

# NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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Magazine

## A War That Would Not End: Florida and the Seminole Wars

By Bob Griffin, Local Historian

The Seminole Wars were three major military conflicts between the United States and the Seminole people, spanning roughly from 1817 to 1858. Throughout the first half of the 19th century, the Seminole Nation and the federal government clashed repeatedly as U.S. expansion pressed deeper into Florida.

The First Seminole War in 1817 lasted barely two and a half months. When General Andrew Jackson declared victory, few realized that the conflict had only just begun.

After Florida became a state and James K. Polk assumed the presidency, a fragile peace followed. Seminoles lived largely within reservation boundaries and traded with settlers at authorized posts. To reduce tensions, Polk established a 20-mile buffer zone around the reservation where white homestead claims were prohibited.

### Second Seminole War (1836–1854)

Pressure for complete Indian removal continued. Congress passed the Indian Removal Act of 1830, which sought to resolve what officials called the "Indian problem" by relocating tribes to Indian Territory in present-day Oklahoma. Though labeled "voluntary," an estimated 60,000 Southeastern Native Americans were displaced. Approximately 15,000 died along the way, a tragedy remembered as the Trail of Tears. In Central Florida, Seminoles were taken to Tampa or Fort Myers, placed on ships, and transported to New Orleans. Forced removals continued through 1850.



Osceola, Seminole warrior

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### Also in this Issue:



#### New Residents at the Aquarium

Clearwater Marine Aquarium welcomes harbor seals Ocean, Scallop, and Pharoah.

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#### Monitoring Air Quality

Pinellas County Residents can now keep track of the air quality in their home using a new phone application and monitoring device.

- page 10

#### Sugar Sand Festival Returns

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

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**DUNEDIN NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS MAGAZINE**

Inside, you will find articles and local information about the nearby area. We call it Neighborhood News because it is primarily about our neighborhood, Dunedin. This magazine is printed every other month and direct mailed.

Do you need another copy? Ask for them at the Chamber of Commerce, History Museum, Community Center, Library, and the UPS on Main St. 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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**CITY MANAGER** Jennifer Bramley

**DEPUTY MANAGER** Jorge Quintas

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Solid Waste: 298-3215

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Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

**SHERIFF DISPATCH** 582-6177

**DUNEDIN FIRE RESCUE** 298-3102

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**PINELLAS COUNTY:**

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Dave Eggers 464-3276

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Clearwater, FL 33756  
DEggers@Pinellas.gov

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**VETERANS SERVICES** 464-8460

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Hooper.Ed.Web@FLSenate.gov  
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Republican, District 57  
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Republican, District 58  
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Ron.Ogden@MyFloridaHouse.gov

**FLORIDA UNITED STATES SENATORS:**

Ashley Moody (202) 224-3041  
B40-B Dirksen Senate Office Building  
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Moody.Senate.gov  
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Washington, DC 20510  
RickScott.Senate.gov

**AREA UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE:**

Anna Paulina Luna (202) 225-5961  
226 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Luna.house.gov

**CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS & EVENTS**

*As always, this is subject to change. Please verify dates and times.*

**MARCH**

Copperhead Cup at Innisbrook 1-3

City Commission Meeting 5

Clearwater Library Comicon 7

Daylight Savings Time Ends 8

Strawberry Festival Ends 8

Dunedin Seafood Festival 7

Reggae Rise Up Music Fest 12-15

Flanagan's St. Patrick's Festival 14

Pinellas Schools Spring Beak 16-20

St. Patrick's Day 17

PGA Valspar at Innisbrook 17-22

City Commission Meeting 19

98 Rockfest at the Sound 20

First Day of Spring 20

Letter Carrier's Food Drive 20

Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival Begins 27

Palm Harbor Fest 10-13

**Dunedin Highland Games** 11

Palm Sunday 13

Taxes Due 15

City Commission Meeting 16

Foreigner at the Sound 18

**History Museum Citrus Gala** 19

Patriot's Day 20

Earth Day 22

Administrative Assistant Day 22

Arbor Day 24

Downtown Art and Craft Festival 25

Bucs Beach Bash St. Pete Beach 25

Public Schools Closed 27

**MAY**

May Day 1

Cinco de Mayo 5

Teacher Appreciation Day 5

City Commission Meeting 7

Mother's Day 10

Armed Forces Day 16

Safe Boating Week 17-23

City Commission Meeting 21

Memorial Day 25

Public Schools Closed 25

More details for items highlighted in red can be found in the Bar/Restaurant News, Business Briefs, Community News or Holiday Events Sections

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She has been published in peer-reviewed journals, presented at national meetings, and was recognized in Newsweek's "America's Best Medical Dermatologists" in 2022. She is excited to join Dr. Nayyar and the team at Dermaclinique, where she looks forward to providing compassionate, high-quality dermatologic care to the community.

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# Did You Know



**SUGAR SAND FESTIVAL RETURNS** Tickets are on sale for the 2026 Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival presented by Visit St. Pete-Clearwater. More than 1,000 tons of Clearwater Beach sand will be transformed into a stunning sand sculpture museum featuring the theme, "United in Sand: Celebrating Sports & Spirit!" The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival returns to Clearwater Beach March 27th - April 12th. For more information, visit [SugarSandFestival.com](http://SugarSandFestival.com).

**FLORIDA #2 IN GROWTH** Florida ranked second among U.S. growth states in the 2025 U-Haul Growth Index, which analyzes one-way customer moves during the year. Texas reclaimed the top spot for the seventh time in the past decade, climbing one position after finishing behind South Carolina in 2024. South Carolina, last year's leading growth state, slipped four places in the latest rankings. Florida, North Carolina, and Tennessee followed Texas as top destinations for movers. Although the order shifted, the top five states remained the same as in both 2024 and 2023.

California ranked last for the sixth consecutive year, recording the nation's highest level of out-migration. Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois rounded out the bottom five states on the index.

The U-Haul Growth Index ranks states based on the net gain or loss of customers who rented one-way trucks, trailers, or U-Box® moving containers, picking up equipment in one state and dropping it off in another. The rankings are compiled from more than 2.5 million one-way transactions conducted annually across the U.S. and Canada.

**PICKLEBALL WITHOUT THE SUNBURN**

Pickleball Kingdom opened in January in Pinellas Park, offering players all the fun of pickleball in an indoor, climate-controlled environment. The 40,125 square foot facility features 14 professional-grade courts. Hours of operation are 7am-11pm Monday – Saturday and 7am-10pm on Sunday.

There are several membership options offering perks like unlimited open play, free daily locker use, no court fees, and discounts on the ball machine. The facility is located at 7300 US Highway 19 N. For more information, visit [PickleballKingdom.com](http://PickleballKingdom.com).

**OUR NEXT ISSUE IS IN MAY** Read this issue, and others, online at [BeachNewsletters.com](http://BeachNewsletters.com) and follow us on Facebook at Neighborhood News Magazines for ongoing local news updates.

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# and More...



**BEACH RENOURISHMENT COMPLETION** The Pinellas County beach renourishment project is set to be completed this month. The \$126 million project began last September to repair the erosion left by the massive flooding and storm surge brought by the 2024 hurricanes.

The project brought sand from John’s Pass, Pass-a-Grille, Blind Pass, and Egmont Shoal. It was mixed with seawater, then pumped onto the beach from Sand Key to Treasure Island. The process is generally done every five years and was scheduled for 2024, but a dispute with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers over easements caused a delay.

**NEW HOTEL DOWNTOWN CLEARWATER** In 2019, Clearwater demolished the Harborview Center, which was home to a department store, a restaurant, trade shows, conventions, weddings, high school proms and more, before it was abandoned in 2009. In 2022, Clearwater voters approved the sale of the property for \$9.3 million for a redevelopment project.

The 158-room Ballad Hotel will provide accommodations for those attending downtown events, meetings, and conferences. The property, next to Coachman Park, will also offer 169 parking spaces, a rooftop bar and about 21,000 square feet of retail space. The Ballad and restaurant are expected to open mid-2027.

**HURRICANE RECOVERY** Pinellas County is reaching out to people who may have been impacted by Hurricanes Idalia, Helene, and/or Milton, and previously applied for disaster assistance.

If you still have unmet recovery needs like home repairs or financial losses from the storm, Pinellas County’s People First Hurricane Recovery Programs may be able to help — even if you already applied for FEMA assistance, SBA assistance, or received insurance proceeds.

The U.S. Government approved Pinellas County for \$813 million in recovery grant funds and we’re using most of this grant to provide direct assistance to eligible homeowners, renters and landlords of small rental properties. You may qualify for grants funds to rebuild your home above flood code, recoup repair costs, be reimbursed for storm-related expenses, and buy a new home.

You can apply for Pinellas County’s People First Hurricane Recovery Programs online or in-person. Learn more about income eligibility and see how much you could qualify for by visiting [Recover.Pinellas.gov](http://Recover.Pinellas.gov) or by calling (727) 606-3307, Monday - Friday, 8am-5pm.

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# The Seminole Wars, Continued

In 1846, Captain John Sprague was appointed to oversee Indian affairs. Seminole leaders distrusted him—understandably, given the long history of chiefs being seized under flags of truce. Sprague estimated that only 360 Seminoles remained: 120 warriors and 240 women and children.

A Seminole trading post opened on Payne's Creek near the Peace River. Against Florida law, free whiskey was initially distributed to encourage trade. When the new manager, George Payne, ended the practice, tensions escalated, as this was the Seminoles' only reliable source of whiskey.

Violence followed. Attacks occurred near Fort Pierce, a government employee was killed at James Russell's home, and finally Payne's Creek was attacked after Payne again refused whiskey. Payne and his assistant, Dempsey Whidden, were murdered, and the trading post was looted and burned.

Chief Billy Bowlegs surrendered several warriors responsible for recent attacks, expecting peace. Instead, General David Twiggs announced that all Seminoles would be removed from Florida.

Two companies of U.S. troops sent from Fort Brooke (Tampa) to reinforce Fort King (Ocala) never arrived. They were ambushed by a small Seminole force, and the 108 soldiers were killed.

Federal forces were unprepared for renewed war. Twiggs increased troop levels, relying heavily on mounted volunteers, as conflicts spread as far south as Miami and the Florida Keys.

By 1841, only about 300 Seminole warriors remained. Some had surrendered to avoid starvation; others were captured when they approached forts to negotiate. The war became deeply unpopular with the American public, press, and government. It devolved into a costly war of attrition and quietly faded away without formal resolution.

In 1850, the government offered another \$50,000 to encourage relocation. Seventy-four more Seminoles were shipped west, but resistance continued. Chiefs were taken to Washington, signed agreements under pressure, and repudiated them upon returning. Leadership changed frequently, and resentment deepened.

In 1854, Secretary of War Jefferson Davis imposed a hardline policy, including trade embargoes and opening Seminole lands to white settlement. Another conflict became inevitable.

## The Third Seminole War (1855–1858)

By late 1855, more than 700 U.S. troops were stationed in Florida. Seminole leaders met near Taylor Creek, where some favored resistance while others urged caution.

On December 20, 1855, Billy Bowlegs led an attack on Lt. George Hartsuff's surveying party near Fort Myers. Four soldiers were killed, Hartsuff was wounded, and supplies were destroyed, formally igniting the Third Seminole War.

Militias formed statewide as federal forces surged. Raids spread across southern Florida, including near Fort Dallas and Key Biscayne. Retaliatory attacks followed, sometimes involving mutilation of bodies.

Brigadier General William Harney returned to Florida, establishing a line of forts and introducing flatboats for Everglades patrols. His campaign achieved little, and by early 1857 he was reassigned.

Colonel Gustavus Loomis replaced him and created the "Everglades Navy" using shallow-draft, metal "alligator boats." The boats, thirty feet long, were pointed at both ends and only drew two to three feet of water. They could carry up to sixteen men into the swamps, capturing primarily women and children and destroying villages and crops. Abner Doubleday, the Union major general credited with firing the first shot in defense of Fort Sumter, served in this unit.

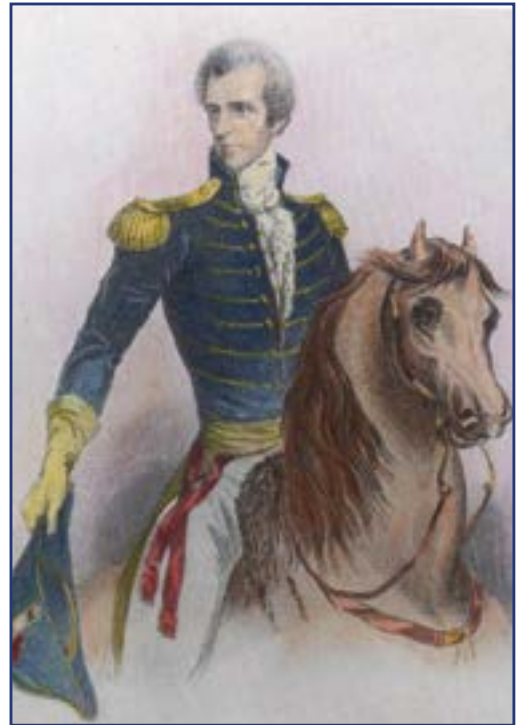
Beginning January 1, 1858, U.S. troops swept through the Big Cypress region, burning settlements and destroying remaining food supplies.

Negotiations resumed with Billy Bowlegs, who was offered a separate reservation in Indian Territory. Payments were standardized at \$500 per warrior and \$100 per woman.

In May 1858, 163 Seminoles departed from Punta Rassa near Fort Myers for New Orleans. On May 8, Loomis declared the Third Seminole War officially over.

Officials believed roughly 100 Seminoles remained in Florida, though this was likely an undercount. Groups led by Sam Jones and Chipco remained hidden in the Everglades and near Lake Okeechobee.

During the Civil War, Seminoles remained neutral. Florida's 1868 Constitution granted them legislative representation, though no seats were filled. Later constitutions removed those



Andrew Jackson, President (1829-1837)

provisions and imposed voter restrictions that remained in place until 1968.

A small number of Seminoles continued living in isolation near Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades through the early 20th century. By the mid-20th century, Seminoles consolidated on reservations. Federal recognition followed in 1957 for the Seminole Tribe of Florida and in 1962 for the Miccosukee Tribe.

By the 1940s, Seminoles began consolidating on reservations. In 1957, the Seminole Tribe of Florida gained federal recognition. The Miccosukee Tribe received recognition in 1962 were granted the Miccosukee Indian Reservation along the northern border of Everglades National Park, about 45 miles west of Miami.

In the 1970s, Seminoles began pioneered high stakes bingo, later expanding into full casino operations. In 2007, they purchased Hard Rock International, adding the Las Vegas Hard Rock Hotel & Casino in 2020.

The Miccosukee Tribe, maintaining a more traditional lifestyle, became known for cultural tourism, alligator wrestling, crafts, and eco-tours.

Today, both tribes preserve their cultural traditions while operating successful modern enterprises across Florida.



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## VICE MAYOR’S UPDATE: INVESTING IN WHAT MAKES DUNEDIN SPECIAL

By Vice Mayor Rob Walker

One of the best community organizations in our city is the Dunedin Council of Organizations (DCO), which meets the third Friday of every month at 7:30 AM at the Scottish American Society. At the February 20 meeting, I had the opportunity to provide an update on how the City of Dunedin is continuing to invest in our economy, infrastructure, sustainability efforts, and the unique amenities that make our community such a special place to live, work, and visit.

As we continue moving forward following the historic 2024 hurricane season — including Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton — our recovery has evolved into something even more meaningful. We are making strategic investments to strengthen the infrastructure and public spaces that define Dunedin’s quality of life. This time of year, always reminds us how fortunate we are to call Dunedin home. Signature events such as Toronto Blue Jays Spring Training, the Downtown Mardi Gras Parade and Festival, and upcoming events like the Gulf Coast Festival celebrating Dunedin’s Florida Hope Spot designation on February 28 help bring our community together while also supporting local businesses and showcasing Dunedin’s vibrant culture and Scottish heritage.

Several important investments are continuing to move forward across our community. Planned enhancements to Main Street streetscapes will improve walkability and accessibility along one of our most cherished downtown corridors. The Skinner Boulevard Road Project will support undergrounding of utilities — improving both resiliency and aesthetics — while developments such as the Main Street Exchange and Flats on Main Street Affordable Housing project will expand opportunities for residents and support a vibrant, mixed-use downtown environment. Old City Hall Park, now named Grand Oak Park, will soon offer enhanced green space and public amenities for families and visitors alike.

Major investments in our parks and recreation system are also underway. Continued design work for Gladys E. Douglas Preserve Phase 2 and the Highlander Aquatic Complex — now at approximately 60 percent design completion — will enhance access to outdoor recreation while supporting the environmental stewardship that defines Dunedin’s coastal identity.

At the Dunedin Marina, planned upgrades including the replacement of the fishing pier and improvements to day docks and emergency docks will strengthen our waterfront infrastructure while preserving safe and reliable boating access. The City of Dunedin has received grant funding from State of Florida and most recently a \$828K grant, sponsored by Congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna, through the 2026 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development appropriation. Through my service on the Pinellas Suncoast Transportation Authority (PSTA) Board of Directors, I am extremely proud to work with Congresswoman Luna’s staff, PSTA, the Clearwater Ferry and the City of Dunedin.

We are also continuing to invest in sustainability initiatives that protect our natural resources and enhance long-term livability. These include updates to our Sustainability Matrix and Sustainable Development Scorecard, the upcoming Weaver Park Living Shoreline Workshop, and implementation of the City’s Business Survey Action Plan to better support our local economy.

As always, I would like to thank our City Manager and staff for their continued work in advancing these initiatives on behalf of Dunedin’s residents and businesses.

For additional information, visit [Dunedin.gov](http://Dunedin.gov) or reach out to me directly at [Robert.Walker@Dunedin.gov](mailto:Robert.Walker@Dunedin.gov).

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# Bar & Restaurant News

**THE WEST END MARKET OPENS** After the Dunedin Mix, located at 990 Broadway, was sold and sat vacant for months people wondered what would become of the uniquely designed, French Quarter - style food hall and carousel bar. After a few upgrades, The West End Market is now open. They added eight 65-inch televisions and a 190-inch television, the largest in Dunedin. They have trivia every Thursday, live music on Fridays and Saturdays, and brunch on Sundays from 10am-2pm. There is also 1,220 sq ft event space available for rent on the second floor for parties, meetings, yoga, etc. The West End Market is family and pet friendly. For more information, visit [TheWestEndMKT.com](http://TheWestEndMKT.com).

**THE END OF AN ERA AT PALM PAVILION** For over 60 years the Hamilton family has owned the Palm Pavilion, located at 10 Bay Esplanade on North Clearwater Beach. Since their father retired, it has been co-owned by the four brothers: Ken, Dale, Hoyt, and Wade. Now, at or near retirement age, they have decided it is time to step back from the hustle and bustle of the restaurant world and spend more time with family and friends.

Over the years, the Hamilton family has been approached by many companies looking to purchase the land and business but never got an accepted offer.

During the four and a half months they were closed for repairs after the 2024 hurricanes, they had a chance to reflect and decided it was time to sell. The family still intends to take an active role in the Palm Pavilion's 100-year celebration on May 31st.

The family would like to thank their many management teams, staff, friends, long-time patrons, and fans. They want to leave everyone with one last toast - "There is no place like this place, anywhere near this place, so this must be the place."

Beachside Hospitality Group, the managers of Crabby's Dockside, The Salty Crab, Salty's Islan Bar and Grille, and others have taken over the Pavilion and intend to "keep the party going on Clearwater Beach." It is now named Crabby's Beachside Pavilion.

## HIGHLAND HOUSE CELEBRATES ONE YEAR

Highland House at Dunedin Golf Club has quickly become a welcoming gathering place for both locals and visitors looking for elevated but approachable dining. Open to the public, Highland House blends classic clubhouse charm with a modern, hospitality driven experience set against one of Florida's most historic golf courses.

It is open daily for lunch and dinner and features a strong lineup of food and drink specials throughout the week. Ongoing specials include \$3.50 drafts such as Miller Lite, Michelob Ultra, Pabst Blue Ribbon, along with \$3.50 five-ounce house wine pours. There are \$5 house cocktails, fish dip, deviled eggs, and chips and dip (during happy hour). Saturday nights feature a \$25.99 Prime Rib dinner served with soup or salad, baked potato, and vegetables. Guests can also enjoy unlimited mimosas, Bloody Mary's, or domestic draft pitchers with the purchase of an entrée. Golfers who present their same-day golf receipt receive additional exclusive specials.

Weekly features include Locals Tuesday with 30 percent off food, Wednesday \$10 half pound Smash Burgers, Thursday Ladies Night with \$5 martinis, \$5 prosecco, \$5 select appetizers, and Friday \$12 Fish Fry. Visit [HighlandHouseFL.com](http://HighlandHouseFL.com) for menus and more information.

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## BREATHING EASY IN PINELLAS COUNTY: HOW RESIDENTS ARE TRACKING AIR QUALITY THEMSELVES

By Karen Donoghue & Craig Newell

As temperatures drop and Tampa residents light their fireplaces, that warm, cozy smell of wood smoke carries an invisible threat. Particulate matter in smoke can penetrate deep into the lungs, aggravating asthma and other respiratory conditions, and enter the bloodstream, affecting the entire body. But keeping warm in front of the fire is just one piece of a larger air quality puzzle affecting Pinellas County.

Air quality was once thought to be a “solved” problem with the adoption of the Clean Air Act in the 1970’s, but in recent years it is once again becoming an issue, as highlighted by wildfire smoke from as far away as the West Coast and Canada now regularly drifting over Florida. Air quality is not just regional; it is also highly localized, such as when air pollution from local sources is trapped in the overnight coastal fog. This pollution could be from New Year’s fireworks, open burning of yard waste, land clearing, or people simply enjoying an outdoor fire pit. Other sources, such as traffic pollution and industrial emissions, have more regional impacts, adding to the mix and further degrading the air that people in Pinellas County breathe.



*Pinellas County residents are installing sensors outside their homes to track pollution in real time via low-cost monitors (Local Haze app)*



The health risks are serious. Breathing polluted air damages your body in ways that build up over the years. It causes lung cancer, increases your chances of heart attacks and strokes, and raises your risk of developing Alzheimer’s and dementia as you age. Children are hit especially hard - their growing brains and lungs make them far more vulnerable than adults. But air pollution also harms people immediately: it can trigger asthma attacks and dangerous flare-ups in people with COPD. Seniors face particular danger from day-to-day changes in air quality that most of us don’t even notice or think about.

The challenge? The combination of many harmful pollutants being completely invisible and the highly local nature of much air pollution makes it impossible to determine when the air is unsafe without proper monitoring. The few public air quality monitors in the Tampa Bay area that focus on long-term pollution exposure have created an environment in which many air quality issues go unreported, and no alerts are sent.

The good news? You don’t need to be a scientist to monitor the air quality in your neighborhood. A growing network of citizen scientists is taking air quality monitoring into their own hands, using low-cost air quality monitors to track pollution in real time in their local area, and the data is freely available to anyone with a smartphone. Using affordable monitors from companies like PurpleAir and AirGradient, Pinellas County residents are installing sensors outside their windows and in their backyards to track pollution in real time, building their own real-time air-quality monitoring networks. For

under \$250, anyone in Florida can now purchase and install an air-quality monitor. Some, like AirGradient’s Open Air kits, even encourage DIY assembly, making them a popular choice for schools and community groups.

The data from these devices can be viewed in real time and shared publicly via websites such as [fire.airnow.gov](http://fire.airnow.gov) and [map.purpleair.com](http://map.purpleair.com), and via mobile apps such as Local Haze, which also offers customizable alerts.

Residents can take simple protective steps: check air quality before exercising outdoors, keep windows closed during pollution spikes, use air purifiers when needed, and share information with vulnerable neighbors. By staying informed and taking basic precautions, Pinellas County residents can protect their health while continuing to enjoy paradise.

Local Haze is a free mobile app available for iPhone and Apple Watch. To learn more, visit [LocalHaze.HumanLogic.com](http://LocalHaze.HumanLogic.com).



# Business Briefs

**FIVE STARS** Congratulations to 2Shea Fishing and Dive Center, located at 198 Seminole Street north of downtown Clearwater, on recently being accredited as a Professional Association of Diving Instructors (PADI) Five Star Dive Center. A PADI 5-Star rating signifies a top-tier dive center, that offers a full range of PADI programs, high-quality facilities and equipment, strong customer service, a focus on environmental responsibility, and commitment to safety and education.



Owner and Captain TJ Shea started 2Shea Fishing and Diving Charters over twenty years ago with a single engine 24-ft center console boat. From there he grew his passion and now offers fishing, diving, spearfishing, and sunset cruise experiences on five boats. For more information or to book online, visit [2SheaCharters.com](http://2SheaCharters.com).

**FULL SERVICE** Smart Building Construction LLC is a licensed Florida general contractor serving the Tampa Bay area. The company specializes in residential remodels, additions, custom homes, and light commercial projects. From permitting through completion, Smart Building Construction provides hands-on project management, code-compliant construction, and quality craftsmanship tailored to Florida's unique building requirements.

Smart Heating & Cooling LLC and Smart Home Electric LLC provide full-service HVAC and electrical solutions throughout the Tampa Bay area. Together, the companies deliver air conditioning installation and replacement, maintenance programs, indoor air quality systems, electrical panel upgrades, EV charger installations, generator systems, and lighting solutions. Focused on safety, energy efficiency, and long-term performance, the team supports both residential and light commercial clients with reliable service and code-compliant installations tailored to Florida's climate and infrastructure needs. Visit [SmartBuild-Florida.com](http://SmartBuild-Florida.com), [SmartHomeElectricalServices.com](http://SmartHomeElectricalServices.com), or [SmartHeatandCool.com](http://SmartHeatandCool.com) for more information.

**MOBILE SURFACE RESTORATION** After 20+ years in business in Nevada, Blackbeard Enterprises relocated to Pinellas County two years ago. The company offers quality mobile surface restoration by utilizing specialized, portable media blasting equipment to clean or strip a multitude of surfaces like concrete, metal, wood, and stone with eco-friendly methods. Blackbeard also offers pressure washing, wood restoration (doors, cabinets), minor repairs, and various homeowner association needs. They bring services directly to your location for projects too large to move, such as pool decks, vehicles, boats, or heavy equipment. Blackbeard can remove paint, rust, graffiti, and grime, preparing surfaces for refinishing while minimizing dust and disruption. Call (727) 272-9115 or email [BlackbeardMB@yahoo.com](mailto:BlackbeardMB@yahoo.com) for more information.

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

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## THE SUGAR SAND FESTIVAL - "UNITED IN SAND"

The Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival returns to bright and beautiful Clearwater Beach March 27th - April 12th. This year, the festival celebrates sports and spirit during its biggest and best year yet with the theme, "United in Sand: Celebrating Sports and Spirit!" This year's theme celebrates teamwork, a strong sense of American pride, and the defining stories that shape our nation.

This year, the Sugar Sand Walk Exhibit expands to an impressive 24,000 square feet, featuring an exciting, augmented reality experience that serves as a tribute to the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence and as an ode to this historic celebration.

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 stretch for 17 days, which allows people more time to attend and gives those visiting for the Easter holiday a chance to see this incredible and affordable festival.

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 "Frontline Fridays," which are March 27, April 3, and April 10, 2026. These discounted tickets will be available at the gate only with proper identification. All other tickets can be purchased online at [SugarSandFestival.com](http://SugarSandFestival.com).



Visitors may also enjoy "Timeless Tuesdays" where individuals aged 60 and older can enjoy a discounted ticket price of \$12 each plus tax on Tuesdays: March 31st and April 7th.

The Sugar Sand Festival is proud to partner with Tampa Bay Sandsculpting Co., which will once again 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 2025 event drew more than 130,000 visitors throughout its 17-day run. The festival continues to attract visitors from around the world.

### About the Pier 60 Sugar Sand Festival

Eighteen 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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## DUNEDIN 55+ COCKTAIL SOCIAL BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER AT SEA SEA RIDERS

By Alison Ross Tompkins, Broker Associate for Coldwell Banker



What a wonderful evening it was in Dunedin as local residents and professionals gathered for our recent 55+ Cocktail Party, hosted at the warm and welcoming Sea Sea Riders in downtown Dunedin. Designed as a relaxed social gathering for adults 55 and better, the event offered the perfect balance of connection, conversation, and community support.

From the moment guests arrived, the room was filled with lively discussion. Attendees shared stories, compared experiences, and explored topics that increasingly shape the next chapter of life. Throughout the night, conversations naturally emerged around downsizing, housing decisions, lending options, senior living communities, financial questions, and long term planning—all in an easy, friendly setting where questions felt welcomed.

A standout feature of the event was the presence of several local professionals who attended simply to engage in conversation and serve as approachable resources. Their willingness to listen, offer insight, and answer questions casually created a relaxed environment where guests could explore real concerns without formality or pressure.

One especially meaningful contribution came from David Reider, Attorney with Berlin Patten Ebling, who offered a thoughtful perspective on why events like this matter for our community.

“Many adults 55 and better are navigating major life transitions, and having a supportive environment to discuss estate planning, housing, and long term goals is incredibly valuable.”

— David Reider, Attorney, Berlin Patten Ebling

His insight perfectly captured the heart of the evening: creating a safe, supportive place where individuals can gather reliable information, connect with experts, and feel more confident about their decisions for the future.

We also extend deep appreciation to Sea Sea Riders for providing the perfect backdrop for the night. The coastal charm, relaxed ambiance, and exceptional service set a warm tone for the event. And a special thank you goes to the owner Sylvia for her gracious hospitality, her servers attention to detail, and warm presence ensured every attendee felt welcomed and cared for throughout the evening.

Adding a touch of excitement, the event wrapped up with our 6pm raffle drawing, which brought smiles, laughter, and celebration. Ending on such a joyful note made the evening even more memorable.

Gatherings like this highlight the importance of staying connected—especially for those exploring life transitions later in life. Whether guests attended to learn about future housing options, meet trusted professionals, or simply enjoy the company of others, the evening provided meaningful value on multiple levels.

We look forward to hosting more events like this in the months ahead as we continue to support, empower, and connect our 55+ neighbors here in Dunedin. If you’d like to attend one of these events in the future, please reach out directly to me.

Live where you love, in a warm community, where we are all navigating life’s next chapters together.

Alison Ross Tompkins, Broker Associate for Coldwell Banker, has been in sales and Real Estate for 30 years. Reach her on her cell at (727) 729-9942 or at the Belleair/Dunedin offices at (727) 581-9411.

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**NEW ADDITIONS AT THE AQUARIUM**

Last month, Clearwater Marine Aquarium welcomed three harbor seals — Scallop, Pharaoh and Ocean—marking both a brand-new species and a newly-renovated seal habitat for CMA. The arrival of harbor seals expands CMA’s animal care family and reinforces its mission to inspire human connection to marine life through meaningful, conservation-based stories.



The new harbor seal habitat is part of CMA’s broader plan to incorporate pinnipeds - marine mammals that have front and rear flippers - including harbor seals and California sea lions, into its overall animal care. The exhibit supports CMA’s mission while broadening educational messaging beyond Florida to address marine conservation challenges not just in Florida, but around the world.

“It’s important to understand that rescue can take many forms and isn’t always limited to direct intervention in the ocean,” said Joe Handy, CEO of Clearwater Marine Aquarium. “Some of the most meaningful rescue work happens through rehabilitation and long-term care, that helps prevent harm before it occurs. Our mission of rescue, rehabilitation, release, and research remains steady, and each part plays a vital role in protecting marine life.”

The harbor seals were welcomed from The Miami Seaquarium. The three seals are considered non-releasable to the wild, as they were born under managed care and do not possess the life skills necessary to survive in their natural environment. The move was approved by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

In summer 2026, CMA plans to welcome additional pinnipeds — sea lions — who will move into a new sea lion habitat currently in development and scheduled to open this summer. The refurbished habitat is being funded by a \$6 million grant from the Tourism Development Council, approved by the Pinellas County Board of County Commissioners.

Harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) are found across coastal waters of Alaska, New England, the Mid-Atlantic, Southeast and West Coast of the United States, as well as the northern coasts of Europe and Asia.

They typically live 20–30 years in the wild and can live up to 50 years under human care. Adults can reach up to 300 pounds and measure five to six feet long. Each seal has a unique pattern of spots—much like a fingerprint—and is easily identified by their rounded heads, V-shaped nostrils, large eyes, lack of external ear flaps, and distinctive claws used for grooming, gripping, and efficient movement on land and in water.

Pinnipeds face threats including pollution, toxins, habitat loss, vessel strikes, harassment, and prey loss due to overfishing. While harbor seals are currently listed as a Species of Least Concern overall, some populations are endangered in certain regions, making education and conservation awareness critical.

With the addition of harbor seals, Clearwater Marine Aquarium continues to evolve as a trusted source for marine conservation, inspiring guests to care about the health of oceans. For more information, visit [CMAquarium.org](http://CMAquarium.org).

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# Community News

## SAILABILITY

Submitted by Claudia Nabel

We are a group of dedicated volunteers who envisioned and implemented an opportunity within our community to bring the sport of sailing to the disabled community, so they could participate in this fun activity.

Our dock was destroyed during the hurricanes of 2024, limiting our ability to provide this service. Our goal here is to raise money to go towards the replacement of a new ADA dock.

Despite the fact that Sailability has lost the dock, along with water access for many of our participants with disabilities, we continue to persevere. We are fortunate to have a contractual agreement with the Clearwater Community Sailing Center, and have been able to provide sailing, kayaking and water experiences to some of our less-involved disabled participants. What we have is an amazing village that works together to make things happen through improvising and adapting.

We realize that the City of Clearwater suffered a lot as a result of hurricanes Helene and Milton with so many critical needs, we hope to raise funds to get started on the replacement of the dock sooner rather than later.

Any help you can give is greatly appreciated! To donate, visit [GoFundMe.com/f/RebuilddocksforSailability](https://GoFundMe.com/f/RebuilddocksforSailability).

Sailability is taking out participants every other Saturday. Please visit [SailabilityTampaBay.org](https://SailabilityTampaBay.org) to sign up to participate or volunteer for sailing on catamarans and the kayaks that we currently have available.

## STIRLING ART STUDIOS AND GALLERY

Submitted by Janice Ritter Kadushin

Stirling Art Studios & Gallery (SASG) have elected officers for 2026. Co-presidents Laura Vincenti has been with SASG for 10 years, and co-President Janice Ritter Kadushin has also been with SASG for 10 years. Vice President Chris Fredrick has been at SASG for over 15 Years. Wendy Davis will continue as Treasurer and Joy Swanson will continue as Secretary. SASG is a not for profit trying to promote the arts in the Tampa Bay Area. Meet the artists on the second Saturday of every month from noon-3pm for an open house with wine and snacks.

## PAINT DUNEDIN PURPLE

Help raise awareness to honor those facing Alzheimer's.

- March 22nd - Pickle Ball Tourney
- March 23rd - Drag Queen Bingo at Blur Nightclub
- March 24th - Mahjongg for Hope at Hale Center & Wine At The Docks
- March 25th - Painting Events - Cueni Brewing Co, HOB and Wine At The Docks
- March 26th - RunRaiser - Dunedin Run Club
- March 27th - Dunedin Goes Carting - Around The Town
- March 28th - Community Event - business fundraising activities and community education and awareness, Alzheimer's Association Brain Bus, Paint Dunedin Purple awareness booth and community senior services and support organizations, Dog Parade - hosted by Coastal Vet, and Pub Crawl - hosted by Ladies Of Lager.

For more information, follow Paint Dunedin Purple on Facebook.

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