

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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Magazine

DONALD ROEBLING AND HIS ALLIGATOR

By Pete Magnani, Publisher

85 years ago, World War II began with the German invasion of Poland. The United States was drawn into the war in December 1941 after the attack on Pearl Harbor. By 1942, U.S. Marines were given an advantage in battle thanks to a Clearwater resident. Inventor and engineer Donald Roebling had a vision for a civilian rescue vehicle that evolved into a military powerhouse, the "Roebling Alligator."

John Roebling emigrated from Prussia in 1831. A civil engineer, he was a pioneer of the wire-cable suspension bridge, designing and overseeing construction of several aqueducts and bridges across the Northeast. His High Bridge, spanning the Kentucky River Palisades, was the first cantilever bridge constructed in the United States.

In 1867, he began designing what is now the Brooklyn Bridge, spanning the East River in New York City. Two years later, while scouting the location, his toes were crushed by a ferry, resulting in an amputation. John refused medical care and attempted to cure his injury with "water therapy," which is continuous pouring of water over the wound. The treatment was unsuccessful, and he died of tetanus on July 22nd, 1869. John's son Washington took over the project but suffered decompression sickness ("the bends") while directing efforts to extinguish a fire in one of the underwater bridge caissons. His wife Emily, who had taught herself bridge construction, took over management of the project. The bridge was completed in 1883. The John A. Roebling and Sons Company also manufactured the cables for the Golden Gate Bridge fifty years later.



Donald Roebling and Navy Admiral Davidson in 1945. Roebling had just been awarded a medal of merit and citation signed by President Truman awarded. (Courtesy Special Collections, University of South Florida.)

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Also in this Issue:



Capable Canines

More than just loyal and loving companions, dogs and their heightened senses serve many important purposes.

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What Happened 100 Years Ago?

From the Olympics, to the Thanksgiving Day Parade, to NHL Hockey, 1924 was the stage for notable national events.

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The Year in Review

Sheriff Bob Gualtieri wraps up 2024 with his recap of notable events.

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CREDITS



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INDIAN ROCKS BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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

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

We hope you enjoyed our magazine. We want your input. Did you like this issue? What suggestions do you have for future articles? Call or email us..

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

Thank you for reading,

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SEE YOU AGAIN IN MARCH!



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CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS & EVENTS

As always, this is subject to change.



JANUARY

- New Year's Day 1
- Holiday Lights in the Gardens Ends 4
- Dunedin Art Festival 4-5
- Public School Begins 6
- Epiphany 6
- Creative Pinellas Fundraiser 7
- Peace Memorial Concert Series 12
- City Commission Meeting 14
- St. Pete Boat Show 16-19
- Shen Yun at Mahaffey Theater 16-19
- Florida's Arbor Day 17
- Gasparilla Children's Parade 18
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day 20
- Public Schools Closed 20
- Inauguration Day 20

- NCAA Championship Game 20
- Gasparilla Pirate Fest 25
- Pinellas Park TacoFest 28
- Chinese New Year Begins 29

FEBRUARY

- Pro Bowl 2
- Junk & Jewels Belleair Garden Club 7-8
- Sant' Yago Knight Parade 8
- Tampa Bay Sun Home Opener 8
- Super Bowl 9
- Registration Deadline March Election 10
- Florida State Fair 6-16
- Public School Hurricane Makeup Day 17
- Valentine's Day 14
- Free Wedding Botanical Gardens 14
- Winterfest on the Rocks 15
- Presidents' Day 17
- MLB Spring Training Begins 21
- Gasparilla Run 22
- Blue Jays Spring Home Opener 22
- Safety Harbor Art & Seafood 22-23
- Phillies Spring Home Opener 23
- Florida Strawberry Festival Begins 27
- St. Pete Grand Prix Begins 28

MARCH

- Dunedin Mardi Gras Parade 4
- Peace Memorial Concert Series 9
- Rotary Runs the Beach 15



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Did You Know

CITY PARKING DECALS The 2025-27 City of Indian Rocks Beach Resident Parking Decals will be available Monday, January 6. IRB property owners or residential lessees with at least a one-year lease may obtain two decals per property.

Decals can be obtained at City Hall with the following documentation:

A copy of Pinellas County Property Appraiser’s record identifying the applicant as a property owner or recorded deed. If the applicant is a lessee, a copy of the one-year lease agreement or a notarized letter from the landlord of the property for which the decal is sought, confirming the lease for at least one year.

If the applicant is a corporate entity, a copy of the current year’s annual report on file with Florida’s Secretary of State identifying the applicant as an authorized member of the corporate entity that owns the property for which the decal is sought. Applicants must provide a valid driver’s license and a valid registration for each vehicle.

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 will be in 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. In December, the city council voted to spend \$1.4 million to repair the roof. Major League Baseball requires the repairs begin within ninety days.

The Rays will play the 2025 season at Steinbrenner Field in Tampa, the Spring Training home of the New York Yankees.

NEW RULES Several new laws went into effect on January 1st, with concerns from voter registration to medical treatment. Senate Bill 362 increases the maximum medical reimbursements for physicians and surgical procedures and increases the maximum fees for expert witnesses from \$200 to \$300 per hour under the “Workers Compensation Law.” The law requires employers to provide injured employees all medically necessary remedial treatment, care and attendance for the entire recovery process.

Other new laws address threatening first responders, updated building regulations, social media accounts for children, and additional protections against financial exploitation for seniors.

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

OUR NEXT ISSUE IS IN MARCH Read this issue, and others, online at BeachNewsletters.com and follow us on Facebook at Neighborhood News Magazines for ongoing local news updates.

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TURTLES RELEASED In December, Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA) released two sea turtles, Odessa and Philly, back into the waters off Fred Howard Park after successful rehabilitation at CMA.

Odessa, a juvenile Kemp’s Ridley sea turtle, was found swimming in a ditch about two miles inland on November 11th in Crystal River. Philly, a juvenile green sea turtle, was found swimming in a ditch on November 30th in Dixie County. These turtles were possibly displaced due to the hurricanes and subsequent flooding.

During their short rehabilitation stay at CMA, all diagnostics showed Odessa and Philly were otherwise healthy. CMA is excited to share that they were returned to the Gulf of Mexico with the assistance of the Fred Howard Park rangers.

Multiple sea turtles as well as manatees have been found inland after the severe storm surge of Hurricane Helene.

The public can call Clearwater Marine Aquarium at (727) 441- 1790 ext. 1 if displaced wildlife is sighted.

HEALTH INSURANCE OPEN ENROLLMENT For those that buy insurance on HealthCare.gov, open enrollment began in November 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.

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.

Roebling Alligator, Continued

Donald Roebling was born in New York City on November 25th, 1908, to John A. Roebling II and Margaret McIlvane Roebling. He was raised in Bernardsville, New Jersey and became an electrical engineer. Roebling married Florence Spotswood Parker in 1929 and moved to Clearwater in hopes that Florida's climate would be therapeutic for his ailments.

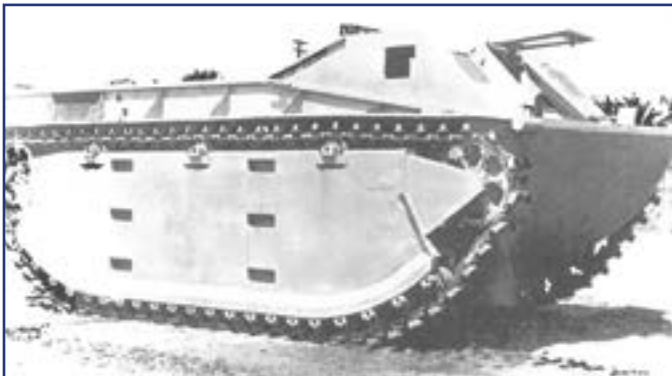
Roebling began construction on an elaborate estate on the Intracoastal Waterway one half mile south of today's Memorial Causeway. The four-story Tudor Revival mansion featured nine bedrooms and fourteen baths and over 15,000 square feet of living space. Completed in 1930 at a cost of \$100,000 (approximately \$1.9 million today), the residence has an elevator to an underground tunnel. The passageway provides access to an Olympic-size swimming pool, greenhouse, tennis courts, boathouse, and a large machine shop. It was in this shop that the Roebling Alligator came to life.

The Great Miami Hurricane of 1926 resulted in the deaths of 372 people. Roebling believed that a rescue vehicle that could operate both on land and in water would have spared many of those lives. Another 1800 lives were lost to hurricanes in 1928 and 1932, and Roebling, an inventor by nature, began designing an amphibious rescue craft.

The prototype Alligator rolled out of the Spottis Woode machine shop in 1936, powered by a 92-horsepower Chrysler engine. The 14,350-pound vehicle was 24 feet long and 9 feet 10 inches wide. When asked about the specificity of the width, Roebling advised it was not due to engineering, but simply because the shop door opening was ten feet wide. The vehicle ran on two tracks with flared cleats that functioned as paddles to propel the Alligator in water. It ran 25 miles per hour on land, but only 2.5 miles per hour in water.

By its next iteration in 1937, the aluminum-hulled Alligator was four feet shorter and only weighed 6,000 pounds. Its lighter weight, redesigned track, and 95-horsepower Ford V-8 enabled the vehicle to cruise at 5.5 miles per hour offshore. Following a Life Magazine article featuring the amphibious vehicle, the United States military took notice. Despite initially resisting the idea of his humanitarian invention being used in battle, Roebling was eventually convinced of the vehicle's potential to save the lives of American servicemen. He was awarded a \$200,000 contract to produce an Alligator to military specifications.

The first military model was completed in 1940. It could drop into the water from a height of six feet without capsizing and would still float even if the interior was fully flooded.



An early Amtrac built at FMC in Dunedin.



Roebling, (rear row, second from right) and his Alligator.

The 95-horsepower Mercury engine enabled the Alligator to cruise at ten miles per hour. The only downside was the lightweight aluminum construction. At the request of the Marine Corps, Roebling got to work on an all-steel version of the vehicle. The military designation for the Alligator was Landing Vehicle Tracked, or LVT.

Roebling contracted the Food Manufacturing Company (FMC) in Dunedin to produce the LVTs. The first two steel vehicles rolled off the production line in July 1941. The Marines approved the prototypes and FMC was awarded a \$4 million contract to manufacture 200 additional LVTs. The company decided to move its commercial fruit washer manufacturing to Lakeland so the Dunedin plant could focus on military vehicles. While the new Polk County facility was under construction, it became obvious the United States would be drawn into the war. Subsequently, the Lakeland FMC plant never manufactured any fruit washers and became the main assembly line for LVTs. Later, FMC expanded production to additional plants in Riverside and San Jose, California.

The LVT was an innovation for the military, and its operators need training. The United States Marine Corps Amphibian Tractor Detachment originally formed in Quantico, Virginia and moved to Dunedin in early 1941. The detachment was initially housed at the Dunedin Hotel until completion of a specialized barracks at US Alternate 19 and Curlew Creek. The location was ideal for training soldiers to operate the LVT on land and in water.

The 16,000 LVT-1 measured 22 feet long, 10 feet 8 inches wide and was 8 feet tall. It could carry eighteen fully equipped soldiers or 4,500 pounds of cargo. Lacking protective armor, LVTs were first used by the 1st Marine Division at Guadalcanal in 1942, ferrying supplies from ship to shore. Roebling redesigned the vehicle, adding armor, improved suspension, and more powerful engines. Later, fire support versions were produced, featuring gun turrets and 78mm Howitzer cannons. These were dubbed "Amtanks."

Over time, LVTs saw combat worldwide, including Europe, the Philippines, Africa, and the Suez Canal. 8,500 Alligators were produced by the end of World War II. The Marine Corps still uses a variant of the LVT, now known as Amphibious Assault Vehicles (AAVs).

After the war ended, Roebling became a renowned philanthropist in Clearwater. He financed the Roebling Wing of Morton Plant Hospital, a hall and gym for Peace Memorial Church, and a building for the Boy Scouts. He passed away on August 29th, 1959 in Boston, Massachusetts following complications from gall bladder surgery. His home, Spottis Woode still stands, a landmark when cruising the Intracoastal Waterway.

Photos on this page courtesy of the Dunedin History Museum.

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SIX BIG MISTAKES IN RETIREMENT - PART TWO

by Ray Ferrara, ProVise Management Group

In our last article, we talked about the first three mistakes: 1) taking too much risk, 2) not taking enough risk, and 3) not understanding the difference between accumulation and decumulation. Now we turn to the next three: 1) Not having or understanding the need for a budget, 2) using variable dollars to pay fixed expenses, and 3) not managing income taxes.



MISTAKE #4 NOT HAVING OR UNDERSTANDING THE NEED FOR A BUDGET

Okay, let's just say it up front – you never had a budget while working. You always had enough money to live your lifestyle and save, so who needs a budget? But in retirement, life is very different. No longer do you have a predictable and steady flow of income; you have a variable limited income. There are no annual bonuses or yearly salary increases. Your sources of income are limited, and they will be variable both due to using the money and market performance. If you do not have a budget and a reasonable understanding of your expenses, you are setting yourself up for potential financial disaster.

MISTAKE #5 USING VARIABLE DOLLARS TO PAY FIXED EXPENSES

When you do your budget, separate your fixed expenses (the things you must have) and your variable expenses (the things you like to have). If you are trying to pay your fixed expenses with variable dollars and the market takes a big downturn, it can cause significant angst. Try to match fixed expenses with predictable income and variable expenses with variable income. When the market takes a negative turn, you cut back on the variable expenses without having to sacrifice your "need to have" fixed expenses.

MISTAKE #6 NOT MANAGING INCOME TAXES

While we are working, managing the payment of taxes is not complicated as they just come out of our paycheck. In retirement, you will likely have to file tax payments on a quarterly basis. Not doing it correctly can cause interest and penalties. Depending on your income, up to 85% of your Social Security benefits are taxable. Arrange your cash flow to include ordinary income, capital gains, tax free income, etc. such that you are keeping your taxable amount to as little as possible.

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

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THE MANY TYPES OF WORKING DOGS

By Pete Magnani, Publisher

Dogs are loyal, playful, and make great family pets, but they also serve higher purposes. Their intelligence and senses make them valuable in several ways. Dog's noses are their primary asset. Their sense of smell is about 100,000 times stronger than humans. People have about 400 olfactory receptors, dogs have up to 300 million.

Service dogs have many roles, including assisting blind or visually impaired people. They can help their handler navigate obstacles, elevation, and hazards. They are trained to "intelligently disobey" commands that would put their handler in danger, such as stepping onto a busy road or crossing the street against traffic. These dogs are selected after a rigorous screening, only after evaluation of their temperament, intelligence, and physical attributes.

Other service dogs perform tasks like mobility assistance, medical assistance for seizures and other conditions, and hearing for those with auditory impairment. Breeds commonly trained to perform these tasks include golden and Labrador retrievers, standard poodles, and German shepherds.

Therapy dogs are trained and certified animals used as part of a patient's therapeutic treatment plan. They provide emotional support while visiting nursing homes, hospitals, and schools. These dogs must be well-trained, socialized, and even-tempered. Any breed can become a therapy dog, with the most common being retrievers, standard poodles, and border collies.

Dogs are also a valuable resource to law enforcement and the military, where they are trained to find fleeing criminals and detect illicit drugs, explosives, and cadavers. Military

dogs are also used as scouts and sentries. Some are trained to parachute out of airplanes strapped to their handler. These animals must be well-trained, obedient, and non-fearful. The most common breeds used by law enforcement and the military are German shepherds, Belgian Malinois, and Dutch shepherds.



Search-and-rescue dogs

use their advanced senses of smell and hearing in many different fields, including specialized searches for disasters like hurricanes and building collapses, avalanche rescue, and cadaver location. Cadaver dogs are also used to locate ancient burial sites for archeological research. Dogs in Croatia have located such sites dating back 3000 years. Retrievers, border collies, German shepherds, and Leonbergers are commonly used for search-and-rescue.

Herding dogs are used to control pasturing animals like sheep, goats, and cattle. These dogs come from herding breeds that have passed the necessary instincts down through genetics. They include Border collies, Icelandic sheepdogs, Black mouth curs, and king shepherds.

Guard dogs have a natural instinct to protect. They must be highly-trained, strong, intelligent and non-fearful. They can patrol perimeters, provide personal protection, and charge and pin down threats. Akitas, bull mastiffs, Doberman pinschers, and German shepherds are the most commonly used as guard dogs.

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A CENTURY BY THE NUMBERS

By Lora Magnani, Publisher

People always lament how much the world has changed. But has it really? We decided to compare the year we just finished (2024) with its counterpart 1924. Are there really that many differences?

In 1924, Americans were amidst the "Roaring Twenties" and right in the middle of Prohibition. Presidents Jimmy Carter (39th) and George H.W. Bush (41st) were born, and Calvin Coolidge was the 30th sitting President United States, which at the time had only 48 states. Coolidge signed into law the Immigration Act of 1924, also known as the Johnson-Reed Immigration Act. It was the most stringent U.S. immigration policy up to that time in the nation's history.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was established, and J. Edgar Hoover would take the helm as the first acting director. His tenure would last 48 years. Congress passed the Indian Citizenship Act which conferred citizenship on all Native Americans born within the territorial limits of the country. Wyoming was the first state to elect a female governor, Nellie Tayloe Ross, and the Statue of Liberty was declared a national monument.



1924 was a big year for the Olympics as well. France hosted both the Summer and Winter games. The Winter games were held at the foot of Mount Blanc in Chamonix and Haute-Savoie between January 25th and February 5th. The games were originally recognized as the "International Winter Sports Week," but following the success of the event it would go on to be called the "First Winter Olympics" by the International Olympic Committee. The Summer Olympics were held in Paris, this was the second time the city hosted the games,

making them the first to host twice. They would then host for a third time a century later in 2024. These were the first games to have an Olympic Village and introduced the Closing Ceremony ritual.

In pop culture, Walt Disney's studio released its first animated short film, *Alice's Day at Sea*, on March 1, 1924. Macy's staged its first Thanksgiving Day parade in New York City, where employees marched down 34th Street dressed in costumes. There were bands and floats, and even live animals borrowed from Central Park Zoo. International Business Machines (IBM) was also founded in New York that year.

In sports, Canada's National Hockey League expanded to the United States, including the Boston Bruins. The Bruins beat fellow expansion team Montreal Maroons 2-1 in the first NHL game played in the United States. Soldier Field, the home of the Chicago Bears, opened, and the 50th annual Kentucky Derby was won by John Mooney riding Black Gold with a time of 2:05.2.

Here are a few Now and Then comparisons:

The life expectancy in 1924 was 54.1 years and today it is 79.9 years.

The one-dollar bill is equivalent to eighteen dollars now.

Unemployment was at 5 percent, as of October 2024 Florida's rate was at 3.3 percent, according to FloridaJobs.org.

The Dow Jones closed at 120.51. The average as of December 16th 2024 was 43,824.18.

The average household income in the 1920s was \$3,269.40 (in today's money that would be \$49,341.14) versus \$96,992 presently in Florida.

In the 1920's Do-It-Yourself home buildings were popular. One example was the Florence Cozy five room cottage sold at \$1,195. Sears Roebuck Gladstone sold another which featured three bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen and bath for \$2,025. Today's average 3BR/2BA is \$359,000 in Pinellas County.

The average rent for an apartment in New York City was \$60 per month. Now, a studio apartment in the Big Apple runs around \$3,827 per month.

Gas was typically around 21 cents per gallon. Florida's average price per gallon was \$3.12 as of December 15th 2024, according to AAA.

An automobile ranged from the new Ford Runabout at \$265 to the luxury Buick Marquette for \$965. Today a Ford Taurus has a starting price of \$27,800 and the Rolls-Royce La Rose Noire Droptail carries a price tag of \$30 million.

Dinner and a Movie - A diner meal would usually run 70 cents (\$18.73 in today prices) and an average meal would cost a patron \$20-\$30 in 2024. A movie ticket sold for 15 cents (equivalent to \$2.26 today). The going rate for a movie ticket in Florida is \$12, reaching as high as \$28 in New York.

A wedding is something families save for years before the big day. Today the average family pays around \$30,000. In 1924, a wedding would run them around \$400 (\$6,036 in today's money).



A new radio, which was highly sought after, could cost over \$200 (approximately \$3000 in today's money) but would drop to \$35 (\$528.21) by the end of the decade. A washing machine was \$81.50 (\$1,229), while a basic machine can start at \$450 and run as high as \$3,000 today. An electric vacuum cleaner complete with a motor-driven brush was \$28.95. Typically, a handheld vacuum starts at \$100 today

Let's talk about groceries. A gallon of milk was 54 cents, a dozen eggs were 13 cents, fresh baked bread was 9 cents, and shoppers paid 25-30 cents for a pound of coffee. Today milk is \$4.04, eggs are around \$3.65, a loaf of sliced white bread is \$2.54, and a 12-ounce bag of Starbucks medium roast sells for \$8.79.

Florida's population was 1,160,000 in 1924, a 5.7% increase from the year before. This was due to the large number of Americans who had the time and money to travel to Florida and invest in real estate after World War I. The most populated city in Florida in 1920s was Jacksonville with 91,588 residents. St. Petersburg came in 6th with 14,237. Today Jacksonville is still ranked the highest with 949,611 and St. Petersburg has moved up to 5th with 258,308.

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HOLIDAY CHEER

Determined to make the best of it, the residents of Indian Rocks came together to celebrate the holidays. Once again, the holiday season opened with the Annual Christmas Tree Lighting. Action 2000 supplied popcorn, Crabby Bill's hot chocolate, and the Beach Art Center had crafts and calendars! All in all, it was a beautiful night and a great way to catch up with friends!

BEACH CLEAN-UP AND CHRISTMAS MARKET

Indian Rocks Beach shined with holiday spirit when the Indian Rocks Trash Tribe hosted a Winter Wonderland Beach Cleanup and Christmas Market on December 14. The festive event helped locals make a positive impact on the environment while enjoying the joy of the season.

The evening began with a beach cleanup at 4pm, where volunteers of all ages cleaned the shoreline. Following the cleanup, visitors enjoyed a lively Christmas market filled with unique holiday gifts, treats, and winter decor.

Adding to the festivities was holiday music, a cotton candy machine, popcorn, hot chocolate, and apple cider. A snow machine and Christmas decorations brought a magical winter feel to the beach.

In addition to the cleanup and market, attendees enjoyed a special brunch with Santa and Mrs. Claus at Groupers on the Gulf earlier that morning.



COOKIE EXCHANGE

Once again, the women of Indian Rocks came together to celebrate the season and exchange wonderful, sweet treats. The annual tradition is hosted by Diane Flagg. Many of the ladies attending are displaced and not living in town, making their time together even sweeter.

LIGHTED BOAT PARADE

This year's Lighted Christmas Boat Parade was a little different than the past. Due to the impact of the hurricanes, the format was changed. Instead of a judged parade, the public decorated their boats and met on the Intracoastal at the southern end of the Holiday Inn for an informal parade. Also, unlike last year when the parade was canceled at the last minute due to weather, it was a beautiful, but cold evening. A big thank you to Captain Eddie Bie for again leading the boats.



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Bar & Restaurant News

NEW ENGLAND COMES TO INDIAN ROCKS

At the end of September, before Hurricane Helene, The Original Crabby Bill's Seafood Restaurant and Family Brands announced that JD's Restaurant & Lounge was rebranding to become Monstah Lobstah. This is a collaboration between the Loder family and their good friend Dan Hall. Dan has years of experience with Maine lobsters and seafood. Cleanup delayed the project and Monstah Lobstah opened in November.



The menu features seafood selections including lobster, snow crab, shrimp, and scallops, as well as sandwiches, burgers, and salads. There are daily BOGO specials, and breakfast on Saturday and Sunday. The outdoor bar became "JD's Back Porch" and kept with the same warm, welcoming vibe patrons have come to know and love.

Monstah Lobstah IRB is located at 125 Gulf Blvd. and is open 7 days a week with live music on JD's Back Porch daily. Follow them on Facebook for specials and upcoming events.

REBUILDING Sandy's Cafe is still closed and awaiting roof repairs. Chicago Jaqx Pizza is temporarily closed and awaiting permits. They hope to expand and add dining space during the remodel.

The Frog Pond on North Redington Beach, well known for their large breakfast portions and frog decor, is also temporarily closed. Caddy's Pub in Indian Shores is also being remodeled.

REOPENED Two years ago, the ceiling collapsed at the Greek Village restaurant in Seminole. Owner Vicki Kyriazis Albarelli closed the doors intending to reopen after repairs but had to relocate. Greek Village is now open at 12199 Indian Rock Rd in the space previously occupied by the Haus Coffee shop as Greek Village Cafe.

The cafe has a limited menu while remodeling the new location. You can still pickup one of their famous Greek salads, a bowl of their "Avgolemono" chicken lemon orzo soup, or a Gyro. They are open Tuesday-Saturday from 8am-6pm. For more information call (727) 470-9151.

LOCALZ NOW ROCKHOUSE LIVE In the aftermath of Hurricanes Helene and Milton, RockHouse Live made the decision to relocate from Clearwater Beach to the former Localz location at 14219 Walsingham Road in Largo. They are open 7 days a week from 11am-3am with happy hour Monday-Friday from 11am-7pm.

The 4,500 square foot restaurant features 45 televisions and the NFL ticket. It has live bands, karaoke, and trivia nights. RockHouse also offers a full menu featuring burgers, sandwiches, and a variety of tacos, with daily specials. Follow them on Facebook to see daily specials and band lineups.

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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THE YEAR IN REVIEW

From the Desk of Sheriff Bob Gualtieri



It has been a rough few months here in Pinellas County. As 2024 draws to a close and we look back over the significant events that touched our lives, it can be hard to remember anything except hurricanes, hurricanes, and more hurricanes. So many people were affected by Helene and Milton, from the 12 lives that were tragically lost in Helene, to the devastation of homes and businesses that the unprecedented flooding of both storms produced. Half of the county evacuated, and some will never be able to return to the places they called home, or the places that provided them with income. Although the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) and many other organizations are helping people rebuild their lives, and though I see you all coming together to help each other out, we have all been touched by the devastation. As we rebuild, I want you to remember some of the other significant things that happened in the last 12 months.

Keeping our kids safe is one of my top priorities. As chair of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, I've worked to improve school safety here in Pinellas County and statewide. On January 1st, a new Florida Model of school-based threat assessment went live in Florida, based largely on the model developed at PCSO. Now there is a uniform system for any school-based threats of harm to others, or self-harm. The modernized system is more comprehensive and adaptable and will ensure that school districts can share information.

Adjacent to school safety, I supported new laws that include enhanced penalties for juveniles who commit gun crimes. The bill was signed into law in April 2024. It makes it a felony to be a minor in possession of a firearm and ensures that if they commit a crime with a firearm there will be even more serious consequences. We have many programs to help redirect youth who have started down the wrong path, but when they get to the point that they are using firearms to commit crimes, they need more than a slap on the wrist.

In the last few years, we've had a big problem with vehicles fleeing from traffic stops. Our criteria for pursuing a vehicle are very stringent, because a high-speed chase puts innocent civilians at risk. To curtail the number of vehicles fleeing from us, as of June 11, 2024, vehicles that flee are subject to forfeiture, meaning they can be seized and sold by the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office, with the proceeds going back to the community and to charities. The bottom line is, if you run from us, we can take your vehicle.

Whenever there is significant news or a large-scale operation, I hold a press conference to share as much information as possible with the public. In one major press conference in July 2024, I let you know about Operation Snow Cap, which took down a major narcotics network and, in conjunction with the St. Petersburg Police Department, broke up a dog fighting ring. In October of 2024, Operation Flood of Fraud arrested dozens of unlicensed contractors who were trying to take advantage of hurricane victims.

Whether in big operations that net scores of felons, or the small-scale law enforcement work our deputies do every day, we have been working tirelessly all year to keep you safe. As we move into 2025, we will continue our long tradition of leading the way for a safer Pinellas.

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From The Beaches To The Bay & Everywhere In Between

Still deciding how to deal with the aftermath of Hurricane Helene or Milton? I am helping many clients navigate this difficult time. Feel free to reach out to me with any questions you may have.



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Business Briefs

BEACHES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT MOVING

Robin Miller, President / CEO of the Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce (TBBCOC) for the past 16 years, has accepted the same position in Blowing Rock, N.C. The Tampa Bay Chamber covers Florida's Pinellas County Beaches.

During the first three years of Miller's tenure, membership in the Beaches Chamber tripled. She oversaw all the business of the Chamber and interacted with all six beach cities and their elected officials. She was a member of the Visit St Pete/Clearwater advisory board, Tourist Development Council and Visit Florida's Visitor Services Committee, and others. The TBBCOC is searching for a new President.



NEW CONDOMINIUMS ON CLEARWATER BEACH

Construction is about to begin on the northeast side of the Sand Key bridge at 551 Gulf Blvd. The 3.2-acre lot, home of the Fisherman's Wharf from 1963-1990, has sat vacant for years. The Viceroy Residence, two nine-story waterfront condominium towers with 86 luxury units, is set to open in late 2027. These are the first condominiums to be built on the beach in over a decade.

BH3 Management and US Development purchased the plot for \$24.75 million in February of 2024. It was the most expensive vacant lot ever sold on Clearwater Beach. The property will include a secluded beach, valet, a private restaurant, a spa with a steam room, exterior hot and cold plunge pools and a resort-style pool with cabanas. There will be two- and three-bedroom units ranging between 2,000 and 3,500 square feet. Larger units ranging from three to five bedrooms will also be available with terraces. Sales have begun and start at \$2.5 million. Construction is expected to begin later this year.

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.

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CLEARWATER YACHT CLUB

THE WINTER MEMBERSHIP IS HERE!
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This offer is for first time CYC members & runs through March 31st!

There is NO initiation fee and for \$275 a month you will get exclusive use of CYC and find out what it is like to be part of Clearwater's #1 social club!

Bring this Flyer in when signing up to get a FREE Sunday Brunch for TWO!

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FEMA Reality Has Set In

After 103 years, 2 hurricanes finally impacted Pinellas County, and the FEMA rules caught everyone off guard, not knowing the extent of the 50% FEMA Rule. Homeowners are nervously awaiting their letter from local government with the determination of whether or not they can remodel their homes, or have to either elevate their home or demo and build a new home for their family. This is a huge unanticipated financial impact on families, and many considerations have to be weighed out.

There are 3 main options for homeowners to consider. First, some homeowners are considering just raising their existing 60+ year old home, and attempt to bring it up to all new Florida Building Codes (Structural, Electric, Plumbing, Mechanical, etc.). In almost all cases this could cost more than new construction, and you still have an outdated layout and design from the 1960's. Second, many are considering a wood frame modular home. This initially looks to be the less expensive option, but when you add the all the options being offered that bring the home up to custom home specifications, and add the cost of all the sitework, it becomes clear that there will probably be little or no savings, apples to apples. Also, although the modular home companies state they can have the home constructed in 6 months, that normally takes about as much time as conventional built concrete block homes, with the additional timing for the extensive piling/foundation system, permit delays, and backlogs in the factory due to the hurricane push.

Finally, a new concrete block elevated home is proving to be the choice for the most affected homeowners whose homes have been determined to be substantially damaged. A local experienced General

Contractor can work closely with a homeowner to design an elevated home that fits their budget.

A family making this decision must also weigh out the resale value when the home is sold in future years. Although companies that just raise homes, or companies selling wood frame modulars argue that the home will sell at the same price as a custom elevated block home, historically this has not been the case. The type of structure, whether wood frame modular or a block custom built home, is disclosed in any listing sale agreement. In almost all cases, when that home is listed for sale, the final sales price is lower.

Don't make a hasty decision that you will regret later. With a home being the most valuable financial asset most families have, it is important to consider the future value.

Our beautiful beach communities will come back stronger and more valuable than before the hurricanes. Visit the Jersey Shore that was devastated by Hurricane Sandy, and you will see vibrant beach communities where homeowners had this difficult decision. **Classic Florida Dream Homes** offers Design/Build services for large custom beach homes. Also to serve the replacement home market due to the hurricanes, we offer elevated homes starting at \$680,000, which includes all architecture, engineering, permitting, construction and sitework. Feel free to call at (727) 404-1347 or email at tsmithcfdh@outlook.com.

www.CFDH.INFO



Community News

INDIAN ROCKS HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Submitted by Nan Jensen

The museum is open and welcoming visitors. The hours of operation are 10am-2pm, Wednesday through Saturday. We are located at 203 4th Avenue across from the post office.

The museum will host a covered dish luncheon on April 5th beginning at noon. We can guarantee delicious food and an engaging speaker, Robert Griffin, who will share how the beach community towns were named. We ask those who want to attend the luncheon to bring a dish to share with the group.

We are looking for donations of memorabilia, artifacts, and photos of Indian Rocks Beach. If you want to donate items, contact us by email at Info@IRBMuseum.com or call (727) 593-3861 and leave a message.

The museum is looking for volunteers to serve as hosts during our open hours. Training will be provided. Contact Carol McLaughlin at (727) 420-8662 if you are interested in becoming a volunteer.

VACATION DONATIONS

Submitted by Diane Daniel

If you're visiting Indian Rocks Beach from January to Easter and have leftover food you can't take home with you, please consider donating it to locals in need. When possible, Vacation Donations will pick up at your rental. We will accept unopened food and beverages, both perishables (fresh) and nonperishables, such as canned and boxed goods. You can also donate opened containers of food if they have casings, such as eggs, individually wrapped cheese singles, etc. These donations will go to two pantries in Largo, just over the bridge from IRB - Lifeline Ministries at St. Jerome Catholic Church and Christ the King Lutheran Ministries. Call or text Diane at (727) 201-2333 or email VacationDonations@gmail.com for possible pickup at your rental. Visit VacationDonations.org/food to donate directly to these pantries.

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

WINTERFEST ON THE ROCKS

Submitted by Liz Robb

Calvary Episcopal Church, located at 1615 First Street, will host its huge family, friendly, fundraising festival both inside the church and outside on its large property. All beach community residents, visiting friends and family from all over, and YOU are invited to attend Winterfest on the Rocks '25 from 10am-4pm on Saturday, February 15th.

The 20th Annual event includes a silent auction, arts and crafts, a patriotic pet contest with prizes, an old-fashioned bake sale, and food including pulled pork sandwiches and hot dogs. There will be beer, wine, soft drinks, clowns, face painting, and children's games with an area for building and sailing their own toy sailboat. Music and entertainment will include a mix of island steel drums, light symphony selections, and a concert by Calvary's music director.

The silent auction will display many treasures in "The Meeting Place" inside the church, and a special surprise grand prize drawing will be held outside at 3:30pm.

For further information and to register, please visit online at CalvaryIRB.org or call (727) 580-8237. Join us and more than 1000 attendees from our beach communities and surrounding counties to have fun and experience Winterfest!

COAST GUARD AUXILIARY CLEARWATER FLOTILLA

In November, Karen Miller was elected Flotilla Commander for 2025. Supporting her in this leadership role is Robert Taylor, who was elected Flotilla Vice Commander. Together, they promise a year of enhanced service, dedication, and commitment to the community, recreational boaters, and the U.S. Coast Guard.

Karen Miller, a Coast Guard Auxiliary member since 1993, brings an exceptional track record of leadership and expertise to her role as Flotilla Commander. A retired entrepreneur, her management and leadership skills are matched by her maritime credentials, including a 50-ton U.S. Coast Guard Master's License.

Robert Taylor, the newly elected Vice Commander, brings a diverse and accomplished background to his leadership role. A seasoned mariner with a 100-ton U.S. Coast Guard Master's License, Taylor has captained commercial and corporate vessels and instructed power and sail courses in the Chicago area. He also delivered yachts between Chicago and Florida, a journey that deepened his appreciation for Florida's waterways.

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is a uniformed civilian volunteer component of the United States Coast Guard created by an Act of Congress in 1939. The Auxiliary, America's Volunteer Guardians, supports the Coast Guard in nearly all the service's missions.

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Community News

ACTION 2000

Submitted by Daryl Frahn

In times of unimaginable challenges, the strength of our community shines brighter than ever. Indian Rocks Beach has proven that we face adversity not as individuals, but together. Neighbors helping neighbors, local businesses stepping up with food and supplies, and volunteers tirelessly giving their time—these are the moments that define us.



One memory stands out for me. I was in desperate need of plastic bins during a particularly chaotic time. As if by magic, two appeared on my doorstep. On the hardest day of demolition and cleanup, a volunteer stopped by with sandwich boxes for everyone working with me. To this day, we don't know who they were, but their kindness fueled us when we needed it most.

This is the spirit of Indian Rocks Beach. Recovery here isn't a solitary journey—it's a shared mission, powered by a community that cares.

At the heart of this generosity is IRB Action 2000 (A2K), an organization rooted in volunteerism and dedicated to making Indian Rocks Beach even more beautiful. For over 25 years, A2K has carried out beautification projects, thanks to the unwavering support of our incredible local business partners.

At our November meeting, we reflected on the vital role these businesses have played in our journey. Inspired by their generosity, our members unanimously decided to give back. To show our gratitude, we purchased \$10,000 worth of gift cards from these supportive businesses and offered them at a 50% discount to local residents.

This initiative is our way of saying "thank you"—not just to the businesses that have stood by us, but also to the residents who make this community what it is.

We know we have a lot of work ahead of us. Our signature projects like the 10th Avenue walkway, the butterfly garden and the swing at the Narrows are being assessed for damage and rejuvenation. Check our website and Facebook pages for meeting information, events and projects and together, let's celebrate the resilience, kindness and generosity that define Indian Rocks Beach.

For more information about A2K, visit IRBAction2000.com or find us on Facebook at [Facebook.com/irbaction2000](https://www.facebook.com/irbaction2000).

BEACH ART CENTER

While the Beach Art Center is temporarily closed due to damage from Hurricanes Helene and Milton, the new year will kick off with a lineup of creative classes and events. Visit BeachArtCenter.org for a full list. Please pay special attention to the information regarding locations of classes as they are off-site.

The Gallery Committee is excited to invite members and artist friends to participate in their first post-hurricane Art Show. Enjoy this unique show that is more of a warehouse than a standard gallery! Reception is Friday, January 10th from 5-8pm.

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Community News



ROTARY CLUB OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH

Submitted by Claire English

Rotarians have been busy in our neighborhood assisting with Hurricane Relief efforts by providing supplies and tools, assisting with clean-up efforts, providing hot meals with Fluffy's Mobile Hibachi, and working with the beach community food pantry to get food to those in need.

Every Thanksgiving and Christmas the Rotary Club of Indian Rocks Beach partners with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office (PCSO) Community Policing Unit, Pinellas Suncoast Fire and Rescue, and Publix to deliver Holiday Meals to those in need in our community. The meals are coordinated and funded by the Rotary Club of Indian Rocks Beach and include a full holiday meal, dessert and essentials. The PCSO identified those most in need through their direct relationships with the community and personally delivered every meal directly to the families. Rotary Club members, Publix employees, PCSO deputies, and Pinellas Suncoast Fire and Rescue members helped load all the meals into the Sheriff's vehicles for delivery.

The Rotary Club of Indian Rocks Beach held our 22nd Annual Big Game Raffle Drawing Sunday, December 8th at Guilty Sea Sports Pub. The Grand prize package includes two tickets to football's biggest game, 4 nights lodging and \$1000. Additional winners of cash prizes of \$1000, \$500, \$300, and \$200 were drawn. Congratulations to all our winners and thank you to everyone who purchased chances to win.

We are excited to announce the 6th Annual Rotary Runs the Beach will take place Saturday, March 15th on beautiful Indian Rocks Beach. This year our theme is Rotary Rescues the Beach as a portion of proceeds from the event will be used for hurricane relief in Indian Rocks Beach. Join us for this fun and unique, family friendly event includes a 5K race and 1 mile walk/run along the scenic shoreline of Indian Rocks Beach. Registration and event details can be found at RotaryRunsTheBeach.org.

Some of the other great projects included decorating the gazebo in Kolb Park, volunteering and building beds for Sleep in Heavenly Peace with the Interact Club at R.O. Jacobson Tech High School, ringing the Bell for the Salvation Army, volunteering at the Botanical Gardens, providing food for the food pantry at Ready for Life and Wreaths Across America. If you are interested in learning more or membership join us for breakfast meetings every Wednesday at 7:15am at The Original Crabby Bills, 401 Gulf Blvd.



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