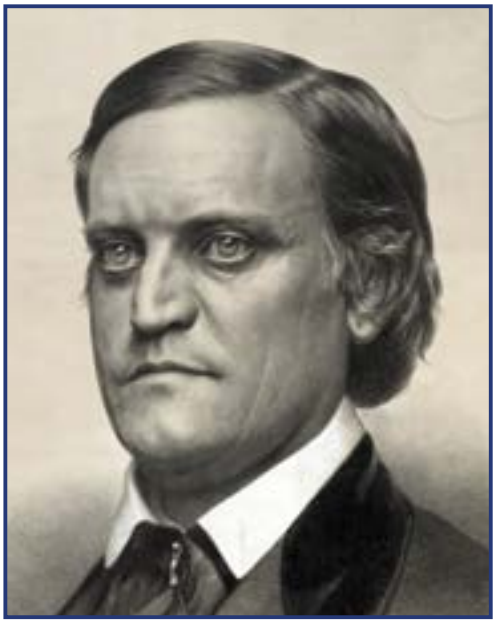
INDIAN ROCKS BEACH
NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS
Magazine
www.beachnewsletters.com
SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026 ISSUE 123

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

- Continued on page 6

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.

- page 22

The Legacy of Firefighter Stephen Siller

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

- page 14

Clearwater Jazz Holiday

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

- page 15

Visit Us Online

Scan this QR code to read this News Magazine and previous issues online.

CREDITS

This newsletter is published by Magriff Productions, LLC, and is mailed to every occupied residence in Indian Rocks Beach's ZIP code 33785. We are not associated with the City of Indian Rocks Beach.

PUBLISHERS
Lora and Pete Magnani

ART DIRECTION
Pete Magnani

SALES
Lora Magnani
(813) 361-7376

CONTACT INFO
P.O. Box 2628
Dunedin, FL 34697
(813) 239-6862
BeachNewsletters.com

If you are interested in advertising, we offer multi-city and annual discounts. Ads need to be reserved one month in advance.

E-mail: pete@magriffproductions.com or visit beachnewsletters.com for more information.

© 2026 Magriff Productions, Inc.

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
Pete@MagriffProductions.com

SEE YOU AGAIN IN NOVEMBER!

CITY NUMBERS

CITY HALL 595-2517
Mon–Fri, 7:30a.m.–4p.m.
1507 Bay Palm Blvd
Indian-Rocks-Beach.com

CITY MANAGER Ryan Henderson
MAYOR Lan Vaughn
COMMISSIONERS
Vice Mayor Janet Wilson • John Bigelow • Hilary King • Kellee Watt

Planning & Zoning:	517-0404
Public Works:	595-6889
Mon–Fri, 7a.m.–3:30p.m.	
Solid Waste/Trash Pickup	595-6889
ELECTRICITY	443-2641
PHONE (RESIDENTIAL)	(800) 483-4000
PHONE (BUSINESS)	(800) 483-5000
WATER	464-4000
CABLE (SPECTRUM)	(855) 657-7328
EMERGENCIES:	9-1-1
SHERIFF NON-EMERGENCIES	582-6200
Sheriff Bob Gualtieri	
SHERIFF DISPATCH	582-6177
IRB FIRE STATION	595-1117
Fire Chief Ken Grimes	
POST OFFICE	584-0301

204 4th Avenue
Mon–Fri 8:30a.m.–4:30p.m.; Sat 9a.m.–12p.m.

PINELLAS COUNTY INFO	464-3000
COMMISSION OFFICES	464-3377
Chris Latvala	464-3278

315 Court St
Clearwater, FL 33756

STATE:

Senator Nick DiCeglie 563-1910
Republican, Dist. 18
1940 West Bay Dr. Ste 4
Largo, FL 33770
Nick.DiCeglie@FLSenate.gov

Representative Kimberly Berfield 351-8850
Republican, District 58
2189 Cleveland St, Ste 229
Clearwater, FL 33765
RonOgden@MyFloridaHouse.gov

Governor Ron DeSantis (850) 717-9337
400 Monroe St.
Tallahassee, FL 32399
Ron.DeSantis@MyFlorida.com

FLORIDA UNITED STATES SENATORS:

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

Rick Scott (202) 224-5274
502 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
RickScott.Senate.gov

AREA UNITED STATES REPRESENTATIVE:

Anna Paulina Luna 610-3980
1226 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
Luna.House.gov

CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS & EVENTS

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

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
Howl-O-Scream Begins	11
COTI Summer Block Party	12
Rock the Rocks at Crabby Bill's	12
MORFLOW Music Fest at the Sound	12
Rosh Hashanah	11-13
Buccaneers Season Opener	13
Grandparents Day	13
Modest Mouse at the Sound	16
Pasco Scallop Season Ends	18
IRB Library Florida Explorers	19
NHL Preseason Begins	19
Buccaneers Home Opener	20
Yom Kippur	20-21
International Day of Peace	21
First Day of Fall	22
Clearwater Offshore Nationals	25-27
Greentown Kids Beach Cleanup	27
MLB Playoffs Begin	29

OCTOBER

Lightning Season Opener	1
Wildflower and Pollinator Festival	3
Lightning Home Opener	3
Clearwater Fall Family Festival	3-5
Deadline to Register to Vote	9
IRB Oktoberfest	10
Columbus Day	12
City Commission Meeting	13
Stone Crab Season Begins	15
Clearwater Jazz Holiday	15-18
Dunedin Fall Fest	15-18
IRB Library Florida Explorers	19
Owl-O-Ween McGough Park	23
Frenchy's Stone Crab Weekend	23-24
Bluffs Wine Walk	24
Halloween	31

NOVEMBER

Rotary Big Game Raffle	6
CASA Scavenger Hunt	7
City Commission Meeting	10
The Annika LPGA at Pelican	11-15
IRB Community Garage Sale	14-15
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

REMEMBERING A LEGEND The Indian Rocks Beach fishing community is remembering longtime charter captain and tournament fisherman David Scott "Captain Dave" Mistretta, who died unexpectedly Aug. 12 at age 64.

Mistretta spent more than four decades fishing the Gulf and became a familiar figure throughout Tampa Bay. As owner and captain of Jawstoo Fishing Charters, he introduced thousands of customers to Gulf fishing while building an accomplished tournament career with the Jawstoo Pro Team.

His son and longtime fishing partner, Captain David John Mistretta, will continue operating Jawstoo Fishing Charters and carrying forward the family tradition.

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 Beach Welcome Center, CVS, library, Beach Art Center, USA Grocer, or Panera Bread on West Bay Drive. 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...

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.

ENHANCED FLOOD INSIGHTS As a coastal community, Indian Rocks Beach faces ongoing flood risks associated with storm surge, heavy rainfall, tidal flooding, and severe weather events. Understanding these risks is essential when making decisions about property protection, insurance coverage, and flood mitigation.

To enhance public access to flood-related information, the City has partnered with Forerunner—a technology platform specializing in floodplain management, flood risk analysis, and flood insurance education. Through this partnership, residents and business owners can access user-friendly tools that simplify complex floodplain data and provide property-specific insights.

Through the platform, you can search for any property address to view its public profile, which details flood risk characteristics, relevant local regulations, review thresholds, and building code considerations.

The site also allows you to search for and instantly download on-file permits, Elevation Certificates, and flood-related reports. If you ever need additional support, you can submit an inquiry directly through the Get Help page with your address, and City staff will follow up. Explore your property's flood insights at IndianRocksBeachFL.WithForerunner.com.

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.

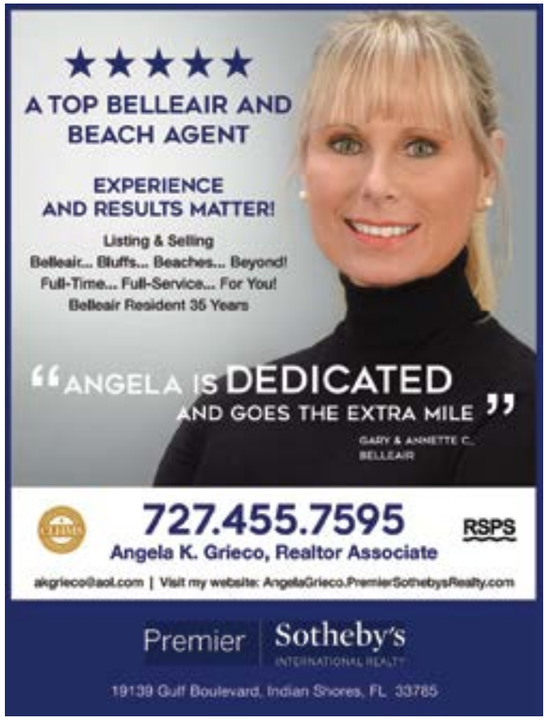
By May 30th, the fugitives reached Carlisle's Landing on the Indian River Lagoon near present-day Titusville. Breckinridge was astonished to discover that the "Indian River" was not a river at all but an immense coastal lagoon stretching more than 150 miles behind Florida's barrier islands. As the group 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.

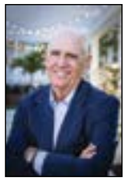
Breckinridge was not the only Confederate leader to rely on Florida's geography for escape. Confederate Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin also fled through Florida, using the Gulf Coast and Florida Keys before reaching the Caribbean and eventually Britain, where he built a distinguished legal career. 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.



ARE TRUMP ACCOUNTS REALLY WORTH IT? YOU BET THEY ARE!

By Ray Ferrara, ProVise Management Group



The One Big Beautiful Bill Act introduced a new savings vehicle for children called a "Trump Account." While the name may draw attention, the real attraction is the opportunity to build significant long-term wealth through disciplined saving and investing.

Trump Accounts can be established for children under age 18. Parents, grandparents, and others may contribute up to $5,000 annually. Employers can contribute up to $2,500 per year on behalf of employees' children. These employer contributions count toward the annual limit, are generally tax-deductible to the company, avoid FICA taxes, and are not taxable income to the employee under federal law.

Perhaps the most appealing feature is the government's contribution. Children born between 1/1/25 and 12/31/28 receive a $1,000 starter deposit from the federal government. Contributions also receive favorable treatment for gift and generation-skipping transfer tax purposes, making them an attractive planning tool for grandparents and other family members.

The account is designed to encourage long-term investing. Funds generally cannot be withdrawn before age 18, except in limited circumstances such as excess contribution corrections, qualified rollovers, certain ABLE account transfers, or upon the beneficiary's death. At age 18, the account transitions into a traditional IRA.

If funded consistently, the growth potential can be substantial. Assuming a $6,000 initial contribution, including the government's $1,000 deposit, followed by annual contributions of $5,000 for the next 17 years, and assuming a hypothetical 7 percent annual return, the account could grow to approximately $173,000 by age 18.

The real opportunity may come after the conversion to a traditional IRA. A young adult in a relatively low tax bracket may gradually convert the account to a Roth IRA, paying little or no tax on portions sheltered by the standard deduction. Even after paying some taxes on larger conversions, the long-term benefits can be dramatic. In one hypothetical example, the account could grow to about $226,000 after completing a series of Roth conversions. Left invested at the same 7 percent return, it could exceed $4 million by age 65.

Of course, life rarely follows a perfect script. Yet even if some of the Roth IRA funds are eventually used for education, a first home, or other major life goals, Trump Accounts can provide young people with an extraordinary financial head start and a powerful foundation for future wealth.

To discuss any financial planning issue, take advantage of our complimentary one-hour consultation.

V. Raymond Ferrara, CFP®, Founder and Executive Chair
ProVise Management Group, LLC
300 Park Place Blvd, Suite 210, Clearwater, FL 33759
727-441-9022, Info@Provise.com

Financial planning for your life and your lifestyle

PROVISE MANAGEMENT GROUP

The information herein is general and educational in nature and should not be considered legal or tax advice. Tax laws and regulations are complex and are subject to change.

Investment Advisory Services may be offered through ProVise Management Group, LLC.

LITHIUM BATTERY SAFETY BEFORE AND AFTER THE STORM

By Chief Ken Grimes, PSFRD

Ask someone to picture a firefighter at work, and they will likely imagine a house fire, a vehicle crash, or a hurricane rescue. While those emergencies remain central to our work, your special fire district is equally committed to preparing for next-generation hazards. One of the fastest-growing challenges in today's fire service stems from an everyday household technology: lithium-ion batteries.

A generation ago, most homes contained only a few rechargeable batteries. Today, they power cordless drills, lawn equipment, golf carts, e-bikes, smartphones, tablets, flashlights, and portable power stations. These devices have transformed how we live and work, offering exceptional convenience and safety under normal conditions. However, when damaged, lithium-ion batteries present a fire hazard unlike traditional household threats.

Unlike ordinary fires, a damaged lithium-ion battery can enter thermal runaway—a rapid chain reaction that produces intense heat, toxic smoke, and flammable gases. These fires burn exceptionally hot and can reignite hours after appearing to be extinguished. Fire departments across the nation are responding to these incidents with increasing frequency, prompting continuous investment in specialized equipment, tactics, and response procedures.

On Florida's barrier islands, hurricane season adds a critical layer of risk. Batteries exposed to floodwaters—particularly saltwater—may show no immediate signs of damage and may even continue to operate. Unfortunately, internal corrosion can trigger a catastrophic failure hours or days later as residents clean up, charge tools, or restore power.

Fortunately, proactive measures can significantly reduce these risks. To prepare ahead of a storm, fully charge essential devices before the weather degrades, then store all batteries, cordless tools, and equipment in a cool, dry space above potential flood levels. Be sure to unplug devices as soon as they reach full charge, and move larger battery-powered equipment—such as e-bikes, golf carts, and lawn tools—completely out of areas vulnerable to storm surge.

Following a storm, never attempt to recharge or plug in any battery that was submerged in water or physically damaged. Carefully inspect your devices and watch for warning signs of failure, including swelling, leakage, excessive heat, hissing or popping sounds, unusual odors, or smoke. If a battery displays any of these symptoms and it is safe to handle, immediately move it outdoors away from structures and flammables, and contact your local solid waste or recycling agency for proper hazardous waste disposal rather than placing it in household trash.

The most effective fire is the one that never happens. Public education and prevention remain vital to our mission. As technology evolves, so do the risks to our community, requiring modern response equipment, continuous firefighter training, and active public awareness.

Your special fire district exists to deliver that high standard of readiness. Whether responding to a structure fire, performing a storm rescue, or helping residents navigate modern hazards, our focus remains steadfast: protecting lives, property, and the community we are privileged to serve.

WANTED!
WE ARE BUYING
ESTATES • COLLECTIONS • HEIRLOOMS • VALUABLES
JEWELRY • WATCHES • COINS
STERLING SILVER
SCRAP GOLD & DIAMONDS
HISTORICAL • IMPORTANT • RARE & UNIQUE
One-Of-A-Kind Antiques & Collectibles
MEMORABILIA • MILITARIA • ARMS & ARMOR

2026 Highs • GOLD $4,350 • SILVER $65 oz.
ESTATE & FINE JEWELRY | SCRAP GOLD & BULLION
• Fine Antique & Vintage Jewelry • Silver, Gold & Platinum Bullion
• All Gold, Silver & Plat. Jewelry • Coins, Ingots, Bars & Nuggets
• 10k,14k,18k,22k, 900, 925 & 950 • Old, Outdated & Broken Jewelry
• Diamonds & Diamond Jewelry
• Designer Jewelry & Acessories
ANTIQUES / COLLECTIBLES
• Cartier, Tiffany, Gucci & Chanel • Historical, Important, Unique &
• VINTAGE COSTUME JEWELRY • Rare One-Of-A-Kind Treasures
• Cameos, Cufflinks, Collections • Militaria, Antique Arms & Armor
WATCHES & TIMEPIECES • Guns, Daggers, Knives, Swords
• Political, Entertainment, Movie &
• Pocket Watches, Chains, Fobs • Sports Memorabilia, Autographs
• Vintage & Modern Wristwatches • Native American Silver Jewelry
• Rolex & PreOwned Timepieces • Decorative & Fine Art, Paintings
• Bulova, Omega, Hamilton, Elgin • Posters, Prints, Photos & More
• Ladies GOLD & PLAT. Watches • F. Remington & Bronze Statues
• Watch Collections... WANTED! • Scrimshaw, Ivory, Jade & Coral
COINS & CURRENCY • Carpets, Rugs, Clocks & Lamps
• Fountaine Pens, Walking Canes
• All U.S., Foreign & World Coins • G. Armani, Lladro, iCart & Erte'
• Tokens, Medals & Collections • Figurines, Brass Statues, Busts
• Antique, Gold & Silver Coins • Swarovski & Waterford Crystal
• Shipwreck & Spanish Colonials • Flags, Maps, Charts & Globes
STERLING SILVER • Shipwreck & Nautical Antiques
• Vintage Guitars, Antique Violins
• Antique Silverware & Flatware • Bugles, Music Boxes & Edisons
• Tea Sets, Jewelry & Trophies • Art Glass, Pottery & Porcelain
• Platters, Trays & Candlesticks • by Tiffany, Loetz, Galle', Lalique
• Decorative Silver & Silver Vertu • Moser, Meissan, Majolica & More
FREE APPRAISALS! • TOP $$$ PAID!
EXPERT VALUATIONS! • FREE HOUSE CALLS!
WE COME TO YOU! (727) Call Today!
BY APPOINTMENT ONLY! 484-0146
BNG X TREASURES bngtreasures.com
1115 Ponce de'Leon Blvd. • Clearwater, FL. 33756

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 ICE CREAM ON THE BEACH Recently, the owners of long-time Clearwater staple Gondolier Italian Restaurant & Pizza opened Kera Pizza & Tavern at 311 Gulf Blvd on Indian Rocks Beach, but that's not all. A few steps away, in the same plaza as Kera, owner Dimitri Sioutis has opened Beverly's Ice Cream Shop. Beverly's, named after Sioutis' mother, originally opened in 2020 on Clearwater Beach under the Hyatt Regency, but they were unable to rebuild after Hurricane Helene in 2024.

They offer 32 flavors that can be in waffle cones, waffle bowls, cake cones, cups, chocolate-dipped cones, and assorted sundaes. Patrons can also enjoy ice cream on top of made-to-order waffles, banana splits, milkshakes, assorted coffees, espresso, cappuccino, lattes, iced coffees and much more. Their ice cream comes from Chocolate Shoppe, which is one of the leaders in high-quality ice cream manufacturing; they are based in Madison, Wisconsin.

They have one more location in Morristown, Tennessee, and one soon to come on St. Pete Beach. They are open 11a.m.–10p.m. (Sunday–Thursday); 11a.m.–11p.m. (Friday and Saturday). For more information, follow them on Facebook or visit BeverlysIceCream.com.

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

SUNDAYS ARE BETTER WITH BBQ Looking for the perfect way to end the weekend? Belleair Hideaway, located at 560 Indian Rocks Road North, invites guests to gather every Sunday for a relaxed afternoon of great food, good company, and Southern-inspired hospitality at BBQ Sundays.

Featuring slow-smoked favorites, chef-inspired specials, and a welcoming atmosphere, BBQ Sundays have become a local tradition for families, friends, and food lovers throughout the Belleair area. Whether you're craving tender pulled pork, smoked brisket, classic sides, or signature sauces, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

More than just a meal, BBQ Sundays offer an opportunity to connect with the community, unwind from the week, and experience the unique charm that makes Belleair Hideaway a favorite local destination. Bring your friends, bring your appetite, and make Belleair Hideaway part of your Sunday tradition.

For weekly menus, specials, and event updates, follow Belleair Hideaway on Facebook.

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.

BELLEAIR BLUFFS SPORTS BAR NOW OPEN Congratulations to the Pappas family and team on the opening of Tavern in the Bluffs, located at 2890 West Bay Drive (previously occupied by Cody's Roadhouse). This is the sister restaurant to Backwaters Sand Key and Backwaters North Redington Beach.

Tavern in the Bluffs is a neighborhood bar and grill in Belleair Bluffs known for elevated comfort food, handcrafted drinks, and a lively atmosphere with live sports on screen. From quick lunches to happy hour and late-night outings, they serve fresh, flavorful dishes in a welcoming setting. Guests can enjoy classic bar favorites and satisfying meals perfect for any occasion.

The Tavern opens at 11a.m. daily, closing at 11p.m. Sunday–Thursday and 2a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Follow them on Facebook to view upcoming events and specials.

ROCKIN' FOR HEROES RETURNS TO VFW POST 10094

By Steve Kalnasy

On Saturday, November 7th, Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 10094 will host the Second Annual Rockin' for Heroes, a Veterans Day celebration honoring America's veterans while commemorating AMERICA 250, the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Combining legendary classic rock with patriotic purpose, the event celebrates the service and sacrifice of America's veterans while raising funds to support VFW Post 10094 and several local veterans' organizations. Following the tremendous success of last year's inaugural event, organizers expect another large crowd for what promises to be one of the area's premier Veterans Day weekend celebrations. Guests can look forward to an afternoon filled with outstanding live entertainment, patriotic tributes, food and beverages, and opportunities to connect with veterans, military families, and members of the local community in a festive and meaningful setting.

The first Rockin' for Heroes exceeded expectations, drawing nearly 900 attendees to the grounds of Indian Rocks Beach VFW Post 10094. The event honored military service while paying special tribute to the 250th anniversary of the United States Marine Corps, creating a memorable afternoon that blended live music, patriotism, and community pride.

This year's concert features an impressive lineup of nationally recognized classic rock performers alongside artists with distinguished military backgrounds, making for a unique Veterans Day experience that celebrates both American music and the enduring spirit of those who have defended our freedoms.

Co-headlining the event are Atlanta Rhythm Section and Firefall, two legendary bands whose music has remained a staple of classic rock radio for decades.

Few Southern rock bands have enjoyed the longevity and influence of Atlanta Rhythm Section. Formed in Doraville, Georgia, in the early 1970s, the band became known for its distinctive blend of Southern rock, blues, country, jazz, and melodic pop. Their catalog includes timeless hits such as *So Into You, Imaginary Lover, Champagne Jam, Spooky, Do It or Die,* and *I'm Not Gonna Let It Bother Me Tonight.*

Firefall, formed in Boulder, Colorado, helped define the soft rock sound of the late 1970s by combining rock, country, and folk influences into a style uniquely their own. Their string of radio favorites—including *You Are the Woman, Just Remember I Love You, Strange Way, Mexico, Cinderella,* and *Headed for a Fall*—continue to receive regular airplay on classic rock and yacht rock stations.

Returning by popular demand is The Derek Stoner Band. Led by retired U.S. Army Special Forces veteran Derek Stoner, whose 20-year military career included multiple combat deployments, the Nashville-based performer delivers authentic country music inspired by artists such as George Strait, Alan Jackson, and Travis Tritt. His heartfelt songwriting and energetic performances have earned him a growing national following.

Opening the afternoon is Detroit-based Two-Toned, featuring vocalist SolSong, whose appearance on NBC's The Voice introduced his powerful voice to a national audience, along with Melissa Kalnasy, former lead vocalist of Arbor Reign. Together they will kick off the festivities with an energetic set of classic favorites.

Doors open at 2:30p.m. on Saturday, November 7th, at VFW Post 10094, 14450 Walsingham Road, Largo. Tickets are available now through Eventbrite, with additional event information available at VFWPost10094.com.

Founded in 1899, the Veterans of Foreign Wars of the United States is one of the nation's oldest and largest veterans service organizations. Established by veterans returning from the Spanish-American War and the Philippine Insurrection, the VFW was created to advocate for benefits and medical care for wounded service members at a time when few resources existed. Today, the organization and its Auxiliary include more than 1.4 million members dedicated to serving veterans, military families, and their communities.

Proceeds from Rockin' for Heroes help support the mission of VFW Post 10094 and several organizations serving veterans throughout the Tampa Bay area.

As America celebrates its 250th birthday, Rockin' for Heroes offers an opportunity for the community to come together through music, patriotism, and gratitude, honoring those who have served while supporting vital, life-changing programs that continue to make a profound and lasting difference in the lives of our cherished veterans today and for generations to come.

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.

Sergeant Elio Diaz

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.

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.

Firefighter Jimmy Riley

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.

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.

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.

GoodCall Housecalls®
727-421-4230
Trusted, Expert Medical, Holistic and Preventive Care on YOUR schedule!
- Illness & Minor Emergency
- IV Meds, Hydration & Vitamin Infusions
- Prescriptions & Mobile Xray
- Peptide Therapy & NAD+
- Care Continuum

Now expanding to meet your demand!
Contact us about employment opportunities: clinical@goodcallhousecalls.com
www.goodcallhousecalls.com
Trusted Care Anywhere

Peggy Cordle
MS, APRN-C
Owner, Director

Natural Gas
It's The Natural Choice!
The difference is clear — save up to 47% annually when using natural gas energy!
Natural gas: the most efficient way to power appliances!
• Water heating • Cooking • Pool heating • Home heating

	NATURAL GAS COSTS	ELECTRIC COSTS
Water Heating	$126.00	$427.76
Cooking	$44.10	$140.44
Clothes Drying	$63.00	$229.53

Call CGS Energy at (727) 562-4980 to switch to energy-efficient natural gas and visit our website at www.CGSEnergy.org
CGS ENERGY
CLEARWATER

Business Briefs

CELEBRATING AND EXPANDING Congratulations to Indian Rocks Beach residents and owners of IRB Creamery, Jade and Will Pendley, on five years in business. In May of 2021, the couple took over the neighborhood staple Pinky's Ice Cream & Candy Shop. After working for Pinky's for over 10 years, Jade made the transition from employee to boss, adding her husband as her wingman.

If that wasn't enough to celebrate, Jade and Will have taken on a new venture. They bought Old Florida Cigar & Bait Company, just a few doors down, which was put up for sale by owner and operator Tim Chase back in November. Chase ran the business for 15 years before retiring. The sale was brokered by Allie and Stewart DeVore of Palm Legal, PLLC (pictured above with the Chases and the Pendley family). The store provides anglers and cigar connoisseurs with an assortment of fishing gear, bait, and Tampa's famous hand-rolled cigars. It is open seven days a week from 6a.m.–sunset.

Both shops are located in the Sunrise Plaza at 1401 Gulf Blvd. For more information, call (727) 333-5496 or follow them on Facebook.

NEW APPAREL STORES IN COZY DUNEDIN Black & Glen is an elevated menswear boutique created for the modern man who values quality, fit, and effortless sophistication. The shop blends timeless British style with contemporary Florida ease, offering curated apparel and accessories built to last. Founded by Neil Brown and Tina Taylor—partners in life and adventure—Black & Glen reflects their shared love of travel, craftsmanship, and superior design. Neil, a Scottish-born Army veteran with a long career at Deloitte, and Tina, a successful HR entrepreneur with a keen eye for detail, set out to bring thoughtful, well-made menswear to Dunedin, creating a space where every man can dress with confidence, personality, and polish.

After Black & Glen Men's opened at 735 Broadway in Downtown Dunedin, customer demand quickly grew for a women's line. Neil and Tina took the leap and opened Black & Glen Women's just four doors down at 719 Broadway, bringing the same commitment to quality, craftsmanship, and personal service that made the original a local favorite. The new shop features thoughtfully curated contemporary and resort-inspired brands, offering versatile pieces that transition seamlessly from day to evening alongside personal styling guidance designed to help women feel comfortable and confident in what they wear.

Follow them on Facebook or visit BlackandGlen.com for more information.

Business Briefs

IRB CHAIRS CELEBRATES TEN YEARS

For the past 10 years, IRB Chairs has been helping locals and visitors make the most of their time along the beautiful shores of Indian Rocks Beach. What Mike and Teresa Fowler began as a beach chair and umbrella rental business has grown into a trusted local company with 12 employees, a strong relationship with the City of Indian Rocks Beach, and a reputation for exceptional service reflected in its 5-star Google rating. As IRB Chairs celebrates its 10th anniversary, the company continues to make enjoying a day at the beach easier, more comfortable, and more convenient.

Planning your perfect beach day has never been simpler. IRB Chairs offers convenient online booking, allowing customers to reserve beach chairs, umbrellas, and cabanas before they even arrive. Beyond beach rentals, IRB Chairs is also proud to support community events and local initiatives, reinforcing its commitment to being more than just a beach rental company. IRB Chairs also provides a daily beach report on Facebook, keeping followers up to date on beach conditions and helping them plan the perfect day by the water.

After a decade of serving Indian Rocks Beach, IRB Chairs looks forward to continuing its mission: making beach days easy, comfortable, and memorable for residents and visitors alike. Ready to plan your perfect beach day? Visit IRBChairs.com to reserve your chairs, umbrellas, or cabana, and follow IRB Chairs on Facebook for the daily beach report.

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.

THIRD LOCATION FOR BELLEAIR COFFEE
Congratulations to Belleair Coffee Company and owners Chris Whelan and his wife, Cammie Griffin, on celebrating a decade of business at their 100 Indian Rocks Road location. The couple opened Belleair Coffee Company and Taphouse at 1158 7th St NW in Largo last year and are now working on a third location at 1211 4th Street North in the Old Northeast neighborhood of St. Petersburg. It will serve house-roasted specialty coffee, baked goods, breakfast and lunch items, beer, and wine. The new cafe will host live music on weekends, open mic nights, trivia, and coffee education events. For more information about events and specials, call (727) 501-1010 or follow them on Facebook.

BUSINESS NEWS WANTED If you have news for this magazine, e-mail Pete@MagriffProductions.com or call (813) 239-6862.

DIRTY DOG
SELF SERVE DOG WASH
DIRTY DOG SELF SERVE DOG WASH
No Appointment Needed
Affordable and Easy
Safe and Effective
No Stress No Mess
Get your pet Squeaky Clean using professional equipment and products, without the groomer price tag.
14100 Walsingham Road Unit #31, Largo
Open 7am-9pm Every Day
DirtyDogSelfServeDogWash.com
(727) 309-1751

NEKTON SURF SHOP
- Paddle, Skim & Surf Board Sale/Rentals
- Clothing & Footwear
- IRB Tees & Gifts
- Beach Accessories
- Sunglasses
- Jewelry

(727) 593-8292
www.NektonSurf.com

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.

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:

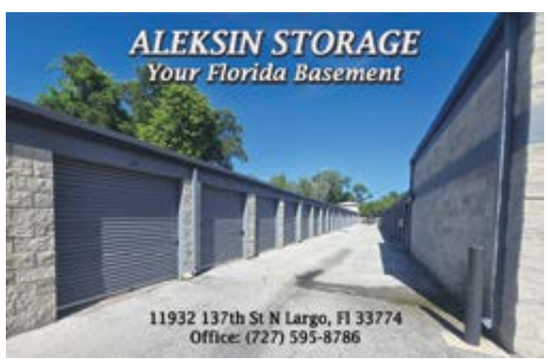
Indian Rocks Beach (south to north):
Sharky's Sea Pub 19703 Gulf Blvd
Guilty Sea Sports Pub 301 Gulf Blvd
Kera Pizza & Tavern 311 Gulf Blvd
Hurricane Eddie's IRB 1407 Gulf Blvd
Coco's Crush Bar and Grill IRB 2405 Gulf Blvd

Largo and Belleair:
Goose's Sports Bar 11988 Indian Rocks Road
Rock House Live Sports Bar and Grill 14219 Walsingham Road
Mike's Pizza and Pub 14477 Walsingham Road
Sauced Sports Bar 1250 Seminole Blvd
Sports Shack Bar & Grill 999 Missouri Avenue North
Schooners Westbay 2441 West Bay Drive
Tavern in the Bluffs 2890 West Bay Drive
Whiskey Wings Largo 2480 East Bay Drive
Sportscaster's Bar & Grill 2655 East Bay Drive
Eddie's Bar & Grill 3665 East Bay Drive

South Clearwater Beach:
Hogg Daddy's Beach Bar and Grill 752 S Gulfview Blvd
Jimmy's Fish House Bar 521 S Gulfview Blvd
Sandcastle Arcade & Grill 325 S Gulfview Blvd
The Boxer Coronado 207 Coronado Drive
Jimmy's Island Grill 40 Devon Drive

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



JULIE MARCUS, PINELLAS COUNTY SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS

NOVEMBER 3, 2026 GENERAL ELECTION

GET ELECTION READY

Get Registered
- The deadline to register to vote is October 5, 2026.
- Voter registration applications are available at VotePinellas.gov or any Supervisor of Elections office.
- Make sure your address and signature are up to date and check your registration status at VotePinellas.gov.

Vote by Mail
- All mail ballot requests expired in 2024! The deadline to request a mail ballot is October 22 at 5 p.m.
- Request a mail ballot at VotePinellas.gov or call 727-464-VOTE (8683).
- Mail back your ballot or take it to any one of our secure mail ballot return locations.

Vote Early
- Vote Early at any one of our 7 Early Voting locations: October 19 – November 1, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. daily.
- Bring your photo and signature ID to avoid delays.

Vote on Election Day
- On November 3 (Election Day), voters are required to vote in the precinct where they live.
- Polls are open 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. Bring your photo and signature ID to avoid delays.
- Visit VotePinellas.gov or call 727-464-VOTE (8683) to find your Election Day polling place.

SCAN HERE

(727) 464-VOTE (8683) ELECTION@VOTEPINELLAS.GOV VOTEPINELLAS.GOV

Michael Perez
(727) 422-6943

The #1 Indian Rocks Beach Condo Advisor Since 2012 and #2 Over All

100% Focused on Providing Superior Customer Service and Sharing Local Knowledge to Get You the Results You Need! Advising Clients with Their Real Estate Needs Since 2006. Call for FREE Evaluations

Indian Rocks Beach Water Front Home
495 Harbor Drive S, Indian Rocks Beach
Double Lot with 216 Feet of Water Frontage
4 Bed 3 Full Bath 2 Half Bath, 3 Car Garage
Heated Swimming Pool, Boat Dock 24K Lift & 10K Lift
Sold Price $3,019,000

Pier House of IRB
420 Gulf Blvd #202, Indian Rocks Beach
Direct Beach Front Condo, 2 Bed 2 Bath with 1,330 Square Feet
24 Foot Wide Balcony, Heated Swimming Pool & Hot Tub
Under Building Assigned Parking with Exterior Storage,
2 Week Minimum Rentals Permitted
Sold Price $930,000

Lighthouse Pointe
17980 Gulf Blvd #103, Redington Shores
2 Bed 2 Bath Direct Beach Front Condo
Private Spiral Staircase Off the Balcony
Down to the Pool and Beach 30 Day Rentals Permitted
Sold Price $655,000

The Tides Beach Club
16500 Gulf Blvd #755, North Redington Beach
Direct Beach Front Condo, 3 Bed 2 Bath Penthouse Level
Luxury Resort-Style Amenities, 3 Pools
Sprawling Balcony, Gorgeous Sunset Views
Sold Price $1,020,000

Premier Sotheby's INTERNATIONAL REALTY
19139 Gulf Blvd. Indian Shores, Fl
www.MikePerezHomes.com

NAVIGATING THE POOL DECK: A PARENT'S GUIDE TO PRESCHOOL SWIM CLASSES

Swimming is more than a fun childhood activity—it's an essential life skill, especially for families in Florida. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), drowning is the leading cause of injury-related death for children ages 1 to 4 in the United States. Studies also show that nearly 70% of toddlers who drown were not expected to be near the water. Fortunately, formal swim lessons can reduce a young child's risk of drowning by as much as 88%, making early instruction one of the best investments parents can make.

With so many programs available, choosing the right class may seem overwhelming. The key is finding one that matches your child's comfort level, personality, and stage of development.

Parent-and-Me Transition Classes

If your preschooler is still hesitant around water or struggles with separation anxiety, a parent-assisted class is often the best place to begin. In these lessons, parents join their children in the pool while the instructor guides activities. Your presence provides reassurance while helping your child build trust, confidence, and basic water skills before moving into independent instruction.

Play-Based Group Lessons

Children who are comfortable in the water but haven't yet learned swimming fundamentals often thrive in developmental group classes. Programs labeled "Water Acclimation" or "Beginner Preschool" use games and imaginative activities to teach essential skills. Blowing bubbles develops breath control, retrieving sinking toys encourages submersion, and playful kicking exercises strengthen coordination. Look for classes with no more than four children per instructor so each child receives frequent practice and individualized attention.

Survival-Focused Swim Programs

Some programs emphasize water survival rather than traditional swim strokes. These highly structured lessons teach children how to roll onto their backs, float independently, control their breathing, and remain safe until help arrives. Families with backyard pools, boats, or homes near lakes, canals, or beaches often choose this type of instruction because it focuses on self-rescue skills that could prove lifesaving.

Questions to Ask Before You Enroll

Before signing up, ask a few important questions. What is the student-to-instructor ratio? Smaller classes provide more hands-on instruction and less waiting between turns. Does the school offer makeup lessons? Preschoolers inevitably miss classes because of illness. Finally, ask about the teaching philosophy. Some instructors emphasize gentle encouragement and gradual progress, while others use a more structured approach. Choose the environment that best fits your child's temperament.

Every child learns differently, but the goal is the same: developing confidence, water awareness, and essential safety skills. By selecting the class that best matches your preschooler's needs, you'll help build a lifelong love of swimming while giving your family greater peace of mind. In the end, the most important lesson isn't perfect strokes—it's learning to stay safe around the water.

Indian Rocks Beach Favorite Restaurant Since 1985

Keegan's SEAFOOD GRILLE

Locally Caught

Fresh Fish, Shrimp, Crab, Oysters & More

- plus -
Delicious Steaks, Juicy Burgers & DAILY SPECIALS

OPEN DAILY 11am - 10pm
ORDER ONLINE

727-596-2477 | 1519 Gulf Blvd | Indian Rocks Beach | KeegansSeafood.com

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).

September Opening
The "Bimini Harbor"
Showcase Home

Classic Florida Dream Homes has specialized in constructing luxury waterfront homes along the Pinellas Beaches. Following the devastation caused by Hurricanes Helen and Milton, we made a corporate decision to expand our focus and provide local families with a cost-effective option for replacing storm-damaged homes with new, elevated coastal construction.

Our "Bimini Breeze" & "Bimini Harbor" designs were developed with that goal in mind.
Our furnished Bimini Harbor Showcase Home in Madeira Beach features four bedrooms, two baths, 3,360 square feet under roof, with 1,600 square feet of living area and the ability to expand to approximately 2,400 square feet of living space.

The prices we quote our customers for hurricane replacement homes on their lots are the complete cost for the family, including the architect, engineering, permitting, home construction and all sitework. Our prices are the lowest along the beaches, and include an in-ground piling foundation system, 1st floor living area at least 4' **above** FEMA-required elevation, roofed porch, 150-mph-rated building envelop, cathedral ceilings, quality custom cabinetry & countertops, heavy insulation, quality specifications throughout. All for prices starting at only $375/sf Living Area ($178/sf Total Roofed Area).

For customers who need both a homesite and a new custom home, we offer lot selection assistance in the beach communities from Treasure Island to Clearwater – providing a true one-stop approach from lot selection through completed construction.

Our furnished Madeira Beach Showcase Home is scheduled to open during the last week of September. Visitors will be able to walk through a completed CFDH home, experience the quality and craftsmanship firsthand, and see available features and options. Look us up at CFDH.INFO or call us for more information at (727) 404-1347. Feel free to come by and explore what a new elevated custom home has to offer at 40 140th Ave, Madeira Beach!

CLASSIC FLORIDA CFDH DREAM HOMES

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.

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.

Sketch of the first Grand Demonstration of Working Men from Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, 1882.

CELEBRATING WORKERS

Labor Day is an American national holiday celebrated annually on the first Monday in September to honor American workers. There are several accounts of the holiday's origin. The most accepted is that various labor unions gathered in New York City on September 5th, 1882, and held a parade celebrating the city's working men and women. Over 20,000 workers attended the first celebration, despite having to give up a day's pay. The event was organized by the Central Labor Union of New York, Brooklyn, and New Jersey, which later became part of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO). Unions in other states soon followed suit.

After the economic depression of 1893, the Pullman Company, a manufacturer of passenger rail cars, laid off thousands of workers and reduced salaries of others. After negotiations failed, the American Railway Union organized a strike against the company, crippling most rail lines in the central and western United States. The following year, President Grover Cleveland and Congress designated Labor Day a national holiday in an attempt to appease workers.

Today, Labor Day is the "unofficial last day of summer," as many school districts resume the week before or after. Many retailers offer sales over the long weekend, making it one of the busiest shopping weekends of the year.

TRIM NOTICES

TRIM (Truth in Millage) notices, officially known as Notices of Proposed Property Taxes, are mailed to property owners each year in mid-to-late August. Although they often resemble a tax bill, they are not bills for payment.

The notice outlines your property's assessed and taxable values, proposed property tax rates, estimated taxes for the upcoming year, and any exemptions applied to your property. It also explains how to appeal your property's value or exemptions if you believe they are incorrect.

In addition, the TRIM notice lists the dates, times, and locations of public budget hearings where local taxing authorities—including counties, municipalities, and school boards—will vote on their final millage (tax) rates.

For questions about your property's value or exemptions, contact the Pinellas County Property Appraiser at PCPAO.gov. For questions about tax payments or collection, contact the Pinellas County Tax Collector at PinellasTaxCollector.gov.

Community News

ACTION 2000 IRB (A2K)

Submitted by Daryl Frahn

It's almost time for one of Indian Rocks Beach's favorite community traditions! Oktoberfest on the Beach returns Saturday, October 10th from noon–7p.m. at Kolb Park, presented by IRB Action 2000 and the City of Indian Rocks Beach.

This year's festival is getting bigger and better, with extended hours until 7p.m. so you can enjoy the fun well into the afternoon and early evening. Come for the cold beer and bratwursts, stay for everything else that makes Oktoberfest such a great IRB tradition.

Enjoy live music, local food and craft vendors, children's activities, games, and plenty of German-inspired fun. The Beach Art Center will be joining us with face painting and special crafts for the kids. And, of course, there will be plenty of opportunities to show off your skills in the stein carry, keg toss, chicken dance, and other games.

We're also excited to welcome new vendors and new food options this year, along with a fun entertainment lineup featuring the Bavarian Girls Duo and Those Meddling Beach Kids Band.

Most importantly, Oktoberfest is more than a great day at the park—it is A2K's largest fundraising event of the year. Proceeds help IRB Action 2000 fund beautification and preservation projects throughout our community, from landscaping and public spaces to historic preservation and other projects that help maintain the unique character of Indian Rocks Beach.

We are especially grateful to our generous event sponsors, including Crabby Bill's, Attorney Patrick L. Smith, The Beacons, and The Garden Medical Spa, Wellness & Massage, along with all of our supporting sponsors. Their commitment to our community helps make Oktoberfest possible and allows A2K to continue investing in projects that make Indian Rocks Beach special.

Of course, an event of this size takes a village. We couldn't do it without our amazing A2K volunteers, community partners, vendors, entertainers and the many neighbors who support the event year after year. When you enjoy Oktoberfest, you're helping make future A2K projects possible!

Visit IRBAction2000.com/oktoberfest for more information.

BELLEAIR BEACH LADIES LUNCHEON CLUB (BBLC)

All set for the upcoming year, BBLC looks forward to a new year filled with great food, friends, and programs. The charity for this year is The Kind Mouse, which ensures that children receive food, as many go without—not just during the school year, but all year. We are looking forward to working with this charitable organization.

Don't let the name fool you—not just Belleair Beach, but all surrounding areas are welcome. There is a $25 yearly membership fee; each luncheon is $37 and includes bread, salad, a hearty meal, dessert, and a glass of wine. We meet at local restaurants on the second Tuesday of the month (one exception), October through May, and have a different program each time. The group is a wonderful mix of ladies enjoying a lovely lunch together.

If you would like more information or to join, contact Treasurer Deborah Hendricks at (727) 453-2193 or dsbrown55@yahoo.com.

BELLEAIR GARDEN CLUB

Submitted by Carol Mears

The Belleair Garden Club is welcoming fall with a lively lineup of programs, workshops and community events, with opportunities to learn, create, connect and enjoy the season. All are open to the public.

The Garden Club's popular Plant Swap & Potluck returns on Saturday, September 12th at 11:30a.m. Guests are invited to bring plants, cuttings or garden treasures to exchange while enjoying good food and conversation at the historic Belleair Garden Club clubhouse. The casual gathering is a fun way to discover something new for the garden, share favorite plants and meet others who enjoy gardening and the outdoors.

The Belleair Garden Club also offers monthly workshops throughout the season, featuring hands-on and educational topics inspired by gardening, nature and the outdoors. Advance registration is required.

The upcoming season begins Wednesday, October 7th at 12:30p.m. with Native Plants Made Easy, an informative and practical program designed to take some of the guesswork out of choosing native plants for Florida landscapes. The program will explore approachable ways to incorporate Florida native plants into home gardens and landscapes, including plant selection, placement and creating attractive gardens that support local wildlife and pollinators.

Presented by the Belleair Garden Club in partnership with Candles for Caterpillars, the Holiday Harvest Market in the Bluffs is a festive community market featuring local artisans, handcrafted goods, unique gifts, seasonal décor, garden finds, specialty foods, live music and hands-on activities for all ages. The curated market celebrates creativity, community and the spirit of the season while supporting two local nonprofits and encouraging visitors to shop locally and support the community. The market is on Saturday, November 21st from 10a.m.–2p.m. at Belleair Bluffs City Hall, along Lentz Street and in the adjoining park.

Whether you're an experienced gardener or simply looking to connect with others who enjoy nature, learn new skills, or give back through community service, the Belleair Garden Club welcomes you. Membership is open to everyone, and guests are always encouraged to attend a meeting, workshop or event to discover what the club has to offer. Visit BelleairGardenClub.com for information on the club and our events and programs.

The Belleair Garden Club is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to gardening, conservation, education and community involvement. The clubhouse is located at 903 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Belleair, FL 33756. To learn more about upcoming events, membership, volunteer opportunities and clubhouse rentals, visit BelleairGardenClub.com.

WELCOME NEWCOMERS CLUB

This club is open to the women of Pinellas County; all are welcome to come and socialize. Luncheons are held the first Tuesday of each month at Belleair Country Club. There is always a guest speaker or other entertainment with cards following for those interested. Please contact Mary at (727) 240-5372 with any questions.

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.

Community News

GREENTOWN KIDS

Submitted by Allie DeVore

GreenTown Kids has a fun fall season ahead, and we'd love for you to join us!

Our next Sunset Citywide Beach Cleanup is September 27th from 5:30–7:00p.m. Check in at the 17th Avenue County parking lot beach access, where we'll have cleanup supplies and snacks.

In mid-October, join us for our Fall Community Garden Planting Party at the IRB Community Garden as we get the garden growing for the new season. Volunteers of all ages are welcome, and student volunteer hours are available for both events.

GreenTown Kids is also continuing to bring hands-on gardening experiences to local students through our School Garden Projects. Our newest initiative, GreenTown Clubs, gives middle and high school students the opportunity to start their own school clubs focused on community service projects like beach cleanups and gardening—with support from GreenTown Kids along the way.

Want to grow with us? Community garden boxes are available for fall. Email us for more information.

GreenTown Kids is a 501(c)(3) public nonprofit organization made possible in part by the generosity of our donors and volunteers. Whether you volunteer, donate, garden with us, or come to our events, we appreciate your support!

Connect with GreenTown Kids:

Facebook/Instagram: @GreenTown Kids
Email: greentownkids@gmail.com
Website: www.greentownkids.org

Help us keep growing: Donations can be made via Zelle to greentownkids@gmail.com

FRIENDS OF THE IRB LIBRARY

Submitted by Diane Daniel

Our monthly Saturday Florida Explorers programs continue, with the next two on September 19th and October 17th. This lively books and nature program teaches kids about our unique marine ecosystem through art, reading, and hands-on activities. The events, at 11a.m. in the IRB Civic Auditorium, are free, but please register in advance. More information and a signup form link are on the library website.

Also, for the younger set, story time is 11:30a.m. every Wednesday. Join us for songs, stories and fun!

Adults are welcome to our monthly book club, held the last Tuesday of the month from 4–5p.m. The September book will be "Gone Before Goodbye," by Reese Witherspoon and Harlan Coben.

The library continues to restock its shelves with more books for children and adults. Come see our new titles! We also accept book donations to fill the used bookstore and little free libraries around town (see a list on the library's website).
Visit Indian-Rocks-Beach.com/our-community/irb-library or call (727) 596-1822 for more information. For updates and news, see us on Facebook at Indian Rocks Beach Library and Friends of IRB Library.

BEACH ART CENTER

Submitted by Hope Fitch-Mickiewicz

As we wrap up another successful Creative Kids Summer Camp, we want to thank our incredible instructors, volunteers, sponsors (IRB Rotary, IRB Homes, Slyce, IRB Creamery) and families for making this summer one to remember. We loved seeing so many young artists explore their creativity and can't wait to welcome everyone back for another exciting season of classes and workshops.

We're also expanding our programming and are looking for experienced creative instructors to join our team. If you teach painting, pottery, drawing, photography, jewelry making, fiber arts, mixed media, Mahjong, or another creative discipline, we'd love to hear from you. Learn more and apply at BeachArtCenter.org/teach.

Calling all photographers! Our next gallery exhibition, State of Wonder: A Photography Exhibition Honoring Native Florida, is now accepting submissions. Artwork drop-off is Saturday, September 12th or Monday, September 14th from 10a.m.–2p.m. The opening reception will be held Friday, September 25th from 6–8p.m. For complete exhibition details, upcoming classes, workshops, and events, visit BeachArtCenter.org.

SHEPHERD'S VILLAGE

Submitted by Sherry Chandler

You may not have known Shepherd's Village has quietly served this community for 35 years, but chances are you know a single mom. She might be your sister, coworker, daughter, neighbor, or the mom cheering alone at the soccer field who never quite lets on how much she's carrying.

For 35 years, Shepherd's Village has walked alongside single moms and their children—offering housing, support, and Christ-centered encouragement so families can face their future with confidence. What began with one single mom and a step of faith has grown into a village where women find stability, community, and hope.

We've often been called the best-kept secret in town, not because lives weren't being changed, but because the work has always been quietly happening behind our doors. As we celebrate 35 years, we believe it's time the secret is shared. When a single mom is supported, her children are strengthened, and when families are strengthened, our entire community becomes stronger.

For 35 years, single moms and their children have been finding hope and rebuilding their futures right here in your backyard; now we're inviting our community inside the story. Join us as we celebrate 35 years of impact at our Annual Gala on September 25th at the Opal Sands on Clearwater Beach, including a Sunset Social, Silent Auction, and Dinner Program. A limited block of rooms is available at the resort for our gala guests.

Visit ShepherdsVillage.com/2026gala for event information and tickets. We've been in your neighborhood for 35 years; it's time to meet your village.

WE WANT YOUR NEWS

Does your civic organization have news, upcoming events, anniversaries, or other information that is of interest to the community? Get it printed here for free. Send an email to Pete@MagriffProductions.com.

Community News

ROTARY CLUB OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH

Submitted by David Kline

IT'S FOOTBALL TIME AGAIN! It is that time of year when football excites the masses. Yes, the pro and college seasons are in full swing and excitement is in the air. Watch parties are happening everywhere, tailgating is a focus for many fans, and all of our favorite teams are still in the hunt for that elusive trophy and ring.

This time of year also signals the presentation of Indian Rocks Beach Rotary Club's Big Game Raffle. This will be our 24th year offering the grand prize winner a trip of a lifetime to Los Angeles for the 61st edition of American football's Championship 'Biggest' Game. This year's Big Game will be played at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, CA on Sunday, February 14th, 2027.
The Big Game Raffle will once again award the lucky Grand Prize winner two tickets to the game, four nights' lodging in the area, and $1,000. There are four additional cash prizes: second prize is $1,000, third prize is $500, fourth prize is $300, and fifth prize is $200.

The winning tickets for the grand and secondary prizes will be drawn at our BGR Drawing Party on December 6th, starting at 2:30p.m. (you do not have to be present to win). We are grateful to our friends at Guilty Sea Sports Pub in Indian Rocks Beach who will again host the event. Guilty Sea will have all the day's football games on their many TVs. The drawing will take place at 5:30p.m. Please plan to join us for a fun party; someone will be going to Los Angeles!

Tickets are five chances for $20 and are now available from the following:

- Any IRB Rotarian
- At the Rotary tent at the Rock the Rocks Music Festival/ Market on the second Saturday of every month, starting at noon, at Crabby Bill's main restaurant in IRB
- The Taste of IRB, November 2026
- By contacting David Kline at (727) 418-1673 or DavidKline92@gmail.com.
- At the BGR Drawing Party on December 6th at Guilty Sea

This is the 24th consecutive year that IRB Rotary is sponsoring our annual Big Game Raffle, in support of the many charitable and humanitarian projects throughout our community and the world. None of them would be possible without the community's support of our fundraisers. When you invest in Rotary, you help to change lives and "do good in the world!" Are you ready for some football?

CASA PINELLAS

Join CASA's Scavenger Hunt on November 7th and explore downtown St. Pete in a whole new way. $35 gets you more than just a ticket; it's your pass to a full day of fun with a purpose. Grab your friends, build a team, and race through the city completing challenges, earning points, and discovering fun, cool spots around St. Pete.

Your ticket includes an exclusive t-shirt, entry to the hunt, and an after-party at Good Night John Boy with a DJ, a drink, and lunch. It's the perfect mix of adventure, teamwork, and giving back, helping support survivors in the community while making unforgettable memories.

CASA is the official domestic violence center for Pinellas County and has provided lifesaving services to women, children, and men living with domestic violence for over 40 years. For more information, visit CASAPinellas.org.

BROOKER CREEK PRESERVE EDUCATION CENTER

Submitted by Julia Myers

Local nature enthusiasts and families are invited to celebrate Florida's native flora and essential wildlife during the annual Wildflower & Pollinator Festival on Saturday, October 3rd from 9a.m.–2p.m. Held at the Brooker Creek Preserve Environmental Education Center in Tarpon Springs, this community event highlights the vital role that native wildflowers play in supporting butterflies, bees, hummingbirds, moths, and beetles, while teaching residents simple strategies to build pollinator-friendly landscapes at home.

Throughout the campus, attendees of all ages can participate in a variety of interactive educational activities and hands-on experiences. Visitors can purchase Florida-friendly plants from regional growers, explore the trail network through a guided Wildflower Quest, view a honeybee observation hive, and speak with naturalists at educational stations. Family-friendly highlights also include kids' make-and-take nature crafts, a beeswax candle-making booth, temporary ecological tattoos by Kate Dolamore Art, and information tables hosted by local conservation organization partners.
Visit Explore.Pinellas.gov/pinellas/programs for more information.

INDIAN ROCKS HISTORICAL MUSEUM (IRHM)

Submitted by Joan Johnstone

The IRHM has had a very active season and was closed from July through September. We are now open to visitors and history lovers. The museum is located at 203 4th Avenue North, directly across the street from the post office. Our hours are Wednesday–Saturday from 10a.m.–2p.m. Stop by to tour the history of IRB and browse the Gift Shop for many interesting items reflecting our history and more.

The Museum is looking for volunteers to serve as hosts during open hours. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer, please contact Carol McGlaughlin at (727) 420-8662. Training will be provided.

We are currently in the process of interviewing long-time residents relating their memories of growing up and raising families in this special community. Look for updates on this project.

The Indian Rocks Beach Historical Society, in conjunction with the museum, will soon be partnering with several local community organizations. Stay tuned for more information and upcoming events. Check back for more details.

Our hearts and prayers go out to the family of R.B. Johnson who lost his mom, Martha Joan Moseley Johnson, on May 31st. She was a lifelong member of the IRHM, and we are proud to count R.B. as an asset to the museum board. Sadly, we have also lost one of our very active members, Museum Treasurer Nancy Ayers. Nancy served as Treasurer for many years and will be missed.

GREATFLORIDA INSURANCE

GREAT Service!
GREAT Rates!
GREATFLORIDA!

- Home
- Boat
- Umbrella
- Auto
- Motorcycle
- Flood

Kristin Asbury
Faron Estep

12998 Walsingham Rd.
Largo, Fl
(727) 595-6000
indianrocks.greatflorida.com
mygreatflins@gmail.com