

# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

including Sand Key and Island Estates

Magazine

## DONALD ROEBLING AND HIS ALLIGATOR

By Pete Magnani, Publisher

**8** 5 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.)

- Continued on Page 6

### Also in this Issue:



#### Capable Canines

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

- page 13

#### What Happened 100 Years Ago?

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

- page 14



#### Sugar Sand Festival Returns

The beach at Pier 60 will be transformed into a magical display for the 11th annual event.

- page 10

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**CREDITS**



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**CLEARWATER BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS**

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

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

We hope you enjoy our 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](http://BeachNewsletters.com).

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

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

**FEBRUARY**

Groundhog Day	2
Grammy Awards	2
City Council Meeting	6
Junk&JewelsBelleairGardenClub	7-8
Sant' Yago Knight Parade	8
Tampa Bay Sun Home Opener	8
Chapel by the Sea Beach Walk	8
Super Bowl	9
Reg. Deadline March Election	10
Florida State Fair	6-16
Public School Hurricane Makeup	17
Valentine's Day	14
Free Weddings Botanical Gardens	14
Presidents' Day	17
City Council Meeting	20
Willie Nelson At the Sound	20
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	27
Clearwater Sea-Blues Fest Begins	28
Ramadan Begins	28

**MARCH**

Clearwater Sea-Blues Festival Ends	2
St. Pete Grand Prix Ends	2
Academy Awards	2
Dunedin Mardi Gras Parade	4
Fat Tuesday	4
Ash Wednesday	5
City Council Meeting	6
Employee Appreciation Day	7
International Womens Day	8
Safety Harbor Craft Beer Festival	8
Daylight Savings Time Begins	9
Peace Memorial Concert Series	9
Florida Strawberry Festival Ends	9
Reggae Rise Up St. Pete	13-16
Largo Shamrock 'n Run	15
Rotary Runs the Beach IRB	15
Foreigner at the Sound	15
Diana Ross at the Sound	16
St. Patrick's Day	17
City Council Meeting	17
Valspar Championship	17-23
Public Schools Spring Break	17-21
Spring Equinox	20
Kids' Night at the Aquarium CMA	21

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# Did You Know

## PARK REOPENS

After extensive repairs and cleanup following Hurricanes Helene and Milton, the historic fort, dog beach and both fishing piers at Fort De Soto Park reopened in January. These amenities had been closed to the public since September.



The park's causeway, boat ramp, East Beach and Area 3 of the campground reopened late last year. Some areas of the park, including North Beach, remain closed. Visitors should exercise caution throughout the park as there may still be some storm debris in reopened areas. For more information, visit [Pinellas.gov/parks](http://Pinellas.gov/parks).

## PIRATE SHIP FOR SALE

Mark Ferguson, owner of Ferg's Sports Bar and Grill on Central Avenue across from Tropicana Field in St. Petersburg, has put his pirate ship float on the market. The float has been anchored next to the bar for the last four years and has been used for live music concerts, sporting events, and Halloween parades. Ferguson is building a new concert stage and says there is not enough room for both.

The float is 35 feet long and 15 feet wide with a capacity of 25 pirates. It features two decks, two bathrooms, a pirate statue, and a treasure chest. Ferguson is asking \$10,000 or best offer for the float. Potential buyers can view the ship at 16th Street North and Burlington Avenue North.

## NEW PET ADOPTION CENTER

The Humane Society of Pinellas opened the Sjouwerman Adoption Center in December. The state-of-the-art facility features large enclosures, an auto-flush drain system, and a fresh air intake. The facility can accommodate thirty-nine dogs and sixty cats, that will be kept on two separate levels to reduce the animals' stress. It also has a gift shop.

Sjouwerman Adoption Center is located at 3040 State Road 580 in Clearwater. For more information or to donate, visit [HumaneSocietyofPinellas.org](http://HumaneSocietyofPinellas.org).

## START YOUR ENGINES

The Annual Firestone Grand Prix of St. Petersburg returns to downtown St. Pete February 28th - March 2nd. The race series begins with a kick-off party on Thursday at noon and continues with on-track action and festivals throughout the weekend.

The 14-turn, 1.8-mile track incorporates the streets of downtown St. Petersburg and a section of runway at Albert Whitted Airport. The races feature closed and open wheel race cars, culminating in the IndyCar Series race on Sunday, March 2nd.

Pricing for a three-day general admission ticket starts at \$75. Single-day and grandstand tickets are available. Visit [GPStPete.com](http://GPStPete.com) or call (727) 898-4639.

## OUR NEXT ISSUE WILL BE APRIL

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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# and More...

## PREPARING FOR WILDFIRE SEASON

In January, the Florida Forest Service and local emergency responders conducted a multi-agency aviation exercise in preparation for the upcoming wildfire season. The exercise provided an opportunity for state and local departments to practice interagency communications,



coordinate multiple air resources, and practice operating equipment for wildfire suppression before a wildfire begins. Approximately 80 personnel from across various agencies participated in the exercise, using resources and equipment like helicopters, drones, fixed-wing aircraft, bulldozers, and trucks.

The Florida Forest Service employs approximately 30 qualified USAS pilots in its fleet. There are fixed-wing aircraft located in all 15 Florida Forest Service Districts, with 5 helicopter bases located throughout the state. The helicopters are outfitted with Bambi Buckets, which range from 180 to 320 gallons and are used to collect and carry water to nearby wildfires.

**RAYS FAN FEST 2025** After Tropicana Field sustained severe damage during Hurricane Milton, the Tampa Bay Rays announced that this year's Fan Fest will be held at the St. Pete Pier, 600 Second Avenue NE in St. Petersburg. The free event is scheduled for February 15th from 1-5pm.

Fan Fest includes player interaction, mascots, games, and a charity yard sale. There are paid VIP experiences available including Autograph Passes, Tiki Boat Experience, and Reelin' with the Rays, giving fans the opportunity to fish with players at the Pier.

The event is free, but fans must register for their ticket at [RaysBaseball.com/fanfest](https://RaysBaseball.com/fanfest).

**USE YOUR BLINKERS** Florida State Statute 316.155 governs the use of turn signals on every road in Florida. It states that a signal must be used any time a vehicle or bicycle moves left or right, including turns and lane changes.

The signal must be given for at least the last 100 feet before turning, except that arm signals need not be given continuously by a bicyclist if the hand is needed for operation of the bicycle. Violation of the statute is a noncriminal moving violation and can result in a fine of up to \$150.

**POPCORN FOR A CAUSE** Clearwater Boy Scout Troop 313 beat the national record during their 2024 Annual Popcorn Sale. The troop raised \$303,000, making them number one in the country. 11-year-old Grayson van den Berg led the troop with a whopping \$26,000 in sales.

Although there is an online purchase option, the majority of sales were done in-person with the scouts setting up stands outside supermarkets and other retail locations. The revenue generated by popcorn sales is used to purchase camping supplies, uniforms, annual fees, and more.

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# 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.

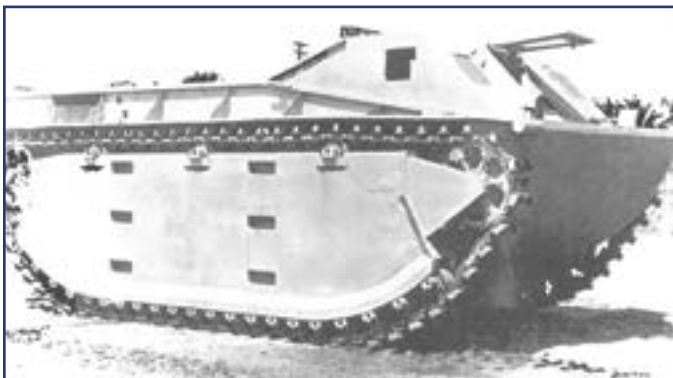
Roebling began construction on an elaborate estate on the Intracoastal Waterway one half mile south of today's Memorial Causeway. The four-story Tudor Revival mansion featured nine bedrooms and fourteen baths and over 15,000 square feet of living space. Completed in 1930 at a cost of \$100,000 (approximately \$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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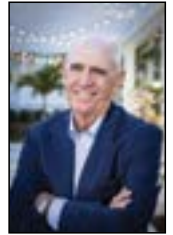
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## SIX BIG MISTAKES IN RETIREMENT - PART TWO

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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### DINOSAURS IN THE SAND

The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival returns to bright and beautiful Clearwater Beach April 11th - 27th. This year, the festival celebrates its eleventh year and its biggest year yet with the theme, "DinoShores: A Prehistoric Adventure in Sand!"

From architectural masterpieces created from Clearwater's famous sugar sand to concerts, performers and daily entertainment, the Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival Presented by Visit St. Pete Clearwater is an annual event attracting visitors from around the world. This year's festival will again stretch for 17 days, which allows people more time to attend and gives those visiting for Easter a chance to see this incredible and affordable festival.

This year, the Sugar Sand Walk Exhibit expands to an impressive 24,000 square feet, featuring an exciting, new augmented-reality experience that brings the intricate sand sculptures to life through vivid, interactive imagery.

General admission to the sculpture exhibit will be \$14 per person (plus tax) and free for children 3 years old and younger. Discounted tickets for military personnel, police officers, firefighters, teachers and healthcare workers can be purchased for \$10 each on "Beachside Hospitality 'Frontline Fridays,'" which are April 11th, 18th, and 25th. These discounted tickets will be available at the gate only with proper identification. All other tickets can be purchased online at SugarSandFestival.com.

The Sugar Sand Festival is proud to partner with Tampa Bay Sandsculpting Co., which will build this year's exhibit and offer free sand-sculpting classes during the festival.

Each year, the Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival continues to grow in popularity and garner national attention. The 2024 event drew more than 200,000 visitors throughout its 17-day run. The festival continues to attract visitors from around the world. Seventeen world-class artists craft elaborate sand sculptures from Clearwater's internationally famous sugar sand. The works of art are on display in a 24,000-square-foot structure. More than 1,000 tons of Clearwater sand takes on a new life, bringing visitors on a unique and special adventure. The festival is a joint effort between Sunsets at Pier 60 Daily Festival, a 501(c)3 organization and the city of Clearwater.



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READER'S CHOICE TOP 3

**Linda Bullerman** CLTC

# Bar & Restaurant News

**NEW OWNER** In December, Sarah and Dale Robinson, the owners of Clearwater's Downtown Pizza Sports Bar and Grill, announced they are passing the torch to Dan Mahoney. They will continue to help with the transition of ownership in the months to come.



Downtown Pizza, located at 128 Cleveland Street, is a great place to bring your friends and family and cheer on your favorite sports teams with many TVs and most sports packages. It is also a short walk down Cleveland Street to the Baycare Sound and Coachman Park.

They sell pizzas of all sizes, including by the slice. Their gourmet pizzas feature traditional toppings such as Meat Lovers and Margarita to specialty pizzas like Chicken Cordon Blue or Philly Steak & Cheese. Downtown Pizza also offers a variety of burgers, sandwiches, calzones, salads, and more. Follow them on Facebook and check out their website for weekly and daily specials.

**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.

**SECOND LOCATION** Congratulations to Backwaters on Sand Key on the opening of their second location on North Redington Beach. It is located at 17307 Gulf Blvd Unit A103, previously occupied by the Burrito Social.

They have the same great Backwaters menu featuring butter broiled crab cakes, fresh seafood, mouth-watering steaks, and happy hour food and drink specials. Become a VIP member by signing up on their website at BackwaterRestaurant.Com and be the first to receive updates on exclusive events, secret menus, special offers and discounts, loyalty rewards, and more. They are open 11am-10pm Monday-Sunday at both locations.

Construction continues at the Pappas family's newest concept, Tavern in the Bluffs, located in the space formerly occupied by Cody's Roadhouse in the Belleair Bluffs Plaza.

For reservations and more information at the Redington location call (727) 954-0051.

**COMING TO PALM HARBOR** The Original Crabby Bill's announced they are opening a new restaurant in downtown Palm Harbor. "After the challenges brought by the hurricanes of 2024, I realized the importance of securing a high and dry location for our family business. Today, we are proud to say that this Palm Harbor venue is the perfect fit for us," says owner Matt Loder Sr.

Crabby Bill's has had several restaurants in the Palm Harbor area over the years and is excited to be coming back. The whole family is working hard to get the new place up and running from painting the walls to mopping the floors.

They are currently hiring all positions. Apply in person at 1114 Florida Ave (previously Buchanan's Landing) between 9am-6pm. Applications may also be submitted via their Indian Rocks Beach application platform at <https://bit.ly/40yrTER>. For more information, call at (727) 498-4600 or follow them on Facebook.

### MAYOR'S UPDATE

By Mayor Bruce Rector

Spring always brings a sense of hope and optimism as the weather warms and visitors flock to Clearwater from around the world to soak in the sunshine and enjoy our world-renowned beaches. After the events of the past six months though, we will welcome the season this year with a greater appreciation of rebirth and renewal than perhaps ever before.

Our community continues to amaze me with its resilience, unselfishness and fortitude. We would not have been able to make such incredible progress in post-hurricane recovery without friends, neighbors, and businesses all working together and supporting one another. Our residents and businesses have clearly shown that they are the real reason that Clearwater is the best place on earth to live, work, and play.

The Phillies and Blue Jays will be returning soon for another great Grapefruit League season. The Phillies will be holding Spring training in Clearwater for the 79th time. Clearwater's rich history of hosting spring training dates back to 1923, when the Brooklyn Dodgers first held it at the Clearwater Athletic Field in North Greenwood.

Coachman Park continues to grow its opportunities for residents and visitors to experience the uniquely beautiful community asset. The BayCare Sound continues to bolster and diversify its music lineup with Willie Nelson, Foreigner, Little River Band, Chicago and many others coming in the next few months. In addition, the Green, in the middle of the park will host the annual Sea Blues Festival in February and the popular Purina Incredible Dog Challenge Competition in April.

After a pause for hurricane recovery, several construction projects have resumed. The Clearwater Beach Marina improvement project is moving forward and will include two phases of construction. The first phase has begun with the complete demolition and rebuild of the west side of the marina with the goal of minimizing traffic impacts on that end as soon as possible. The resurfacing of the Memorial Causeway and addition of a right turn lane extension lane into Island Estates are well under way but may take a year to complete. Work continues to progress to assess, stabilize and repair Pier 60 with the hope of at least a partial re-opening to the public very soon. Finally, the city is close to completing construction of six new pickleball courts and a playground at McKay Park. All of us that live on the barrier islands will experience some additional inconvenience and headaches from time-to-time as these projects progress but once completed will be significant and overdue improvements to our premier beach destination and local quality of life.

Despite our recent challenges, our city's future is brighter than ever. We welcome your thoughts and ideas on how we can all work together to make Clearwater thrive and please reach out to me at [bruce.rector@myclearwater.com](mailto:bruce.rector@myclearwater.com) any time.



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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.

Times, they are a changing!

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## CHILD DEVELOPMENT CONSIDERATIONS FOR PARENTING PLANS

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



The most important years in a child’s development are from birth to age 5. What if these years collide with divorce or breakup, triggering the need for a parenting plan? Parenting plans govern the relationship and **decision-making** between parents and the child(ren). It addresses issues such as education, healthcare, and time-sharing.

In Florida, parents can agree on **shared decision-making**. The expectation is that parents will communicate and confer on key issues. Other outcomes designate decision-making to one parent.

When parents gain knowledge of child development, outcomes improve. **Age-Appropriate Parenting Plans** using **early learning and child development factors** are vital. Consider infant/toddler (ages 0-3) and preschool (ages 3-5), when development is most vulnerable. If decision-making, communication, and conflict resolution aren’t properly addressed, disputes could erupt. Considerations include:

### SCHEDULES & ROUTINE:

Maintaining regular & frequent contact with each parent is critical from birth to age 3. How can this be achieved when they live in different homes? What if one parent travels for work? How can that be managed to not interfere with regular, frequent contact and routine?

### CHILD CARE & EDUCATION:

Finding affordable childcare is hard enough, how do they also find a convenient location?

School Readiness Programs: Is this an “education” decision that requires agreement? Who decides? Voluntary Prekindergarten: is this an “education” decision that requires agreement? Who decides? These programs are proven to better prepare children for academic success from kindergarten to high school. Simply put, an effective parenting plan that addresses these concerns is instrumental to career success.

### SCREENINGS:

What if parents disagree on concerns about a child’s development? Is this a health care decision? Who decides? What if a specialist suggests intervention based on a behavioral screening, and only one parent agrees? Is this a health care decision? Who decides?

The purpose of this article is to inform parents that Age-Appropriate Parenting Plans exist and are intended to address the most important issues while incorporating **decision-making**. There are also mediators who specialize in this and can facilitate the process.

In 1999, our friend, David Lawrence, led an effort that formed The Early Childhood Initiative Foundation and Early Learning Coalitions (ELC’s). We often encourage parents to utilize their local ELC to make informed decisions on early learning and child development related issues that commonly arise when navigating child custody and co-parenting. ELC’s can be used to develop effective parenting plans, avoid disputes, and address disputes that do arise. They exist to support children and families.

OCHR is a 501c3 nonprofit that serves children by helping parents navigate child custody & co-parenting, at no cost to the family. If you, or someone you know, needs assistance, we’re here for you. Our mission: protect the rights of children to have access to both responsible parents by providing education and support services for successful co-parenting strategies. Why? Because Our Children Have Rights.

Contact Jake at [JakeHornstein@OurChildrenHaveRights.com](mailto:JakeHornstein@OurChildrenHaveRights.com) or [www.OCHR.Org](http://www.OCHR.Org) To donate: [www.ourchildrenhaverights.org/donate](https://www.ourchildrenhaverights.org/donate).

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# Business Briefs

**BEACHES CHAMBER OF COMMERCE PRESIDENT MOVING**

Robin Miller, President and CEO of the Tampa Bay Beaches Chamber of Commerce (TBBCOC) for the past 16 years, 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, will be built and is planned 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.

**NEW HYPNOTHERAPIST** Mercedes Locke Hypnotherapy is excited to announce the opening of its (virtual) doors in December. Having been a health and wellness coach since 2020, Mercedes embarked on a transformative and personal journey using hypnotherapy. Once she found this powerful modality, she felt compelled to share it with others. Earning her Certified, Clinical and Transpersonal Hypnotherapy certifications in 2024, she is now looking forward to building her private practice.

Mercedes offers online appointments, so her clients can experience the profound effects of hypnotherapy from the comfort of their own homes or sacred space. To learn more about how hypnotherapy can transform your life, visit MercedesLockeHypnotherapy.com and book a free phone consultation today.

**GRAND OPENING** In December, Trader Joe's opened in Palm Harbor. Customers braved the cold standing in lines that wrapped around the building to get a first glance at the new store. This is the California-based grocers fifth location in the Tampa Bay area and the second in Pinellas County.

Trader Joe's does not carry many branded items. Instead, they offer unique and interesting products, along with everyday basics under the Trader Joe's label. Through the company's long-standing Neighborhood Shares Program, the new store will donate 100% of unsold, but in good condition, products to various non-profit, community-based organizations. The store is located at 33591 US HWY 19 N in the Highland Lakes Plaza.

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# Community News

## ROTARY CLUB OF CLEARWATER

Bob Griffin, former publisher of this news magazine, spoke to the Clearwater Rotary in January. Bob and Becky recently bought a second home in Boone, N.C. and now snowbird between here and there. His topic was "Who Is Daniel Boone and How Did the Town Of Boone Get That Name."

The Clearwater Rotary meets every Wednesday for lunch at the Belleair Country Club at noon. You are welcome to join them.

Get more information at [ClearwaterRotary.org](http://ClearwaterRotary.org).



## SHEPHERD'S VILLAGE

Submitted by Sherry Chandler

**New Year, New YOU: Path to Single Mom Success** - Discover your path to success with Shepherd's Village and our It's a Single Mom Thing Class/Support Group: New Year, New Mindset: Flipping the Script on Your Single Mom Story.

Through our empowering classes and weekly It's a Single Mom Thing podcast, you'll gain the tools and support needed to embrace a fresh mindset, rewrite your story, and thrive as a single mom. Classes are held on the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of Every Month, includes free childcare.

- Free Meal & Mingle: 6-6:30pm
- Class: 6:30-7:30pm

To view upcoming class topics or register, visit [ShepherdsVillage.com/classes](http://ShepherdsVillage.com/classes). Advance registration is required one week in advance.

Find It's a Single Mom Thing on your favorite streaming platform or at [shepherdsvillage.com/podcast](http://shepherdsvillage.com/podcast).

Join us in 2025 to flip the script on your story, strengthen your mindset, and walk confidently into the future.

## 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.





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## THIS VALENTINE'S DAY, BE AWARE OF SIGNS OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

From the Desk of Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

Valentine's Day should be all about romance, about forming loving bonds where couples support and cherish one another. Unfortunately, one in four women have been the victim of serious intimate partner violence in their lifetime, and one in seven men have suffered violence from their intimate partner. Domestic abuse can happen to men and women, to all ages, races, and cultures, and to people at all economic levels. This Valentine's Day, and all year, pay attention to your relationships, and those of your friends and family. If you see signs of domestic abuse, take action and get help.



Domestic abuse can take different forms, and can include physical, emotional, financial, or other kinds of abuse. Ultimately, the abuser is usually trying to establish power and control over the victim. You may recognize that a friend is in an abusive relationship if you see bruises or broken bones but also pay attention to other signs that are less recognizable.

An abuser may be extremely jealous, preventing the victim from socializing with friends or even visiting family. They exert control by isolating the victim. They may also control all finances. An abuser may insist on making all the decisions, keeping the victim from going to work or school. All of this makes the victim dependent on the abuser and makes it less likely that they will leave or tell anyone.

Abuse can be emotional, with the abuser telling the victim that they are useless, weak, stupid, or never do anything right. They may insult or belittle them in front of others. Every couple has arguments or tiffs, but if someone consistently, deliberately tries to make you feel badly about yourself, it is abuse.

Sometimes the abuse takes the form of threatened violence instead of overt violence. An abuser may threaten to harm the victim if they don't act in a certain way or threaten to harm children or pets. They might also destroy or threaten to destroy a victim's belongings. Breaking things or punching walls can be a sign of abuse.

Abusers will often blame the victim. You made me do this, they might say. Or they may blame it on their passion, saying I'm only doing this because I love you so much. But real love is never violent or cruel.

If you see signs that a friend or family member might be abused, ask them about it. Understand that they may be reluctant to talk, out of a misplaced sense of shame, but let them know that you are there for them, will listen without judgement, and believe them. Let them know that any kind of abuse is wrong, and they deserve to live a life free from control, threats, and violence. Then help them plan what to do next. That might include leaving and getting someplace safe, calling law enforcement, or getting a domestic violence injunction so the abuser can no longer contact them in any way.

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office takes domestic violence very seriously. If you are in danger, call 911. If you think a verbal argument might get violent, you can call 911 too. A law enforcement officer can arrive to help calm things down. We have victim rights advocates who can help people navigate through the legal and social help that is available. You can also call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233 or visit their website for more ways to get help. Locally, you can contact CASA's 24-hour domestic violence hotline at 727-895-4912.

# Community News

## BELLEAIR GARDEN CLUB

Submitted by Carol Mears

The Belleair Garden Club invites the public to attend their upcoming events and programs:

**February 6th from 4:30-7pm - Junk & Jewels Annual Presale Night** The club will offer their customary " Presale Night" for Junk & Jewels on Thursday, February 6th. Collectors and shoppers can browse and get the first dibs on all the goods. There is a \$5 entry fee to attend the presale night only.

**February 7th-8th from 8am-2pm - Belleair Garden Club Annual Junk & Jewels Sale** The upscale rummage sale has been held inside the historic garden club building in Belleair for thirty-four years. The entire clubhouse will be overflowing with an eclectic mix of finds including antiques, collectibles, jewelry, home & holiday décor, furniture, art, clothing & accessories, books, toys, tools, household goods, and vintage treasures. In addition, there will be a Bake Sale, and an outdoor Plant Sale featuring an assortment of potted plants, gardening tools and accessories. There will be something for everyone, and it benefits a worthy cause. Entry is free and the sale will coincide with the Town of Belleair's Annual Garage Sale.

**February 19th - Orchid Extravaganza and Sale** Join us for All About Orchids, presented by Michael and Paula Pollin, owners of Art Stone Orchids & Statuary. Learn how to grow these spectacular blooms or find a plant of your own just waiting for a new home. Gather at the clubhouse at 12:30pm and the program will begin at 1pm. A light tea will be served afterwards. A large selection of orchids and more will be available for purchase. There is no fee to attend. Donations to the Belleair Garden Club are welcomed.

**March 5th - Healthy Trees, Safe People** Program presented by O'Neil's Tree Service. Learn about tree planting, pruning, and plant care. Gather at the clubhouse at 12:30pm with meeting and program beginning at 1pm. A light tea will be served afterwards.

**March 12th at 10am - Field Trip to McGough Nature Park in Largo** The field trip includes a presentation on reptiles and birds of prey. Arrive by 10am to see the feedings. A \$4 donation is requested. Meet at McGough Nature Park, 11901 146th St. North in Largo.

## CHAPEL BY THE SEA

It is time again for Chapel by the Sea's 16th Annual Beach Walk fundraiser on Saturday, February 8th. This event brings critical support to Hope Villages of America and Homeless Empowerment Project (HEP). The walk begins at 8:30am from Palm Pavilion, and ends at Chapel by the Sea with a catered breakfast and silent auction. Sponsorship and walker registration will begin soon Visit ChapelbytheSea.net for updates.

## SHAMROCK N' RUN

Join them for the Shamrock n' Run Race at Ulmer Park - a lively event featuring a 5K racecourse, followed by some live music and a cold beer to quench your thirst. Get ready for a day of fitness, festivity, and endless fun.

The race is on Saturday, March 15th from 5-9pm at Ulmer Park, 301 West Bay Drive in Largo. Registration fees are: 5K - \$25 pre-register, \$30 day of registration, 1.5-mile walk - \$20 pre-register, \$25 day of registration, Clover Fun Kid Run \$10. For more information, or to pre-register for races, visit RunSignup.com/Race/FL/Largo/CityofLargoShamrocknRun.



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# Community News

## ISLAND ESTATES WOMENS CLUB

Submitted by C. Genovese, IEWC Publicity Chair

It was a festive event, indeed, at the Island Estates Women's Club (IEWC) annual holiday luncheon at the Island Way Grill on December 17th. The annual luncheon is always dedicated to raising funds and securing in-kind donations for Clothes to Kids (CTK). This year was no different, yielding nearly 200 articles of clothing and shoes and nearly \$2000 in cash donations.



CTK is a local non-profit that provides a complete school wardrobe to low-income or crisis school-age children for free. More than half of the kids in Pinellas and Hillsborough counties qualify to shop at CTK.

As depicted in the accompanying photo, the very well attended affair was filled with great spirit, camaraderie and joy.

CTK's Executive Director, Jennifer Jacobs and Director of Development, Sarah Shine, attended and acknowledged IEWC support and explained how critical the contributions are to their organization. "In 2023, CTK helped to clothe more than 16,400 kids," said Ms. Jacobs. "The sense of pride the children get in being able to shop the store and personally select their individual wardrobe is immeasurable."

The IEWC is proud of their annual commitment to CTK. IEWC's mission is to provide service and create unity within the community.

For more information on IEWC and/or to get involved go to [www.islandstateswomensclub.com](http://www.islandstateswomensclub.com)

## HERITAGE VILLAGE

Submitted by Hannah Hayes

On February 22nd, 1895, Myrtle Scharrer was born at the family homestead on Caladesi Island. A lifetime later, at age 87, while living in Palm Harbor, Myrtle wrote *Yesteryear I Lived in Paradise, A Story of Caladesi Island*. First printed in 1983, every edition has completely sold out. On Sunday, March 9th, the book will be available for purchase at Heritage Village and Myrtle will be signing copies from 9am-2pm.

On Saturday, April 19th, Heritage Village presents the Annual Easter Weekend Classic and Vintage Car Show from 10am-3pm. The event features hundreds of classic cars, food, and music. It is free for spectators and there is no fee to register vehicles. There will be a People's Choice Trophy and special Sponsor Trophies. Visit [HeritageVillageCarShow.com](http://HeritageVillageCarShow.com) for more information or to register.

Heritage Village is located at 11209 125th Street in Largo. Visit [HeritageVillagefl.org](http://HeritageVillagefl.org) or call (727) 582-2123 for more information.

## CLEARWATER SEA-BLUES FESTIVAL

Clearwater's signature waterfront blues event, Clearwater Sea-Blues Festival, will take place February 28th - March 2nd at Coachman Park, 300 Cleveland Street. The two-day free festival is known for its amazing blues performances, outdoor casual vibes and amazing seafood tastings.

This year, festivalgoers can expect a lineup of soulful performances from renowned national artists on the Main Stage and emerging local talent on the Visit St. Pete Clearwater Locals Stage. The festival will feature free performances starting at 2pm each day, with the kickoff party starting at 6pm on Friday, February 28th.

While general admission is free and open to the public, VIP tickets and reserved seats are available starting at \$25. VIP experiences offer exclusive perks, such as premium viewing areas, private seating and access to a hospitality tent. A portion of VIP ticket sales will support the Homeless Empowerment Program (HEP), a Clearwater-based charity dedicated to providing housing, food, clothing, and essential services to homeless and low-income families. To find out more information on how you can be involved with HEP visit [HEPempowers.org](http://HEPempowers.org)

Details about performing artists, schedules and VIP ticket information can be found online at [CoachmanPark.com](http://CoachmanPark.com). The Clearwater Sea-Blues Festival, a two-day open-air music and seafood celebration organized by the city of Clearwater, has been essential in bringing the community together for more than 15 years. With a rich history of blues culture, coastal flavors and a community spirit, the festival has drawn in top-tier national acts to Clearwater.

## COMMUNITY DENTAL CLINIC

Submitted by Theresa White

The Community Dental Clinic is thrilled to invite you to our annual fundraiser, Reds, Whites, and Bites + More! This year's event promises to be exceptional as we gather at our new location, The Collection on Palmetto on April 5th. Like a fine wine, this evening will be lively, crisp, and satisfying - a perfect blend you won't want to miss. We are delighted to announce our Honorary Chairs for the evening - Ruthy & Tom duPont, whose dedication to our community inspires us all.

Highlights of the evening include our exciting wine lottery, featuring more than 80 bottles of exclusive, featured, and classic wines, over 20 different spirits, and other extraordinary items.

We are honored to host you for a night of tasting fine wines, spirits, and delicious bites while celebrating the community's generosity. Your support of this event will help the Community Dental Clinic provide comprehensive dental services, education, and access to care for uninsured, low-income adults in Pinellas County.

Our Reds, Whites, and Bites fundraiser generates 20 percent of our annual operating budget. As the need for dental care grows, your contributions are vital to ensuring we can meet this demand and continue our mission.

Please mark your calendars and join us for an unforgettable evening. Visit [CommunityDTLClinic.org](http://CommunityDTLClinic.org) for more information.



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