

NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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Magazine

The Story of Boca Ciega Bay: From Ancient Shores to Our Modern Backyard

By Pete Magnani, Publisher

Boca Ciega Bay—the scenic, shallow estuary framing the local Intracoastal Waterway—is bordered by St. Petersburg, Gulfport, Seminole, and South Pasadena to the east, and the barrier islands of Madeira Beach, Treasure Island, and St. Pete Beach to the west. Its Spanish name translates to “blind mouth,” a nod to the bay’s confusing inlets, shallow waters, and shifting shorelines. For centuries, this vital body of water sustained Florida’s earliest indigenous peoples and, later, European settlers. Eventually, it fueled the mid-century development boom that altered the local landscape, ultimately sparking the modern conservation efforts that protect the bay today.

Early Peoples and the Tocobaga

Long before modern homes lined the waterfront, these shores supported thriving Indigenous communities who depended entirely on the bay’s rich resources. Archaeological evidence connects the eastern shoreline with the late Weeden Island and Safety Harbor cultures, spanning from roughly 800 A.D. to 1700 A.D. The Tocobaga people are most famously tied to this area, leaving behind remnants of their civilization in the historic Jungle Prada area of present-day St. Petersburg.

The Tocobaga Chiefdom was a powerful society centered around Tampa Bay, with its main political hub located near Safety Harbor. Their villages stretched from northern Tampa Bay down to Sarasota, usually nestled along productive coastal waters. They reshaped the local geography by building massive mounds: platform mounds made of shell and clay served as elevated foundations for homes; middens of discarded shells and bones doubled as elevated lookout points; and sacred sand mounds served as resting places for their ancestors.



Map of Boca Ciega Bay,
circa 1919
State Archives of Florida/
Pinellas County
Board of Trade (Fla.)

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Florida During the American Revolution

Although it was not one of the thirteen original colonies, Florida played a role in the birth of our nation.

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Follow the Rules on Two Wheels

Knowing the laws can keep everyone safe on the sidewalks, streets, and trails.

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The Importance of Recess

The nation’s leading pediatricians released new guidance on the benefits of free time in school.

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CREDITS



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INDIAN ROCKS BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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

Do you need another copy? Ask for them at USA Grocers, CVS Drug Store, Beach Welcome Center, City Hall, and Indian Rocks Beach Library. We hope you enjoyed our magazine. We want your input. Did you like this issue? What suggestions do you have for future articles? Call or email us.

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

Thank you for reading,

Lora & Pete Magnani 813-239-6862
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**SEE YOU AGAIN
IN SEPTEMBER!**



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Indian-Rocks-Beach.com

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MAYOR Lan Vaughn

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• Hilary King • Kellee Watt

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CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS & EVENTS

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



AUGUST

Back to School Sales Tax Holiday Month

Coast Guard Appreciation Month

NFL Preseason Begins 6

Purple Heart Day 7

Public School Begins 11

City Commission Meeting 18

Dog Day at Baycare Ballpark 21

Asian Food and Music at the Sound 21

Wearable Art Fashion Show Dunedin 22

DEVO at the Sound 27

Jimmy Buffett Day 30

SEPTEMBER

97X Next Big Thing at the Sound 4

Gulfport GeckoFest 5

First USF Home Game 5

Labor Day 7

City Commission Meeting 8

Patriot Day 11

Modest Mouse at the Sound 16

Pasco Scallop Season Ends 18

Buccaneers Home Opener 20

International Day of Peace 21

First Day of Fall 22

Greentown Kids Beach Cleanup 27

JULY

National Postal Workers Day 1

Clearwater Celebrates 250 3-4

Fourth of July 4

Fireworks Largo Central Park 4

Fireworks at Coachman Park 4

Rock the Rocks Crabby Bill's 11

MLB Home Run Derby 13

City Commission Meeting 14

MLB All-Star Game 14

XMas In July Crabby Bill's 25

Parents' Day 26

The Black Keys at the Sound 28

More details for items highlighted in red can be found in the Did You Know?, Bar/Restaurant News, Business Briefs, Community News, or in articles or ads.



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Did You Know

SALES TAX HOLIDAY

The Back-to-School Sales Tax Holiday runs from August 1st –31st saving parents on supplies for the upcoming school year. Exempt items include clothing (\$100 or less), footwear (\$100 or less), wallets/bags (\$100 or less), school supplies (\$50 or less), learning aids/jigsaw puzzles (\$30 or less), and personal computers/accessories (\$1,500 or less). Visit FloridaRevenue.com for more information and a complete list of included items.



SPECIAL NEEDS EVACUATION PROGRAM With hurricane season underway, Pinellas County Emergency Management is encouraging residents with qualifying needs to register now for the Special Needs Evacuation Program.

During emergency evacuations, the program provides transportation and shelters for residents of all ages with medical, functional, or special transportation needs including requiring assistance with routine care and medications, being dependent on oxygen or electricity for medical equipment, requiring assistance with walking or getting out of bed, or requiring transportation assistance to an emergency shelter during evacuations.

Key program features include generator-powered shelters to ensure uninterrupted power for medical devices and life-safety equipment, onsite health professionals available throughout the evacuation to assist with medical needs, transportation assistance for registered participants without other evacuation options, personal outreach from Emergency Management staff to verify needs and confirm enrollment, shelter access for immediate family members and caretakers, and pet care provided by Pinellas County Animal Services for registrants without alternative arrangements, until they return home.

County staff recently contacted all program registrants to confirm their information is up to date and they are still eligible for the program. Existing registrants who have not confirmed their information with program staff this year are asked to call Pinellas County Emergency Management at (727) 464-3800 as soon as possible to ensure they remain on the registration list.

For more information or to register for the Special Needs Evacuation Program, visit Pinellas.gov/SpecialNeeds or call (727) 464-3800.

NEW GOLF CART LAW Indian Rocks Beach has raised the minimum driving age for golf carts on public streets to 18 years old, aligning the city code with Florida state law. Before this change, teens as young as 14 were permitted to drive golf carts in the city.

Under the new rules, drivers under 18 must have a valid driver's license or learner's permit and be accompanied by a licensed adult. Drivers 18 and older must carry a valid, government-issued photographic ID. Underage drivers operating without an adult face up to a \$500 fine. Officials also request that residents and owners register their golf carts at City Hall. For official updates on street-legal zones and registration forms, visit Indian-Rocks-Beach.com.

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CLEARWATER AQUARIUM UPDATES Clearwater Marine Aquarium's (CMA) Nesting Team located its first sea turtle nest in Pinellas County in May. The CMA Sea Turtle Conservation Program monitors approximately 21 miles of beaches between Caladesi Island and Treasure Island with daily patrols starting before sunrise every day during the nesting season. As nesting sea turtles return to the coast and begin to emerge from the Gulf looking for a safe and suitable nesting site, CMA reminds everyone to please put away any beach furniture and other potential obstructions that may deter sea turtles, slow down on the water, and switch to sea turtle-friendly lighting to help ensure the survival of these endangered animals.

On a somber note, CMA announced the passing of Star, age 27. The Atlantic Bottlenose dolphin joined the CMA family in December 2025. In May, Star appeared to show signs of discomfort requiring supportive care. CMA's veterinary team, animal care specialists, and independent outside experts evaluated and monitored her health around the clock. Despite their best efforts, Star's condition declined and she passed away on May 8th.

NO FERTILIZER DURING SUMMER Pinellas County's Fertilizer Ordinance prohibits the sale or application of lawn and landscape fertilizers containing nitrogen and/or phosphorus through September 30th.

Phosphorus cannot be used at any time of the year unless a soil test confirms it is needed. Also, fertilizer can never be applied within 10 feet of the top of a slope leading to a seawall, wetland, or waterbody.

The purpose of the restrictions is to prevent fertilizer runoff and yard waste from harming lakes, ponds, rivers, Tampa Bay and the Gulf of America and from leaching into groundwater. Excess nitrogen and phosphorus can cause harmful algae blooms that lower oxygen levels and lead to fish kills.

Pinellas County recommends using summer-safe lawn care products and landscaping best management practices to keep a healthy landscape during the summer: For more information, visit Pinellas.gov/fertilizer-landscape-information.

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

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Boca Ciega Bay, Continued

The Tocobaga occupied Jungle Prada from approximately 1000 to 1700 A.D. Surviving shell middens show just how deeply these early residents relied on what we now call Boca Ciega Bay. Fish, oysters, clams, and sea turtles formed the basis of daily life. Unfortunately, much of this ancient mound landscape was damaged or leveled by twentieth-century housing development, making the surviving, protected portions of Jungle Prada incredibly precious to our local history.

Today, the Jungle Prada archaeological site spans both public parkland and private property, showcasing these surviving ancient mounds alongside an educational museum. Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2003, Jungle Prada is also famous as the setting for the 1528 landing of the Spanish Narváez expedition.

Spanish Exploration and the Narváez Expedition

Pánfilo de Narváez sailed from Spain in 1527 to explore La Florida, a vast territory named in 1513 by Juan Ponce de León. The expedition navigated into Boca Ciega Bay in April 1528, where the crew spotted indigenous buildings perched high atop platform mounds. Narváez made landfall near Jungle Prada, officially claiming the entire region for King Charles V.

While the expedition sought to secure vast colonial wealth and new territory for Spain, it ended in disaster. After landing, Narváez split his forces, marching inland with 300 men while ordering his ships to wait. The plan failed catastrophically; the ships lost track of the land party, and only four members of the expedition ultimately survived to tell the tale. Tragically, these and other explorers also introduced European diseases and violence, causing the Tocobaga to vanish from historical records within two centuries. Despite the grim outcome, this fateful landing permanently links Boca Ciega Bay to one of the earliest European encounters on the Gulf Coast.

Settlement, Fishing, and Waterfront Life

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Boca Ciega Bay remained the heart of daily life in western Pinellas County. The bay's shallow seagrass beds, oyster bars, and tangled mangroves offered both abundant food and natural shelter, allowing small, tight-knit waterfront communities to take root.

By the late 1800s, rustic fishing camps and pioneer homesteads dotted the shoreline near modern-day Gulfport, St. Petersburg, Madeira Beach, and Treasure Island. In Gulfport, the waterfront evolved into a popular community gathering place. The town built its first public fishing pier in 1907, and the iconic Gulfport Casino (originally

built in 1906) marked the community's transition from a quiet fishing village into a vibrant social destination. Steamships, ferries, and small skiffs ferried goods and passengers across the water, where early winter residents fell in love with the mild climate, world-class fishing, and serene coastal views.

When the railroad reached St. Petersburg in the late 1880s, local growth accelerated. The rail lines connected the lower Pinellas peninsula directly to national markets and wealthy winter tourists, sparking a boom in grand hotels, cozy boarding houses, and waterfront recreation. Commercial fishermen continued to harvest the bay to feed their families and tourists, and the shoreline adapted to the influx of new residents and vacationers.

The arrival of the automobile marked the bay's next great transformation. Roads, bridges, and causeways provided easy, direct routes to our barrier islands, slowly replacing the old reliance on boats and ferries. The original Welch Causeway opened to Madeira Beach in July 1926, followed by the Treasure Island Causeway in 1939. These new thoroughfares carried steady traffic across Boca Ciega Bay, transforming isolated islands into the bustling, beloved beach communities we know today.

By mid-century, neighborhoods around the bay actively promoted our region as a paradise for boating, fishing, and retirement living. Yet even as neighborhoods expanded, commercial fishing remained a cornerstone of the bay's identity, bridging early maritime history with modern coastal growth and setting the stage for future conservation battles.

Dredging, Filling, and Development

The most dramatic visual transformations occurred during the post-WWII boom. Rapid population growth and an insatiable demand for waterfront real estate led to massive dredge-and-fill operations. To create competitive waterfront property, developers reshaped the shallow bay bottom into residential finger canals and man-made subdivisions. Scientific studies estimate that roughly 3,500 acres of Boca Ciega Bay were filled in after 1950, shrinking the bay's total surface area by 20 percent and devastating vital seagrass beds, shellfish habitats, and marine nurseries.

These massive engineering projects forever altered natural tidal flows, water circulation, and the coastline itself. The bay quickly became a stark, cautionary example of the delicate conflict between rapid coastal development and environmental preservation in Florida.



Pasadena Estates across Boca Ciega Bay, early 1900s. Archives Heritage Village

Protection and Restoration

Mounting public alarm over this environmental degradation during the mid-twentieth century sparked an organized movement to protect Boca Ciega Bay's remaining natural resources. Decades of dredging, neighborhood expansion, and navigation projects had severely altered the shoreline and submerged habitats. Residents, scientists, and environmental advocates united to raise the alarm about dropping water quality, disappearing mangrove wetlands, and the steep decline of local fish and wildlife populations.

In response to this grassroots pressure, the state designated Boca Ciega Bay as an official aquatic preserve in 1969, making it one of Florida's very first protected estuarine systems. This designation successfully halted large-scale dredge-and-fill projects, preserving the bay's ecological future. This success inspired the creation of the neighboring Pinellas County Aquatic Preserve in 1972, extending vital protections to surrounding coastal waters and preventing further habitat loss along our coast.

Over the last few decades, local conservation efforts have focused heavily on restoring these precious marine habitats. Today, our mangrove forests, seagrass meadows, oyster bars, and salt marshes are recognized as essential infrastructure that cleans our water, stabilizes our shorelines, and protects our properties. Current initiatives include seagrass monitoring, constructing artificial oyster reefs, and neighborhood education programs that teach homeowners how to practice good stewardship in their own backyards.

Our local waterfront parks play a starring role in connecting residents with this shared history. Beautiful spaces like Boca Ciega Millennium Park, Clam Bayou Nature Preserve, and Jungle Prada de Narváez Park give neighbors a place to experience untouched coastal habitats while learning about our past. Together, these parks remind us of the enduring bond between people and Boca Ciega Bay—from the ancient Tocobaga to the modern homeowners working to protect our county's most precious coastal ecosystem.




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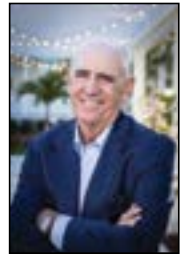
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WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN INVESTING AND GAMBLING?

by Ray Ferrara, ProVise Management Group

Betting is not new. From early online poker to today's real-time sports wagering—where you can bet on the next pitch, pass, or shot—gambling has become faster and more accessible than ever. Predictive markets have expanded wagering into politics and other real-world events, gaining attention during the 2024 election cycle. As access has increased, so has a concerning trend: many people, especially younger individuals, are beginning to view gambling as a legitimate form of investing. So, what separates the two?



The difference comes down to purpose, process, and probability—how and why money is put at risk.

Purpose: Investing is intended to build wealth over time. It involves allocating money to assets such as stocks, bonds, or real estate that are expected to grow or generate income. Gambling, by contrast, is primarily about winning money quickly based on chance. There is typically no underlying asset nor long-term value being created.

Process: Investing requires research, discipline, and strategy. Decisions are based on economic conditions, company performance, and long-term market trends. Risk can be managed through diversification, asset allocation, and time. While returns are not guaranteed, they are grounded in analysis and historical patterns. Gambling, on the other hand, depends largely on random outcomes—cards, dice, spins, or short-term events. There is little to no ability to manage risk in a meaningful way, and the odds are often structured against the participant. As the saying goes, “the house always wins.”

Probability: Over long periods, investing very often carries a positive expected outcome as markets historically rise and productive assets generate returns. Gambling generally has a negative expected value, meaning the average participant is likely to lose money over time.

Time Horizon: Investing is a long-term endeavor measured in years or decades. It represents ownership in assets that can appreciate and produce income. Gambling is short-term, with immediate results and no lasting economic value.

In summary, investing uses risk to build long-term wealth, while gambling uses risk to pursue short-term excitement. Confusing the two can lead to costly financial decisions—and unfortunately, it's becoming increasingly common.

Take advantage of our complimentary one-hour consultation in our Clearwater office or by Zoom. We will not gamble with your future, but we can talk about financial, retirement and/or estate planning.

V. Raymond Ferrara, CFP®, Founder and Executive Chair
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HURRICANE SEASON

From the Desk of Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

Hurricane season runs through November 30, so now is the time to prepare. Various organizations have released their predictions for this year's season, and there's no true consensus. Some call for an active season, while others predict a slightly lower than normal number of hurricanes, but predictions don't really matter. All it takes is one hurricane hitting our area and Pinellas County could be devastated. Last year we got lucky, but don't let that make you complacent. Now is the time to prepare for what you will do if a hurricane threatens Pinellas.



The first thing to do is understand your risk. Find out now if your home is in an evacuation zone. You can search your address on kyz.pinellas.gov and find out if you will be one of the residents subject to a possible evacuation order because of deadly flooding risk. When Helene hit, 12 people were killed, most by floodwater when they didn't leave an evacuation zone.

Know where you'll go if you need to leave. It's not always necessary to travel far – you just have to get out of the flood zone. You can go to a hurricane shelter, or stay with family or friends who live in a non-evacuation area. Remember your pets too. Several Pinellas hurricane shelters are pet friendly.

Make sure your house is prepared. Whether you are staying home or evacuating, you want to make sure your home withstands the storm. Ensure that your roof and windows are in good condition, and have a weatherproofing plan such as plywood or storm shutters. Houses are destroyed when hurricane-force winds enter them, so take steps to keep the wind out. Check your trees now, removing any dead limbs that can be hazards during the storm. As a hurricane approaches, bring any outdoor furniture inside. Anything unsecured becomes a deadly missile in hurricane-force winds.

Start collecting the safety, survival, and comfort items that will help keep you safe during and after a hurricane. Remember, the storm is dangerous, but the aftermath can be dangerous too, or at the very least difficult and uncomfortable. Stock up on nonperishable food, and anything you might need or want that typically flies off the shelves when a hurricane is approaching, such as bottled water or paper products. Don't forget a manual can opener. Have battery operated lights and a radio along with plenty of batteries, and keep rechargeable things fully charged. Have a well-stocked first aid kit, and a fire extinguisher. Tools, plastic sheeting, garbage bags, and duct tape can come in handy for both preparation and the aftermath of a storm.

The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office is prepared too. We always had a robust hurricane response ready to come to your aid, but after Helene and Milton we've redoubled our efforts, creating an Emergency Management Division to prepare for a hurricane and its aftermath. We'll keep our fingers crossed for no hurricanes this year, but if the worst comes, we'll be ready. Make your plans now to be ready too.

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A man dressed as Santa Claus, wearing a red suit with white trim and a white beard, is holding two small, fluffy yellow chicks in his hands. He is standing outdoors in front of a blue and white striped awning.

long. Show up in your best summertime Christmas attire—think Santa hats and flip-flops, reindeer shades, and Christmas swimsuits! Santa Claus will be making a special summer stop from 5-7pm to take photos and crack some jokes. Live music will be playing all day starting with Steve Balesteri from 1-5pm and Crownz from 6-10pm to keep the holiday vibes going strong. Whether you've been naughty or nice, everyone's welcome. Come celebrate the season, island-style!

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Bar & Restaurant News



QUARTER CENTURY FOR ISLAND WAY GRILL
 Congratulations to Island Way Grill on their 25th anniversary in May. Island Way is one of many restaurants in the Baystar Restaurants Group (BRG) led by Frank Chivas on Clearwater Beach and surrounding areas.

The menu at Island Way features dishes from land and sea including Tomahawk ribeyes, succulent filets, "boat-to-table" fresh catches from Baystar's own fleet of fishing boats, and hand-rolled sushi.

Island Way offers daily specials including "Wine Down Wednesdays" with half-off wine bottles and Sam on the Sax playing live music on the patio. Sunday Brunch, from 10am-2pm, is a buffet style brunch featuring an array of different stations: pastry, breakfast, sushi, dessert, shellfish, salad, lunch, carving, and made-to-order omelet station. One complimentary mimosa or champagne is included, as well as coffee, tea, and soft drinks. The Early Bird menu runs Sunday-Friday from 4-5:30pm and Noon-5:30pm on Saturdays.

Island Way is located at 20 Island Way, come by land or sea (docking is available at the Island Estates public dock). For more information about the menu or to make reservations, visit IslandWayGrill.com. Follow them on Facebook to view specials and upcoming events.

PIZZA RETURNS Kera Pizza Tavern, located at 311 Gulf Boulevard on Indian Rocks Beach (previously occupied by SLYCE Pizza), opened in May. This is the sister restaurant to longtime Clearwater Beach staple, Gondolier Italian Restaurant and Pizza at 674 South Gulfview Blvd.

The new restaurant is a mixture of authentic Greek cuisine and Italian-fired pizza. Among their Mediterranean offerings are Spanakopita, Keftedes (Greek meatballs), Avgolemono v(chicken, lemon, and orzo soup), gyros, and Pastitsio (similar to lasagna). For pizza lovers, they offer specialty and build-your-own pies, calzones, and strombolis. Guests can enjoy one of their hand-crafted mocktails, libations from their full-liquor bar, or a glass of wine off their carefully curated wine list.

Kera is open Tuesday-Thursday from 4-10pm and Friday and Saturday from 4-11pm (closed on Mondays) and offers indoor and outdoor seating. To view their menu, visit KeraPizzaTavern.com. For more information about specials and upcoming events, follow them on Facebook or call (727) 660-8010.

RESTAURANT NEWS WANTED If your restaurant has news or an upcoming event we can include in this News Magazine, please e-mail Lora@MagriffProductions.com or call (813) 361-7376.

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LET THE CHILDREN PLAY

By Pete Magnani, Publisher

The nation's largest pediatricians group is urging schools to protect free play for children and teens in its first guidance on recess in thirteen years. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), founded in 1930 by 35 physicians to address pediatric healthcare standards, is the nation's largest professional association of children's clinicians. As many schools are cutting back recess to prioritize test performance, the AAP has issued a revision to their 2013 policy statement "The Crucial Role of Recess," advising that playtime is critical to academic, physical, social, and emotional development.

The guidance follows a study published last year in the *Journal of American Medicine* which revealed that the health of children nationwide has deteriorated significantly across nearly all metrics over the prior 17 years. Utilizing data from mortality statistics, national health surveys, and electronic health records from over two million children, researchers found U.S. kids were more likely to have obesity, chronic diseases, and mental health problems like depression. "The surprising part of the study wasn't any single statistic; it was that there's 170 indicators from eight data sources, all showing the same thing: a generalized decline in kids' health," said Dr. Christopher Forrest, one of the authors of the study.



New research suggests downtime, including recess, helps students retain information, improves their grades and test scores, and contributes to students' ability to focus while in class. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends children and adolescents have at least one hour of physical activity each day and recognizes that schools are in a unique position to promote healthy behaviors like physical education and activity. These behaviors promote lifelong health and wellbeing and help prevent various health conditions.

In addition to the physical and cognitive benefits of daily physical activity, pediatricians stress its role in the social and emotional development of children. Peer-to-peer engagement on the playground is often a child's introduction to social integration, leading them to develop skills including self-control, communication, cooperation, conflict resolution, and leadership. Researchers also say recess gives kids a chance to navigate relationships and build confidence. Despite this guidance, up to 40 percent of US school districts have reduced or eliminated recess since the mid-2000s, according to the CDC, and elementary schools schedule students to have only 27 minutes of recess each day.

About a dozen states require some daily recess. Under Florida law, students in kindergarten through grade 5 must be given at least 20 consecutive minutes of unstructured free-play recess per day. The state's school boards must also provide 150 minutes of physical education each week, with at least 30 consecutive minutes conducted per day. Oklahoma became the latest state last month to expand its recess requirement, passing a law that increases mandatory unstructured playtime to 40 minutes each day.

Among U.S. schools offering recess, the duration ranges from less than 10 minutes to over an hour. In Shanghai, China, students take a 30-minute nap after lunch and are given 10 minutes of recess for every 40 minutes of instruction. Primary school students in England get a 15-minute break in the morning and an hour at lunchtime.

In Finland, elementary school students take a 15-minute recess each hour. Students do not start actual academics until the equivalent of America's second grade, and play is considered more important than homework. The strategy has led to Finland's steep rise in the chart of the *Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)*, a worldwide study intended to evaluate educational systems based on pupils' scholastic performance.

After studying the Finnish model, Texas Christian University Professor Debbie Rhea developed the LiNK Project, which promotes the connection between well-run recess periods and classroom achievement. The model includes two 15-minute recesses in the morning and two in the afternoon combined with lessons on social skills like empathy. "Physiologically, you want to reboot every 45 to 60 minutes," says Rhea. "That brings better attentional focus than having a 30-minute recess in the morning and a 30-minute recess in the afternoon." U.S. schools that have implemented the program report a 70 percent reduction in student stress and anxiety and higher math and reading scores.

In many schools, recess is considered a privilege that can be withheld for disciplinary purposes. This is a mistake, according to researchers. Pediatricians argue that withholding recess is counterproductive, as children who struggle with self-regulation, attention disorders, or behavioral challenges are the ones who need movement breaks the most. The AAP recommends that recess be protected and never withheld for academic or punitive reasons, and urges schools to find alternative disciplinary measures, such as reflective writing, restorative justice circles, or loss of other privileges.

Recess is just as important for older students as it is for grade schoolers. Although most of the evidence is focused on elementary schools, middle and high school students also benefit from having recess or comparable physical activity periods in addition to physical education and classroom physical activity. These benefits and opportunities are particularly important for students with special needs, functional limitations, or physical disabilities because they may have more behavioral issues and limited experiences interacting socially with other students.

Research has shown that recess and other breaks from classroom instruction are a necessary component of a healthy learning environment for students across all grades. Unstructured play and social time increases children's physical fitness, improves memory and concentration, and improves their social and emotional development.

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BIG BIRTHDAY Belleair Bluffs Cleaners, at 2924 West Bay Drive, is celebrating 45 years in business. Gary Dawson opened Belleair Bluffs Cleaners in 1981. Back then, his neighbors were Winn Dixie to the east and Ben Franklin Five and Dime to the west. He was the only dry cleaner in town, and lot of dirt has gone through Gary's machines since then.



Being a Certified Garment Care Professional, Gary has acquired many certifications from the Dry Cleaning and Laundry Institute including Dry Cleaning, Wet Cleaning, and Environmental Dry Cleaning.

Belleair Bluffs Cleaners is open Monday-Friday from 7am-6pm, Saturday from 9am-3pm, and is closed on Sundays. For more information on their services, visit BelleairBluffsCleaners.com or call (727) 585-1101.

HORIZON WEST BAY OPENS Largo's \$85 million mixed-use development opened last month at 440 West Bay Drive. The long-awaited project is the cornerstone of a redevelopment effort that brings municipal services, retail, dining, and public meeting space to the downtown core.

Horizon's open-air plaza will host outdoor markets, concerts, and other civic events. The 18,000 square feet of indoor commercial space includes Louis Pappas Fresh Greek, Strachan's Ice Cream and Desserts, and Parlor Doughnuts.

The building is home to the new Largo City Hall, replacing the 225 1st Avenue SW location which housed government offices and services since 1962. The new facility includes commission chambers, administrative offices, and a training lounge for city employees.

Sustainability was a factor in the planning of Horizon West End, including a 25,000 square foot solar array and a rainwater collection system. It also includes a 300-space indoor parking garage with 11 electric vehicle charging stations. For more information, visit DowntownLargo.com.

NEW AT-HOME HEALTHCARE PROGRAM GoodCall Housecalls has been treating residents and their visiting friends and family in Belleair and the surrounding Beach communities for over six years. They provide care for minor emergencies and illnesses and offer preventative options for health and wellness care.

GoodCall Housecalls is proud to announce Care Continuum, a new program to support patients and their families by providing a better alternative to "going it alone" as they recover at home or from a long hospitalization. Their experienced medical care and ongoing coordination ensures the best recovery in the comfort of home. It relieves the anxiety from extended caregiving or scheduling recovery management from long-distance. At the same time, GoodCall offers peace of mind to family and loved ones of those who are recovering from planned or emergency procedures, unexpected illnesses or hospitalizations, or ongoing medical conditions.

For more information regarding their programs, contact them at Info@GoodCallHousecalls.com or (727) 421-4230.

NOW HIRING Valery Insurance Agency, located at 2113 Gulf Blvd on Indian Rocks Beach, is hiring a full-time licensed (2-15 or 2-18) insurance agent for Medicare sales. Salary is commensurate upon qualifications and experience. Leads are provided at no cost, and there is no cold calling. Please send resume to Arnels@ValeryAgency.com.



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Business Briefs



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PROVISE CELEBRATES 40 YEARS ProVise Management Group, LLC, a financial planning and investment management firm with offices in Clearwater and Tampa, is celebrating its 40th anniversary. ProVise is a SEC registered Investment Advisor serving over 1200 clients in over 30 states and managing about \$2 billion at a fiduciary standard of care.

Ray Ferrara, Founder and Executive Chair said, "We are humbled by the confidence our clients have place in us and proud of the excellent advice and service our team members provide each day." ProVise Management Group, LLC is located at 611 Druid Rd E, Suite 105 in Clearwater. Reach them at (727) 441-9022 or Info@ProVise.com.

NEW HEALTH AND WELLNESS STUDIO The Tox Technique, a lymphatic body sculpting studio designed to sculpt and restore, is one of the new businesses opening this August in the Horizon West Bay building. It is a transformative approach to wellness, blending body contouring modalities with proprietary methods to de-bloat and redefine. Their proprietary body sculpting method incorporates different techniques that can increase metabolic rate, rid the body of excess toxins, and assist with water retention. They also offer "Sculpting Facials," which remove muscle tension and naturally sculpt the face while ridding the body of excess toxins and bloat. These facials include the use of a "Gua Sha" stone and Tox sculpting wand to assist in toning the muscles of the face.

The Tox Technique is a nationwide franchise with the nearest location in Tampa. Women and men are welcome; they also have pregnancy options available. This location is coming soon, contact the studio directly for booking inquiries by calling (601)843-8699 or drop by at 454 West Bay Drive. They will be offering VIP packages to the first 50 guests at their Grand Opening. For more information email them at Clearwater@TheToxTechnique.com.

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WHERE YOUR FIRE DOLLARS GO

By Chief Ken Grimes, PSFRD

At 2:14 in the morning, a 911 call comes in. A husband wakes up to find his wife is not breathing. He is trying CPR, unsure if he is doing it correctly. Panic sets in quickly. Every second feels longer than the last. He is waiting for help.

Before that call was ever made, your fire district was already preparing for that moment. Crews were staffed. Equipment was checked. Stations were strategically positioned. Training had already taken place long before the emergency happened. We often say this about our profession. We are there on people's worst day, and we feel a responsibility to make it better. That responsibility drives how your fire district invests your tax dollars.

About 85 percent of the district's budget goes directly into salaries and benefits. That number tells an important story. Emergency services are fundamentally about people. Firefighters and paramedics are on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They train constantly to respond to medical emergencies, fires, water rescues, hazardous materials incidents, hurricanes, and countless other situations where seconds matter. Right now, as you read this, firefighters, paramedics, boats, special rescue teams and even helicopters are only minutes away.

When someone calls 911, the outcome often depends on the skill, experience, and preparation of the people who arrive in those first few critical minutes. That level of readiness requires investment. It also requires the ability to recruit and retain high quality professionals in a very competitive environment. Departments across Florida compete heavily for experienced firefighters and paramedics. It is estimated 4,000 new firefighters are needed a year and the state is producing 2,000. Maintaining strong staffing is not just about today. It is about ensuring the system remains dependable years into the future.

Your fire dollars also support the stations themselves. Fire stations are not simply buildings. They are carefully placed response points designed to improve coverage and reduce response times. Location matters. Seconds matter. Just as important, how those stations are built matters too.

Recently, when the district was told a traditional fire station project could cost nearly ten million dollars, we challenged the assumption. Instead, we purchased an existing home and adjacent property and began adapting it into a functioning station at a fraction of the cost. That decision potentially saved about 7 million dollars while still improving service to the community. In many ways, it may also create a healthier and more comfortable living environment for firefighters who spend a third of their lives at work.

Training and equipment are another major part of the investment. Emergencies do not give second chances. Firefighters and paramedics train continually so their response becomes automatic under pressure. Engines, rescue units, protective gear, medical equipment, radios, and lifesaving tools all must perform without fail when they are needed most. At the center of all of this is readiness. Unlike many services, emergency response cannot be created after the emergency happens. The people, equipment, stations, and systems must already be in place before someone dials 911.

One of the things that makes your special fire district special is that these decisions are guided locally. Your district is overseen by a local board made up of residents who live in the community. They experience the same storms, traffic, risks, and emergencies as everyone else. Their role is to balance strong emergency service with responsible stewardship of public funds. This is not really about budgets, buildings, or taxes. It is about making sure that when someone is having the worst day of their life, help arrives quickly, professionally, and prepared to make things better.

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Depiction of the Continental Army circa 1776

By Jeanne Holmquist, Clearwater Historical Society Museum

To celebrate the 250th anniversary of the American Revolution, we thought we would share what was happening in Florida history at that time. Everyone remembers that Ponce de Leon came to Florida in 1513 and planted a Spanish flag along the Atlantic coast. In 1563, the French settled at Fort Caroline near present-day Jacksonville, but in 1564, the Spanish attacked and massacred the French forces, and Florida was once again entirely ruled by Spain. Fast forward 200 years, to 1763, during the Peace of Paris Treaty, that not only ended the French and Indian War, but it also included in the agreement that Britain trade Cuba to Spain for Florida. Although the thirteen colonies declared their freedom from Britain in 1776, it was not until the signing of the 1783 Treaty of Paris that the Americans were truly free from British rule.

The American Revolution lasted from 1763 until 1783, and during that time the British ruled Florida and most of the Spanish people who had lived in Florida moved to Cuba. Florida was a safe place for northern British Colonists uninterested in fighting Britain over taxation or religion and new British loyalists emigrating from Europe.

In 1763, Britain took possession of Florida and divided it into East and West Florida, separated by the Apalachicola River. As strange as it seems, Clearwater and the entire peninsula would have been part of the East Florida colony. The capital of East Florida was St. Augustine. The West Florida colony was the panhandle of Florida, from the Apalachicola River west to Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River, and its capital was Pensacola. In 1774, the thirteen colonies asked Florida to join the Continental Congress, but Florida declined to attend. They were happy to live under British rule.

The British forces in St. Augustine played a key role as a supply port for the British Army during the American Revolution. There were at least three attempts by the Continental Army to take St. Augustine from the British. All three attempts failed due to a lack of supplies or manpower. The Continental Army got as far south as the St. Mary's River but then they received a surprise attack from the British and retreated into Georgia. The British were able to hold onto St. Augustine and East Florida. Being further away from the other colonies, there was a much more scattered population in West Florida. In Pensacola, the people were more concerned with the Spanish and the French in New Orleans than the British. They were not interested in joining as the next colony and would not swear allegiance to the United States.



Spain reentered the war in 1779 and by 1781 saw their opportunity to retake West Florida from by capturing Baton Rouge, Mobile, and Pensacola. Back in Paris in 1783, the British returned both East and West Florida to the Spanish and their 20-year rule of Florida was over. During the 1783 Treaty of Paris, the original thirteen colonies officially won their independence from the British and formally ended the Revolutionary War.

Florida was back under Spanish rule until 1821. During that time, Spain was weakened by Napoleon's attack on the Spanish mainland, and both the East and West Floridians declared their independence from Spain. In 1810 President James Madison claimed Florida as a U.S. territory, and by 1818, General Andrew Jackson took this opportunity to seize Spanish forts in St. Marks and Pensacola. Negotiations between Spain, Don Luis de Onís, and the U.S. started in 1815, but it wasn't until James Monroe was President and John Quincy Adams was Secretary of State that the treaty was signed making Florida a U.S. Territory.

Florida became the 27th state in 1845.

By Pete Magnani, Publisher

In Florida, bicycles are legally defined as a vehicle and the bicyclists as drivers. People riding bicycles have the same right to the roadways as drivers of motor vehicles and must obey the same traffic laws, as those specific to bicycles as defined in Florida State Statute 316.2065.

Cyclists must obey all traffic controls, stop signs, and signals. If a bike lane is present, it must be used, if not cyclists must ride in the right-most lane, or as close to the right-hand curb as possible. They may use the full lane to turn left, avoid hazards, or pass another vehicle. Bicycles are permitted on sidewalks, but cyclists have the same rights and duties as pedestrians. They must yield right-of-way and give an audible signal before overtaking and passing any pedestrian.

Between sunset and sunrise, the law requires a white light on the front and a red reflector/light on the rear. Every bicycle must be equipped with a brake which will enable its rider to stop the bicycle within 25 feet from a speed of 10 miles per hour on dry, level, clean pavement.

Bikes cannot carry more people than they are designed for, with the exception of an adult rider carrying a child securely attached to their person in backpack carrier or sling. A rider may carry a child under four years of age or weighing 40 pounds or less in a seat or carrier that secures and protects the child from the moving parts of the bicycle. The rider cannot leave a child in the seat or carrier when they are not in immediate control of the bicycle.

Helmets are mandatory for all riders and passengers under age 16, including a child riding in a trailer attached to a bicycle, and wearing headphones or earplugs while riding is prohibited. It is illegal to ride under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

When riding in groups, cyclists may not ride more than two abreast, except on a bicycle path. Where bicycle lanes are present, riders may only ride side-by-side if both are able to remain in the lane. If it is too narrow, they must ride single file. When groups approach a stop sign, they may only proceed after coming to a full stop, and then in groups of ten or fewer at a time.

A rider who violates any of the provisions of the statute commits a noncriminal traffic infraction, punishable as a pedestrian violation subject to a fine.

The rapid popularity surge of electric bicycles, or e-bikes, necessitated additional regulations, which are spelled out in Florida State Statute 316.20655. E-bikes are considered vehicles to the same extent as bicycles and riders have the same rights and duties under State law, but local governments may adopt stricter ordinances governing the use of e-bikes on bicycle and multiuse paths, trails, beaches, and sidewalks.

Currently, electric bicycles and their operators are not subject to the provisions of law relating to insurance, driver or motor vehicle licenses, vehicle registration, or title certificates. State legislators and many local governments have recently begun exploring stricter e-bike laws. Last month, the State Senate passed SB 382, which if passed would require e-bike riders on a sidewalk or any other area designated for pedestrian use to maintain a speed of ten miles per hour or less, yield to pedestrians, and give an audible signal when overtaking and passing. Violators would commit a non-criminal traffic infraction punishable as a moving violation as opposed to a pedestrian offense. The bill would also require the Florida Highway Patrol and each police department and sheriff's office in the state to maintain a list of all the traffic crashes that each respective agency investigates which involve an electric bicycle, then send an annual report to the state.

There are three classifications of electric bicycles:

Class 1 bikes (Low-Speed Pedal-Assisted) are equipped with a motor that provides assistance only when the rider is pedaling, ceasing assistance at 20 miles per hour. These are often permitted on paved trails and mountain bike trails.

Class 2 bikes (Low-Speed Throttle-Assisted) are those equipped with a motor that can propel the bike without pedaling, provided power cuts off at 20 miles per hour. They are often allowed in the same areas as Class 1.

Class 3 bikes (Speed Pedal-Assisted) are equipped with a motor that assists only when the rider pedals, up to a maximum speed of 28 miles per hour. They usually feature a speedometer and are often permitted on roads and in bike lanes.

Electric bicycles manufactured after January 1st, 2021, are required to have a manufacturer-affixed label listing the bike's classification number, top assisted speed, and motor wattage. Modifying an e-bike to change the motor-powered speed of an electric bicycle is prohibited unless the label indicating classification number and top speed is replaced with the updated information. All e-bikes must operate in such a manner so that the motor disengages when the rider stops pedaling or the brakes are engaged.

Senate Bill 382 was passed by the Florida Legislature and was sent to Governor DeSantis prior to this publication. The bill sets a speed limit of 10mph on sidewalks, shared-use paths, or areas designated for pedestrians if a pedestrian is within 10 feet of an ebike. Florida's roads, sidewalks, paths, and trails are shared space. Motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians must follow the rules and be respectful of each other to ensure their safe and enjoyable use.



Community News

ACTION 2000 IRB (A2K)

Submitted by Daryl Frahn

Annual Preservation Awards

The spirit, charm, and history of Indian Rocks Beach were on full display at the May 11th Preservation Awards, hosted A2K. Since 2007, A2K has proudly recognized homeowners and businesses who help protect and celebrate our community's beloved Old Florida character and small-town charm. This year, in partnership with the Plein Aire Cottage Artists, we honored two outstanding properties that truly reflect the heart of IRB:

1506 Gulf Blvd. Blue Water Beach Rentals – Recognized for its classic Old Florida curb appeal and ongoing commitment to preserving the character of our community.

516 Gulf Blvd. – A beautifully restored historic 1932 cottage owned by Laura Jenkins, honored for its thoughtful preservation that honors the past while securing its future.

We are also grateful for the Plein Aire Cottage Artists, who for more than 25 years have used their artwork to spotlight and protect the architectural treasures that define Indian Rocks Beach. The Preservation Awards reflect A2K's ongoing commitment to preservation, beautification, and community pride—and to keeping IRB's special character alive for generations to come.

A2K recently sent a letter to the City Commission and City Manager encouraging the inclusion of architectural design guidelines in the city's Master Plan update. We also noted support maintaining existing setback and height regulations to help protect the small-town atmosphere that benefits our entire community.

This is an exciting opportunity to help protect the charm, scale, and coastal identity that make Indian Rocks Beach such a special place to live, work, and visit. Unlike strict regulations, design guidelines offer a flexible framework that encourages beautiful, compatible development while still allowing creativity and growth.

As more of our historic cottages and bungalows are replaced, it is more important than ever to ensure future development enhances—not erases—the character residents cherish. Many Florida communities, including Dunedin, Winter Park, Key West, and St. Augustine, have successfully used design guidelines to balance growth with preservation.

Oktoberfest on the Beach Save the date: October 12th

Planning is already underway for the legendary A2K Oktoberfest on the Beach—and this year we're turning up the fun with extended hours from Noon to 7 PM!

Come enjoy a day of delicious food, live entertainment, local vendors, family-friendly activities, and great community spirit. As our signature fundraiser and community celebration continues to grow, we're looking for volunteers, sponsors, and enthusiastic community members to help make it our best year yet.

Come connect with us at our monthly meetings on the second Monday of every month at 6pm. Start with our social hour, meet great people, and get involved in projects that help shape the future of IRB. From planting native gardens to enhancing public spaces to planning community events, there are always meaningful ways to participate. Even a small contribution makes a big difference. Follow along for meeting location updates, volunteer opportunities, events, and news: Facebook.com/Action2000IRB | IRBAction2000.com



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Community News

MORTON PLANT HOSPITAL

Submitted by Janet O'Harrow

Morton Plant Hospital announced the appointment of Casey Childers, New Director of Operations, in May. Childers also received his Ph.D. in organization and strategic management from Liberty University that month. For Childers, the timing felt especially meaningful because Morton Plant is already part of his family's story.



His wife was born at Morton Plant, and earlier this year the couple welcomed their third child at Morton Plant, making his new role feel like a full-circle moment for the Childers family. A graduate of the United States Military Academy at West Point, Childers began his career as an officer in the United States Army, where his leadership style was shaped by service, discipline and responsibility.

During a 2018 deployment to southern Afghanistan, Childers suffered a back injury while making sure every member of his team made it out safely. That life-changing moment led him to a new path in not-for-profit health care, where he continues his leadership journey and impact.

Volunteers Needed - Morton Plant Hospital is seeking volunteers to help in the Attic Resale Shop and the hospital gift shop for weekly four-hour shifts. The Attic has been a staple on Fort Harrison Avenue for 37 years. Call (727) 461-8010 to learn more about volunteering.

FRIENDS OF THE IRB LIBRARY

Submitted by Diane Daniel

Happy birthday, America! Indian Rocks Beach Library is celebrating our nation's 250th with a special selection of titles for all ages, from nonfiction, graphic novels, fiction and more. Come see what we have! We've got your summer reading covered too, whether you're hanging at the beach, poolside or reading with the kids, at home or with us.

Our Reading with the Rays summer program is going strong. When it ends July 29th, bring in your reading logs and passports to collect stickers, prizes and vouchers for Rays tickets!

For our weekly Story Time with Ms. Beth on Wednesday at 11:30am, programs include "America and Me Flag Craft" (with Ms. Lee) on July 8th, a not-to-be-missed T-Rex tea party on July 15th, and Dino Craft on July 22nd.

Meanwhile, Florida Explorers, our monthly Saturday children's books and nature program, is serving up more fun. The July 11th program explores the world of rays. Next up is Coral Reefs on August 22nd. The events, at 11am in the IRB Civic Auditorium, are free, but please register in advance. More information is on the library website.

And for adults, On the Rocks Book Club meets on the last Tuesday of the month in the library from 4-5pm. The July read is "Lake County," by Florida author Lori Roy, followed by "The Paris Hours," by Alex George, in August.

The library is open 10am-4pm Monday - Friday. Friends membership is \$10 a year or \$100 for a lifetime. The Friends can be reached at Friends@IRBLibrary@gmail.com. Contact the library at Indian-Rocks-Beach.com/our-community/irb-library or (727) 596-1822.

CLEARWATER YACHT CLUB

The Clearwater Yacht Club (CYC) announced plans to move forward with a new clubhouse initiative, replacing the Club's current facility with a purpose-built, modern waterfront destination. The approximately \$15 million project represents the Club's largest capital investment in its 115-year history.

For more than a century, CYC has been a beacon of excellence, camaraderie, and maritime tradition on Florida's Gulf Coast, fostering friendships, celebrating local culture, and hosting memorable events for generations. The new clubhouse will be a significant upgrade in both form and function. Key features of the design include modern dining and bar areas, a large pool with a dedicated family pool area and a resort-style pool bar, enhanced waterfront and dock access, covered parking, and dedicated event space.

Construction is planned to begin next Spring with a Grand Opening targeted for Fall 2028. CYC will remain fully open and operational throughout the construction period, ensuring members can continue to enjoy the Club without interruption. CYC invites members, guests, and the broader Clearwater community to be part of this historic chapter, where tradition meets innovation and the spirit of Clearwater sails on. For more information, visit ClearwaterYachtClub.org.

BEACH ART CENTER

Submitted by Hope Fitch-Mickiewicz

Pottery Is Back at the Beach Art Center! We are excited to announce that pottery classes have officially returned to the Beach Art Center. After rebuilding from last year's hurricanes, our pottery studio is once again welcoming students for beginner-friendly wheel throwing and handbuilding classes, with additional pottery workshops and programs planned throughout the year.

We are honored to host a special gallery exhibition featuring artwork created by students from the DePaul School for Dyslexia. On display through July 23rd, the exhibit celebrates the creativity, talent, and unique perspectives of these remarkable young artists. We invite the community to come experience this inspiring collection and support these talented student artists.

Summer is also in full swing with our Creative Kids Summer Camp, running weekdays from 9am-1pm. There are still a few spots available for families looking to add some creativity to their summer plans.

As part of our summer programming, the Beach Art Center will be closed to the general public weekdays from June 8th - July 24th from 9am-1pm while camp is in session. Evening and weekend classes, workshops, and events will continue as scheduled, offering plenty of opportunities to stay creative while escaping the summer heat. For camp registration, classes, events, and gallery information, visit BeachArtCenter.org.

MILITARY ORDER OF WORLD WARS

The Clearwater Chapter of the Military Order of World Wars meets the first Tuesday of each month at the Dunedin Golf Club, 1050 Palm Blvd, Dunedin. Social hour is at 11:30am followed by lunch and a short program. Active duty, retired or former Military Officers and their spouses are invited to attend. The MOWW Clearwater Chapter invites those interested to RSVP for lunch by emailing Col. Brian K. Smith at SmithBK@comcast.net.

Community News

ROTARY CLUB OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH

Submitted by David Kline

The Rotary Club of Indian Rocks Beach has completed another year of service to our local, national and global communities. The Rotary International year starts on July 1st and concludes on June 30th. For over 35,000 Rotary clubs and over 1.2 million members in more than 220 countries and geographical areas it's the chance for new leadership, new projects, and new ways to 'do good in the world' and in our local communities. The Rotary Club of Indian Rocks Beach is no exception. June 30th marks the end of club president Mark Arnold's year of leadership and the beginning of our 2026-2027 club president Shawn Barklow's leadership.

A new year is also a chance to reflect on what our club has accomplished during Mark's presidency. Our fundraising efforts from 2024-25 culminated last summer and made it possible for our club to provide more than \$45,000 in relief funds to our local non-profits organizations after the devastation of Hurricanes Helene and Milton. We were proud to assist in the recovery of the Beach Art Center, Calvary Episcopal Church and the IRB Public Library.

Our Interact Club, composed of student members at Richard O. Jacobson Technical High School, supported a project that impacted the lives of many needy people. The Rise Against Hunger Project packed more than 20,000 meals destined for distribution in Haiti and the Philippines last fall.

With our partners of many years at Publix and the Pinellas County Sheriff Office, we distributed over 110 full holiday meals at Thanksgiving and Christmas to local families that needed support during the holidays.

During the 2025-2026 year, our members raised more than \$90,000 by running our major projects (Big Game Raffle, Rotary Runs the Beach, Pancake Breakfast, and Flags for Service) as well as through direct community and member donations. Those funds are distributed to a multitude of local programs, such as the ones mentioned above, and also include scholarships, educational opportunities, veterans organizations, and global Rotary initiatives such as polio eradication, temporary shelter and clean water.

Everything that IRB Rotary accomplishes through the years could not happen without the support of all of you, our friends in the community. By way of that support, you all become partners in the improvements of the lives of those who struggle with life's adversities. For all of that support, we sincerely thank you! We celebrate Mark's leadership and thank him for his 'service' to the community.

Our Rotary Club in IRB is a special group of people dedicated to these core values -- service, leadership, friendship, integrity, and diversity. If you share these values and want to make a difference in your community, we invite you to sample our hospitality by joining us at one of our weekly meetings. We meet every Wednesday morning at Crabby Bill's main restaurant, starting at 7:15am. Please consider joining us in our efforts to "do good in the world."

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