

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

including Sand Key and Island Estates

Magazine

FROM FARM TO WHITE HOUSE AND YOUR HOUSE

By Becky Griffin, Local Author

Christmas trees are grown in various regions around the country, but most trees sold in Florida come from a small six county area in Western North Carolina. Just like you, this year the White House Christmas tree was grown in that area – specifically, Avery County, North Carolina.

The North Carolina Christmas Tree Industry is ranked second in the nation for the number of trees harvested, and it produces twenty-two percent of the real Christmas trees grown in the United States. Annually, over three million trees are harvested in North Carolina and ninety-six percent are North Carolina Fraser Fir trees.

The Fraser Fir is native to the Western Appalachian Mountains. Its sturdy branches that can hold heavy ornaments make it very popular. It also retains its needles longer, meaning the trees can be harvested earlier, and ship better. North Carolina's 940 Christmas Tree growers have approximately fifty-three million trees growing on over 33,000 acres. Close to ten percent of those trees are harvested each year.

Every two years, the National Christmas Tree Association hosts a national tree contest, at which growers, industry experts and consumers vote to select the Christmas Tree grower who will provide the official White House Christmas Tree. To qualify, growers must first win their state or regional competitions, so being named National Grand Champion is quite an achievement.



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Well Deserved Retirement

Pinellas County Commissioner Janet Long retired after fifty-two years of dedicated service.

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Holiday Events

After a trying summer and fall, everyone can use some holiday cheer. We have a list of upcoming festivities that you don't want to miss.

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Once in a Blue Moon

We have all heard of a blue moon, but what about wolf, worm, and blood moons? Read all about moon names and their origins.

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To read this News Magazine, and previous issues online, scan this QR code or visit BeachNewsletters.com.



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 magazine 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.

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

Thank you for reading,
Lora and Pete Magnani (813) 361-7376
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SEE YOU AGAIN IN FEBRUARY

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MARINA	462-6954
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NEIGHBORHOOD LIAISON	562-4554

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

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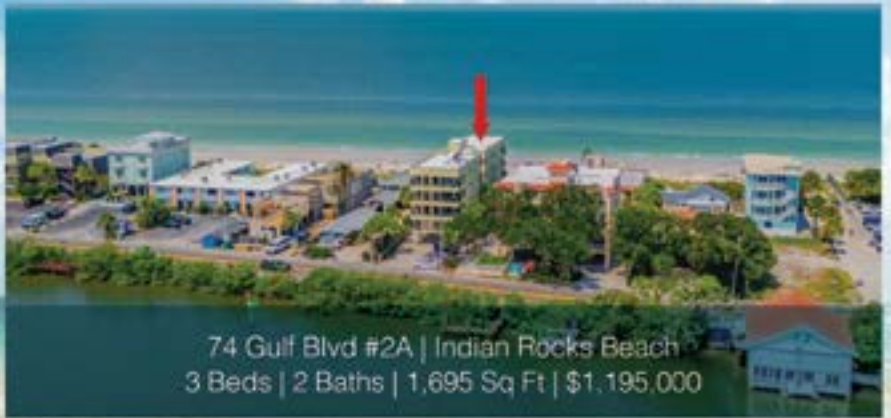
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Act Fast! Three stunning, fully furnished condos are for sale and are *move-in ready*—but they won't last long!



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Did You Know

NEW MURAL ON THE BEACH

During the recent Hurricanes, the Wyndham Grand Clearwater Beach illuminated certain rooms to make an illuminated heart on the side of the building as a message of hope and support. Now, local multimedia artist Chad Mize is painting a mural on the hotel, making that message permanent. The artist said the artwork will incorporate the heart and will have a color palette with an 80's vibe.



WATER SHORTAGE

Florida TaxWatch, a nonpartisan research institute, recently analyzed Florida's water supply and found that nearly \$2 billion in critical water projects were needed to avoid a significant shortage, predicted to begin in 2025. The group blames Florida's rapid economic and population growth for shortage, estimating the state will have 26.4 million residents by 2040.

PLAY BALL

The Rays are looking for a new home for their 2025 season after Tropicana Field was damaged during Hurricane Milton. A damage report given to the St. Petersburg City Council estimates the cost of repairs at \$55.7 million, including replacement of the roof that tore off during the storm. The city has not decided on whether or not to fund the repairs considering a new stadium is expected to be built before the 2028 season.

According to Major League Baseball, the Rays will play the 2025 season at Steinbrenner Field in Tampa, the Spring Training home of the New York Yankees.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

The National Guard turns 388 years old on December 13th. The state-based military reserve force is activated for service upon declaration of emergency by the governor of the state or territory where they serve and can be mobilized for federal



active duty during times of war or national emergency. Over 11,000 Florida National Guard soldiers and airmen were deployed across after Hurricanes Helene and Milton. Some were also sent to North Carolina to assist in relief efforts.

Most National Guard members hold full-time civilian jobs and serve the Guard part-time. There are more than 430,000 National Guard soldiers nationwide.

OUR NEXT ISSUE IS FEBRUARY

If you need another copy of this magazine, pick up one up at the library, rec center, or the UPS Store on Island Estates. If you need more than a few, call (813) 361-7376.

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MARINE MAGIC Dive into a sea of lights and wonder with Aqua Lanterns: a Chinese Festival of Lights at Clearwater Marine Aquarium. This luminous experience, featuring dazzling lantern displays, is open Wednesday through Sunday evenings and other select dates through December 30th.

As the sun sets, the aquarium transforms into a glowing seascape, filled with over thirty illuminated sculptures of whales, penguins, jellyfish and other sparkling sea creatures. Visit CMAquarium.com for more information and tickets.

HEALTH INSURANCE OPEN ENROLLMENT For those that buy insurance on HealthCare.gov, open enrollment started last month and ends January 16th for plans beginning in February. Now is the time for individuals and families not insured through their employers to enroll or change plans for 2025. For plans beginning in January, the enrollment deadline is December 15th.

Before enrolling, decide your medical needs and how much you can afford to pay in premiums and deductibles. Monthly premiums have increased an average of six percent, but most people will qualify for enhanced federal premium subsidies. To register, call 800-318-2596 or visit HealthCare.gov.

MOVE OVER FLORIDA Passed in 2016, Florida State Statute 316.081 requires drivers on multi-lane roadways to move out of the leftmost lane when being overtaken by another vehicle travelling at a higher rate of speed. The law pertains even if the overtaking vehicle is speeding.

A bill vetoed by Governor DeSantis earlier this year would have made it illegal to be in the leftmost lane except when passing or preparing to exit the roadway.

HAZARDOUS WASTE Pinellas County Solid Waste's Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Program diverts household hazardous waste from the municipal solid waste stream for proper recycling and disposal. The HHW Program currently collects chemicals at HHW North, a permanent collection facility open select Saturdays from 9am-2pm. The facility is located at 29582 U.S. 19 N. in Clearwater.

Accepted materials include automotive oil and coolant, household chemicals, paint, batteries, and pool chemicals. For more information call (727)- 464-7500.

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The White House Christmas Tree, Continued

Participating growers entered up to four trees at the National Christmas Tree and Wreath Contest held at rotating locations throughout the country. Each grower is responsible for cutting, transporting (in a refrigerated truck) and displaying their trees. The Grand Champion provides the eighteen-and-a-half-foot tall tree on display in the White House's Blue Room. The contest is held every two years, so two Champions are chosen, one for this year and one for next.

The Carter Christmas Tree Farm in Newland, NC was chosen to provide this year's White House Christmas tree. In late October, White House personnel visited the farm and traveled to the top of a mountain where they had four trees to choose from. Sam Cartner, one of the owners of Cartner Christmas Tree Farm, is responsible for delivering it to the White House. Shortly before Thanksgiving, hoping it isn't foggy, icy, or snowing, his crew will cut the twenty-five-year-old tree and using a crane, load it on a trailer to bring it down the mountain, where it will be baled and shipped in a refrigerated truck to Washington D.C. This is the fifty-eighth year the National Christmas Tree Association has provided the White House tree. The North Carolina Fraser Fir is a sixteen-time winner, more than any other state and tree species in the nation. This year's tree is named "Tremendous."

Sam Cartner, along with his brothers Jim and David, grew up on the Cartner Christmas tree farm his parents founded in 1959 and together they manage the farm. David, a lawyer with a practice in Asheville, NC, is responsible for shipping logistics. Jim, owner of a veterinarian clinic in Statesville, NC visits throughout the year and assists with order loading during harvest. Sam, a retired veterinarian and former Director of the Animal Resources Program at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, oversees operations and visits customers throughout the year.

Owning a Christmas tree farm is a lot more complicated than planting some trees. The seedlings come from a local grower. Cartner participates in a seed orchard that has been perfecting seeds for the last twenty years. A bushel of cones, harvested from the tops of forty-foot-tall trees, yields 2 or 3 pounds of seed (optimally, that is 60,000 seeds or trees per pound). A good cone crop only happens every 5 to 7 years, so after being properly cleaned and dried, the seeds can be frozen for years.

When the six-inch-tall seedlings arrive on the Cartner farm, they are already five years old. After they are manually planted, the trees will grow about a foot a year. That means your seven-foot-tall tree is eleven to twelve years old. A late frost will kill the tips and add a year to the growing schedule. After planting, the trees are regularly trimmed, hand-sheared for shaping, and fertilized. The ground cover must be managed to avoid choking the new trees. Pest are also a problem, and the trees are routinely inspected and treated for fungus. Sam estimates each tree is touched about 150 times before it is harvested. A field manager oversees the daily work performed by experienced crews.

Earlier this fall, the trees were inspected, measured and tagged. In early November, the harvest began. The tagged trees are being cut, baled and carried from the mountain fields to a storage area, to be sorted by size and watered daily as they await shipping. The tree stumps and roots left in the field will quickly decompose and the nutrients return to the soil.

The Carner farm provides Christmas Trees primarily to independent garden centers and non-profit organizations throughout Florida. Each truck that leaves the farm contains multiple orders, requiring it to be carefully loaded separating each order. Wreaths, made by hand on site are also included with the orders. When they are done, eighty truckloads of trees will leave their farm - only about ten percent of their planted trees.



Like many local farms, the Cartner Christmas Tree Farm offers a "Choose and Cut" option for those that want to pick their very own tree in the field. It is a small, but popular portion of their business and nearly 1000 people drive two or three hours just to pick that perfect tree.

With the easy availability of artificial trees, why buy a real tree? While they're growing, the trees absorb carbon dioxide and other gases and emit fresh oxygen. A harvested six-to-eight-foot tree contains approximately sixty pounds of carbon absorbed from the air. Yearly, an acre of trees produces the same amount of oxygen used by twenty people use each year. In addition, the trees stabilize the soil, while providing refuge for wildlife. In many cases, the trees are grown in soil that does not support other crops. Just like any other agricultural crop, they are replanted each year. To ensure a constant supply, growers plant one to three seedlings for every tree harvested. The best part is that real trees are biodegradable; they can easily be recycled for mulch and other purposes.

The Cartner family has been invited to the unveiling of the Blue Room Christmas tree. Unfortunately, it is in the middle of their harvest. They hope to be able to see their tree fully decorated and on display at some point before Christmas.

As you probably know, Western North Carolina was also hit by the devastating Hurricane Helene on September 27. The storm dumped 20-30 inches of rain over twenty-four hours with 50 mph winds. Creeks and rivers quickly overflowed taking people, animals, land, homes and buildings with them.

The community, government, and people throughout the U.S. quickly came together creating a response exceeding anything imaginable. The Cartners were spared, only losing some small Christmas trees. Many harvest roads were damaged by the mud slides which caused gullies, washed-out culverts, and downed hardwoods. Through the hard work of their team, they are now harvesting and will be able to ship all the trees needed to fill existing orders, including the White House's tree. Sam Cartner wants all to know, "our devoted temporary workers from Mexico, who return year after year, are as much our heroes as the first responders, and community volunteers." Visit CarolinaFraserFir.com for more information on the Cartner Farm.

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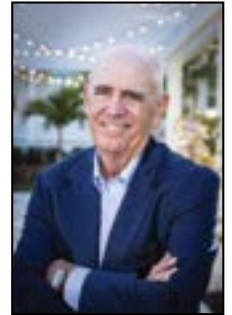
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SIX BIG MISTAKES IN RETIREMENT - PART ONE

by Ray Ferrara, ProVise Management Group

Most articles about retirement planning explain what you should do. We thought it might be worthwhile to list six BIG mistakes to avoid.



MISTAKE #1 - TAKING MORE RISK THAN NECESSARY

While working, we accumulate money for future financial needs and wants. Hopefully, we have saved diligently and invested wisely. When younger, we have time to take risks because there is time to recover, but once in retirement there are more years behind than in front of us.

Suppose you have \$1 million saved and you believe that you need to draw \$40,000 each year in addition to Social Security and maybe a pension. Over the past fifty years according to Standard & Poor's, the 500 Index produced an average annualized return of 11.1 percent through 12/31/23 with lots of volatility; that keeps you up at night.

That worked great while working but who wants to stay awake at night in retirement? If your plan works with "only" a projected 6 percent return, why not reduce the risk? Think of it this way - if the additional risk brings no additional value, why take the risk?

MISTAKE #2 - TAKING LESS RISK THAN REQUIRED

Too often retirees are not willing to take enough risk to get the return necessary to support their lifestyle. Turning to guaranteed investments like CDs is not likely to achieve a high enough return, especially in light of inflation. Guarantees come at cost- usually a lower return. It is difficult to look 10, 20, 30 years into the future and see the devastating effects that come with not enough risk.

MISTAKE #3 - NOT UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN ACCUMULATION AND DECUMULATION

While working we are accumulating money – values go up. Of course, there are times when the value goes down, but we feel confident that over time there will be more pluses than minuses. But when you are withdrawing (decumulating) and investments decline, it is harder to recover. It is a triple whammy. For example, if you retired at the beginning of 2021 (up about 27 percent) as opposed to 2022 (down about 19 percent) the amount you would have at the end of the first year would be quite different. This is known as "sequence of return risk."

These three mistakes have strategies to mitigate or eliminate them. Take advantage of our one-hour complimentary consultation I our Clearwater office, or by Zoom.

V. Raymond Ferrara, CFP®, Chair and CEO
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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.

Investment Advisory Services may be offered through ProVise Management Group, LLC.



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Winter Holiday Safety



HOLIDAY DECORATING

- Be careful with holiday decorations. Choose decorations that are flame resistant or flame retardant
- Keep lit candles away from decorations and other things that can burn.
- Some lights are only for indoor or outdoor use, but not both.
- Replace any string of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Read manufacturer's instructions for number of light strands to connect.
- Use clips, not nails, to hang lights so the cords do not get damaged.
- Keep decorations away from windows and doors.



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Before Heading Out or to Bed

Blow out candles when you leave the room or go to bed. **Turn off** all the light strings before leaving home or going to bed.

FACTS

- ❗ More than **one-third** of home decoration fires are started by candles.
- ❗ More than **two of every five** decoration fires happen because decorations are placed too close to a heat source.



HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

- Test your smoke alarms and tell guests about your home fire escape plan.
- Keep children and pets away from lit candles.
- Keep matches and lighters up high in a locked cabinet.
- Stay in the kitchen when cooking on the stovetop.
- Ask smokers to smoke outside. Remind smokers to keep their smoking materials with them so young children do not touch them.
- Provide large, deep ashtrays for smokers. Wet cigarette butts with water before discarding.



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Bar & Restaurant News

NEW NAME, NEW LOOK In September, Blinkers Beachside Steakhouse announced that they would be closing temporarily for a remodel and rebranding. The transformation took a little longer than expected, but the restaurant has reopened as Mandalay Prime Steakhouse and Lounge. It has the same owners and concept, with a fresh, elevated ambiance and menu. They serve dinner nightly featuring USDA Prime and Choice sterling steaks, prepared to order with their signature seasoning along with fresh seafood and innovative pasta dishes. They are located at 476 Mandalay Avenue. For more information, follow them on Facebook or call (727) 754-1757.

NEW SPORTS BAR COMING TO BELLEAIR BLUFFS Cody's Original Roadhouse, at 2890 West Bay, closed at the beginning of March and residents have been wondering what would move into the location - the answer is finally here. Tavern in the Bluffs is a new sports bar and tavern is coming soon. Remodeling has just begun and owners hope for an early 2025 opening. The Pappas family, also owners of Backwaters on Sand Key, say they are excited and looking forward to being a part of the Belleair Bluffs community and bringing something the residents can be proud of to the area.

CLOSED After 52 years in Clearwater, Capogna's Dugout, made the difficult decision to close in October. The neighborhood pizzeria was known for being a local hangout where friends and families would gather after their kids' big game or to kick back and enjoy good food and company. After back-to-back hurricanes and a tough economy, the Capogna family said they have taken a hit from which they cannot recover. They would like to thank their staff, employees, loyal patrons and the Clearwater community for the many great years they got to work with and serve them.

GUESS WHO'S BACK Last year, the Brown Boxer on North Clearwater Beach closed for a remodel and reopened as Salt Social (now Hurricane Eddies). Residents, regulars, and snowbirds thought it was the end of the Brown Boxer, but it turns out the restaurant just moved south. The Boxer Kitchen & Bar opened in November in the former Jimmy Hulas location at 454 Mandalay Avenue. Jeff and Allison Brown, Mike and Lexi Caracappa, and John and Liz Cairns are the owners, but they are definitely not new to the Boxer family. The menu has many of the old favorites and some new ones too. The bar has twenty-eight televisions for guests to watch their favorite sports teams, live music seven days a week, Jukebox Bingo on Tuesdays, and other specials. Follow them on Facebook or call (727) 221-7794 for more information.

REOPENED Borah Caliskan and Melis Sinoglu, Mio's Mediterranean Grill and Cafe in the Shoppes of Sand Key, opened The Turkish Flame Mediterranean Restaurant at the beginning of September at 2699 Gulf Blvd in Indian Rocks Beach, but that new restaurant feeling was cut short by Hurricane Helene. After being completely flooded, they had to start from scratch. With a lot of hard work, they reopened in November. Customers can also enjoy their cuisine at sister restaurants, Mio's of Sand Key at 1261 Gulf Blvd and Mio's of Downtown St. Pete at 119 2nd Street N.

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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JANET LONG - SERVING THE PUBLIC FOR OVER 50 YEARS



By Bob Griffin, Contributing Writer

Janet Long is Pinellas County's longest serving member of Board of County Commissioners (BOCC). She has been on the BOCC for 12 years, first elected in 2012 but has been in public service since 1972 – a total of 52 years. Her three children are also public service servants. Long is retiring on November 5th.

Prior to being elected, Long was an assistant to the Mayor of Seminole, and Legislative Aide to former Representative Roger Wilson throughout the mid to late 1970s. She was also the Administrative support for the Pinellas Legislative Delegation.



In 1987, Insurance Commissioner Bill Gunter appointed Long as Deputy Insurance Commissioner for the region encompassing all the coastal counties on the west coast of Florida. She was reappointed by Tom Gallagher and again by Bill Nelson.

Long's first elected position was to the Seminole City Council in 2002 where she was reelected in 2004. In 2006 she was elected to the Florida House of Representatives and again in 2008. In 2012, she was elected to the Pinellas

County Commission, where she has remained. Now, she plans to retire in November. From 2010 to 2021, she also worked at Clearwater Central Catholic High School as the as the Director of Advancement and Communications.

Long's involvement with the BOCC is lengthy and covers dozens of boards and committees. She has been dedicated to advancing and strengthening Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay region's commitment to resiliency and sustainability to preserve and improve the quality of life for residents now—and in the future. One her many priorities has been to ensure smarter forward thinking on public transportation opportunities for our entire region.

In 2018, she worked with Sheriff Gualtieri to form Mental Health for Heroes (MHFH), whose sole mission is to provide mental health services for Law Enforcement and First Responders. The 501-C-3 non-profit provides help and mental services for first responders and law enforcement officers, many of whom need help to deal with the pressures of their job. MHFH provides services to those that serve us—our frontline heroes. (See www.MHforHeroes.com for more information.)

"We've been fortunate to have someone on the county commission like Janet Long who understands what it takes to keep our community safe," explains Sheriff Bob Gualtieri.

"She and I have enjoyed a great working relationship. She has always been an advocate for the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office and all law enforcement officers throughout the county. Janet's passion for ensuring the well-being of our first responders is evident through her work in establishing Mental Health for Heroes (MHFH), which is a non-profit organization that funds counseling services for those first responders in need," Gualtieri continues. "Since 2021, MHFH has been giving back to those that have given so much to their community and Janet has been the driving force behind it. I'm grateful for her passion and commitment to our first responder community and I look forward to continuing to support her efforts."

As Chair of the Regional Planning Council, she formed a compact with 24 regional governments to focus on sustainability and resiliency and to study the intensity and frequency of our changing weather patterns and how it would affect the extreme heat and rising seas. The model was recognized at the World Water Conference in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, and at the United Nations. The Regional Planning Council now has 30 regional governments that focus on sustainability and resiliency. The Regional Resiliency Summit currently holds an annual conference with speakers from around the world.

Former County Commissioner Karen Seel worked alongside Long for many years. "It's been a pleasure to serve with Janet Long over our many years of service," Seel says. "I look forward to having her continued friendship. Janet is full of wit and wisdom and has been a steward for future generations. She has always been looking at climate change and sustainability to provide for future generations. She has provided leadership for Pinellas County - we have EV vehicles, charging stations through Duke Energy and many other sustainable and environmental policies due to her," Seel explains. "Her mantra has been to plan for our children and our grandchildren. Janet will leave a legacy for all of us. I'm personally grateful to her."

Long, now 79, lives in Seminole and has three grown children, five grandchildren, and one great-grandson. Her husband, Richard, retired as an officer with the Seminole Fire Department. They have been married 46 years. "When I retire, I have a long list of plans," says Long. "Some of these include spending more time with my husband, my children, my grandchildren, my great-grandson, and my soon-to-arrive second great-grandchild. I also look forward to traveling with my family."

Once In a Blue Moon



By Bob and Becky Griffin, Local Authors

Full moons have inspired poets and artists since the beginning of time. Each month, the moon moves through phases constantly waxing and waning from full moon to new moon and back again. Full moons occur every 29.5 days when the moon moves to the side of Earth opposite the sun and reflects the sun's rays. The reflection causes the moon to appear to be a perfect, glowing disk in the sky.

The moon's path across the sky changes with the seasons. Full moons are very high in the sky between November and February. They are lower in the sky between May and July.

A "Blue Moon" is when there are two full moons in a single calendar month. (It has nothing to do with its color.) The next Blue Moon will occur in 2026 on May 31st.

Each year, the moon completes its final cycle about 11 days before Earth finishes its orbit around the sun. These days add up; every two and a half years or so, there is an extra full moon – known as a blue moon. Today, the term is commonly used for a second full moon in the same calendar month. Once every century, two Blue Moons happen in the same year.

The moon does not actually appear blue during a blue moon, it can appear blue on rare occasions when tiny particles in the air, like smoke or dust, scatter red wavelengths of light. This has been known to happen after a volcanic eruption or wildfire. The phrase "once in a blue moon" was first mentioned in a pamphlet in 1528. The modern use of the word comes from a reference in the Maine Farmer's Almanac.

Throughout history, the moon's cycles have been used to track time and set schedules for planting and harvesting. Ancient man began to name the full moons based on what was happening during the lunar month. Most of those names are still used today. Here is a list of the months and their full moons.

January: Wolf Moon - Native Americans named this full moon after the howling wolves during the winter. They were easily heard as sound carries farther with winter's clear skies.

February: Snow Moon - Due to the typically cold, snowy February weather in North America.

March: Worm Moon - The last full moon of winter, Native Americans named it for the worms that would appear as ground begins to melt. They knew the worms would be followed by the return of the robins. Other cultures call it the Sugar Moon because that is when they tapped the maple trees.

April: Pink Moon - Though not really a pink moon, Northern Native Americans knew a species of pink wildflower – the moss pink, or moss phlox - would begin blooming.

May: Flower Moon - May's abundant flowers give this full moon its name.

June: Strawberry Moon - Usually, the last full moon of spring, in North America this is the time strawberries are at their peak.

July: Buck Moon - Male deer, also known as bucks, shed their antlers each spring, and regrow larger ones. By July they are at their largest.

August: Sturgeon Moon - North American fishing tribes knew sturgeon were abundant this month.

September: Harvest or the Corn Moon - Because the calendar and the moon cycle don't always align, the moon closest to the fall equinox is the Harvest moon (the best-known moon name). That usually happens in September, but every third year it falls in October. This full moon is particularly bright and rises around sunset, allowing farmers to continue harvesting into the night before the frost comes.



October: Hunter's Moon - The first moon after the harvest moon, the Hunter's moon is usually in October but occasionally falls in November. This is the time to hunt summer-fattened deer easily seen in the cleared fields. It too is particularly bright.

November: Beaver Moon (unless it is the Hunter's Moon) - Some say the name is due to the activity of beavers building their dams and preparing for winter, while others think it references the season the Native Americans set beaver traps for their fur.

December: Cold Moon - The coming of winter and its dark cold period earned December's full moon name. It is also known as The Old Moon or The Moon after Yule.

A "Blood Moon" occurs during a total lunar eclipse, which only happen during a full moon. Since the moon orbits in a different plane than the Earth and the sun, eclipses are rare. At times, however, the planes coincide and Earth passes between the moon and sun, making the moon appear rusty or red in color.

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ADDRESSING EDUCATION IN PARENTING PLANS

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

Child custody outcomes are determined when a parenting plan is approved by or established by the courts. The parenting plan governs the relationship and decision-making roles between co-parents and their child(ren). It addresses issues such as the child's education, health care decisions, a time-sharing schedule, and more.



Florida courts are presumed to generally favor joint custody, where possible. If parents agree on an approved parenting plan, they have the option to agree on sharing decision-making. The expectation is that parents will communicate and confer on issues, like education. This can be challenging when parents have opposing views on the best educational path for the child(ren). Understanding what education-related issues co-parents commonly disagree on is extremely important when drafting a parenting plan. It could be the difference between addressing or not addressing an educational issue in the plan. And if the outcome is agreed through mediation or by going to court. In court, further disagreement may result in less control over the outcome for both parents, and the judge will decide!

EDUCATION ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

- Where will the child(ren) go to school? What type of school? Private school? Who pays?
- What sports will they play at school? Lacrosse? That's expensive equipment! Who pays?
- What if the child is struggling with grades and may need tutoring? Who decides?
- The teacher cites behavioral issues. How does that get handled?

Knowing the education issues to consider can help parents anticipate disagreements and be better prepared to draft a parenting plan they agree on. The more prepared both parents are regarding each other's concerns, the more likely they can work collaboratively and agree on a plan.

Parenting plans address education because education is one of the important aspects of a child's life. If not resolved through mediation and disagreement continues in court, the decision goes to the judge! OCHR is a 501c3 nonprofit that serves children by helping parents more seamlessly navigate their child custody & co-parenting journeys, at no cost to the family.

We kindly ask you to consider a small donation. Your support is needed for us to serve more children by helping more parents achieve successful co-parenting strategies. Successful co-parenting is critical to a child's development, and success in school and life. Successful co-parenting better positions children to reach their full potential and become positive contributors to our community. They are our future workforce!

Most importantly, if you, or someone you know, need 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: www.ourchildrenhaverights.org/donate.



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Sunday, Jan. 12 – 3 p.m.
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 AND NATE NAJAR, GUITAR**

Business Briefs

STATE REP JOINS NONPROFIT Our Children Have Rights (OCHR), a statewide nonprofit organization, announced the appointment of State Representative Linda Chaney as Development Director. In this role, Rep. Chaney will oversee all development strategies to increase fundraising efforts through individual and corporate donations, grants, and sponsorships. A highly regarded statesperson, Rep. Chaney brings a wealth of expertise from both the business and nonprofit sectors.



This addition reinforces OCHR's commitment to serving children by helping parents more seamlessly navigate their child custody and co-parenting journeys, at no cost to the families. Along with the organization's dedication to helping children reach their full potential in school and life through successful co-parenting strategies.

"Working with Our Children Have Rights is a unique opportunity to impact generations and build healthier communities. I'm excited and honored to be part of the Our Children Have Rights team and invite everyone who cares about our children and communities to join us," said Rep. Chaney.

DIRECTOR AWARDED St. Pete-Clearwater Airport Director Tom Jewsbury was selected as the 2024 Florida Department of Transportation's Aviation Professional of the Year. Tom has served at the airport for over 30 years and led the airport to record-breaking annual passengers and over \$3.4 billion economic impact.

GOLF COURSE RECOGNIZED

The Belleair Country Club was recognized by Top 100 Golf as the 13th best club in the state of Florida.

For twenty years, Top 100 has been rating golf courses in the Sunshine State and this year designated BCC West as falling within the same elite company as traditional top Florida courses such as Seminole Golf Club, TPC Sawgrass, and Jupiter Hills.



Tasked with restoring the original 1897 Donald Ross design, architects Jason Straka and Dana Fry worked with one-hundred-year-old plans to bring the original course to life. After only two years, the course has blossomed into a star.

According to Top 100, in addition to the water views from over half the holes, two par 3s serve as the course's highlights. Number 7 is a peninsula that juts out into the water and plays from 80 to 182 yards. Top 100 found the fourth hole with its necklace of sand and its water panorama a "showstopper."

The club, which also garnered a top four ranking from Golfweek, has already approved renovation of its East Course and is slated to begin construction in the Spring of 2026.

BUSINESS NEWS WANTED If your company 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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NEW FACILITY FOR MANATEES

Clearwater Marina Aquarium (CMA) opened a new Manatee Rehabilitation Center. The facility will help accommodate a recent surge in manatees requiring care. CMA will provide assistance to sick, injured, or orphaned manatees including individuals affected by habitat loss, boat strike wounds, ingestion of foreign objects, entanglements and cold stress syndrome.

Manatees, the official state marine mammal of Florida, may grow to over thirteen feet long and weigh more than 1,000 pounds. They face many threats, including cold weather, watercraft accidents, pollution, entanglements, and starvation. The Florida Manatee Sanctuary Act of 1978 established broad protections for manatees and essentially made Florida a sanctuary state for the mammals. Despite these protections, manatee rescues are increasing, with 80 taking place in 2023 in west central Florida.

The state-of-the-art rehabilitation facility at CMA consists of an 80,000-gallon pool that features a movable bottom, giving staff the ability to raise the manatees out of the water without having use more stressful means to give them treatment or take measurements. The pool also has two doors, allowing it to be compartmentalized if patients need to be separated for their care.

CMA's first two manatee patients, Yeti and Zamboni, were transported from ZooTampa at Lowry Park, which like CMA, is a member of the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership (MRP). In February, Yeti was rescued by the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), ZooTampa, and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Citrus County after suffering cold stress. Unlike other marine mammals, manatees lack a layer of blubber, and water temperatures below sixty-eight degrees can cause cold stress or hypothermia.

Zamboni was rescued in January for cold stress by FWC from Placido Bayou in Pinellas County. Both manatees were brought to ZooTampa for critical care, then transported to CMA in July for continuing care. They are being monitored while undergoing an acclimation period and are expected to be returned to their environment.

Yeti and Zamboni are juveniles, and care at this age is vital. "These two are basically toddlers," said Dr. James "Buddy" Powell, Chief Zoological Officer and Executive Director at CMA. "The first year or two years of life are critical to the manatee. They will remain at the facility until they reach about 600 pounds and are cleared to be released."

ZooTampa, along with SeaWorld Orlando and Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens are critical care facilities for manatee rehabilitation. Two of those facilities have at least 20 manatees currently receiving care, so their transfer to CMA helps alleviate the critical care bed space. CMA will be moving toward accepting critical care cases in the near future after its surgical suite is renovated, enlarged, and equipped to allow for manatee surgical needs.

LOCAL HOLIDAY EVENTS

Through January 4th 5:30-9:30pm nightly Holiday Lights in the Garden

12520 Ulmerton Rd

The Florida Botanical Gardens will sparkle with one million, twinkling, LED lights in a multitude of colors. Vibrant laser lights and lighted figures round out the display to wow guests of all ages. The opening of the new Majeed Discovery Garden takes this already awesome event to the next level. There are free kids activities in the Majeed Discovery Garden every Sunday and Thursday evening throughout the month of December. A donation of \$10 per person is kindly requested, children 12 and under are free.

December 1st, 4-10pm Clearwater's Tree Lighting

Coachman Park 330 Cleveland St.

The city of Clearwater invites everyone to enjoy live holiday music and free entertainment at Coachman Park. Elected officials will illuminate the city's Christmas tree.

December 7th, 4-10pm Winter Wonderland Holiday Market and Festival

2045 Palmetto St.

Get into the holiday spirit with unique gifts from local vendors, delicious treats, and joyful activities for the whole family. Winter Wonderland is the perfect place to find that special something for your loved ones while enjoying the magic of the season. There will be a KIDS ZONE where children can enjoy Florida snow tubing, Florida snowball throwing/play, Reindeer food making, Coloring station, bounce houses, obstacle course, pony rides and petting zoo. Limited tickets are available for children 5yrs and older.

December 10th, 4-6pm Clearwater's "Making Spirits Bright" Holiday Parade

Island Way Grill at 20 Island Way

Celebrate the magic of Christmas on Clearwater Beach! The parade line up begins at 3pm at Island Way Grill. The parade will begin at 4pm and travel from Island Estates to North Beach Clearwater, then to South Beach Clearwater, and finish at Island Way Grill for a holiday celebration at 6pm. For more information and to register, send an email to Aquilar2@verizon.net.



December 13th, 4:30-9pm The Polar Express Experience at the Baycare Sound

300 Cleveland St.

Enjoy falling snow on the plaza while enjoying a wide variety of family-friendly experiences for kids of all ages, including games, activities and crafts. A visit from the "Big Guy" himself, Santa Claus, is also promised. At 6:30 pm, the Ruth Eckerd Hall Chorus will take the stage for a Holiday Sing-A-Long. Then, enjoy a FREE screening of the Oscar®-nominated animated movie, The Polar Express starring Tom Hanks on a large screen on the amphitheater stage. For more information, please visit www.TheBayCareSound.com.

December 14th, 6:30-9pm Clearwater Yacht Club's Lighted Holiday Boat Parade

Clearwater Yacht club invites you to come and celebrate half a century of maritime magic with their 50th Anniversary Holiday Lighted Boat Parade! Enjoy a night filled with beautifully decorated boats, festive music, and holiday cheer! This lighted, nautical event celebrates the spirit of the holidays and raises funds for sailing scholarships at the Clearwater Community Sailing Center for youth in the Boys and Girls Club of the Suncoast. Laura Moody of Fox13 Tampa Bay will once again be the 2024 Grand Marshal. For parade routes, more information, or to register, visit ClearwaterYachtClub.org or call (727) 447-6000.

December 14th, 10am-2pm 12 Days of Christmas with Market Marie

Coachman Park, 300 Cleveland St

The Market Marie is held on the 2nd Saturday of every month. It has over 150 vendors, delicious food, fresh produce, pet adoptions and more. This particular Saturday will be extra festive. Families can have their faces painted, have their picture taken with Santa, listen to story time with Mrs. Claus, do arts and crafts in Santa's workshop, and enjoy the PAWrade of festive furry friends. Bring your family and friends, and let's make it an unforgettable holiday celebration!

December 21st, 9:30am-12pm Breakfast with Santa at the Clearwater Marine Aquarium

249 Windward Passage

Bring the whole family to celebrate the holiday season. Enjoy a memorable morning filled with holiday spirit, delicious food, festive crafts, and a chance to meet Santa himself! Whether you're crafting ornaments, sipping hot cocoa, or taking photos with Santa, there's holiday cheer for everyone. To reserve tickets, go to CMAquarium.org

December 30th 5:30-7pm Chanukah Festival

420 Main St. Pioneer Park, Downtown Dunedin

Join the Chabad of Pinellas County for a Chanukah Festival in Pioneer Park, downtown Dunedin. All are welcome! There will be a giant, neon menorah lighting, a DJ and light show, DIY glow sticks, neon wearables, snacks, balloons, a dreidel man, Chanukah music, and a drone gelt drop. For more information, call 727-789-0408.

December 31st starts at 8pm-12:30am January 1st, 2025

Light It Up Clearwater

301 Drew St

Fireworks will light up the sky at midnight. Watch from all along Clearwater Beach, especially near the southern end of Clearwater Beach. Note that the fireworks will be set off from the north end of Sand Key, across the bridge from Clearwater Beach. Many hotels and restaurants have special events going on that night including such as Shepard's, JW Marriot, and The Edge Hotel.

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RECOVERING FROM TWO HURRICANES

From the Desk of Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

We went through the unimaginable – two hurricanes in two weeks, and as we work to rebuild, I want to say how proud I am of the way the people of Pinellas County have come together to survive and begin to recover. As I worked throughout the county in the immediate aftermath of both storms, I saw neighbors helping neighbors, and strangers stepping up. You opened your homes to friends in evacuation zones, brought food and water to people in need, and cleared debris from the yards of the elderly.



I'm also proud of the hard work that all members of the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) did before, during, and after the hurricanes. As the storms approached, we prepared equipment and notified people in evacuation zones. We responded to people's calls for help as long as we could as the winds grew fiercer, and as soon as the storm passed our deputies jumped into action, rescuing people from flooded homes, clearing trees from roads, and helping traffic flow despite broken traffic signals. Civilian and sworn members alike performed essential tasks like keeping the jail running smoothly and safely and protecting stored property and evidence. The Public Relations Bureau stayed on top of messaging, putting out valuable, potentially life-saving information even in the middle of the hurricanes.

Tragically, lives were lost in both of the storms. In most cases those deaths were preventable. People drowned, were electrocuted, or had medical emergencies when first responders couldn't come to help them – all of which could have been avoided if they had evacuated. While any storm can bring the unexpected in the form of tornadoes, falling trees, or unanticipated flooding, you can mitigate the risk by evacuating when the order comes out.

After the storms, closures helped keep people safer, giving officials time to assess the damage. After Helene passed, we kept the barrier islands shut for a few days. After Milton ravaged Pinellas, the entire county was closed for a while. Many roads were impassable because of fallen trees, traffic lights were out at many major intersections, and more than half of the county was without power. Bridges were closed, and deputies blocked land access to Pinellas until crews had a chance to assess the major hazards. Access resumed by midday, but the area was full of hazards for a long time afterward.

For all the generosity and public-spiritedness of so many people in the county, there are plenty of people who want to take advantage of our disaster. We increased patrol to combat looters. Scammers also flocked to the area, posing as contractors or FEMA or insurance agents. Don't let yourself be scammed – don't make hasty decisions, don't pay upfront, or pay by non-traditional means like Venmo, gift cards, or crypto, don't give out your personal information, and be wary of any offer that seems too good to be true.

Pinellas County is strong, we are resilient, and we will emerge stronger and safer than ever.

Community News



CLEARWATER YACHT CLUB LIGHTED BOAT PARADE

Submitted by Holly Shuga

Come and celebrate half a century of maritime holiday magic at Clearwater Yacht Club's 50th Anniversary Holiday Lighted Boat Parade on Saturday, December 14th. This lighted, nautical event celebrates the spirit of the holidays and raises funds for sailing scholarships at the Clearwater Community Sailing Center for youth in the Boys and Girls Club of the Suncoast. Laura Moody of Fox13 Tampa Bay will once again be our 2024 Grand Marshal. Cash and prizes will be awarded in several categories.

Both individual and commercial entries of all types and sizes in holiday décor are encouraged. There is no registration fee for the event. Participants must register for a boat number for the parade to be eligible for prizes. For sponsorship opportunities, email Julie@floridabeachbusiness.com. The proceeds of the 50th Annual Holiday Lighted Boat Parade will foster youth sailing programs in the Clearwater area. For boat registration and further information please visit ClearwaterYachtClub.org/boat-parade.

GFWC CLEARWATER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Upcoming Events at the Clearwater Historical Society:

- December 13th at 11 am: Basketweaving Class
- December 18th at 5pm: Macrame Class
- December 21st at 10am: Santa visits the museum

All events are at the Clearwater Historical Society, 610 Fort Harrison. Call (727) 754-8019 for more information.

RESCUE NOT RETAIL DUNEDIN

Submitted by Amanda Atteniese

We are happy to announce that we have rescheduled our BauserWeen Fundraising Event for December 15th. Since this event is usually held around Halloween, we decided to mix Christmas and Halloween; and have a Nightmare Before Christmas themed fundraising event. The festivities will be at Bauser's Local Neighborhood Bar, 520 Douglas Avenue from 1-6pm, including live music by the Howler Monkeys, a dog costume contest, a photo station, and our famous "Battle of the Bartenders" dunk tan. There will be a 50/50 drawing, raffle baskets, pet food/supply drive, and vendors. Dunedin Dog Rescue will also be there with adoptable pets.

Proceeds will benefit Rescue Not Retail Dunedin, a 501c3 Non-Profit Animal Rescue/Resource Provider, and the Community BarkBox. Costume contest entrants must be registered no later than 2:30 PM so that we can get our pups out of the heat. Sign-up at the RNR information booth. Follow RNR on Facebook for more information.

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Community News

SAND KEY SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Submitted by Shelley Breiner

The Sand Key Social Committee is excited to invite Sand Key residents and their guests to an exclusive Winter Wonderland Family & Friends Extravaganza at Dillard's Countryside. Join us on December 15th from 9-11am for a magical holiday shopping experience in a festive atmosphere—without the holiday crowds – doors will be open just for us. There is no cost to participate.

Guests will be welcomed into a transformed Winter Wonderland, where Santa and his elves have sprinkled holiday magic throughout the store. This complimentary event offers a luxurious shopping experience and festive surprises, including:

- Live DJ: Festive tunes to spread holiday cheer and create the perfect shopping atmosphere
- Festive Refreshments: Light seasonal hors d'oeuvres, seasonal cocktails, and mocktails
- Free holiday gift wrapping and shipping
- Exclusive Savings: A 10% "Family & Friends" discount for all attendees
- Exciting Prizes: Get ready for incredible, must-have prizes that will make your holiday season even more special!
- Meet Santa: Family-friendly fun for all ages, including a meet-and-greet with Santa and his elves
- Personalized Service: Enjoy personalized fittings and shopping assistance

Support Toys for Tots by bringing a new, unwrapped toy for donation. For every toy donated, you'll receive a ticket for a chance to win even more amazing prizes!

The Sand Key Social Committee would like to extend a heartfelt thank you to Dillard's Countryside and PPA Realty for helping make this event possible. For more information or to RSVP, contact Shelley at (813) 417-6153.

The Sand Key Social Committee unites independent residents of Sand Key in a powerful commitment to forge deeper connections, build a stronger community, and celebrate the vibrant spirit of our island. Together, we are dedicated to enriching life on Sand Key through meaningful events and enduring bonds.

The Sand Key Social Committee operates independently and is not affiliated with any Homeowners' Association (HOA). All invitees and attendees participate in our events at their own risk and assume full responsibility for any associated risks.

CLEARWATER COMMUNITY WOMAN'S CLUB

GFWC Clearwater Community Woman's Club's signature initiative for 2024-2025 is to combat food insecurity for children and families in Pinellas County by establishing new school food pantries.

One in four children in our area is food insecure. Food is the most basic of human needs and hunger has been associated with academic and behavioral impairments in school going children. Families rely on school meals and food pantries to provide nutritious food.

GFWC Clearwater Community Woman's Club's goal is to create or support two new school pantries for needy families. Visit CCWCFloida.org for information.

FLORIDA BOTANICAL GARDENS FOUNDATION

Submitted by Emily Goot

The Florida Botanical Gardens Foundation (FBGF) is excited to announce the 1st anniversary of the Majeed Discovery Garden, the 2+ acre addition of a children's garden to the Florida Botanical Gardens.

The Gardens are free to enjoy, open daily, maintained and cared for by Pinellas County Parks and Conservation Resources, with events and programming led by the FBGF.

Since its grand opening last November, the Majeed Discovery Garden has since seen hundreds of children and families through its gates— with field trips, birthday parties, family programming and daily visitors to the Gardens.

This garden expansion was made possible by generous donations from the community, including the Majeed Foundation and the Berolzheimer Foundation.

Visit FLBGFoundation.org/events or contact Executive Director, Emily Goot, at emily@flbgfoundation.org to learn more about the Majeed Discovery Garden's One-Year Anniversary Celebration.

Other Events:

Holiday Lights in the Gardens: Voted 9th in the Nation in 2023! Friday, Running through Saturday, January 4th from 5:30-9:30pm - This family-friendly, Pinellas County Holiday tradition



returns for its 24th year.

The Florida Botanical Gardens sparkle with over one million twinkling LED lights. Includes live, local entertainment nightly, seasonal concessions available for purchase. Opens the day after thanksgiving and runs every night through the new year. Suggested donation, \$10 per person, ages 12 and under free.

Gift & Plant Sale: Shop small this holiday season! Saturday, December 14th from 8am-9pm -A selection of local vendors set up shop in the Florida Botanical Gardens for this annual fair, including plants, crafts and more - includes a night market in the evening at Holiday Lights in the Gardens.

For more information on all events, visit FLBGFoundation.org.

CREATIVE PINELLAS

Submitted by Roman Black

Due to the two recent historic hurricanes, Creative Pinellas has transformed our Arts Annual Fundraiser into the Arts Annual Hurricane Relief Fundraiser, now rescheduled for Saturday, December 7. This year, our arts community needs support more than ever.

Through ticket sales, sponsorships, donations, and art sales, Creative Pinellas will distribute 80% of net proceeds to Pinellas County artists and arts organizations to aid in their recovery.

The Arts Annual 2024 exhibition will be on view through January 4 along with our first-ever Arts Annual Pop-Up Gift Shop.

Creative Pinellas is located at 12211 Walsingham Road in Largo. Visit CreativePinellas.org for more information.



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“Brian, We want to thank you for the exceptional job you did selling our Cabana Club penthouse. You priced the unit realistically while skillfully marketing it in all possible venues. You brought us a great offer in early August when other realtors told us to wait until January to put it on MLS. You dominate Cabana Club condominium sales for one simple reason, Results! You skillfully negotiated every aspect of the transaction from start to finish, importantly keeping us informed every step of the way. Following the worst storm in 100 years to hit Clearwater, you kept our buyer informed of every aspect of the cleanup and rebuilding process with an exceptional attention to detail. Your calm, confident demeanor exudes honesty which is palpable to all involved in the transaction. There’s a reason you are the #1 Realtor in Sand Key. Selling “The Beach” is different than selling Tampa. You know your market. You know your product.

*You epitomize the old marketing average “Knowledge breeds Confidence, Confidence breeds Enthusiasm and Enthusiasm sells”. Sharon and I were honored to have you represent us in the sale of our property. We would highly recommend you to anyone looking to buy or sell their property on Sand Key. You under promised and over delivered!
 Best Regards, Mike and Sharon Dirrane”*