cabinet aims to Provide Awareness about prescription drug abuse, protect children from accidentally ingesting medications, and provide the public with a safe, proper way to dispose of medications.

Safely remove medication from bottles and place in ziplock bags. Remove labels from bottles and destroy them. Find a dropbox near you at PCSOWeb.com/omc.



OTTER OVERLOAD Clearwater Marine Aquarium is pleased to announce the arrival of Opie, a young male North American river otter, to its Otter Oasis. Opie joins the CMA family, where he will reside with Walle and Boomer, who have been captivating visitors since their arrival in 2012 and 2018, respectively. After several weeks of acclimation behind the scenes, Opie has been introduced to Walle and Boomer and guests can see him adjust to his new habitat. Opie’s name holds a special significance, as it pays tribute to the late Mary Opall, the director of Nature World Wildlife Sanctuary, a 501c-3 organization dedicated to rescuing, rehabilitating, and releasing injured or orphaned wildlife. Mary, who passed away after being diagnosed with stage four cancer, dedicated her life to wildlife conservation and played a pivotal role in the sanctuary’s success. For more information about CMA and its newest resident, visit CMAquarium.org.

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Charlie Wilcox, Continued



Charlie Wilcox and Staff, Courtesy of Heritage Village Archives & Library

In 1924, Charles (Charlie) Albert Wilcox, a longtime area resident became the County's third Tax Assessor / Appraiser. Charlie was born in New York in 1889; his father, Edward Everett Wilcox, moved the family to the Anona area in the early 1900s.

Edward bought many acres of land east of Indian Rocks Road. A railroad ran to the Belleview Biltmore on its way to St. Petersburg. It had a short spur to take people to Indian Rocks Beach, through Anona. Edward built a small house near that railroad, where he also planted a citrus grove and opened a sawmill. It was near today's Anona United Methodist Church.

When the Indian Rocks Bridge opened, the spur was discontinued, and the tracks were converted into a road, first called "Railroad Road" and later renamed "Wilcox Road."

When the Wilcox family first moved to Anona, few people lived there. The earliest settlers were the McMullens, Lowes, Whitehursts, Hammocks, Meares, and Wilcoxes. As primarily the only families, they frequently married each other.

Charlie and Ruth Hammock went to school together and "knew each other forever" doing all the things kids did back then - swimming, picnicking, fishing, taking trips to towns, and attending fairs and dances. Ruth's father was a Hammock, her mother a Whitehurst. Charlie and Ruth married in 1910, moved into his father's house and quickly became known as the "Anona Wilcoxes."

Charlie and Ruth had seven children, all of whom went to Anona Elementary and later Clearwater High School.

Charlie followed his father's lead and bought land in the Anona area. Soon he had one hundred and sixty acres in the area. Charlie worked at his father's sawmill, but soon after Ruth and Charlie were married, he was in a terrible accident there. He was taken to Morton Plant Hospital, where he almost died; they were forced to amputate his left arm.

After the accident, he could not do the work required at the sawmill and instead took a job in the office of a canning plant. There he learned how to run a business. Mary Wilcox Rogers, one of Charlie's daughters, once said, "It was said he could do more things with only one arm, than most men with two."

Charlie loved to grow things. He always had citrus groves and loved the fruit business. He eventually opened Wilcox Nursery on Indian Rocks Road for his two sons, Everett and Norman. His son David opened a florist shop in the same building.

When Charlie was appointed to the office of Voting Registrar, he needed to live closer to downtown Clearwater, and moved the family—all seven kids. "Clearwater was such a wonderful little town to grow up in," said his wife, Ruth.

Soon after the move, Charlie was elected to the office of County Tax Assessor, where he introduced several changes, which have endured today. The foremost was to send a notice to taxpayers reminding them to file for

homestead exemption to help reduce their overall tax.

Charlie lost reelection in 1929 to Republican opponent Herschel Sterling. The two ran against each other again in 1933, Charlie won and continued to serve until he retired in 1949. Herschel Sterling went on to serve from 1949-1961.

Charlie and Ruth's income primarily came from his government job and the citrus groves (in good years). They were said to have lived very frugally and sent all seven children to college.

Upon Charlie's retirement, they sold their Clearwater house and moved back to Anona. He began building his dream house on the northwest corner of Indian Rocks and Josephine Roads, across the street from Wilcox Nursery. Unfortunately, in 1951, during the construction, Charlie died at the early age of 62. Ruth finished the house and lived there until 1980, when at the age of 91, she too passed away.

At the time of his retirement, Charles A. Wilcox had been Pinellas County's fourth and sixth Tax Assessor. He served thirty-two years in office, eight as the Voting Registrar (1916-1924) and 24 years as Tax Assessor (1925-1929 and 1933-1949). He won six elections.

In 1974, the voters changed the name from Tax Assessor to Property Appraiser as the office doesn't levy taxes — others determine the tax rates. The Property Appraiser determines the value of the property.

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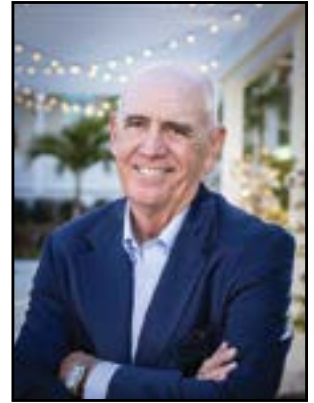
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IT'S A FAMILY THING - \$80 TRILLION

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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The information herein is general and educational in nature and should not be considered legal or tax advice. Tax laws and regulations are complex and are subject to change.

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Congratulations to the Graduates!

Anona Elementary 5th Grade Graduating Class with (from left to right) Teachers Cali Kulavic, Caroline Dunagan, Davis Hall, Peyton Hawk, Principal Denise Ballard, Assistant Principal Ann Palmer, and School Safety Officer Andre Simes (Not Pictured - Kristen Clanton – Ledbetter)

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Bar & Restaurant News

NEW RESTAURANT AND VENUE The location at 752 S. Gulfview Blvd will be the first for Hogg Daddy's Beach Bar & Grill. Gerstles Owner Erik White partnered with Jeff Hawks in November 2023 to start a new "beach concept."



"The success of Gerstles was the perfect foundation for us to come in and focus on a concept that had been in the making for 10 years," said Jeff Hawks. "My love for Hogfish and Memphis BBQ got it started and we will be launching a never-done-before Specialty Oyster Menu."

The menu includes "The World-Famous Boss Hogg Sandwich"(Hogfish), Seafood Margarita (shrimp, crab, and scallops diced up in salsa), and Beach Nachos on plantain chips. Hogg Daddy's will smoke its own pork and brisket, with Memphis-style barbecue sauce.

The venue has capacity for large events with live entertainment, the spring break party had over 1000 attendees. Owners hope the location becomes a hotbed for emerging musicians and artists.

Hogg Daddy's Beach Bar and Grill is located at 752 S. Gulfview Blvd., Clearwater Beach.

MAKEOVER AND MARTINIS Some area Village Inn restaurants are getting a new look along with beer, wine, and full liquor bar. Franchise owner Dan Lehan implemented the changes at his St. Petersburg, Clearwater, and Oldsmar locations, and says the changes will be implemented at all nine of his restaurants, including the Largo location at 13105 Walsingham Road.

The menu has some updates as well, but has retained most customer favorites such as breakfast skillet, patty melts, and chicken-fried steak. New features include lemon artichoke chicken, albacore tuna melt, and chocolate hazelnut banana crepes. The classic pie menu will also remain.

For now, the nearest updated location is the Clearwater restaurant at 2659 Roosevelt Blvd. View the new menu online at Villagelnn.com/Clearwater-FL.

CLOSED Orlando-based seafood chain Red Lobster closed 87 locations across 27 states last month after considering filing for bankruptcy protection. Sixteen Florida restaurants were shuttered, including two in Tampa and the Largo location at 10500 Ulmerton Road.

NEW RULES FOR DELIVERY SERVICES A new law requires significant changes to food delivery service in Florida. It requires food delivery platforms like Doordash and UberEats to provide customers with an itemized bill including tax, service charges and anticipated date and time of delivery.

The law also mandates that delivery providers give restaurants a method of communicating with the consumer for up to two hours after the order is picked up for delivery. Also, delivery platforms may not alter a food service establishment's price without a written agreement and must remove a restaurant listing within ten days upon the establishment's request for removal.

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Bar & Restaurant News

NEW ON THE BEACH

Chaser's North Beach, formerly Senor Tequilas, opened in April. Owner Bill Rudy, a Wisconsin native, started visiting Clearwater beach a little over three years ago and says, "it just feels like home."

After buying a home in Belleair Beach he brought his passion and vision for an elevated sports bar to Clearwater Beach's North Beach.



Chaser's has Happy Hour from 3-6pm every day and live music Thursday-Saturday. They offer 18 beers on tap, burgers that are hand-made to order, homemade wing sauces, and of course Wisconsin's famous cheese curds. Chaser's is located at 486 Poinsettia Avenue next door to the public parking garage. The restaurant is open daily at 3pm. Follow them on Facebook or call (727) 386-9686 for more information about specials and upcoming entertainment.

MAINE COMES TO BELLEAIR BLUFFS Dan Beck grew up in Annapolis, a fishing community in Maryland. His career as a restaurant seafood buyer sourcing fresh Maine lobster led Beck to open his first Mason's Famous Lobster Rolls in Annapolis. The concept is simple – "a taste of luxury without the pretension." Mason's now has over 30 locations in 12 states, Washington, D.C., and Milan, Italy.

The newest Florida location opened in Belleair Bluffs last month. In addition to classic chilled or warm lobster and shrimp rolls, it offers salads, lobster bisque, clam chowder, and a kids' menu.

Mason's Belleair Bluffs is located at 2907 West Bay Drive. View the menu and order online at MasonsLobster.com.

CONGRATUALIONS

Visit St. Pete-Clearwater asked residents and visitors to rank their favorite beaches, hotels, restaurants, and attractions. Salt Rock Grill won Best Restaurant in the "\$\$\$" category. Island Way Grill won the award for Best Brunch.



Frenchy's Rockaway Grill took the prize for Best Grouper. Clearwater Marine Aquarium won Best Family Activities. View the winners at VisitStPeteClearwater.com/bestthingstodo.

NEW HOURS Indian Rocks Café Deli and Market on 14th Avenue has changed to summer hours. The café is open from 8am-2pm, and the market is open from 8am-5pm. Order online at IndianRocksCafe.com or call the store at (727) 475-9949.

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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A Journey to the Mediterranean...



By Pete Magnani, Publisher

Occasionally a traumatic event can turn into a fresh and successful new beginning. Artist Dee Rodrigues found her calling after such an experience. Rodrigues was raised in Southington, Connecticut and began her career as a surgical assistant at a dental practice. While visiting the beachside town of Old Saybrook, she saw a stained glass piece in the window of a small shop and went in to buy it for a wedding gift. The owner said he could sell the artwork to her, but also mentioned that he taught a four-day class on making stained glass art. If she took the class, she could make the gift herself. Rodrigues returned for the class, and her journey as an artist began.

When the practice she worked for closed, Rodrigues moved to Florida. After working in the dental field as a temporary employee for two years, she opened her own temp agency, and eventually accumulated five houses that she rented out. She learned to do her own maintenance, including how to use a trowel for grouting and stucco. She continued developing her growing talent for stained glass and other forms of art.

Several years later, Rodrigues desired a career change and went to work for Publix. She started in the deli but hoped to eventually use her trowel skills decorating cakes in the bakery. After several years of unsuccessful attempts to transfer, she quit and took a job at a small mom and pop bakery. On her first day, as she was dipping a spatula into a pot of boiling water, the pot tipped over, and she sustained third-degree burns to her leg and foot.

During the eleven months of convalescence, Rodrigues decided it was time to try and make her art into a career. "I looked into myself, didn't like what I found, and I decided to change," said Rodrigues. "With baby steps, guided by the heart, I went after the life I should have had years before."



In 2010, she found a studio at the Institute for Creative Arts in Dunedin and founded DelorGlassDesign, producing stained glass and sand art, mosaics, and sculptures. She creates seascapes and nautical artwork, music-themed pieces like guitars and concert scenes, and stained glass portraits. Steve Tyler, lead singer of the band Aerosmith, is proud owner of *Miss Dream On*, pictured below.

Rodrigues' talent is particularly obvious in her quirkier, more unique work. *Themba*, pictured to the left, combines sculpture, metalwork, stained glass, and paint depicting a South African tribal woman from the Ndebel Tribe. It is mounted on a beautiful cedar base. Rodrigues hopes to see the statue in an African cultural history museum as an education display.

In 2012, Rodrigues was given another opportunity to put her trowel skills to use. She was commissioned by the Clearwater Marine Aquarium to make the first piece for its *Clearwater's Dolphins* exhibition. She created *Hunter*, decorating the six-foot tall fiberglass dolphin with swirls of stained glass pieces. The white on the front of the sculpture represents the cap of a wave. "My idea for *Hunter* was a beautiful dolphin coming up from the waves, searching for peace and hope," she said. After the exhibition, *Hunter* was displayed around the state including a stint in Tallahassee at the Florida House of Representatives. It now resides on Broadway Avenue in Dunedin. Rodrigues was later commissioned to make two more dolphins for the Wyndham Grand hotel on Clearwater Beach, each dolphin is covered in more than 5,000 pieces of glass.

In addition to creating art, Rodrigues teaches aspiring artists to create their own stained glass mosaics. She particularly enjoys teaching students with ailments. She finds the level of concentration needed to create these intricate pieces often focuses their attention on the work and not their affliction.

After twelve years at the Institute for Creative Arts, Rodrigues had to vacate her studio when the building was repurposed. She was fortunate to find a space suitable for her equipment in The Alley at Belleair Bluffs. The new studio and gallery is open Thursday-Monday from 11am-4:30pm. View her work and get information on classes online at DelorGlassDesign.com.



WHAT IS EDLER LAW?

By Theodore Schofner, Esq.

Legal problems that affect the elderly are growing in number. Our laws and regulations are becoming more complex. Actions taken by older people about a single matter may have unintended legal effects. To avoid future problems, it is important for attorneys dealing with the elderly to have a broad understanding of the laws that may impact them in any given situation. Unfortunately, this job is not made easy by the fact that Elder Law encompasses many different areas of practice, and most attorneys do not specialize in every one of these areas. When an attorney says he or she practices Elder Law, find out what kind of legal matters he or she handles. You will want to hire an attorney who regularly handles matters in the area of law of particular importance to you. Many estate planning attorneys who perform excellent work in the estate planning arena have little or no experience in the areas of asset protection and qualification for Medicaid in the Nursing Home or Assisted Living Facility.

Attorneys who primarily work with the elderly bring more to their practice than just expertise in the appropriate area of law. They bring to their practice a knowledge of the elderly that allows them and their staff to ignore the myths relating to aging and the competence of the elderly. At the same time, they will take into account and empathize with some of the true physical and mental difficulties that often accompany the aging process. Their understanding of the afflictions of the aged allows them to determine more easily the difference between the physical versus the mental disability of the client. They are more aware of real-life problems, health and otherwise, that tend to crop up as a person ages. All of

these things will hopefully make you more comfortable when dealing with them and ease your way as you try to resolve your legal problem.

I'm afraid we are going to lose all of our hard-earned money to the nursing home.

Too often, a lifetime of savings and hard work ends up in family impoverishment because of inadequate planning during life. Find out the facts. Then take the necessary steps to protect your family's assets. After all, you spent your entire life earning them.

What can I do to protect my assets and avoid impoverishment?

Two words: Effective planning. There are several legal alternatives to the "spending down" of a family's entire life savings in a Nursing Home or Assisted Living Facility. We can help determine the best alternative for any individual by: Analyzing family financial resources and implementing proper planning to qualify for Medicaid assistance; Preparing the formal Medicaid application and following clients through the Medicaid process; and Preparing Qualified Income Trusts (QIT) to successfully overcome "income cap" problems. Very few individuals can afford to privately pay for a Nursing Home facility over the average stay of two and one-half years in a Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF), making Medicaid qualification a necessity. It is important that you work with a qualified Elder Law Attorney who has experience in this complex area of the law (that is filled with traps and mine fields for the unwary) to ensure that an individual and family do not make critical mistakes that will prevent the applicant from ever being able to qualify for Medicaid benefits.

You can reach Theodore Schofner, Esq. at the Schofner Law Firm, 2117 Indian Rocks Road S. in Largo, 727-588-0290.



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THROW SOME FUN INTO YOUR DAY WITH DISC GOLF

By Nathaniel Jenks, local author

If you are seeking a new and challenging outdoor activity for the whole family, look no further than disc golf. The Largo/Clearwater area is blessed with three excellent courses and a great shop to buy discs and accessories. Once you are properly equipped, it is free to play!



Like regular ball golf, disc golf has a par-based scoring system. You throw the disc from a concrete tee pad and shoot toward a pin, which in the case of disc golf is a metal basket with chains hanging from it to stop the flight of the disc. There are a wide variety of discs for long drives, mid-range shots, and putting.

Aaron Tishim is the owner of Saltwater Crew Disc Golf Pro Shop, which is located directly across from Taylor Park beneath Your Pizza Shop on 8th Ave SW in Largo. After running local events and doing business online for several years, Aaron was able to establish his brick-and-mortar business in the space formerly occupied by the golf pro shop for the now-defunct Pinecrest golf course.

"I first started playing disc golf 20 or so years ago. I found some discs, found a course, and just threw around with friends," says Tishim. "We'd tow our kids around in wagons to get them outside. You don't have to be a super-advanced player to enjoy the game."

With the Taylor Park disc golf course right across the street, you can pick up some discs at Saltwater Crew, play a round of golf, and then relax with pizza and beverages at Your Pizza Shop. "Taylor Park is pretty scenic," says Tishim. "The thing that many people love about Taylor is that it has multiple pin positions, so it changes regularly."

The other two courses are in Clearwater off Drew Street on opposite sides of US 19. Cliff Stephens Park is just east of the highway and connects to a string of parks via a picturesque walking/biking trail. "Cliff Stephens is an iconic course here. It has a very good mix of shots, with a lot of water hazards and different challenges," Tishim says. Cliff Stephens is also the home course of 12-time World Champion Ken Climo.

On the west side of US 19, only about a mile away, is NE Coachman Park. In Tishim's opinion, "it's a fun course if you're a lesser-developed player, so you probably won't lose many discs."

There is also a beginner-friendly, 9-hole disc golf course at Hammock Park in Dunedin, and a more advanced course at Sheffield Park in Oldsmar.

Whether it's just a fun outing with family and friends, or you want to become a competitive player, disc golf is a fantastic way to be active in a peaceful park setting.

Disc Golf Shop

- Saltwater Crew Disc Golf Shop – 1200 8th Ave SW Largo

Local Courses

- Taylor Park – 1100 8th Ave SW Largo, FL 33770
- NE Coachman Park – 1120 Old Coachman Rd Clearwater
- Cliff Stephens Park – 901 Fairwood Ave Clearwater
- Hammock Park – 1900 San Mateo Dr Dunedin
- Sheffield Park – 1923 Cutty Bay Ct Oldsmar

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SUNKEN GARDENS – A WALK BACK IN TIME

By Becky Griffin, local author

Nestled in the heart of St. Petersburg, Sunken Gardens' four acres of botanical gardens in the Historic Old Northeast neighborhood, is the area's oldest museum. This 100-year-old garden boasts some of the oldest tropical plants in the region, and its storied history as a sinkhole turned sanctuary is a testament to its enduring appeal.

For many, Sunken Gardens evokes a sense of nostalgia—a connection to a bygone era that offers a space for reflection and relaxation. It has long been a haven for both nature enthusiasts and those seeking a tranquil escape from city life.

The world-famous botanical attraction was created by a plumber named George Turner, Sr. who had moved to the area from Jacksonville in 1902, at the age of 21. George and his wife Eula bought the property in 1911 with plans to make it the site of their family's home.

The property had a small pond, really nothing more than a sinkhole, called "Curlew Pond" that was about ten feet below sea level. It caused the property to flood and be swampy. Using his plumber's background, George created an elaborate maze of clay tiles (still in use today) that functions as a drainage system. He drained the pond leaving a rich mucky soil perfect for gardening. His garden was a real "sunken" garden, below both sea and street level.

Eula shared in George's love of gardening, and together, the Turners planted vegetables, citrus, flowering trees and bushes. They soon began to add tropical plants such as papaya and banana trees. Their gardens flourished and Turner's hobby became their passion. Most Sunday's, neighbors would stop by to stroll in the gardens, hoping to bring home a bit of their bountiful crops.

George retired as a plumber and devoted his time and attention to the gardens. At the original entrance to the garden, he opened a small nursery and vegetable stand. They sold roses and other plants along with fruits and vegetables grown in the gardens.

Over time, more exotic plants replaced their vegetables and in the early 1930s, the Turners began to charge fifteen cents for garden tours that included hundreds of azaleas, gardenias, and exotic plants and over 35 types of palm trees. Sunken Gardens had become an official roadside attraction.

The Turner's children and grandchildren continued the work of creating the



unique tropical garden with its flowing ponds. After George's death in 1961, two of his four sons, Ralph and George Jr., operated the gardens. The property eventually passed to Ralph's three sons.

Through the 1970s, over 200,000 people toured the gardens each year wanting to see the exotic plants and famous flamingos. A gift shop was built that was billed as the "world's largest" gift shop. Bird shows were added featuring trained parrots. Celebrity sightings and beauty pageants were weekly occurrences.

Ranked as one of the top ten Florida attractions, you could find Sunken Gardens billboards lining the Southeast's highways. It helped St. Petersburg earn its reputation as a tourist destination.

Unfortunately, with the birth of Disney World and other theme parks, by the early 1980s, the popularity of the Old Florida attractions began to wane, and attendance began to drop. The family decided it was time to sell the property and in 1999, voters approved the City of St. Petersburg's purchase of Sunken Gardens to preserve the garden for the community. On June 27, 2002, it was added to the U.S. National Register of Historic Places

Each year thousands of visitors still enjoy the serene gardens, over 100 years after George Turner Sr. began his hobby. It is one of the last remaining Florida roadside attractions, and home to some of the oldest tropical plants in our area. Many of the Turner's original plants are still thriving.

Today, a visit to the gardens allows visitors to meander the paths through a living collection of thousands of plants, waterfalls, and a koi pond. There is always something in bloom among the tropical plants and lush gardens.

The garden is also home to a dozen rehomed tropical parrots. They are all rescues whose owners either died or were no longer able to care for them.

In 2016, the Sunken Gardens Forever Foundation acquired a flock of 20 young Chilean Flamingos. They joined the two remaining flamingos, George and Lucy, from the original 17-member flock that was acquired by the Gardens in the 1950s.

The Sunken Gardens Forever Foundation also donated \$100,000 towards the funding of the new History Center at the original 1940 entrance. The building was previously home to the Garden's tropical birds. The birds were moved, and the building was restored. The exhibits feature the Gardens' history and its role as a Florida roadside attraction.

The Gardens has grown into a cultural hub, with events and workshops that invite community involvement. Events include plant sales, workshops, orchid festivals, and yoga. Most events are included with your admission ticket. Sunken Gardens is also a popular place for weddings and private parties, offering a unique entertainment experience. The historic Garden Room, located in the main building overlooking the gardens and built in 1926, is a popular spot for luncheons, banquets, and receptions.

If you plan to visit, Sunken Gardens is located at 1825 4th Street North, St. Petersburg. It is open Monday through Saturday: 10 am to 4:30 pm and Sunday: Noon to 4:30 pm. The last admission is sold at 4 pm. Sunken Gardens is closed Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day.

The cost of admission is, Adults: \$15, Seniors (62+): \$12 and Children (2-12): \$6.

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Business Briefs

THE BIG TEN Belleair Market opened in 1971 at 510 Indian Rocks Road, but it was ten years ago in April 2014 that owner Chris Scott took the helm and changed the name to Belleair Market - Your Corner Store. Since then, he has made many changes including the installation of hardwood floors, granite counter tops, a huge walk-in humidor to find that perfect cigar, and added a wide variety of wines, and over 375 craft beers.

The market carries rotisserie chickens, steaks for grilling, sandwiches made to order with Boars Head deli meats and cheeses and much more, including their award-winning Cuban sandwich. Belleair Market also offers a catering menu for large parties and events, view the menu and weekly specials at BelleairMarket.Dudaone.com or call (727) 584-3697 for more information.



NEW DEPARTMENT STORE The Largo Mall is opening a Burlington Store on June 28th. Burlington is a major discount retailer offering deals on customers' favorite brands for the entire family and home at up to 60% off other retailers' prices. The store includes clothing for ladies, men, kids, and babies along with beauty items, shoes, accessories, home décor, and gifts. Largo Mall is located at 10500 Ulmerton Road Suite 310. Visit Burlington.com or call (727) 625-8944 for more info.

PART OF 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. The transfer of ownership took in April.

Clearwater Gas System will continue to provide natural gas service to northern Pinellas and Pasco Counties.

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 to the Intracoastal 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 or call (727) 445-4069 for information.

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

Business Briefs

SAY CHEESE Happy fifteenth anniversary to Blue Merle Pet Photography. Originally from New York City, owner and photographer Yamile Haibi relocated to Largo in 2001, starting Blue Merle in 2009. The specialty studio is dedicated to photographing "pets and their people" and raising awareness to help animals in need.



Haibi began her career as a volunteer for animal rescues taking photographs of pets in need of homes, love, and a family of their own. That experience led Yamile to earn a certificate in Animal Psychology and Pet Behavior. Clients began to commission her to photograph them and their pets. Her photographs have been on display at the Cleveland Photo Fest in 2022 and 2023 at the Bostwick Design Art Initiative.

If you are interested in having a fun adventure in pet photography with candid and playful images that capture your pet's personality and the loving bond you have, call or text Yamile at (305) 801-6232. For more information visit BlueMerlePhoto.com or email Info@BlueMerlePhoto.com.

DOGGIE DELUXE DAYCARE As of April 6th, Posh by Lucky Puppies has a new home. The owner, Jennifer Elder, has moved from her Dunedin location after four years on Grant Street to a larger, more spacious spot at 1300 N. Fort Harrison Avenue in Clearwater. Posh by Lucky Puppies is a boutique dog daycare that specializes in sun-filled, fun-filled experiences in a safe and nurturing environment. They offer day stays, extended stays, and doggie birthday PAW-ties. For more information go to PoshByLuckyPuppies.com or call (727) 440-3355. Follow them on Facebook and Instagram.



ART AND FOOD Local artists Donna Kay Malloy and her daughter Alexis Novak are teaming up for the Spring Showcase 2024 at the Café in Nature's Food Patch at 1225 Cleveland Street.

Malloy is longtime Town of Belleair resident and holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts and summa cum laude from the International Academy of Design and Technology in Tampa. "Outside the Lines" is the theme for her portion of the exhibit and

includes the themes of nature, design and mixed media.

Alexis Novak, a Florida native, is fascinated by all things wild in nature like flowers, horses, trees, and her three kids. Novak's theme for her portion of the exhibit is "Vignettes of Wild Wonders."

The mother-daughter duo's collaboration of colorful acrylics and photography is on display until July 5th. All art is available for purchase and each artist will donate 20% of their sales to a charity of their choice.

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HISTORY OF THE TAX APPRAISER'S OFFICE

by Bob Griffin, Historian and Mike Twitty, Property Appraiser
 The Property Appraiser, which once was known as the County Tax Assessor, has the legal responsibility to estimate the market value of all real and tangible personal property in Pinellas County, administer exemptions, and appraise the property accordingly. The purpose of this is to provide taxing authorities with accurate values for taxing purposes.

A property's market value is determined to be the "estimated sale price." There are several methods of doing this. With this information, the Property Appraiser's office can place a "fair market value" on every piece of property in Pinellas County.

Originally, the only taxes the State of Florida collected were on real estate. Once automobiles started becoming popular, in 1905, the State imposed a \$2 license fee on all cars and trucks. Today, that initial registration fee is \$225 and higher.

Today, the County lists 436,209 parcels, with a just/market value over \$207 billion and a taxable value of over \$118 billion dollars. Taxable values increase to \$123.8 billion when tangible personal property is added.

Once called the Tax Assessor's office, in 1974 the voters changed the name to Property Appraiser. It was argued that the Tax Assessor did not actually levy taxes—that is the job of the County Commission, Municipalities and School Board since they determine the tax rates. The Property Appraiser only determines the value of the property by following the market, whether up or down.

In Pinellas County's first year, the Assessor, Thomas Northrup, was appointed by the Governor. He was a former St. Petersburg Mayor. John Brown, also from St. Petersburg, was the first elected Assessor. He took office in 1913, when

Pinellas County held its first elections. He served two, four-year terms before becoming the Clerk of the Circuit Court (1917-1925). He was followed by Albert Blocker (1917-1925), who also served two, four-year terms. He was followed by Charles (Charlie) Wilcox, Jr.

The Homestead Exemption Act, established in 1934, provided tax relief for property owners who permanently lived in Pinellas County. The law required property owners to file for homestead exemption on or before March 1st of each year to receive a \$5000 reduction in assessed the property's assessed value. In 1980, the exemption was raised to \$25,000. Today, it is \$50,000 for eligible residential property owners as long as the assessed value exceeds \$100,000.

Each parcel of Pinellas County's property is reassessed annually, effective January 1. The assessment is based on the previous year's sales data. All parcels are visually inspected every five years to verify any changes or upgrades to the property's physical condition. Sales and building permit activities are reviewed annually.

Mike Twitty is the current Pinellas County Property Appraiser. He has held that office since 2017. He is the tenth person to hold that office.



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Sugar Sand Festival COO Charissa Shatanoff and Founder Lisa Chandler accepting Visit St. Pete-Clearwater's "Best Festival" Award

Ten Years of The Sugar Sand Festival

The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival returned to bright and beautiful Clearwater Beach in April. 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: 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 but serve as volunteers for both the Sugar Sand Festival & Sunsets at Pier 60.

The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival is the largest destination event on Clearwater Beach attracting over 200,000 visitors each year and has an economic impact of over \$30 million to the community.



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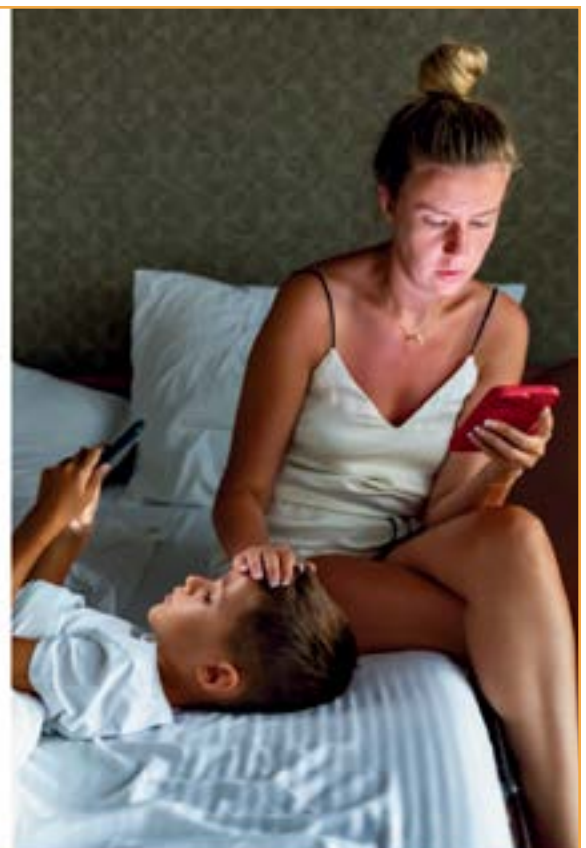


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MOTORCYCLE SAFETY AWARENESS

From the Desk of Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

In the US, motorcycles make up only three percent of all registered vehicles, and a minuscule 0.6 percent of total vehicle miles traveled. Despite that, motorcycles account for 14 percent of all traffic fatalities. That disproportionate number reflects their vulnerability. Additionally, more than 80,000 motorcyclists are injured each year. I urge you to be a safe rider.



Be visible and be predictable. Simply put, motorcycles are hard to see. Most drivers are more cued-in to cars and may miss motorcycles – hence the slogan look twice, save a life. Car drivers need to pay attention, but motorcycle operators have a responsibility too. Obey traffic control devices and stick to the speed limit. Leave sufficient room between you and other vehicles. Check and signal before you change lanes, and never pass in the same lane or ride the line. Drive defensively, as if other vehicles don't see you – because often they may not.

If you are in a crash, a helmet can save your life or prevent traumatic brain injury. Find the style that matches your head shape, size, and the specific type of riding you do. The more comfortable your helmet is, the more likely you are to wear it on every ride. Make sure your helmet is DOT-compliant – look for the sticker on the back and watch out for fakes. Helmets should be at least one inch thick with a stiff foam inner liner, and have sturdy, riveted chin straps. Beware of helmets advertised as "the lightest helmet" – helmets that meet safety standards usually weigh about three pounds.

Protect the rest of your body too. It may be uncomfortable to wear full gear in a Florida summer, but covering your arms and legs with denim or leather is a good idea. Wear gloves, and boots that come over the ankle too. Black leather may look good, but bright colors keep you safer. Opt for high-visibility colors on your upper body and add reflectors to your clothing or to your ride.

You need a motorcycle endorsement to legally ride in the state of Florida. For that you must complete the Basic Rider Course, which teaches the fundamentals of riding your motorcycle responsibly and safely. Advanced courses which help prepare you for more extreme or unexpected situations are a good idea too. Take time to get used to your motorcycle, practicing in easy conditions and working your way up to more challenges as your skills improve. Know how to ride in the rain and prepare for how you'll handle slick roads or obstructions.

Keep your motorcycle in good repair and check it before every ride. Check your tires – pressure and tread – as well as brakes, lights, signal, and fluids. Make sure loads are balanced, and that any necessary adjustments are made to compensate for additional weight.

Passengers need to know how to ride safely too – they're not a passive spectator like a passenger in a car, but an active participant whose behavior can affect performance and safety. Make sure your passenger knows to mount only when the kickstand is raised and the motorcycle is braced, to keep their feet on the footrests, hold the driver's waist or the handholds, and avoid making sudden moves. Be aware of how the extra weight and wind resistance will affect handling.

Pinellas County averages 524 motorcycle crashes and 27 fatalities annually. Ride smart to avoid becoming part of that statistic.

Community News

REMEMBERING KAREN RODOWICZ

By Bonnie Tembulak, Bluffs Business Association

Karen Hering Rodowicz, 51, of Harbor Bluffs passed away on May 8th after a long bout with cancer. Karen was born in Queens, New York and moved to Largo in 2001. Karen was the owner of JK Flowers and Gift Baskets, a business she started in 2002 with her mother Joyce O'Brien, who passed away September 30th, 2020.



Karen was very beloved in the Belleair Bluffs and Largo communities because of her volunteer spirit and dedication to helping others. She was awarded the Clearwater Regional Chamber of Commerce Ambassador of the Year in 2008. Most recently, she was the Manager of the Market in the Bluffs held seasonally in Belleair Bluffs. She was on the Board of Directors of the Bluffs Business Association for many years and planned, organized and implemented many events including the Independence Day celebrations and the Bluffs Wine Walks. She was on the planning committee for the Clearwater Jazz Holiday and was well known for the table decorations she donated every year in the VIP and performers areas. Karen was a strong supporter of the Central Park Performing Arts Foundation. She had a gift for gathering silent auction donations that contributed to many successful fundraising efforts.

Karen was a devoted animal lover and gave much of her time and money to the North Shore Animal League, Fluff Animal Rescue and many more. She is survived by her husband of 26 years Christopher Rodowicz and her fur babies Casper, Widget and Swizzle. She leaves behind many friends who were blessed to know her. Services were held May 16 at St. Patrick Catholic Church followed by a reception at Belleair Bluffs City Hall Auditorium.

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Lowest New Waterfront Home Prices!!

The majority of families desire to be the first owner of their home purchase, and now there is a limited opportunity to own a new waterfront home in Indian Rocks Beach at exceptionally low costs. Two new homes are being constructed on beautiful waterfront lots in Indian Rocks Beach with great sunrise/sunset views from 3 porches overlooking the water. And, each new home comes with a new swimming pool, new boat dock, and new seawall, along with the new 2024 home. Each of these quality homes come with an elevator, piling foundation systems, 4-6 bedrooms, 4 baths and 4 car garages. Annual insurance savings are substantial due to new homes being constructed to stringent hurricane standards. These new homes today are selling for only \$929/sf, as opposed to older one-story 70 year old homes that sold these past few months for an average of \$1014/sf. Don't miss this *limited* opportunity to be the first owner of a new 2024 custom waterfront home in beautiful Indian Rocks Beach!

Classic Florida Dream Homes, LLC is a family owned building company, with considerably lower overhead than most contracting firms, and as such, these cost savings get passed on to the consumer.

What are the benefits of a new waterfront home verses an existing home?

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- Elevator for convenience with groceries, etc.
- Whole house generators for uninterrupted power after a storm
- More modern higher ceilings vs. yesterday's 8' ceilings
- 2024 Building and mechanical codes today vs. outdated systems for Electric, A/C & Plumbing
- Modern updated specifications for cabinetry, countertops, appliances, flooring, bath tile, moldings, updated doors & hardware, gas kitchen range, plumbing & light fixtures, etc.
- Updated Energy Efficient Items for less energy costs
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*"Bahama Breeze" by Classic Florida Dream Home
(Front Rendering)*

Included in the price for a waterfront home for only \$929/sf., that price includes a new swimming pool, new dock, driveway pavers, updated landscaping, and much, much more!

By appointment only for qualified prospects, we have a waterfront home on the intra-coastal 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 to come by. Invest in your Florida dream now!



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MEET PENSION - LARGO POLICE DEPARTMENT'S THERAPY K9

By The Largo Police Department

The Largo Police Department welcomes its first-ever therapy dog to provide comfort to Largo Police employees and reduce anxiety of victims of crime.

Pension is a one-year-old rescue who was trained at Paws and Stripes College with the Brevard County Sheriff's Office. The Paws & Stripes College is a dog obedience program implemented to help save the lives of dogs in the Brevard County Animal Shelter.



Pension and his handler, Largo Police Sergeant Sequeira, went through forty hours of training together at the Paws and Stripes College with the Brevard County Sheriff's Office before coming home to the Largo Police Department.

Pension will spend his days providing comfort and emotional support to the employees of the Largo Police Department.

"Our officers are exposed to psychological stressors and high stress situations that can take a toll on their mental health," said Largo Police Chief Mike Loux. "Research has shown that therapy dogs can have a positive impact on reducing stress, anxiety, and depression, as well as promoting overall well-being. Having a therapy dog as a member of our department will provide officers, dispatchers, and all employees with a source of comfort and support, fostering a more resilient and healthier workforce."

Pension is sponsored by Speak Up, Let's Talk about Mental Health Inc., a non-profit organization working to remove the stigma of mental illness and provide education on mental illness and suicide prevention.

DITCH THE POISON

The recent discovery of a deceased bobcat in Safety Harbor puts a spotlight on a recurring poisoning problem in Pinellas County. A family of four great horned owls in Phillippe Park were killed by rodenticide in 2022, leaving one chick orphaned. Last February, an adult eagle and two eaglets succumbed to poison in Oldsmar. According to the Raptor Center of Tampa Bay, more than 70 birds were killed last year by consuming poisoned rats, known as secondary poisoning. Rabbits, squirrels, coyotes, and even family pets are also killed by rat poison each year.

Rodenticide is often used in bait stations placed around buildings and dumpsters. The rodents do not die inside the station, but return to the wild, often taking more than a week to die. The poisoned animal are potentially lethal prey.

There is no such thing as "pet-safe" or "bird-friendly" rodenticides. There are, however, alternatives to using poison. Rodent-proof your home or business by keeping the structure and surrounding area clean and removing any food, water, and shelter sources for pests. Keep dumpsters and garbage cans sealed and use rodent-resistant materials to close off entry points. There are also many types of traps available.

Efforts are underway at the local, state, and federal level to ban the use of commercial rodenticides, but until these are successful, do your part keep local wildlife safe.

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Community News



PINELLAS SUNCOAST FIRE RESCUE DISTRICT

Submitted by Chief Jeffrey Davidson

The history of Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District (PSFRD) starts before World War II when the department's equipment consisted of a cart with a manually operated tank and hose. In 1951, the Volunteer Fireman's Association was formed. The department covered a very large amount of acreage on the mainland as well as the beaches. At that time, there was only one home per half mile and fires consisted mostly of brush fires which could be devastating to the area. The first fire station was built in 1965 in Indian Rocks Beach.

In 1971, PSFRD purchased the land it currently owns, and in 1973 the second fire station was built, in the unincorporated area of the county known as Oakhurst, located at 13501 94th Avenue. Currently, Fire Station 28 houses Truck 28, or Engine 28, an Advanced Life Support Fire Suppression Unit staffed with three firefighters and paramedics. In 2023, this station responded to over 1,555 emergency calls, covering PSFRD and unincorporated county.

After over fifty years, Fire Station 28 will be replaced with a new, modern fire station. We are very excited to be in the design phase of construction, and hopefully breaking ground in the next five to six months.

MEASE COMMUNITY OUTREACH

CareLift Van Transportation Service

Need a Lift? CareLift, a volunteer-run transportation program sponsored by Morton Plant Mease Health Care, provides free rides to and from medical appointments to community members in need. The service is available Monday-Friday and helps to improve the lives of the most vulnerable people in our area. CareLift provides transport to several medical facilities in the area, including Morton Plant Hospital. Restrictions apply. To qualify and register for CareLift please call (727) 734-6107. Volunteer Dispatchers are available Monday – Friday from 8am-3:30pm.

Volunteers Needed

CareLift provides over 1,000 free rides every month, but they cannot do it without volunteers. If you enjoy meeting new people, we would love to have you join our dynamic volunteer team. A few hours of your time can make a positive difference in your life and the lives of others. Opportunities available at CareLift include Dispatcher, Driver, and Driver's Aide.

To find out more about volunteering please call Mease Dunedin Hospital Volunteer Resources at (727) 734-6046 and speak with Irene, Laoretta, or Karen.

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HURRICANE PREPAREDNESS FOR PETS

By: Kristen Davis, Director of Marketing & Communications at SPCA Tampa Bay

SPCA Tampa Bay has important information for pet owners as we approach hurricane season. It is likely that the Tampa Bay area will feel the effect of a hurricane or tropical storm this season. Keep your family and pets safe by knowing what to do in the event of an emergency.

Hurricane season, which lasts from June through the end of November, can be a scary and stressful time for pet owners. To ensure the safety of pets during a hurricane, it is important to have a plan in place.

Pet owners should ensure that their pets have identification. A collar with a tag that includes the pet's name and owner's current contact information is a must for all pets, even those that live strictly indoors. When traveling, have a temporary tag with your current address and contact information.

It is strongly recommended that all pets have a microchip. Please ensure that the microchip is registered to you with your current contact information. To check your registration info, go directly to your microchip company's website. The likelihood of a pet being reunited with their owner dramatically increases if the pet is microchipped.

In addition to identification, pet owners should have an emergency kit prepared for their pets. This kit should include:

- Food and water for your pets for at least a week.
- Any necessary medications. If your pet requires medication for anxiety during storms, be sure to have your prescription filled well in advance.

- Medical and vaccine records. Ensure that your pet is current on vaccinations. This will help protect them from diseases that may be present in shelters or other areas where people and animals are displaced.

- A sturdy carrier or crate for each pet, as well as bedding, litter, cleaning supplies, and familiar items like a favorite toy or blanket.

- A current photo of each pet in case you are separated and must provide identification to rescuers.

Make a plan for where you will take your pets during a hurricane.

Never leave your pet behind, as dangerous conditions may prevent your return for days or possibly longer. Know your zone at kyz.pinellas.gov so you are aware if you are required to evacuate. Some shelters may allow pets, but not all do. It is important to research ahead of time to find pet-friendly shelters in the area and have your pet's vaccine records printed and easily accessible. Visit pinellas.gov/emergency-information/public-shelters for a list of pet-friendly shelters.

There are very few emergency shelters that accept pets and their owners, and they are never large or comfortable. You and your pets will handle the stress of an evacuation far better if you find pet-friendly hotels and motels, or can stay with friends and family.



Growing up there was only one thing better than spending the day at the beach ... going to the Palm Pavilion. Since its earliest day, The Palm has been a special place where family and friends come and create memories to last a lifetime.

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CUSTOMER SERVICE IS KEY

By Randy Lee

We at Landscapes by Randy Lee, Inc. are entering our 33rd year in business. We strive to create a positive and uplifting experience. The most important part of maintaining long-term relationships is great customer care and service. We communicate, answer our phones and call you back.

What constitutes great customer service? Communication is the most important skill in any relationship, and we start there. Part of communicating is to actively listen. Having a positive and confident outlook combined with knowledge and competence is also important. Project Management skills are a must. Many companies fail miserably by not knowing how to manage a project. You must have a schedule and stick to it.

People want to work with a company they can relate to and trust – they don't want to be told what to do. Problem solving and adaptability are very important skills to possess. Conflicts and changes occur – plans must be adjusted and fixed at the proper time. Anticipate, address and fix problems sooner rather than later so they don't snowball. Lastly, take ownership and responsibility of the project and be able to think on your feet.

A legally run business must possess the right documents. We carry an agricultural bond through the state of Florida. Without it, you cannot sell plants. We must carry liability insurance and workers' compensation – everyone must have this - you set yourself up to be sued if your contractor doesn't carry this. There are no exceptions.

We also have various agricultural licenses and belong to professional organizations such as the FNGLA (Florida Nursery Growers Landscape Association) and the NALP (National Association of Landscape Professionals). Ask to see these documents. They are expensive to possess but a business cannot operate without them. Do not assume.



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Checklist

- The heat is on!
- Heavy plant & sod maintenance.
- Check irrigation systems.
- Great time to plant palms & tropical plants.
- Fertilizer ban started June 1st.

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Community News

CREATIVE PINELLAS

Flora & Fauna showcases the artworks of A Galban, Adriano Nicot, Jorge Dans, Froilán Escobar, Josignacio, and Leslie Hiatt in a captivating fusion of color, line, and creativity, where the beauty of nature intertwines with artistic expression. Curated by A Galban and Tarin Mohajeri, this art exhibition offers a profound and immersive experience, granting visitors the opportunity to marvel at the wonders of flora and fauna while encouraging them to embrace a sense of responsibility for the preservation of our planet's biodiversity. Awardees of the Beyond Placemaking Grant from Creative Pinellas and the National Endowment for the Arts, the *Flora & Fauna* artists have partnered with the Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation to provide art experiences for people of all ages and abilities through scheduled tours and field trips.



Flora and Fauna runs through July 7th. *Threads of Nature: Art Inspired by the Florida Botanical Gardens* opens on July 18th. The Gallery is open Wednesday-Sunday from 10am -5pm.

ISLAND ESTATES YACHT CLUB

Submitted by Commodore Scott Lefebvre

The IEYC has been active with a variety of events, celebrating St. Patrick's Day with brunch at the Island Way Grill, Cinco de Mayo at Tequila's Mexican Grill & Cantina, and chartering the Little Toot for an IEYC day on the water. 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. The IEYC has no clubhouse nor other facilities; therefore our membership dues are minimal. The club meets monthly at different venues with a variety of themes and events. Many members meet more frequently for various activities. Please visit the IEYC website at 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.

The IEYC is always looking for new members. You don't need to live on Island Estates, or own a yacht, to be a member of the IEYC. Email IslandEstatesYC@gmail.com if you have any questions.

BELLEAIR WOMEN'S REPUBLICAN CLUB

Belleair Women's Republican Club (BWRC) will meet on July 12th at Belleair Country Club, One Country Club Lane, Belleair. Normally meeting on the first Friday of each month, BWRC moved this month's meeting date due to the Fourth of July falling on Thursday this year. Social time begins at 11:30am with luncheon and program at noon.

Ed Hooper, Florida State Senator since 2022, will inform us about the status of state legislation. Senator Hooper represents the 21st District, which includes northern Pinellas and western Pasco counties. Mail checks for \$37 for the meal, to arrive by July 3rd to the address above.

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City of Belleair Bluffs

City Government Informational Publication

Summer 2024

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HURRICANE SEASON BEGINS JUNE 1 – BE PREPARED

Did you know the city's Hurricane Preparedness webpage contains helpful resources to keep your family safe this hurricane season? Visit our website at www.belleairbluffs.org to access resources that are available county and statewide. Also, download the mobile app "Ready Pinellas" from your mobile device's app store.

Did you know The NFIP's Community Rating System recognizes the City of Belleair Bluffs for efforts that go beyond the minimum standards of the NFIP by reducing the cities flood insurance premiums with a 15% discount for residents in a SFHA (Special Flood Hazard Area) and a 5% discount on flood insurance premiums for those residents not in a SFHA. There are many ways to learn about your zone.

JULY 4th – INDEPENDENCE DAY PICNIC THURSDAY July 4, 2024 from 11 AM to 1 PM

The city is hosting another fantastic event this year. It will be held outdoors with Sunset Drive being closed off for the food vendors. The city will provide one meal ticket per person, and you will have the option to purchase additional meals from the food vendors and ice refreshments from Kona Ice. There will be a bounce house, face painting, and Largo Fire Rescue and Pinellas County Sheriff's Office will have vehicles and handouts.

The Bluffs Business Association will have the annual dessert contest so get your prized desserts ready! Desserts must be dropped off the day of the event by 10:30 a.m.

The BBA will provide one raffle ticket along with a complimentary bag of give-a-ways. You will have the option to purchase more raffle tickets for the FABULOUS items that have been donated from which you can choose! A winning ticket will be chosen from each item – You Must Be Present to Win.

BRING YOUR CASH AND DEBIT/CREDIT CARD for EXTRA food options available

BRING LAWN CHAIRS TO SIT UNDER THE OAKS

QUICK REMINDERS

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Meetings are held in person in the Community Center. **The Summer Meeting Dates are as follows:** June 17, July 15, and August 12 and 19. Dates are subject to change by Commission approval.

Recreation Program:

Belleair Bluffs residents and businesses have access to City of Largo recreation programs resident rates. Take advantage of their wonderful programs. Come to city hall to pick up your playbook.

Little Library Program

Drop by city hall and grab a book from the lending library by the front parking lot. You may always bring your unwanted books to share.

Belleair Bluffs Book Club

Residents meet in the Community Center the 3rd Thursday of each month at 6:30 p.m.

NPDES – National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Fertilizer RULES

JUNE 1st – SEPTEMBER 30th

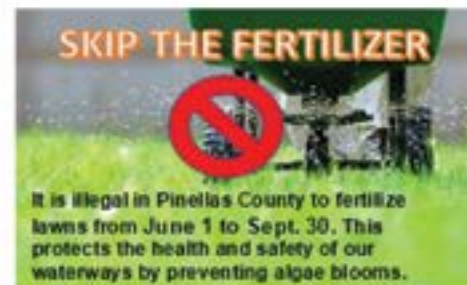
Say NO to Nitrogen (N) and Phosphorus (P)!!! The application of lawn and landscaping fertilizers containing nitrogen or phosphorus are prohibited to protect Pinellas County waters from harmful algae blooms during rainy season.

OCTOBER 1st – MAY 31st

Fertilizers may be applied if they have 50% slow-release nitrogen, and they are applied at least 10 feet away from the water.

Tips for Homeowners

- Any spilled fertilizer must be cleaned up or blown back into the landscape.
- Mow so that the mower chute faces away from hard surfaces or water.
- Keep all yard debris out of storm drains ditches, surface waters & roadways. Compost it, bag it, or blow it back into the yard.



COLLABORATIVE DIVORCE WHEN CHILD CUSTODY IS IN PLAY

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

A Collaborative Divorce is a legal divorce process that allows co-parents to negotiate the terms of divorce.

It's an alternative to fighting in court, while avoiding a prolonged process where the child(ren) is the subject of a nasty litigation dispute. Co-parents can use a mix of mediation and negotiation to form an agreement on the most important details. Mainly, the division of property and debts. But most importantly, child custody and support obligations.



What Makes Collaborative Divorce Special?

With Collaborative Divorce, co-parents and each of their legal representatives sign a "collaborative participation agreement" (CPA). With a CPA, lawyers cannot take part in contested court proceedings. Simply put, all parties commit to resolving the issues in the best interest of the child(ren). It's a unique practice that allows co-parents to respectfully achieve agreeable child custody arrangements without the mudslinging in court.

What Are the Requirements to Qualify?

Requirements include both co-parents, their attorneys, and a participation agreement. The participation agreement includes a disqualification clause. This clause advises the parents, and their lawyers, that if the collaborative process breaks down, the parents fire their legal representatives and hire new ones.

What Are Some Benefits of Collaborative Divorce?

Co-parents set the pace while resolving issues respectfully. A neutral facilitator helps customize parenting plans. Attorneys act as legal guides, working towards innovative, long-lasting solutions. Priority is given to the present and future, not past wrongdoings. It's an efficient process that generally condenses the timeline and is significantly less expensive compared to combative litigation. Above all, the child(ren) isn't subjected to a prolonged legal dispute that harms their emotional and social development.

OCHR is a Pinellas-based 501c3 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 you to consider a small financial contribution to OCHR. Your support is deeply meaningful and necessary to serve parents through our no cost, confidential program, intended to benefit our youth.

Most importantly, if you, or someone you know, needs our assistance, we're here for you. We're on a mission, 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 or www.OCHR.Org To donate: OurChildrenHaveRights.org/donate.

OurChildrenHaveRights.Org

COPARENTING – CUSTODY – PARENTING RESOURCES



OCHR.ORG MISSION

Protect the rights of children to have access to parents by providing education, resources, and support services for successful coparenting strategies.

OCHR.Org Provides:

- 📍

NO-COST RESOURCE CENTERS

Education – Legal Aid - Mental Health & Wellness
- 📺

NO-COST CONSULTATIONS

Zoom, FaceTime, Email & Phone
- 📄

NO-COST DOCUMENT REVIEW

Parenting Plans & Related Documents



Donate at ourchildrenhaverights.org/donate

Our Children Have Rights .Org is a 501 (c)(3) organization: EIN: 87-1023012

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Community News

BEACH ART CENTER

Submitted by Andrea Harms

Thank you to everyone who joined us at our annual Gala in March. Our community is so important to us. Though you do not need to be a Member of the Beach Art Center to enjoy everything we have to offer, Membership is one of the important ways we keep the doors open. Membership levels begin at \$65 per year. Information can be found on our website BeachArtCenter.org/membership.

We are so looking forward to welcoming the kids back this summer! Our 2024 "Creative Kids Summer Camp" includes creative fun and friends for seven weeks in June and July. Campers have fourteen themed camp sessions to choose from including painting, pottery, mixed media, claymation, cartooning and more! Don't wait - registration is open now and several sessions are already full.

We are pleased to announce we are bringing back our KID PWR Gallery Show in June and July featuring the work of children in our community. We invite all school-aged children (K-12) to participate in this Gallery Show. The show will also feature the work of young artists from the DePaul School for Dyslexia directed by local artist, Pamela Miles. The public may view the show June 1st-July 26th. For gallery show details visit BeachArtCenter.org/gallery.

We love being part of the community, please stop in and stay "Hi," check out or Gift Shop or enjoy our Gallery art. We are open Monday – Friday 9 - 4.

Beach Art Center is located at 1515 Bay Palm Blvd on Indian Rocks Beach. Visit BeachArtCenter.org for more information.

COAST GUARD AUXILIARY CLEARWATER FLOTILLA

The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Clearwater Flotilla is taking a proactive approach to promote boating safety by offering a series of virtual safe boating classes in the upcoming months.

Understanding the evolving landscape of education and the need for flexibility, the CG Auxiliary Clearwater Flotilla will conduct safe boating classes via Zoom throughout the year. This virtual option allows participants to join from the comfort of their homes, providing a convenient alternative for those unable to attend in-person sessions.

The use of Zoom technology not only expands the reach of the education program but also accommodates individuals with busy schedules or those residing outside the local area. Participants can interact with instructors, engage in discussions, and complete the course requirements online.

Boat America Classes are \$50 per person, including all books and materials. Class times are from 9am to 2pm on the following dates:

- June 29 and 30
- July 27 and 28
- August 24 and 25
- September 28 and 29
- October 26 and 27
- November 28 and 29

To enroll in Boat America classes, interested individuals can visit USCGAuxClearwater.com or call (727) 469-8895 for more information and to register for upcoming events. Spaces for classes are limited, so early registration is encouraged.



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Community News

CLEARWATER FREE CLINIC

The Clearwater Free Clinic proudly announces the appointment of Anthony "Tony" Degina as its new CEO, succeeding Jeannie Shapiro, who retired.



Degina brings to the role a wealth of experience, with 40 years in the healthcare industry, specializing in hospital management. He holds a Master's degree in Health Care Administration and Management from Trinity University and has a proven track record of success in healthcare management and operations. Known for his tireless advocacy for staff and exceptional leadership, Degina's appointment has been met with enthusiasm from the Clearwater Free Clinic board and community.

Prior to joining the Clearwater Free Clinic, Degina served as President, National Division at Thrivewell Infusion and spent seven years as CEO of Largo Medical Center. His background uniquely positions him to understand and address the needs of uninsured patients, a crucial aspect of the clinic's mission.

Shapiro and Degina will collaborate closely in the coming weeks to ensure a seamless transition of leadership. The Clearwater Free Clinic extends its deepest gratitude to Shapiro for her years of service and dedication and eagerly anticipates a bright future under Degina's guidance.

Contact Charlie Hart at chart@clearwaterfreeclinic.org or call (727) 331-3504 for more information.

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 shelf 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.

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



FLORIDA BOTANICAL GARDENS

Submitted by Allie Fisher

It's summertime at the Florida Botanical Gardens! Stop by our Majeed Discovery Garden to attend various programs for kids of all ages and abilities. Our Children's Garden Educator will be offering preschool, homeschool and family programs all summer long. These programs allow children to connect with nature through hands-on learning. Visit our calendar: FLBGFoundation.org/events for more information, including pricing and registration, And as always, become a member of the Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation to receive discounts on programs and enjoy other benefits: FLBGFoundation.org/membership.

100 WOMEN WHO CARE OF PINELLAS COUNTY

100 Women Who Care of Pinellas County presented \$14,000 to Saving Our Seniors on Wednesday, March 20th. Saving Our Seniors' mission is to help seniors regain and maintain a healthy and independent lifestyle to improve their overall quality of life in and outside of their home. They do this by providing medical equipment, as well as fresh produce. Saving Our Seniors also received a \$5,000 grant from the Richard M. Schulze Foundation. Richard M. Schulze is the founder of Best Buy.

100 Women Who Care of Pinellas County is a philanthropic group that provides an avenue for women to join together to bring financial support to local, charitable organizations that have a 501(c)(3) status. Members commit to attending four meetings per year (one per quarter) and pledge to donate \$100 to an elected charity at each meeting. The members can nominate any organization, three of the nominated organizations are then randomly selected to give a 5-minute presentation, a vote is taken, and then checks are written directly to the winning charity. Since February of 2013 the group, along with the foundation, have given almost \$600,000 to local charities.

For more information, contact Brenda George at (727) 515-1868, on Facebook at 100+ Women Who Care- Pinellas County, or on our website at 100WomenPinellas.org.

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*** Why not just open a 0% credit card?**

Those are teaser rates, it never stays 0% for long. Once it adjusts, it can double and in some cases, **triple the rate** of a home equity line of credit.

**More questions? No problem! My team and I work 7 days a week. Call anytime.
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