DUNEDIN
NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS
Magazine
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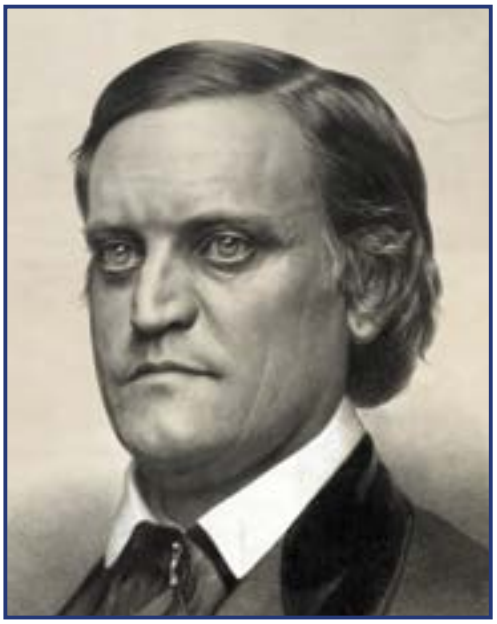
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026 ISSUE 21

The Final Escape: The Confederacy's Last Fugitive and His Flight Through Florida

By Pete Magnani, Publisher

On May 30th, 1865, as the Civil War drew to its bitter conclusion, one of the Confederacy's highest-ranking leaders quietly navigated the waters of Florida's Indian River Lagoon, hoping to evade capture and escape the United States. His remarkable journey through some of Florida's most remote wilderness would become one of the most dramatic escape stories of the Civil War and forever connect the Sunshine State to the Confederacy's final days.

John Cabell Breckinridge had already lived an extraordinary life before arriving in Florida. Born in Kentucky in 1821, he entered public office in 1849 as a Democratic representative in the Kentucky House of Representatives. In 1851, he won a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, representing Henry Clay's former congressional district (traditionally a Whig stronghold). During his two terms in Congress, Breckinridge aligned with moderate Southern Democrats, favoring states' rights while advocating to keep the Union together. He declined to run for re-election in 1855, planning to return to his private law practice due to financial strain, but presidential nominee James Buchanan named Breckinridge as his running mate in 1856. On March 4th, 1857, Breckinridge was sworn in as the 14th Vice President of the United States—the youngest person ever elected to the office.



John C. Breckinridge
by Jules Émile Saintin, 1860

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Also in this Issue:

The Man Behind Our State Song

He never set foot in Florida, yet Stephen Foster wrote one of its most beloved songs.

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The Legacy of Firefighter Stephen Siller

The Tunnel to Towers Foundation eliminates the mortgages of fallen first responders, including two Bay Area heroes.

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Clearwater Jazz Holiday

The 47th annual concert series returns to Coachman Park in October.

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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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CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS & EVENTS

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

SEPTEMBER

Howl-O-Scream Begins	1
97X Next Big Thing at the Sound	4
First USF Home Game	5
Labor Day	7
Patriot Day	11
Whisky vs Whiskey at Flanagan's	12
Downtown Mocktail Walk	13
Rosh Hashanah	11-13
Buccaneers Season Opener	13
Pasco Scallop Season Ends	18
NHL Preseason Begins	19
Buccaneers Home Opener	20
Yom Kippur	20-21
Oktoberfest at Caledonia	25-26
Clearwater Offshore Nationals	25-27
Salty Soul Beach Cleanup	26
MLB Playoffs Begin	29

OCTOBER

Wildflower and Pollinator Festival	3
Lightning Home Opener	3
City Commission Meeting	8
Deadline to Register to Vote	9
Island Fest at Honeymoon	10-11
Downtown Arts & Crafts Festival	10-11
Stone Crab Season Begins	15
Clearwater Jazz Holiday	15-18
OLL Fall Festival	15-18
Bon Appetit 50th Birthday	17
Stone Crab Fest Edgewater Park	17
City Commission Meeting	22
Frenchy's Stone Crab Weekend	23-24
Halloween Spooktacular	24
Halloween Golf Cart Parade	25
St. Joseph Sound Flats Classic	29-30
Downtown Trick or Treating	30
Halloween	31

NOVEMBER

CASA Scavenger Hunt	7
Art Harvest Highlander Park	7-8
City Commission Meeting	10
Wines the Blues	14
Dogtoberfest	14
Bauserween	15
The Annika LPGA at Pelican	11-15
Celtic Festival	21
Suncoast Jazz Festival	20-22

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.

Did You Know

FINAL TOWER AT GROUND ZERO The rebuilding of New York City's World Trade Center reached its final milestone with the groundbreaking of 5 World Trade Center, the last tower to be constructed on the 16-acre site. More than two decades after the September 11th terrorist attacks, the project marks the completion of one of the nation's most significant redevelopment efforts.

The 900-foot tower will feature approximately 1,200 residential apartments, along with office space, retail, and community amenities. About one-third of the apartments will be permanently affordable housing, helping address Lower Manhattan's growing housing needs.

The groundbreaking represents far more than the start of construction. It symbolizes resilience, remembrance, and renewal while completing the transformation of the World Trade Center into a thriving neighborhood. Surrounded by One World Trade Center, the National September 11th Memorial & Museum, and other landmark buildings, the final tower stands as a tribute to those lost on September 11th and a testament to New York City's enduring strength and commitment to the future.

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.

OUR NEXT ISSUE IS IN NOVEMBER If you need another copy of this magazine, pick one up at the Chamber of Commerce, History Museum, Community Center, Library, and the UPS Store on Main Street. If you need more than a few, call (813) 361-7376.

Read this issue and others at BeachNewsletters.com. Follow us on Facebook for local news.

and More...

REMEMBERING BOB HACKWORTH Former Dunedin Mayor Bob Hackworth, who dedicated years of public service to enhancing local quality of life, passed away on August 15th at the age of 71.

Hackworth served on the Dunedin City Commission from 2002 to 2006 before taking office as Mayor from 2006 to 2009. During his tenure, he emerged as a key driving force behind the revitalization and thoughtful development of Dunedin's downtown district. Both during his time in office and as a private citizen, Hackworth stood as a fierce advocate for protecting the local environment and preserving the city's parks and green spaces.

Beyond City Hall, Hackworth was a familiar face around town and an active community member. Known for his energetic lifestyle, he was often spotted cycling through local paths, playing tennis, or hitting the links.

He is survived by his wife of 46 years, Gwynne; his children, Maddie and Bobby; three grandchildren; and an extended family. A Celebration of Life honoring his lasting impact on the Dunedin community will take place later this fall.

NO FLAMINGO, FOR NOW Several new state laws took effect in July, but the northern mockingbird survived unscathed. A proposal to make the American flamingo Florida's official state bird stalled in the Florida Senate, failing to receive final approval before the legislative session ended. Supporters argued that the flamingo better represents Florida's unique wildlife, tourism, and coastal heritage than the current state bird. The northern mockingbird has held the title since 1927 and will continue to do so for now. While the legislation fell short this year, advocates say they intend to bring the proposal back in a future legislative session, keeping alive the effort to make the colorful flamingo an official symbol of the Sunshine State.

HIGH HOLY DAYS Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are the most sacred observances in Judaism. Together, they are called the High Holy Days and frame the Ten Days of Awe—a period of deep reflection, repentance, and spiritual renewal.

Rosh Hashanah marks the Jewish New Year and commemorates the creation of the world. It balances festive celebration with spiritual gravity. A central ritual is the blowing of the shofar (a ram's horn), serving as a wake-up call to the soul. Traditions include eating apples dipped in honey to symbolize a sweet year ahead and sharing round challah to represent the cycle of time. According to tradition, God opens the Book of Life on Rosh Hashanah to judge the past year's deeds.

This initiates ten days of self-examination that culminate in Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. As the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, it is dedicated entirely to prayer, seeking forgiveness, and repairing relationships. Observance includes a 25-hour fast from food and drink, allowing worshipers to focus purely on spiritual reflection. The day concludes with the Ne'ilah service, symbolizing the closing of the heavenly gates, and ends with a final, long blast of the shofar, bringing a sense of cleansing and hope.

John Breckinridge, Continued

As Vice President, Breckinridge presided over an increasingly divided Senate. While he personally supported the rights of slaveholders, he frequently attempted to mediate growing sectional tensions between Northern and Southern senators. However, his relationship with President Buchanan soured over policy differences and patronage disputes. Breckinridge ran for President on the Southern Democrat ticket and lost to Abraham Lincoln by 108 electoral votes.

Following the loss, Breckinridge took a seat in the U.S. Senate representing Kentucky in March 1861. As the Civil War broke out, he urged compromise and argued against Northern military intervention in the seceding states. Although Breckinridge sympathized with the South, he initially hoped Kentucky could remain neutral in the conflict. In August 1861, he delivered one of his final Senate speeches urging reconciliation and warning against a devastating war.

Kentucky's position became increasingly complicated as the state attempted to remain in the Union while divided between Unionists and Confederate sympathizers. In September 1861, the Kentucky legislature voted to support the Union cause. As the state abandoned its neutrality in favor of the Union, federal forces sought to arrest Breckinridge for treason. He fled south, joined the Confederate Army, and was formally expelled from the U.S. Senate on December 4, 1861.

The expulsion was one of the most dramatic moments of the Civil War's early political crisis and marked a dramatic fall from grace. Only months earlier, Breckinridge had been one of the nation's most prominent political figures—a former vice president and presidential candidate. By the end of 1861, he was officially branded a traitor by the Senate and was serving as a Confederate general. He would later rise to the rank of major general and, in February 1865, become Confederate Secretary of War, placing him among the final leaders of the collapsing Confederacy.

By the spring of 1865, however, the Confederacy had collapsed. Richmond had fallen, General Robert E. Lee had surrendered at Appomattox, and Confederate armies across the South were laying down their arms. Unlike some Confederate leaders who still hoped to continue the struggle, Breckinridge recognized that the Confederacy had been defeated and urged President Jefferson Davis to disband the government and spare the South further suffering. Davis refused, and the Confederate government continued its desperate flight southward until Davis was captured in Georgia on May 10th. Realizing imprisonment was now almost certain, Breckinridge resolved to flee the country.

Robert E. Lee surrenders to Ulysses S. Grant
By Jean-Léon Gérôme Ferris, 1920.

Traveling in disguise with a small group of loyal companions, Breckinridge crossed into Florida in mid-May. At the time, much of the state remained sparsely settled, with primitive roads, dense forests, winding rivers, and isolated coastal waterways. The same rugged landscape that had frustrated Union military operations throughout the war now offered one final avenue of escape.

Near Gainesville, Breckinridge received critical assistance from Colonel John Jackson Dickison, Florida's famed cavalry commander known as the "Swamp Fox of the Confederacy." Dickison supplied the fugitives with a small lifeboat captured from the Union gunboat USS Columbine. Although Breckinridge questioned whether the tiny craft could survive the open ocean, it represented his only hope of freedom.

On May 26th, the small party launched down the St. Johns River toward Florida's east coast. The voyage quickly became an ordeal. Torrential rains soaked the men and ruined much of their food and gunpowder. Mosquitoes descended in overwhelming numbers, prompting Breckinridge to later write that no adequate description could convey their misery. The travelers slept sitting upright because there was no room to lie down, surviving on fish, cornmeal mush, turtle eggs, sweet potatoes, wild limes, and whatever game they could find.

By May 30th, the fugitives reached Carlisle's Landing on the Indian River Lagoon near present-day Titusville. Breckinridge was astonished to discover that the "Indian River" was not a river at all but an immense coastal lagoon stretching more than 150 miles behind Florida's barrier islands. As the group paddled south, they traveled through what are now Brevard, Indian River, St. Lucie, Martin, and Palm Beach counties—then an isolated wilderness patrolled by scattered Union guard posts and naval vessels.

One night, they silently slipped past a Union guard station near Fort Pierce, muffling their oars as they glided through darkness within sight of federal campfires. Discovery almost certainly would have meant capture. Near Jupiter, local Confederate sympathizers helped the party obtain a larger vessel better suited for the open-water voyage to Cuba, replacing the tiny lifeboat that had carried them down Florida's coast. After dragging the vessel across the narrow barrier island and entering the Atlantic Ocean, they encountered rough seas that repeatedly forced them south instead of east toward the Bahamas.

Even then, the dangers continued. Food and fresh water dwindled, violent storms threatened to swamp the vessel, and the exhausted travelers faced constant uncertainty. Finally, on June 11th, 1865, they reached Cárdenas, Cuba, bringing an end to one of the most extraordinary escapes of the postwar era. Breckinridge later lived in Britain, Canada, and Europe before returning to Kentucky in 1869 to quietly resume his law practice. He never sought a presidential pardon, instead relying on the general amnesty eventually extended to most former Confederates after federal restrictions eased.

Breckinridge was not the only Confederate leader to rely on Florida's geography for escape. Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin also fled through Florida, using the Gulf Coast and Florida Keys before reaching the Caribbean and eventually Britain, where he built a distinguished legal career. Their journeys demonstrated how Florida's rivers, coastlines, and isolated settlements became the Confederacy's final corridor to exile after military defeat.

Today, motorists crossing bridges over the Indian River Lagoon or visiting communities such as Titusville, Fort Pierce, and Jupiter are traveling waterways that once carried the Confederacy's highest-ranking remaining official toward exile. Breckinridge's escape was not a final battle or military triumph, but the closing act of the Confederate government itself. As Reconstruction began, Florida's rivers and lagoons became the last pathway to freedom for a man who had once served as Vice President of the United States and, briefly, as the Confederacy's final Secretary of War. It remains one of Florida's most remarkable—and least remembered—Civil War stories.

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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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EVEN AFTER SUMMER, KEEP KIDS OUT OF HOT CARS

From the Desk of Sheriff Bob Gualtieri

You see it in the headlines every year—a child has died after being left in a hot car. And you think, how could that possibly happen? Who could forget a precious child in the car on a hot day? According to the National Safety Council, 31 children died of vehicular heatstroke in 2025. Since 1998, more than 120 children in Florida have died after being left in a hot car. Only Texas has more child heatstroke deaths in vehicles. Every single one of those deaths could have been prevented.

The inside of a vehicle heats up much faster than you may realize. According to No Heat Stroke, an organization dedicated to preventing heat-related deaths in cars, when the outside temperature is 90 degrees, the internal temperature can climb to 133 degrees within an hour. But the danger doesn't end when temperatures start to drop a little as fall approaches. Even balmy fall temperatures are enough to heat up a car to dangerous levels. In 80-degree weather, the interior can rise to 123 degrees in an hour. When it is a cool and pleasant 70 degrees outside, a car parked in the sun can heat up to 113 degrees.

Heatstroke can begin when core body temperature reaches 104 degrees. Death can occur when it reaches 107 degrees. Because of their smaller size and greater surface-to-mass ratio, children's bodies can heat up three to five times faster than an adult's.

It isn't enough to leave the windows cracked. That little bit of air circulation does almost nothing to counteract the effects of the sun heating up the car. Parking in the shade might make it a little cooler, but dropping the internal temperature from the 130s to the 120s isn't going to prevent loss of life. Some people think it will be okay if they're just running inside for a few minutes, but the temperature can go from warm to deadly fast. There is no such thing as a safe amount of time to leave a child in a hot car.

Sometimes relatives or babysitters leave kids in the car deliberately because they don't realize how dangerous it is. Other times, people actually forget to take their child out of the car. They may be distracted, exhausted, or think that another caregiver has already taken them out. A baby may be quietly sleeping and overlooked while getting other children out of the car.

Always check the back of your vehicle. When you put a child in the back seat, find a way to remind yourself that they are there. Put something in the back seat that you'll need at your destination.

Some vehicle heatstroke deaths occur when children gain access to a vehicle themselves and become trapped without their parents knowing. Make sure your vehicle is locked, and don't let children have access to the keys. Teach them that the car is not a place to play. As soon as they are old enough, teach them how to open the back doors, and that they can climb to the front and open the front doors if the back doors have a child safety lock. Make sure they know to blow the horn if they get trapped. If a child is ever missing, check the pool first, then the car.

Pets are also extremely vulnerable to vehicular heatstroke, and many people think that it is safe to leave an animal in a car for a brief period. In reality, thousands of pets die each year from being left in hot cars.

If you see a child or animal left alone in a hot vehicle, call 911 immediately.

SAHARAN DUST RETURNS TO FLORIDA, BRINGING HAZY SKIES, SUMMER HEAT, AND STUNNING SUNSETS

By Lora Magnani, Publisher

If Florida's skies have looked unusually hazy lately, the cause isn't smoke or pollution—it is dust from one of the world's largest deserts. A massive plume of Saharan dust, stretching nearly 5,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean, has once again reached Florida and much of the Gulf Coast, creating milky skies while influencing temperatures, air quality, and even hurricane activity.

Known as the Saharan Air Layer, this annual phenomenon occurs when strong winds lift fine dust from the Sahara Desert in North Africa and carry it westward across the Atlantic. The dust typically reaches Florida between June and August, with some plumes being much larger than others.

One of the most noticeable effects is hotter weather. The Saharan Air Layer contains extremely dry air that suppresses the formation of Florida's familiar afternoon thunderstorms. Without those cooling rain showers, temperatures and heat index values can soar above 100 degrees. During these periods, health experts recommend staying hydrated, limiting strenuous outdoor activities during the hottest part of the day, and checking on older adults and others who are especially vulnerable to heat-related illness.

While the dust contributes to hazy skies, it also creates some of Florida's most spectacular sunrises and sunsets. Tiny dust particles scatter sunlight, intensifying brilliant shades of orange, red, pink, and purple at dawn and dusk. Beachgoers and photographers often welcome these colorful displays, particularly along the Gulf Coast.

The dust can also affect air quality. Although concentrations are generally low for healthy individuals, the fine particles may irritate the eyes, nose, and throat or worsen symptoms for people with asthma, allergies, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and other respiratory conditions. Those in sensitive groups should consider limiting extended outdoor activity on especially hazy days.

There is also an upside during hurricane season. The Saharan Air Layer carries exceptionally dry air into the tropical Atlantic while increasing wind shear, making it more difficult for tropical disturbances to develop into organized storms. Although the dust doesn't eliminate hurricane threats, it can temporarily suppress tropical development.

Additional dust plumes are expected throughout the summer before gradually diminishing in early fall. For Floridians, the annual arrival of Saharan dust is a reminder that weather systems can travel thousands of miles, bringing hazy skies, intense heat, breathtaking sunsets, and even a temporary lull in Atlantic hurricane activity.

Bar & Restaurant News

BON APPÉTIT CELEBRATES 50 YEARS IN DUNEDIN Bon Appétit Restaurant & Marina Bar at 148 Marina Plaza in Dunedin is celebrating 50 years of operation on October 17th, with festivities running throughout the month of October. The milestone honors five decades of fine dining, community gatherings, and iconic sunsets over St. Joseph's Sound.

Founded in 1976 by Peter Kreuziger and Chef Karl Riedl, the waterfront establishment quickly became a local landmark for family celebrations, holidays, and milestones. In November 2022, Crabby Bill's Seafood acquired the restaurant, maintaining its longstanding traditions while guiding the venue into its next chapter.

"One of the best parts of celebrating 50 years is hearing people tell us what Bon Appétit has meant to them," said Matthew Loder Sr. "Everyone seems to have a story. Those stories are part of Bon Appétit's history too."

As part of the month-long celebration, Bon Appétit is inviting longtime guests, employees, and community members to submit their favorite memories, photos, and stories from over the years. For more information or to view the menu, visit BonAppetitRestaurant.com.

NEW RESTAURANT IN CLEARWATER The owners of Michelin-starred Rocca, a Tampa-based Italian restaurant, are opening a restaurant in the newly restored Telephone Building on Cleveland Street in downtown Clearwater.

Tastes Pretty Good (TPG) Hospitality Group is opening a "New American" restaurant known as Rippers. It will be TPG's first Pinellas County location. Rippers will serve American classics centered around a signature "ripper-style" hot dogs, which are deep fried until their casings split open, along with burgers, chicken wings, sandwiches, fries and milkshakes.

The new restaurant is part of the growing revitalization in downtown Clearwater led by the Cleveland Street Alliance. The Telephone Building, built in 1914, is the first historic landmark completed in the Cleveland Street restoration. The restaurant will be on the ground floor of the historic building at 534 Cleveland Street.

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.

Bar & Restaurant News

MANGIA MANGIA In July 2020, Giovanni's Fresh Italian Kitchen had to close its Palm Harbor location due to COVID-19. After six long years and a short move south, they are now open in Dunedin, at 2152 Main Street (previously Sallie's Belgium Cuisine) in the Walmart plaza. The restaurant features classic Italian dishes like lasagna, fettuccine Alfredo, ravioli, and chicken parmigiana. Some of their specials include their signature pear and gouda ravioli, a Duroc maple bourbon pork chop, and braised short ribs. On "Wine" Wednesdays, they offer a free bottle of house wine to guests, with the purchase of two entrees. Giovanni's is open Wednesday–Sunday from 4–9p.m. (10p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays). They recommend guests make reservations by calling (727) 216-6488 or visiting GiovannisFreshItalian.com. Follow them on Facebook for daily specials and upcoming events.

A NEW ERA FOR O'KEEFE'S After a remarkable 53-year run, Capogna's Dugout—the iconic Italian eatery and neighborhood sports hangout at 1653 Gulf-to-Bay Boulevard—permanently closed its doors on June 26th. However, the beloved location won't stay dark for long. O'Keefe's Tavern, one of Clearwater's oldest restaurants and among the state's most enduring Irish pubs, is preparing to open its next chapter in the former Dugout space. Following the sale of O'Keefe's original property to neighboring BayCare, owners Garth and Terri DuQuesnay are keeping the legacy in the family by passing the torch to Travis DuQuesnay and Jordan Bragg.

The move unites two rich Clearwater traditions. For decades, both institutions served as primary gathering places where generations of local families marked milestones and shared meals. Ownership assures patrons that the new venue will preserve the classic character, welcoming atmosphere, and long-standing traditions that have defined O'Keefe's for decades.

O'Keefe's closed its original location in August and is undergoing approximately six weeks of renovations and preparation before reopening. An official grand opening date will be announced in the coming weeks.

EXPANDING TO HILLSBOROUGH Tom George, owner of Eddie's Bar & Grills and Hurricane Eddie's, is bringing over 40 years of Pinellas County tradition to Hillsborough. The fourth Eddie's Bar & Grill is now open in Westchase at 12217 West Linebaugh Avenue, previously occupied by Surf Shack. Eddie's Bar & Grills are family-friendly sports bars with wall-to-wall TVs, a large menu filled with lots of fan favorites like their award-winning wings, a full bar, and an array of arcade games to keep guests of all ages entertained. Call (813) 475-5916 or follow them on Facebook for more information.

TUNNEL TO TOWERS HONORS FALLEN HEROES BY PAYING OFF MORTGAGES FOR THEIR FAMILIES

By Pete Magnani, Publisher

Firefighter Stephen Gerard Siller, the youngest of seven children born to Mae and George Siller, understood better than most that life is precious. After losing his father at age eight and his mother just 18 months later, Stephen was raised by his older siblings. Though he struggled for a time, the love of his family and the values his parents instilled helped shape him into an extraordinary husband, father, and firefighter. In just 34 years, he left a legacy that continues to inspire millions.

On September 11th, 2001, Siller had just finished his shift with Brooklyn's Squad 1 and was headed to play golf with his brothers when he heard over his scanner that a plane had struck the North Tower of the World Trade Center. He immediately called his wife, Sally, asking her to tell his brothers he would catch up with them later, then returned to his firehouse to retrieve his gear.

Driving toward Lower Manhattan, Siller reached the entrance to the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel only to find it closed for security reasons. Refusing to let the barrier stop him, he strapped approximately 60 pounds of firefighting equipment to his back and ran through the tunnel on foot to the Twin Towers. There, while helping others escape, he made the ultimate sacrifice.

His courage became the inspiration for the Tunnel to Towers Foundation, which is dedicated to ensuring that the events of September 11—and the sacrifices made that day and every day by first responders and military service members—are never forgotten.

Among the organization's signature initiatives is its Fallen First Responder Home Program. The program pays off the mortgages of first responders who lose their lives in the line of duty or from 9/11-related illnesses, leaving behind young children. By eliminating a family's mortgage, the foundation provides financial stability and peace of mind during one of life's most devastating moments.

This Independence Day, the Tunnel to Towers Foundation continued that mission by delivering mortgage-free homes to the families of 30 fallen first responders across 19 states, ensuring they will always have a place to call home. Two local families were among those.

Among those honored was the family of Firefighter Jimmy Dale Riley Jr. of Plant City Fire Rescue.

Firefighter Jimmy Riley

Riley died on February 24th, 2021, following a long and courageous battle with occupational glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer linked to the hazards firefighters often face. He was 40 years old and had devoted 17 years to serving the Plant City community. Before becoming a firefighter, Riley served his country as a military police officer in the U.S. Marine Corps.

Born in Bartow and raised in Lakeland, Riley excelled both academically and athletically at McKeel Academy, where he played baseball and displayed the competitive spirit that would define his career. Drawn to a life of service, he joined Plant City Fire Rescue in 2004 and served with distinction as a firefighter, EMT, paramedic, instructor, and driver engineer. His professionalism and dedication earned him numerous honors, including being named Firefighter of the Year twice. Beyond his own accomplishments, Riley was a respected mentor who helped train and inspire countless future first responders, leaving a lasting impact on his department and community.

The foundation also honored the family of Sergeant Elio Diaz of the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office.

Sergeant Elio Diaz

Diaz was fatally shot during a traffic stop in Charlotte Harbor after spending more than an hour speaking with a driver who lived in his vehicle. Attempting to help the man resolve an insurance issue and avoid having his car towed, Diaz demonstrated the compassion that characterized his career. Without warning, the driver pulled out a rifle and opened fire before fleeing the scene. Diaz was transported to the hospital, where he later succumbed to his injuries. He was 40 years old and had served the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office for 11 years.

During his career, Diaz was recognized for his exemplary service. He was named Deputy of the Year in 2019 and received a Certificate of Appreciation from the U.S. Border Patrol in November 2024.

Following his death, he was posthumously promoted to sergeant and awarded both the Medal of Honor from the American Police Hall of Fame and the Medal of Valor from the Fraternal Order of Police.

Through its Fallen First Responder Home Program, the Tunnel to Towers Foundation paid off the mortgages on the Riley and Diaz family homes, easing a significant financial burden while honoring two men who dedicated their lives to protecting others.

Today, the Tunnel to Towers Foundation has grown into one of the nation's leading nonprofit organizations supporting America's heroes. In addition to providing mortgage-free homes for the families of fallen first responders, the foundation builds specially adapted smart homes for catastrophically injured veterans and first responders, helps homeless veterans regain stable housing through its Homeless Veteran Program, and assists Gold Star families who have lost loved ones serving in the U.S. Armed Forces. The foundation also preserves the memory of those lost on September 11th through educational programs and annual events that honor their sacrifice while inspiring future generations.

To support the foundation's mission, individuals can make a one-time or monthly donation, sponsor fundraising events, participate in community walks and runs, or organize local fundraising campaigns. Volunteers are also needed throughout the year to assist with fundraising events, community outreach, and programs supporting veterans, military families, and first responders. Businesses, schools, civic organizations, and faith-based groups can also partner with the foundation through volunteer service projects and charitable giving initiatives.

More than two decades after Stephen Siller ran through the Brooklyn Battery Tunnel toward danger, his selfless act continues to inspire a mission that transforms tragedy into hope. Every mortgage paid, every smart home built, and every veteran helped reflects the legacy of a firefighter who refused to stop when others could not go forward. Today, the organization stands as a lifeline for fallen first responder families and injured service members across the nation. Visit T2T.org to learn more about the Tunnel to Towers Foundation, volunteer opportunities, or ways to donate. Every contribution helps ensure that America's heroes—and the families they leave behind—are never forgotten.

NEW PLAN AIMS TO PROTECT TAMPA BAY FROM FLOODING

By Lara Milligan, Natural Resources Agent UF/IFAS Extension Pinellas County

Tampa Bay is taking a big step toward preparing for future flooding, and local residents are being encouraged to take part. A $1.99 million grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will fund the creation of a new Coastal Master Plan designed to reduce flood risks across the region while protecting natural habitats.

The plan will cover seven counties (Citrus, Hernando, Pasco, Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee, Sarasota) and focus on helping coastal and inland communities that are most vulnerable to rising water and recurring flooding. Leaders say the effort is needed now more than ever, as much of the region sits at low elevations and faces increasing flood risk—even during smaller storms.

Rather than relying only on traditional infrastructure like seawalls, the plan will emphasize nature-based solutions. These include restoring wetlands, protecting mangroves, and improving natural shorelines—features that can absorb floodwaters and reduce damage while also supporting fish and wildlife.

The four-year effort will bring together more than 40 partners, including local governments, universities, technical experts, and community organizations. Together, they will map flood-prone areas, identify solutions, and recommend projects that can help protect both people and the environment.

An important part of the plan is public input. Organizers say community involvement will help ensure the final plan reflects real needs, especially in neighborhoods that have historically been underserved.

Residents will have several ways to get involved. Public workshops and meetings will be held throughout the region, giving people a chance to learn about flood risks, ask questions, and share their ideas. Community groups will also help lead outreach efforts, making it easier for residents to stay informed and engaged.

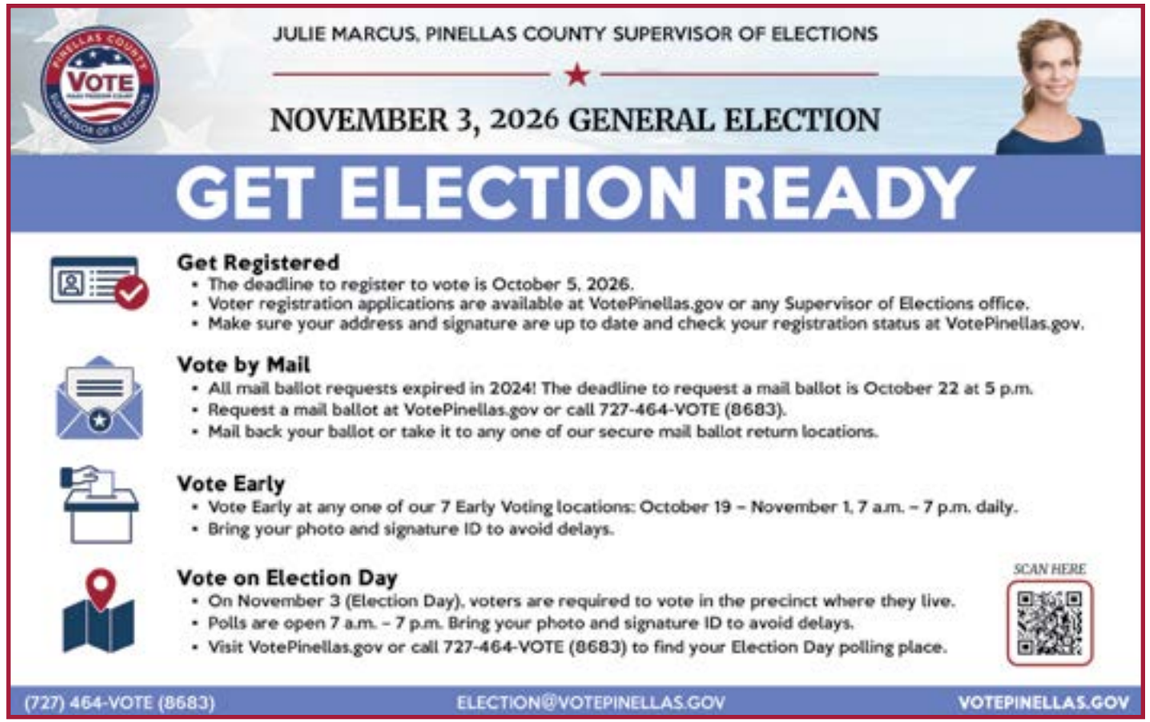
In addition, an online platform will allow users to explore maps and see how flooding could affect their area in the future.

Organizers say local knowledge is key to making the plan successful. Residents who have experienced flooding can offer valuable insights that data alone may not capture.

The Tampa Bay region has been identified as one of the most vulnerable areas in the country to storm surge, making long-term planning critical.

By combining science, community input, and natural solutions, leaders hope the Coastal Master Plan will help build a safer, more resilient future for the region.

Residents interested in participating can learn more and find upcoming events at CoastalTampaBay.org.



Business Briefs

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR BAUSERWEEN The Bauserween 2026 fundraiser brings a Nightmare Before Christmas theme to Bauser's Neighborhood Bar at 520 Douglas Avenue on Sunday, November 15th from noon–5p.m. Proceeds support Rescue Not Retail Dunedin (RNR), a local 501(c)(3) non-profit animal rescue, and the Community BarkBox Free Animal Food Pantry. Guests can enjoy live music from The Howler Monkeys throughout the day, grab a bite from Bauser's Food Truck, cool down with doggie pools, and browse a variety of dog and human vendor booths while participating in a pet food and supply drive, silent auction, raffle baskets, and a 50/50 drawing.

Key scheduled events begin with the "Battle of the Bartenders" Dunk Tank from 1–5:00p.m. where local bartenders compete to raise the most money. Dog owners entering the costume contest must register at the RNR info booth by 1:30p.m. ahead of the 2p.m. judging, with 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place prizes awarded for both Halloween and Christmas-themed attire. A special appearance by the Witches of Dunedin takes place at 3p.m., followed by the final winner announcements for the silent auction, raffles, 50/50 drawing, and dunk tank battle at 5p.m.

Early arrival is encouraged to secure a spot under the newly added shade tents, with free parking available in the Bauser's lot, at the former museum next door, or across the street from the bar. For more information about the event and volunteer opportunities, visit RNRDunedin.com. Those interested in being a vendor for the event can contact organizers directly via email at RNRDunedin@gmail.com.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED Volunteer registration is now open for The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican 2026. Organizers are seeking more than 700 volunteers to fill a variety of roles during the tournament week from November 11th-15th. The $65 volunteer package includes a custom-made official tournament-branded golf shirt, a hat or visor, two weekly grounds passes, a volunteer credential allowing grounds access and complimentary parking all week, and meals provided on scheduled days. For more information, visit TheAnnika.com/volunteer.

ADD SOUL TO YOUR NEXT EVENT Are you looking to add a special musical touch to your upcoming event? Craig Bohlman is a saxophonist, father of two, and passionate performer who is dedicated to bringing joy to others through his music. After a successful career in high-tech, he followed his lifelong dream of becoming a soloist and now brings his unique sound to events in Clearwater. Whether performing for friends, family, or new audiences, Craig's mission is to create unforgettable moments through music.

Discover the perfect soundtrack for your special event with Craig's soulful saxophone performances. Whether it's a wedding, corporate event, or beach ceremony, Craig brings an unforgettable touch to any occasion. To listen to Craig's music, view performance videos, and contact him for booking, visit CraigBohlmanSax.com.

CLEARWATER MARINE AQUARIUM UNVEILS NEW ANIMAL HABITATS

Clearwater Marine Aquarium (CMA) is giving visitors new reasons to explore this summer with two major animal experiences that broaden the nonprofit's conservation and education mission. The expansion introduces California sea lions, harbor seals, tropical birds, tortoises and small mammals to the aquarium's resident animal family, offering a closer look at wildlife from ocean and land habitats.

At the center of the expansion is *Pinniped Pier,* a new waterfront habitat overlooking Clearwater Bay and designed specifically for pinnipeds, the group of marine mammals that includes seals and sea lions. The habitat officially opened to guests in July and marks an important milestone for CMA: the arrival of Tuna and Wahoo, two female California sea lions who are now making their home at the aquarium.

The sea lions join harbor seals that arrived earlier this year, expanding CMA's marine mammal care while creating a new platform for public education. *Pinniped Pier* was designed to encourage natural behaviors and well-being, with spaces for swimming, resting and sunning, plus updated thematic elements and specialized sound-mitigation technology.

"Clearwater Marine Aquarium is entering an exciting new chapter with the opening of the Pinniped Pier habitat," said Joe Handy, CMA's CEO. "This project represents a significant step in strengthening our animal care capabilities and enhancing the guest experience while continuing to invest in the long-term future of our facility."

For guests, the habitat offers an immersive opportunity to observe sea lions and seals while learning about challenges they face in the wild. Native to the Pacific Coast of North America, California sea lions are known for intelligence, social behavior and vocal personalities. They are also considered indicators of ocean health because they are vulnerable to marine ecosystem changes.

Although sea lions live thousands of miles from Florida's Gulf Coast, the threats they face are global. Marine debris entanglement, pollution, harmful algal blooms and climate-related ocean changes can endanger marine mammals and their ecosystems. Through *Pinniped Pier*, CMA connects the stories of Tuna, Wahoo and its harbor seals with broader conservation concerns.

"Although these animals are found thousands of miles from Florida, their stories help us better understand the health of our oceans," Handy said. "By introducing guests to sea lions and harbor seals, we can inspire greater awareness and action to protect marine life everywhere."

The new habitat was made possible through a $6 million grant from the Pinellas County Tourism Development Council, supporting CMA's continued efforts to expand animal care, strengthen conservation education and enhance the visitor experience.

CMA's summer expansion reaches beyond marine mammals with *Wings & Wildlife,* a new habitat introducing tropical birds and tortoises, and *Animal Connections Village*, featuring two sugar gliders, a chinchilla and Benjamin, the Virginia opossum. Together, the areas expand CMA's resident family while continuing its focus on rescue, rehabilitation, conservation and lifelong care.

Several of the new residents came to Clearwater after the closure of Miami Seaquarium, where animal care teams worked to find safe, permanent homes for the animals. CMA welcomed four tropical bird species for the first time: a green-winged macaw, a sulphur-crested cockatoo, an umbrella cockatoo and a red-lored Amazon parrot. Several tortoises also arrived from Miami Seaquarium, while others were rescued locally in Clearwater.

The colorful new flock gives guests an opportunity to meet animals with distinct personalities. Big Bird, a 30-year-old green-winged macaw, is known for bright red plumage, dancing and enthusiastic "Hello!" greetings. Powder, a sulphur-crested cockatoo, is recognized for his affectionate nature, while Skipper, an umbrella cockatoo, stands out for his dramatic crest. Mr. Thumbs, a red-lored Amazon parrot, whistles, makes kissing sounds and even purrs like a cat.

The *Wings & Wildlife* habitat is sponsored by Universal Parking, CMA's parking partner, while the new animal experiences further reinforce the aquarium's evolving role as a home for animals that need long-term care. By welcoming birds, tortoises and small mammals alongside dolphins, seals, sea lions and other marine species, CMA is creating new ways for guests to connect with wildlife and understand the many forms rescue can take.

According to Handy, the new habitats reflect CMA's continuing commitment to rescue, rehabilitation, conservation and education while giving visitors more opportunities to form personal connections with animals from around the world. Those connections, he said, are central to inspiring action on behalf of wildlife and the natural places they depend on.

With *Pinniped Pier, Wings & Wildlife and Animal Connections Village* now part of the guest experience, Clearwater Marine Aquarium is entering a new chapter that blends animal care with immersive storytelling. Visitors can meet sea lions, observe harbor seals, discover tropical birds and encounter rescued animals in settings designed to educate, engage and inspire.

For CMA, the expansion is more than a summer attraction. It is a continuation of the aquarium's mission to use animal stories as a bridge to conservation, helping guests see how the health of individual animals, local waterways and global oceans are all connected.

CLEARWATER JAZZ HOLIDAY CELEBRATES 47 YEARS

Clearwater Jazz Holiday Powered by Duke Energy returns October 15th–18th, celebrating 47 years of live music on the waterfront in downtown Clearwater. The festival will once again feature Tampa Bay Times main stage concerts on the large green in Coachman Park, with two headline performances each night. This year's celebration also includes a free daily festival pre-party featuring live music on two side stages located in Coachman Park's Lower Plaza and Promenade Pier overlooking Clearwater Harbor before the headliners take the main stage each evening.

"We're excited to continue building on the Back to Our Roots format this year. It creates many unique ways for people to experience the festival and in one of the most beautiful waterfront settings in the Bay Area," shares Steve Weinberger, Clearwater Jazz Holiday Foundation CEO. "There's something truly special about live music on Clearwater's waterfront in October."

From the side stages to the main stage, the 2026 lineup continues Clearwater Jazz Holiday's tradition of presenting a fun and musically diverse festival experience with distinct daily themes including Cool Jazz Thursday, Feel the Rhythm Friday, Blues & Brass Saturday, and Roots & Funk Sunday. Festivalgoers can enjoy music from two general admission areas where blankets and lawn chairs are welcome—the ticketed Green experience located behind reserved seating or the free and open Sunset Bluff overlooking the main stage and the waterfront. New for 2026 are stage-front VIP tables for four (4) that include access to the festival's VIP Hospitality Area. Food and beverage vendors will serve festival attendees throughout Coachman Park during all four days of the event.

Reserved ticket options include several tiers of reserved seating as well as new stage-front VIP tables for four with VIP Hospitality Area access. Main Lawn General Admission tickets and free/open viewing areas on the Sunset Bluff provide additional ways to enjoy the festival experience. Single-Day and Discounted Multi-Day Packages are available. Free and open side stage performances take place daily before the main stage concerts begin. Buy tickets and view the full schedule at ClearwaterJazz.com.

Clearwater Jazz Holiday is presented by the Clearwater Jazz Holiday Foundation, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization which also celebrates the art form of jazz year-round with innovative jazz appreciation and instructional programs, online education resources, exciting performance opportunities, special funding, and creative learning experiences.

WAY DOWN UPON THE SUWANNEE RIVER

By Bob & Becky Griffin, Local Writers

Recently, we took a trip to Kentucky and spent a few days in Bardstown, a historic town 40 miles south of Louisville. The Stephen Foster Museum and My Old Kentucky Home mansion are both there. Today, this 1,300-acre state park preserves the soaring brick mansion of Judge John Rowan. Though his cousin, Stephen Foster, never actually lived there, he visited frequently, and the estate's sweeping beauty inspired him to pen "My Old Kentucky Home"—now that state's official anthem, sung every May at the start of the Kentucky Derby. In a striking historical irony, Foster also wrote "Old Folks at Home," Florida's official state song, having never once set foot in the Sunshine State.

Statue outside Stephen Foster Museum, Bardstown, KY

Stephen Foster did not have an easy life. The inkwell on his desk in Pittsburgh was always full, but his pockets were usually empty. It was 1851, and the twenty-five-year-old composer was pacing his room, humming a melody that felt as warm as a southern breeze. He was writing a song about a longing for home, a nostalgic pining for a simpler place.

He had the lyrics mostly finished, but he was missing a name—a two-syllable southern river to anchor the chorus. He had originally scrawled "Yazoo," but it sounded too harsh. He asked his brother, Morrison, for a suggestion. Morrison flipped through an atlas and pointed to a tiny, twisting ribbon of water in Florida. "How about the Suwannee?" Morrison asked. Stephen smiled, shortening it to fit the meter. "Way down upon de Swanee River."

Thus, "Old Folks at Home" was born. Yet, for all the deep, humid longing Stephen breathed into those lines, he had never once set foot in Florida. He had never felt the thick southern heat of the state, nor had he ever seen the Spanish moss draping over the real Suwannee River. To Stephen, Florida was not a geographic reality; it was a beautiful, imagined paradise—a canvas for his own growing sense of displacement.

That displacement soon echoed in his personal life. In 1850, Stephen married Jane Denny MacDowell. Though they had a daughter, Marion, their marriage was a tempest of financial strain and emotional distance. Stephen was a genius of melody but a tragedy of business. In an era before copyright laws protected songwriters, he sold his masterpieces for flat, meager fees, watched publishers make fortunes off his heartaches, and slowly watched his own world crumble.

Vintage Curteich postcard featuring a scenic view of the Suwannee River near White Springs, Florida

By 1860, desperate to spark his career, Stephen moved to New York City. But the city was cold, and the specter of the Civil War dampened the nation's appetite for his sentimental ballads. Depressed, estranged from Jane and his daughter, and battling a worsening dependence on alcohol, Stephen retreated into the shadows of Manhattan's cheap lodging houses.

On a freezing January morning in 1864, the music finally stopped. Confined to a cheap room at the New England Hotel, burning with a severe fever, a weakened Stephen stood up to wash his face. Dizzy, he fainted, collapsing heavily against the ceramic washbasin. The basin shattered under his weight, its sharp shards cutting a deep, terrible gash into his neck.

He was found bleeding and barely conscious by a chambermaid. Though his friend George Cooper rushed him to Bellevue Hospital, Stephen was too weak from the fever and the catastrophic blood loss to fight. On January 13, 1864, America's first great troubadour died peacefully at the tragic age of thirty-seven. When they searched his meager pockets, they found only thirty-eight cents in coins. Alongside the change was a scrap of paper carrying a penciled line, perhaps a lyric for a song he never got to write: "Dear friends and gentle hearts."

The Pennsylvania Railroad attached a special car to a train to carry his body back home to Pittsburgh. He was laid to rest in Pittsburgh's Allegheny Cemetery, buried to the gentle, weeping strains of "Old Folks at Home" played by a brass band. He died penniless and far from home, but his music drifted south, finding the very river he had only ever visited in his dreams. Stephen Foster is credited with 286 total works written over a career that lasted less than 20 years.

As the years went on, his songs basically turned into folklore. "My Old Kentucky Home" evolved from a mournful ballad into a soaring anthem of state pride, while "Old Folks at Home" became synonymous with the romanticized, sunny vistas of a Florida he only ever visited in his mind. In death, Stephen Foster achieved the ultimate artistic irony: he became the foundational voice of American song, forever wandering the beautiful, imagined landscapes of the home he always longed for.

To visit the Rowan Mansion and Stephen Foster Museum, find My Old Kentucky Home State Park at 501 E. Stephen Foster Avenue, Bardstown, Kentucky (VisitMyOldKyHome.com).

Community News

ROTARY CLUB OF DUNEDIN

The Rotary Club of Dunedin, in partnership with the Dunedin and Palm Harbor Chambers of Commerce, will host the 5th Annual St. Joseph Sound Flats Classic (SJSFC) Fishing Tournament and Gala on October 29th–30th. This two-day charity fundraiser directs 100% of its proceeds to support local nonprofit organizations and initiatives across Pinellas County.

The festivities kick off on Thursday, October 29th at 6p.m. with the Flats Classic Gala at Lucky Lobster, 941 Huntley Ave. Guests will enjoy a buffet dinner, hors d'oeuvres, and specialty beverages alongside live and silent auctions. Professional event partners—including Alpert Enterprises, Fast Breaks Executive Entertainment, Socially Funded, and Qtego Fundraising Services—will lead the evening's operations and fundraising efforts.

On Friday, October 30th at 8a.m., anglers gather back at Lucky Lobster for the "Catch & Release" Fishing Tournament. Professional guides will lead half-day charters equipped with boats, bait, and gear to target snook, redfish, and trout. Sponsorship options cover individual angler spots or full three-person boat charters. Sponsors can also donate spots to local veterans, first responders, or healthcare workers, with accessible boat options provided through a partnership with Sailability.

All tickets and sponsorships include Gala access and must be purchased in advance at SJSFC.com. Ticket sales close one week prior to the event, and no tickets will be sold at the door. For questions, visit DunedinRotaryClub.com.

DUNEDIN HISTORY MUSEUM UPCOMING EVENTS

- 9/10: Revolutionary Impressions: Create Your Own Stamps Workshop 6–7:30p.m.
- 9/11: Victoria Drive Sunset Stroll 5:30–7p.m. at Edgewater Park
- 9/15: Mix and Mingle—Secrets, Scandal & Society: The Curious Affair of Benedict Arnold, Peggy Shippen & Major John André 6–8p.m.
- 9/18: Downtown Dunedin Walking Tour 10a.m.–noon
- 10/4: Dunedin Drive and Shine Car Show 7–11a.m.
- 10/8: Revolutionary Traditions: Carving Turnip Jack O'Lanterns Workshop 6–7:30p.m.
- 10/9: Victoria Drive Sunset Stroll 5:30–7p.m. at Edgewater Park
- 10/16: Downtown Dunedin Walking Tour 10a.m.–noon
- 10/31: Spookeasy: Madame Leveau in the VooDoo Lounge 6–8:30p.m. at Andrews Memorial Chapel

Unless noted, all events are at the Dunedin History Museum, 349 Main St. For more information, visit DunedinMuseum.org.

WE WANT TO PRINT YOUR NEWS

Does your organization have news you would like to see printed here? Community News is always free! We would like to promote your upcoming events, anniversaries, and other important information. Send your information to Pete@MagriffProductions.com.

ARE YOU READY FOR SOME FOOTBALL?

With Florida being a melting pot of residents from all over the country (and Canada), the odds are good that football fans are going to disagree on what game should be on the TV. Whether you are a transplant or simply live in a house divided, there are plenty of bars and restaurants that can accommodate the need to watch your home team. Here are a few local options to catch your home team's game:

Dunedin (North to South)

Madison Avenue Pizza 2660 Bayshore Blvd
Cricketers British Pub 2634 Bayshore Blvd
Hurricane Eddie's 300 Causeway Blvd
Marker 8 on the Water 1420 Bayshore Blvd
Eddie's Bar & Grill 1283 Bayshore Blvd
Original Pinehurst Pub 1422 Pinehurst Road
Jack Pallino's Pizza and Sports Bar 718 Broadway
Norton's Sports Bar 1824 Main Street
Paddywagon Irish Pub 2340 Main Street

Clearwater Mainland:

Downtown Pizza 428 Cleveland Street
Prelude Sports Bar 528 Cleveland Street
Norton's Sports Bar Southside 115 Starcrest Drive

Clearwater Beach:

The Boxer Mandalay 454 Mandalay Avenue
Hurricane Eddie's 483 Mandalay Avenue
The Boxer Coronado 207 Coronado Drive
Jimmy's Island Grill and Iguana Bar 40 Devon Drive
Hogg Daddy's Beach Bar and Grill 752 S Gulfview Blvd
Jimmy's Fish House & Iguana Bar 521 S Gulfview Blvd

BUCCANEERS' SCHEDULE

Buccaneers at Bengals September 13th at 1p.m.
Browns at Buccaneers September 20th at 1p.m.
Vikings at Buccaneers September 27th at 4:05p.m.
Packers at Buccaneers October 4th at 1p.m.
Buccaneers at Cowboys October 8th at 8:15p.m.
Steelers at Buccaneers October 18th at 1p.m.
Buccaneers at Panthers October 25th at 1p.m.
Falcons at Buccaneers November 1st at 1p.m.
Buccaneers at Bears November 8th at 8:20p.m.
Buccaneers at Lions November 22nd at 1p.m.
Panthers at Buccaneers November 30th at 8:15p.m.
Chargers at Buccaneers December 6th at 1p.m.
Buccaneers at Ravens December 13th at 1p.m.
Saints at Buccaneers December 20th at 1p.m.
Buccaneers at Falcons TBD
Rams at Buccaneers TBD
Buccaneers at Saints TBD
For more information, visit Buccaneers.com.

Community News

HALE SENIOR ACTIVITY CENTER UPCOMING EVENTS

Monthly Luncheons for ages 50+
Wednesday, September 9, noon: Oktoberfest theme
Wednesday, October 14, noon: Haunted Hale theme
$6/rec card, $7/no card (per month)

Harmonica for Beginners for ages 18+
Thursday, September 3rd–24th, 6–7p.m.
$15/rec card, $20/no card

Wreath Making for ages 50+
Monday, September 14th, 1–4p.m.: Halloween Wreath
Monday, October 12th, 1–4p.m.: Fall Wreath
$25/rec card, $35/no card (per month)

Vintage Vibes Dance Nights for ages 50+
Thursday, September 24th, 6–8p.m.
Thursday, October 22nd, 6–8p.m. $5/person

The Dunedin 3:00 Big Band Concert & Dance for ages 50+
Wednesday, October 21st, 3p.m. $5/person

Pancake Breakfast for ages 50+
Every Tuesday, 8:30–9:30a.m. $4/rec card, $5/no card

Free Seminar: Medicare Savings Program
Tuesday, October 6th, 10a.m.
Free to attend, walk-ins welcome.

The Hale Senior Activity Center is located at 330 Douglas Avenue. For more information, call (727) 298-3299 or visit Dunedin.gov.

FRIENDS OF THE ISLAND PARKS

Friends of the Island Parks and Honeymoon Island State Park invite the community to celebrate the return of Island Fest 2026 at beautiful Oasis Beach. This annual festival brings together outdoor recreation, environmental education, local artisans, and family-friendly activities, giving visitors the opportunity to experience everything that makes Honeymoon Island one of Florida's most treasured state parks.

Throughout the weekend, guests can explore interactive exhibits, connect with local conservation organizations, enjoy guided outdoor adventures, browse a marketplace featuring local artists and vendors, and savor food from a variety of local favorites—all while surrounded by the park's spectacular natural beauty.

Island Fest at Honeymoon Island features a variety of event highlights for visitors of all ages. Guests can dive into environmental discovery through engaging, hands-on exhibits that highlight the park's unique coastal habitats, native wildlife, and ongoing conservation efforts. For those seeking outdoor adventures, guided beach walks, birdwatching excursions, and kayaking experiences offer an up-close look at the island's diverse ecosystems. Attendees can also explore a local marketplace showcasing handcrafted goods from regional artisans and sample delicious dishes from a range of food vendors, while interactive family-fun activities ensure a memorable weekend experience for the whole community.

Island Fest takes place over two days at Honeymoon Island State Park on Oasis Beach, Saturday, October 10th from 10a.m.–5p.m. and Sunday, October 11th from 10a.m.–3p.m. Admission to the festival is free with standard paid park entry or a valid Florida State Parks annual pass. For further details, schedule updates, and additional event information, visit FriendsoftheIslandparks.org/islandfest.

Community News

MEASE DUNEDIN HOSPITAL

Submitted by Lauretta Fernandez

Looking for a fun and rewarding volunteer experience? Mease Dunedin Hospital needs your help! We offer a variety of volunteer opportunities throughout the hospital and in the community.

Visitor Services: Are you friendly and enjoy helping others? We are looking for volunteers to greet patients and visitors and provide escort assistance at both the main hospital and the Physician Office Building.

Gift Shop: Do you enjoy retail or have a flair for merchandising and displays? We need volunteers to help staff our Gift Shop and expand our hours of operation.

Tree House Resale Shop: Love thrifting and discovering treasures? Join our team at the Tree House, our resale shop, and help support the hospital while serving the community.

Carelift Van Transportation Service: Do you enjoy being out in the community and making a meaningful impact? Carelift may be the perfect opportunity for you.

Carelift provides free transportation to BayCare hospital campuses for ambulatory community members who do not have access to reliable transportation. Available Monday through Friday, this vital service helps connect some of our most vulnerable neighbors to the healthcare they need.

Contact us today to schedule an interview and begin your rewarding volunteer journey! Contact Lauretta Fernandez at (727) 734-6046 or Lauretta.Fernandez@baycare.org or Tina Huelsman at (727) 734-6046 or Tina.Huelsman@baycare.org.

DUNEDIN INTERFAITH STORY CIRCLE

Local residents have been sharing stories at the Dunedin Interfaith Story Circle for nearly five years. The purpose of the group is to foster appreciation for the commonality of human experience. Since its initial gathering at the Faith United Church of Christ, the Story Circle has been hosted by eleven different local faith communities.

The next Interfaith Story Circle will meet at the First Presbyterian Church, 455 Scotland Street, at 7p.m. on Wednesday, September 23rd. Each gathering features two storytellers; the attendees then form small groups and are invited to share their own stories on the theme.

We are a diverse group, welcoming all spiritual beliefs, including persons with no religious affiliation. Our shared stories have emphasized commonly held values of compassion and community. You are welcome to come to listen or come to share a story. Storytelling makes a heart-to-heart connection between people that promotes understanding and builds community. For more information, please contact Katie Green at KatieGreenStories@gmail.com.

STUDIO 1212

Submitted by Colleen Baxter

Join local, award-winning artists on Sunday, September 6th from 1-4p.m. at the opening reception for our new exhibit *Elements of Art: Form*, featuring a finger food buffet, wine, and other beverages.

In its 55th year, Studio 1212 Art Gallery, at 234 Monroe Street in Dunedin, offers smaller fine art originals and prints, handcrafted items such as jewelry, unique marine wood sculptures, note cards, journaling notebooks, and more. View additional art in the galleries, workshops offered, gallery news, and other events at Studio1212.org.

Community News

DUNEDIN WINES THE BLUES

Save the Date! 2026 Downtown Dunedin comes alive November 14th for one of our city's most beloved traditions, Dunedin Wines the Blues, presented by the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce. This signature event transforms Pioneer Park and Main Street with electrifying live band performances, a wide selection of exceptional wines, craft beer from Dunedin's local breweries, and delicious eats from local restaurants and food vendors.

Wines the Blues is one of Dunedin's most anticipated annual events, drawing thousands to Downtown Dunedin. Sponsoring this signature community celebration is a great way to showcase your business, connect with locals and visitors, and be part of a tradition that supports Dunedin's thriving arts and business community. Showcase your business and support one of Dunedin's biggest community events.

View sponsorship packages, purchase VIP tickets, and view volunteer opportunities at WinestheBluesDunedin.com.

WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

The Wreaths Across America event at Bay Pines VA Medical Center will be held on Saturday, December 19th at noon. Bay Pines National Cemetery is the final resting place for 38,000 veterans. As we celebrate America 250, please help us honor all who have served and convey to their survivors that they are not forgotten.

Last December, 8,239 wreaths were sponsored, leaving 29,761 grave markers unadorned. Eight hundred eighty-six wreaths have been purchased as of last month. It is our prayerful hope that all of the grave markers will be adorned this year with the help of your heartfelt contribution. The deadline for purchase is November 28th. Donations can be made at WreathsAcrossAmerica.org/FL8PN8 or by scanning the QR on the graphic on this page.

THE WITCHES OF DUNEDIN

Submitted by Alison Clarke

The Witches of Dunedin are dusting off their broomsticks, fluffing their tutus, and getting ready to cast a little magic over Dunedin once again! Witching Season officially begins Friday, October 2nd, and just like the witches themselves, our schedule is delightfully mysterious. Throughout October, you can catch us stirring up some spooky fun with 7:30 and 8:30p.m. performances every Friday and Saturday night—but where will we land? That's part of the magic! Keep your eyes peeled for clues on our Instagram and Facebook pages to discover where our broomsticks will be flying us next around Dunedin.

This year, we're especially proud to use our witchy ways for something truly meaningful. The Witches of Dunedin have chosen Paint the Town Purple as our local charity for the 2026 season, a community-wide Dunedin initiative dedicated to raising awareness and funds for the Alzheimer's Association. So grab your fellow ghouls and goblins, follow the clues, and join us for a little dancing, laughter, mischief, and magic—all for a wonderful cause.

We can't wait to see you this October and make the 2026 Witching Season our most spellbinding yet while raising awareness and funds for Paint the Town Purple!

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