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The Skunk Ape—Florida's Sasquatch

By Pete Magnani, Publisher

When most people picture Sasquatch, they imagine the Pacific Northwest—mist-covered forests, snowcapped mountains, and alpine rivers. Florida offers a different setting for its legendary wild man: flooded cypress forests, tangled mangroves, sawgrass marshes, and humid nights filled with unfamiliar sounds.

Known as the Skunk Ape, Florida's answer to Bigfoot is said to be a large, hair-covered creature that walks upright and gives off a powerful, unpleasant odor. Although no scientific evidence has established that such an animal exists, reports of mysterious creatures in Florida's wilderness have circulated for generations, evolving into one of the state's most enduring legends.

Folklore in the Florida Wilderness

Some modern retellings connect the Skunk Ape with Esti Capcaki, commonly translated as "tall man" or "hairy man" and attributed to Seminole or Muscogee tradition. Popular versions portray this figure as a powerful inhabitant or guardian of the wilderness. That connection should be treated cautiously. Although Indigenous cultures have rich oral traditions involving the natural and spiritual worlds, historical documentation does not clearly establish Esti Capcaki as an ancient version of today's Skunk Ape. Much of that interpretation comes from modern cryptozoology—the study of animals whose existence has not been scientifically verified.

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Anonymous photo sent to the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office, December 2000.

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Before becoming America's first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln built his political career as the nation's party system underwent dramatic change.

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A Hatchling Hero

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Holiday Events

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DUNEDIN NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS MAGAZINE

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

Do you need another copy? Ask for them at the Chamber of Commerce, History Museum, Community Center, Library, and the UPS on Main St. We hope you enjoyed our magazine. We want your input. Did you like this issue? What suggestions do you have for future articles? Call or email us.

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

Thank you for reading,

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CALENDAR OF HOLIDAYS & EVENTS

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

NOVEMBER

Daylight Saving Time Ends	1
General Election	3
City Commission Meeting	5
Art Harvest Highlander Park	7-8
Rockin' for Heroes VFW Post 10094	7
SAVOR St. Pete Food & Wine Fest	7-8
Veterans' Day Ceremony	11
O.A.R. at the Sound	12
Clear Sky Fall Fest	14
Wines the Blues	14
Dogtoberfest	14
Bauserween	15
Reggae Sound Splash Fest the Sound	15
The Annika LPGA at Pelican	11-15
City Commission Meeting	19
Sanding Ovations Treasure Island	19-22
Suncoast Jazz Festival	20-22
Celtic Music & Craft Beer Festival	21
Festival of Trees at the Long Center	21
Thanksgiving Day	26
Achieva Turkey Trot	26
Holiday Lights in the Gardens Begins	27

DECEMBER

Holiday Night Market	3
City Commission Meeting	3
Christmas Tree Lighting	4
Hanukkah	4-12
Honeymoon Island Bluegrass Festival	5
Breakfast with Santa Community Center	5
Holiday Boat Parade	5
Run Run Rudolph! 5k Clearwater	5
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	7
Holiday Parade & Old Fashioned Xmas	12
Clearwater Yacht Club Boat Parade	12
Holiday Night Market	17
City Commission Meeting	17
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Jingle Bell Family Fest Coachman Park	19
Christmas Day	25
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ReliaQuest Bowl Game	31
Light it Up Clearwater	31
New Year's Eve	31

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

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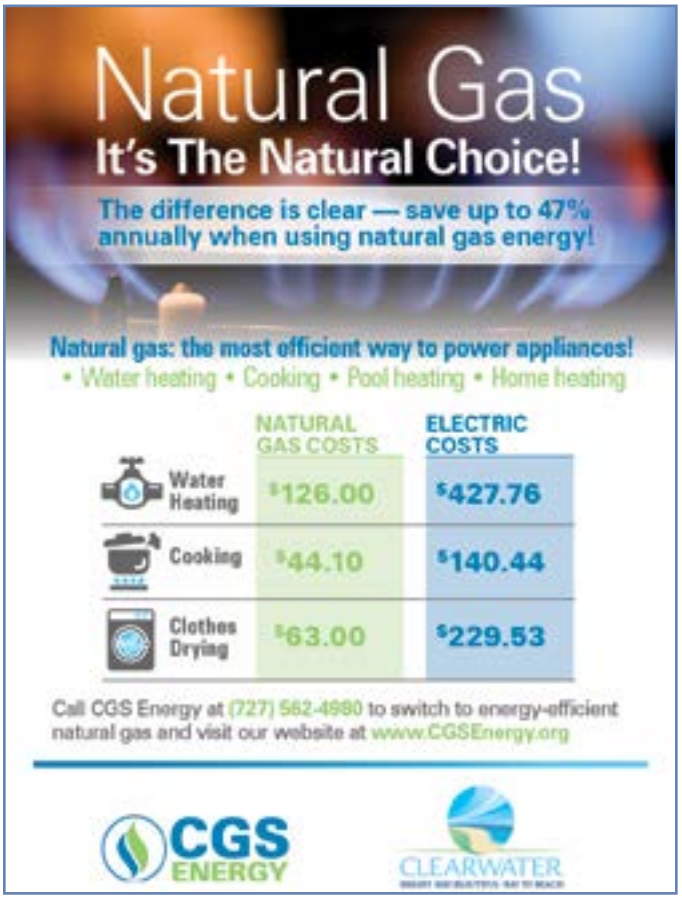
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Did You Know



NEW ART REVEALED AT CLEARWATER BEACH MARINA A new mosaic sculpture is welcoming visitors to the Clearwater Beach Marina Walk. The City of Clearwater unveiled "Ketch," created by Nevada artist Eileen Gay, on September 24th beside the marina at 25 Causeway Boulevard.

The artwork celebrates Clearwater's coastal setting. Gay's design incorporates dolphins, reflecting the marine life associated with the area. The sculpture's name also has a nautical connection: a ketch is a type of sailboat.

"Ketch" is part of the larger Clearwater Beach Marina replacement project, which is improving the waterfront for boaters and pedestrians. Marina Walk extends the city's Beach Walk promenade with shade and seating. The broader project includes new docks and seawall improvements.

The sculpture gives residents and visitors another reason to explore the marina on foot. Set along a working waterfront, it connects the new public walkway with the boats and wildlife that help define Clearwater Beach.

Visitors can find "Ketch" along Marina Walk at the Clearwater Beach Marina. For more information about the marina project, visit MyClearwater.com.

MANATEES BROUGHT TO CMA FOR REHAB Two rescued manatees have arrived at Clearwater Marine Aquarium for the next stage of their recovery. Axle and Gilbert, both males, were transferred from ZooTampa to CMA's Dr. James "Buddy" Powell Manatee Rehabilitation Center in September.

Axle was rescued from shallow water in Venice on February 21st after suffering from cold stress. Gilbert, an orphaned calf, was rescued in Sun Springs on January 2nd. He was underweight and had a low body temperature. Both received critical care at ZooTampa before their transfer to Clearwater.

CMA is part of the Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Partnership, a network of organizations that rescues, treats, and prepares manatees to return to the wild. At CMA, manatees that no longer need critical care receive additional rehabilitation before they are ready for release.

Veterinarians and rehabilitation staff are monitoring Axle and Gilbert as they settle into their new habitat. The team will track their health, behavior, and progress over the coming months. Their release into the wild is anticipated in early 2027, depending on their recovery.

The aquarium will announce when visitors can view the manatees. Until then, the pair may be out of public view while they acclimate. For updates and more information, visit CMAquarium.org.

REMEMBER TO RENEW IF YOU VOTE BY MAIL Vote-by-mail requests expire on December 31st of every even-numbered year, regardless of when the request was submitted. For example, a request made in September for the November 2026 General Election will expire at the end of 2026. Voters who want to continue receiving mail ballots must submit a new request in 2027. Once renewed, the request will remain valid through the end of 2028.

Pinellas County voters may renew their requests online at VotePinellas.gov or by calling the Supervisor of Elections Office at (727) 464-VOTE (8683).

and More...

STATE CONSIDERS CALADESI EXPANSION



Florida is considering purchasing nearly 30 acres of privately owned, undeveloped beachfront at the northern tip of Clearwater Beach to expand Caladesi Island State Park.

The Mandalay Point property includes dunes, coastal vegetation, mangrove wetlands, and a 3,400-square-foot mansion. It is listed for $37.5 million. The Florida Department of Environmental Protection is appraising the land as though it were vacant, excluding the home and other improvements from its valuation.

In February, the state's Acquisition and Restoration Council added the property to a list of potential conservation purchases. A June Florida Forever report estimated the acquisition cost at approximately $30 million.

The land may provide nesting habitat for sea turtles, American oystercatchers, snowy plovers, and least terns. Preserving it would also extend a nearly 18-mile chain of protected barrier islands that includes Caladesi Island, Honeymoon Island, and Anclote Key Preserve state parks.

Clearwater Mayor Bruce Rector, Pinellas County officials, and local tourism leaders have endorsed the proposed purchase as an opportunity to protect coastal habitat from future development.

CLEARWATER TURKEY TROT One of Tampa Bay's longest-running Thanksgiving traditions returns Thursday, November 26th, when the City of Clearwater and Achieva Credit Union host the 2026 Achieva Clearwater Turkey Trot at Clearwater High School.

This year's event will feature several improvements, including a streamlined registration platform, additional packet pickup opportunities at Achieva Credit Union locations throughout Pinellas County, and new weekend pickup options. A redesigned Pre-Trot Celebration at BayCare Ballpark will provide more space and shorter lines. Every registered participant will also receive a collectible 2026 Turkey Trot medal.

Participants of all ages and abilities can choose from three races: the Achieva 5K Timed Run at 7 a.m., the FrankCrum Family Fun 5K at 8 a.m., and Abe's Place 1-Mile Drum Run at 9:15 a.m.

The Family Fun 5K and 1-Mile Drum Run offer a relaxed experience, with strollers and well-behaved leashed dogs welcome. The Thanksgiving morning celebration will also include live music, games, food, entertainment, and a spirited costume contest for the whole family.

For more information or to register, visit MyClearwater.com and search for "Turkey Trot."

NEW GOLF CART CROSSING Golf carts can now cross Skinner Boulevard (State Road 580) at the Douglas Avenue roundabout in Dunedin. The Florida Department of Transportation installed signs authorizing the crossing, which local reports describe as Florida's first golf cart crossing at a roundabout.

The crossing is permitted only north and south across Skinner Boulevard using Douglas Avenue. Golf carts may not travel east or west along Skinner Boulevard, or cross at the Highland Avenue roundabout. Drivers should follow the posted signs and traffic rules.





Florida Skunk Ape, Continued

Still, the association reveals something important about the legend. Florida's swamps have long inspired reverence, uncertainty, and fear. Before roads, drainage projects, and development transformed much of the peninsula, enormous stretches of the interior remained difficult to explore. Stories about unknown beings naturally flourished in such places.

The Skunk Ape Takes Shape

Long before the Skunk Ape became a household name, Florida newspapers carried stories of mysterious "wild men" roaming the state's forests. During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, hunters, turpentine workers, and cattlemen reported large, shaggy figures moving through remote swamps. Most accounts were dismissed as escaped circus animals, bears seen in poor light, or frontier storytelling. Yet they established a tradition that later merged with national fascination following the 1967 Patterson-Gimlin film in California.

By the 1950s and 1960s, Florida newspapers increasingly referred to the creature as the "Skunk Ape," distinguishing it from its western cousin. Residents of the Everglades, Big Cypress, and the Green Swamp swapped stories of nighttime screams, enormous footprints, and an overpowering odor.

Reports became especially common during the 1960s and 1970s, as Florida's population surged and development pushed into rural areas. Newspapers carried accounts of tall, apelike figures near roads, citrus groves, canals, and wooded neighborhoods. Witnesses frequently described dark or reddish-brown hair, unusually long arms, and an ability to disappear quickly into heavy vegetation.

The creature's most memorable characteristic was its smell. Witnesses compared the odor to a skunk, wet animal, rotten eggs, or decaying vegetation. That detail distinguished the Skunk Ape from the better-known Bigfoot and gave Florida's creature a suitably swampy identity.

None of these reports produced scientific evidence. No body, verified biological sample, or conclusive photograph emerged. Nevertheless, the stories attracted the attention of law enforcement officers, newspaper reporters, and state legislators, helping cement the Skunk Ape as an enduring Florida folk legend.

Tallahassee Takes Notice

One of the strangest chapters in the legend is preserved in Florida's official records. In 1978, state Rep. Hugh Paul Nuckolls



Photo: Dave Shealy, Skunk Ape Research Headquarters

introduced House Bill 58, sometimes called the "Florida Skunk Ape Protection Act." The proposal sought to protect unspecified "anthropoids or humanoid animals" from capture or harm.

The bill did not pass, and its introduction did not represent official recognition of the creature. Even so, the surviving 24-page legislative file demonstrates how firmly the Skunk Ape had entered Florida popular culture.

The Mystery of the Myakka Photographs

Interest surged again in December 2000, when the Sarasota County Sheriff's Office received an anonymous letter with two color photographs. The writer claimed that a large animal had entered her yard and taken apples from her porch. She believed it might have been an escaped orangutan.

The photographs show a bulky, reddish-haired figure crouching among saw palmettos, its eyes reflecting the camera's flash. They became known as the "Myakka Skunk Ape" photographs, although the photographer's identity and the location were never publicly confirmed.

Believers considered the photographs some of the clearest evidence of the creature's existence. Skeptics suggested that the subject could have been a person wearing a costume, a known primate, or part of a carefully staged hoax. Without the photographer, a physical specimen, or additional verifiable evidence, the images remain intriguing but inconclusive.

A Legend Finds a Home

Today, much of Florida's Skunk Ape culture centers on Ochopee, a tiny community along the Tamiami Trail. There, longtime enthusiast Dave Shealy operates the Skunk Ape Research Headquarters—part roadside attraction, part museum, and part celebration of Everglades folklore. Visitors can examine footprint casts, photographs, and sighting reports while purchasing souvenirs associated with Florida roadside tourism.

Mainstream zoology offers more ordinary explanations. Florida black bears can stand on their hind legs, while darkness and heavy vegetation can distort an animal's size and shape. Escaped exotic primates, hoaxes, and honest misidentifications may also account for some encounters. Most importantly, no verified bones, DNA, hair, or other physical evidence has demonstrated the existence of an unknown giant primate in Florida.

Yet the landscape makes disbelief feel a little less certain. Big Cypress National Preserve alone protects approximately 729,000 acres of rugged freshwater swamp. Nearby lie the Everglades, the Ten Thousand Islands, and vast stretches of mangrove forest, sawgrass marsh, and isolated hardwood hammocks.

It is a landscape filled with hidden waterways, dense vegetation, and places rarely visited by people. Under the right conditions—and perhaps with a little imagination—an ordinary shadow, distant animal, or unexplained sound can become something far more mysterious.

Whether the Skunk Ape is an undiscovered primate, a collection of mistaken identities, or one of Florida's greatest campfire stories, its place in the state's folklore is secure. Few legends capture the imagination like the possibility that something large and mysterious still moves through the cypress shadows of the Everglades.

In a state better known for beaches and theme parks, the Skunk Ape reminds us that Florida also contains one of North America's great remaining wildernesses—a place where mystery still feels possible. Perhaps that is why reports continue to surface: oversized footprints are photographed, strange cries are heard, and campers swear they glimpsed something disappearing into the palmettos before dawn.

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

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CLEARWATER BOY SAVES TURTLES

By Pete Magnani, Publisher

Twelve-year-old Gabriel "Gabe" Williams expected to spend his summer exploring the beach and building sandcastles near his family's condominium at the Regatta Beach Club on North Clearwater Beach. Instead, his curiosity helped save dozens of sea turtle hatchlings.

On July 20th, Gabe discovered hatchlings trapped inside a storm drain near the Clearwater property's Sunset Pier. The drain, approximately three feet below the surrounding pavers, had become a dangerous trap for the tiny turtles, which had likely emerged from nearby nests and become disoriented while attempting to reach the Gulf.

Gabe and his mother, Jessica Williams, immediately recognized that the hatchlings needed help. Their efforts drew the attention of resident Ruth Tsarnas, who also works with Clearwater Marine Aquarium's Sea Turtle Stranding Team. Aquarium staff coordinated a professional response, and about 40 hatchlings were released safely back into the Gulf.

Clearwater Marine Aquarium patrols approximately 21 miles of northern Pinellas County shoreline. Teams of trained staff members, interns, and volunteers reach the beach before sunrise seven days a week to look for turtle tracks and evidence of nesting activity. Once a nest is located, it is marked and monitored until the eggs hatch. Team members later examine the nest and record its contents to help determine hatching success. The information collected is reported to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Pinellas County.

The aquarium also operates a marine animal hospital that rescues, rehabilitates, and releases sick or injured sea turtles. Its veterinary team treats turtles suffering from entanglements, boat strikes, disease, and other potentially life-threatening conditions. Whenever possible, rehabilitated turtles are returned to their natural habitat.

Sea turtles have lived in the world's oceans for more than 100 million years, but their survival remains uncertain. All five species found in Florida are classified as threatened or endangered. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission estimates that only about one out of every 1,000 hatchlings survives to adulthood.

Nesting season officially runs from May 1st–October 31st. Hatchlings typically emerge at night and instinctively move toward the brightest horizon, which under natural conditions is the reflection of the moon and stars over the water. Artificial lighting can draw them inland and into streets, parking lots, and drainage systems.



Jessica and Gabe Williams

Residents and visitors can help by turning off lights visible from the beach, closing curtains after dark, removing beach furniture and trash, filling holes, and knocking down sandcastles before leaving. Sea turtles and hatchlings should never be handled without authorization. Anyone finding a stranded, injured, or disoriented turtle should call Clearwater Marine Aquarium at (727) 441-1790 or the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission at (888) 404-3922. For more information, visit CMAquarium.org.



SMALL DOGS, LONGER LIVES: WHICH BREEDS LIVE LONGEST?

By Lora Magnani, Publisher

For dog owners, a long life means more years of walks, games, and familiar companionship. According to a 2024 study, small dog breeds tend to stay with their families the longest, particularly the Lancashire Heeler, Tibetan Spaniel, and Miniature Dachshund.

Researchers analyzed records for 584,734 dogs in the United Kingdom, including 284,734 that had died. Across all dogs in the study, median life expectancy was 12.5 years. The Lancashire Heeler had the highest median, at 15.4 years, followed by the Tibetan Spaniel at 15.2 years and the Miniature Dachshund at 14 years. A median is the midpoint: half the dogs in that group lived longer, and half lived less.

The findings also showed that size and face shape were associated with lifespan. Large dogs had a higher risk of shorter lives than small dogs, while flat-faced breeds had shorter median lifespans than dogs with more typical-shaped faces. For example, the study reported a median of 9.8 years for French Bulldogs and 13.1 years for Border Collies. These figures describe broad patterns across the dogs studied; they cannot predict how long any one dog will live.

The longest-lived breeds may be less familiar to some prospective owners. The Lancashire Heeler, a small herding dog originally bred to drive cattle, topped the study's list. The Tibetan Spaniel, a small companion breed, ranked close behind. Miniature Dachshunds, more widely recognized for their long bodies and short legs, also placed among the longest-lived breeds.



Breed averages are only one part of the picture. The researchers compared breed, size, face shape, and sex, but said their study does not establish what causes early death. Individual health, inherited conditions, weight, activity, veterinary care, and other factors can all matter. A dog's breed can offer context, but it is not a guarantee of a particular lifespan.

For anyone choosing a dog, the research points to a useful starting place: ask about health and longevity within a breed, and look beyond appearance. A responsible breeder or rescue organization can share what is known about a dog's background and health. Regular veterinary visits and attentive care also help owners support their companions through every stage of life.

A breed's typical lifespan is just one part of a dog's story. Still, the study suggests that small, long-faced breeds tend to have an advantage—and that thoughtful choices can give a new companion the best chance for many happy years.







Bar & Restaurant News

NEW TIKI BAR ON CLEARWATER BEACH



Barbecue pitmaster and Food Network star Ray Lampe, known as Dr. BBQ, is bringing Squiki Tiki to the Wyndham Grand Clearwater Beach, at 100 Coronado Drive. The tiki-themed restaurant will feature smoked meats, tropical cocktails, and island-inspired dishes.

The menu is expected to include pulled pork sandwiches, St. Louis-style ribs, burnt ends bao buns, and smoked shrimp summer rolls. Bamboo accents, thatched roofing, lounge seating, and string lights will create a casual tropical setting.

Squiki Tiki is expected to operate daily from 11 a.m.–9 p.m. The resort's website advertises a November debut, though no specific opening date has been announced.

Lampe previously operated Dr. BBQ in downtown St. Petersburg from 2018 to 2022. The restaurant, next to Tropicana Field, also featured a second-floor tiki bar. Diners can preview Squiki Tiki at the Savor St. Pete food and wine festival, November 7th and 8th at Vinoy Park. Visit WyndhamGrandClearwater.com for more information.

HALELIFE BAKERY FOUNDER OPENS DUNEDIN CAFÉ

Laura McCutcheon, founder of HaleLife Bakery, has opened The Hale House Healthy Cafe & Coffee Bar in Dunedin. The café at 328 Skinner Blvd. serves coffee, matcha, breakfast, brunch, and lunch, along with baked goods from HaleLife, which partners with Apotëak.

HaleLife's baked goods are made in a dedicated gluten-free and vegan facility. The company says its products are also free of dairy, eggs, soy, peanuts, and tree nuts, excluding coconut. The café is open daily from 8 a.m.–3 p.m. For more information, visit HaleLifeBakery.com or call (727) 265-3372.

FORMER PATIO LOUNGE REBRANDS AS OCEAN CLUB

The Patio Lounge in Dunedin has rebranded as Ocean Club, a Tropic Patio Bar, with a new name, refreshed look, and new menu. The menu features tropical drinks, beach-inspired bites, and Ocean Club hot dogs.

The business also promotes The Red Room, a speakeasy-inspired experience near the Pinellas Trail. Ocean Club describes it as a different atmosphere that is part of the same business.

The rebrand follows recent filming for Bar Rescue at the former Patio Lounge. Crews also filmed at Knock'n Boots Saloon and Sneaky's Sports Bar & Grill in Largo. The episode air dates have not been announced.

Ocean Club is at 949 Huntley Ave. For updates, follow it on Instagram or call (727) 371-5241.

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



FALL FEST RETURNS TO CLEAR SKY DRAUGHT HAUS
Clear Sky Draught Haus, located at 680 Main Street in downtown Dunedin, is bringing back one of the city's favorite autumn traditions. Fall Fest 2026 returns Saturday, November 14th, for a full day of live music, craft beer, great food, and family-friendly fun.

Guests can sample selections from local and regional breweries, with wristbands available for unlimited beer tastings throughout the event. The celebration will also feature a food tent, satellite bar, promotional giveaways, live music, and additional entertainment.

Children can enjoy activities such as a bounce house, face painting, and more.

Fall Fest is about more than craft beer and good times. A silent auction and 50/50 raffle will benefit Hope Villages of America, giving guests an opportunity to support an organization that serves individuals and families throughout the local community.

Whether you come for the craft beer, live music, family activities, or simply a fun day in Dunedin, Fall Fest will offer something for everyone. Gather your friends and family, and mark your calendar for November 14th at Clear Sky Draught Haus. For more information, visit ClearSkyRestaurants.com.

CHANGING HARBORS After 14 years, Jeff and Celeste Harrell have sold Bar Fly Saltwater Grill in Safety Harbor to Frenchy's Restaurant Group. The restaurant, at 100 Main St., served its final night on July 30th. Frenchy's Bayside opened at the location in early October.

The Harrells said they sold the restaurant to scale back operations and focus on Bar Fly Drinking & Fishing Co. in Palm Harbor, which opened about a year ago. They also plan to travel and fish more as they move toward semi-retirement. Their son, Ethan, is learning the business.

Bar Fly Drinking & Fishing Co. is at 2641 U.S. 19 Alternate in Palm Harbor. For specials, music lineups, and events, follow the restaurant on Facebook. Merchandise and fishing gear are available at BarFlyFishingBar.MyShopify.com. For more information, call (727) 250-1141.

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND HIS THREE PARTIES

By Bob Griffin, Contributing Historian

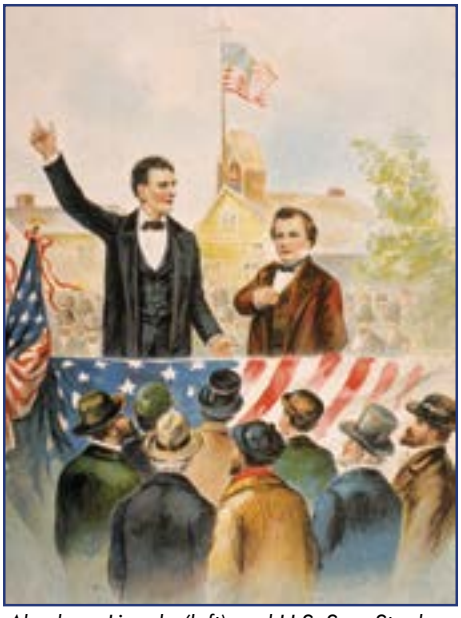
With the 2026 midterm elections approaching, it is timely to examine how American political parties have changed. Florida's major parties are Republican and Democratic. No party affiliation (NPA) is distinct from membership in the minor Independent Party of Florida. Florida also recognizes minor parties, including the America First Party, Ecology Party, Green Party, Independent Party, Libertarian Party, and We the People Florida.

Abraham Lincoln is remembered as the first Republican president, but his career began elsewhere. He supported the National Republicans, served as a Whig, helped establish the Republican Party in Illinois, and sought reelection under the temporary National Union banner.

Early Steps and Local Defeat

In 1832, 23-year-old store clerk Abraham Lincoln announced his candidacy for the Illinois General Assembly. Party labels carried less weight in that race, although Lincoln supported National Republican policies associated with Henry Clay. His campaign was interrupted when he volunteered for the Black Hawk War. Elected captain of his militia company, Lincoln later recalled the honor with pride, although his unit never saw combat.

After returning, Lincoln resumed campaigning. He finished eighth among 13 candidates, with the top four winning seats. Although he performed well in his New Salem precinct, he lacked sufficient support throughout Sangamon County. It was his first electoral defeat.



Abraham Lincoln (left) and U.S. Sen. Stephen A. Douglas in debate, 1858.
Kean Collection/Hulton Archive/Getty Images

The Whig Party

Lincoln tried again in 1834, aligning with the emerging Whig Party. He won a seat in the Illinois House and was reelected in 1836, 1838, and 1840. During four terms, Lincoln became a Whig minority leader and supported roads, canals, and railroads. He also helped move Illinois' capital from Vandalia to Springfield.

In 1846, Lincoln was elected to the U.S. House as a Whig, representing Illinois' 7th Congressional District. His single term proved politically challenging. Lincoln opposed President James K. Polk's handling of the Mexican-American War and introduced his "Spot Resolutions," asking where Mexican forces had allegedly shed American blood. His position drew criticism. Lincoln did not seek reelection in 1848, honoring an informal Whig arrangement rotating the nomination among party leaders. He returned to Springfield and resumed practicing law.

The 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act ended Lincoln's political hiatus. It allowed territorial residents to decide whether to permit slavery, effectively repealing a Missouri Compromise restriction. Opposing slavery's westward expansion, Lincoln returned to politics. He won election to the Illinois House in 1854 but resigned before taking his seat to pursue the U.S. Senate.

At the time, state legislatures—not voters—selected U.S. senators. In February 1855, Lincoln led several rounds of voting but lacked a majority. When divisions among anti-slavery lawmakers threatened to elect another candidate, Lincoln asked supporters to back anti-slavery Democrat Lyman Trumbull, who won.

The Republican Party

As the Whig Party collapsed over slavery, Lincoln joined the new Republican Party. In 1856, he finished second in informal balloting for its vice-presidential nomination, which went to William L. Dayton. Two years later, Illinois Republicans selected Lincoln to challenge Democratic Senator Stephen A. Douglas. Their campaign produced seven debates focused largely on slavery's expansion into western territories.

Voters elected state legislators, who selected the senator. Republican legislative candidates received strong statewide support, but district boundaries and results favored Douglas' allies. The Illinois General Assembly reelected Douglas 54–46. Although Lincoln lost, the debates made him a nationally recognized Republican leader.

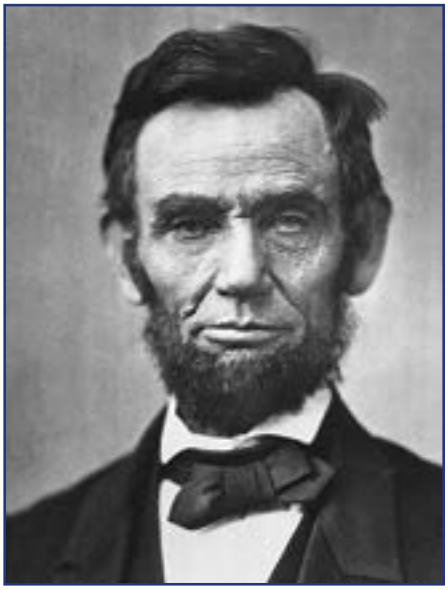


Photo by Alexander Gardner
November 8th, 1863

In May 1860, the Republican National Convention met in Chicago. Lincoln emerged as an acceptable alternative to front-runner William H. Seward and secured the nomination on the third ballot. That November, Lincoln faced three major opponents in a nation divided over slavery. He became the first Republican president, winning 180 of 303 electoral votes despite receiving 39.8 percent of the popular vote.

The National Union Party

Four years later, Republicans joined pro-Union Democrats under the temporary National Union Party banner. Lincoln sought reelection with Tennessee Democrat Andrew Johnson as his running mate. Facing Democratic nominee George B. McClellan, a former Union general, Lincoln won approximately 55 percent of the popular vote and 212 electoral votes.

Lincoln's journey—from National Republican supporter to Whig, Republican, and National Union candidate—reflected the political changes of his lifetime. John Wilkes Booth shot Lincoln at Ford's Theatre on April 14th, 1865, six weeks after his second term began. Lincoln died the following morning, April 15th.

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FUNDRAISING EFFORT CARRIES DUNEDIN BOAT CLUB'S LEGACY FORWARD



By Pete Magnani, Publisher

For generations, the Dunedin Boat Club's blue clubhouse brought together sailors, students, volunteers, and neighbors along the waterfront. After Hurricanes Helene and Milton destroyed the building in 2024, the community began working toward a replacement that would honor the club's history and expand opportunities to enjoy St. Joseph Sound.

The campaign has gained momentum. As of September, supporters had committed $580,490 toward a $900,000 goal, according to a third-quarter report dated October 7th. Contributions and pledges from 189 donors put the campaign at 64.5 percent of its target, with $319,510 remaining.

David and Nancy Bilheimer provided the largest boost with a $300,000 gift. Their contribution helped bring third-quarter pledges and contributions to $327,865 and moved the proposed Dunedin Boat Club and Community Sailing Center closer to reality.

The Bilheimers have supported education, health care, and the arts throughout the area. David spent his career in the air-conditioning systems business in New York City, and Nancy was a schoolteacher. Their philanthropy includes support for the Dunedin Fine Art Center, Mease Countryside Hospital, and educational scholarships. In 2019, Ruth Eckerd Hall announced their $2.5 million gift for arts education through its Marcia P. Hoffman School of the Arts. Clearwater's Capitol Theatre also bears their names in recognition of their generosity.

The couple's interest in the sailing center grew as they learned how many people its programs could serve. Nancy was particularly drawn to Sailability, which helps children and adults of different abilities experience sailing. Their gift supports a waterfront resource with benefits extending beyond club membership.

Other donors have made significant commitments, too. Dunedin residents Marci Wilhelm and Brent Irish contributed $100,000 after learning that their historic waterfront home could not be saved. They redirected part of their planned restoration funding to help another piece of Dunedin's history continue serving the community.

The rebuilding effort continues a tradition of residents investing in their waterfront. Founded on September 3rd, 1929, the boat club helped develop the marina through member labor, fundraising events, and personal contributions. Members began building the original clubhouse in 1936. With the club's centennial approaching in 2029, the current campaign carries added significance.

The club's connection to sailing education dates back decades. In 1947, Major Clifford McKay proposed youth sailboat racing as a way to teach responsibility and self-confidence. He asked Dunedin boatbuilder Clark "Clarkie" Mills to design an affordable boat that families could build from plywood. The result was the Optimist Pram.

The Dunedin Boat Club sponsored pram races and an early statewide regatta, helping establish a local tradition of introducing children to sailing. One of the original 12 prams Mills built for the city is now at the Dunedin History Museum.

That educational mission remains central to the proposed replacement. The clubhouse has been home to the Dunedin Boat Club since 1937, and in recent years it has also supported the Windlasses, a women's sailing and social group, and the Dunedin Youth Sailing Association (DYSA), which provides sailing opportunities for teens.

The new center is expected to serve those groups and welcome additional partners: Sailability of Tampa Bay, a nonprofit that gives people with disabilities a chance to experience sailing, and Science on the Sound, an aquatic environmental education program for high school students. Together, the organizations serve more than 2,200 members, volunteers, and students annually, according to the campaign report.



Their programs include sailing instruction and social activities, youth sailing, adaptive sailing, and environmental education. The Windlasses, founded in 1967, began using boat club facilities in 1974. Science on the Sound will bring high school students to the waterfront to learn about aquatic environments and stewardship.

Plans call for a city-owned building that recalls the original clubhouse while offering better protection against future storm damage. The club's fundraising materials also identify additional sailboat storage and classroom space as priorities. City commissioners unanimously approved the project's letter of intent on September 4th, 2025.

Several steps remain before construction. Architectural plans are expected to be completed during the fourth quarter of 2026, according to the report, allowing the request-for-proposals process to begin. Funding must also be identified in time for the city's fiscal year 2028 budget process. The club currently estimates that the project could begin in 2027 and finish in 2028.

Residents do not need to own a boat or belong to the club to contribute. The Dunedin Boat Club and Sailing Center Fund, administered by Pinellas Community Foundation, accepts charitable gifts restricted to helping the city with construction. Donors can make one-time or recurring contributions.

Visit PinellasCF.org/fund/dunedinboatclub to dontae online. Checks should be payable to Pinellas Community Foundation, with "Dunedin Boat Club and Sailing Center Fund" in the memo line, and mailed to 17755 U.S. Highway 19 North, Suite 150, Clearwater, FL 33764.

Business Briefs



TIME TO GET AWAY The Anchors Away Cruises & Tours, a Pinellas County travel agency for more than 25 years, became part of Preferred Travel & Co. in October 2024. The agency continues to offer personalized travel planning through its team of in-house travel advisors.

Services include cruises, guided tours, customized land packages, expedition travel, all-inclusive resorts, group trips, and air services. Advisors help clients plan trips based on their interests and handle travel details along the way.

Anchors Away is open Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m.–5 p.m. For more information, call (727) 761-5597 or visit AnchorsAwayCruises.com.

SALON EDIN EXPANDS Salon EDIN, at 952 Patricia Avenue, Suite A, in Dunedin, has added a dedicated nail area with spa pedicure chairs. The salon brings hair styling, extensions, skincare, nail care, and other beauty treatments together in one location, with new nail technicians offering manicures and pedicures.

The salon's name incorporates "EDIN" from Dunedin, reflecting its connection to the community. Owner Melinda Bishop says that connection guides her goal of creating a welcoming place for clients and staff. For more information, visit SalonEdin.com or call (727) 386-5918.

NEW EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE COMPANY OPENS Bluewater Residential Solutions, a Largo-based business, began serving homeowners in September. Owner Tyler Wall brings more than five years of experience in gutter and exterior home services to the company, which serves Pinellas and Pasco counties. The company offers dependable gutter cleaning, gutter repairs, drainage, soffit, fascia, and exterior home maintenance for homeowners and property managers.

Gutter cleaning starts at $175 and includes removing leaves, dirt, and debris from accessible gutter runs and bagging the material for cleanup. Final pricing depends on the home's size, access, and amount of debris. Customers can ask about slow-draining or overflowing gutters when requesting a quote. Gutter seam resealing and other repairs are assessed and quoted separately.

For a quote, call or text (727) 599-4411.

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





LOCAL HOLIDAY EVENTS

November 11th, 11 a.m.

Veterans' Day Ceremony

Pioneer Park, 420 Main Street

This patriotic and musical tribute to our veterans includes inspirational speakers, musical performances, and participation from local organizations that proudly support our veterans and active-duty military. Presented by SPC Zachary L. Shannon VFW Post 2550, American Legion Post 275, and the City of Dunedin.

November 14th, 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

Dogtoberfest

Highlander Park, 1920 Pinehurst Road

Enjoy various activities, including Suncoast Alumni Parade, an adopt-athon, a blessing of the animals, games, vendors, and Santa photos and pet selfie opportunities. This event is presented by Suncoast Animal League. For more information, visit Dogtoberfest.info.

November 14th, 2–10 p.m.

Dunedin Wines the Blues

Pioneer Park, 420 Main Street

Downtown Dunedin comes alive for one of our city's most beloved traditions, Dunedin Wines the Blues, presented by the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce. This signature event transforms Pioneer Park and Main Street with electrifying live band performances, a wide selection of exceptional wines, craft beer from Dunedin's local breweries, and delicious eats from local restaurants and food vendors. To sponsor, volunteer, become a vendor, or for more information, visit WinestheBluesDunedin.com or contact Janette Donoghue at Events@DunedinFL.com.

November 15th, noon–5 p.m.

Bauserween: A Nightmare Before Christmas Party

Bauser's Neighborhood Bar, 520 Douglas Avenue

The Bauserween 2026 fundraiser brings a Nightmare Before Christmas theme to Bauser's Neighborhood Bar, 520 Douglas Avenue in Dunedin, on Sunday, November 15th, from noon–5 p.m.

Proceeds will support Rescue Not Retail Dunedin (RNR), a local nonprofit animal rescue, and the Community BarkBox Free Animal Food Pantry.

Guests can enjoy live music from The Howler Monkeys, food from Bauser's Food Truck, doggie pools, and vendor booths for people and pets. Activities will include a pet food and supply drive, silent auction, raffle baskets, and a 50/50 drawing.

The "Battle of the Bartenders" Dunk Tank will run from 1–5 p.m. Dog owners entering the costume contest must register at the RNR information booth by 1:30 p.m. Judging begins at 2 p.m., with prizes awarded for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place in Halloween- and Christmas-themed categories.

A new golf cart decorating contest will feature Halloween, Christmas, or combined themes. There is a $10 cart entry fee, participants must register by 12:30 p.m., and the winner will be announced at 2:30 p.m.

The Witches of Dunedin will appear at 3 p.m., followed by final prize announcements at 5 p.m. Free parking will be available nearby.

For information, visit RNRDunedin.com. Prospective vendors may email RNRDunedin@gmail.com.

November 21st, 11 a.m.–7 p.m.

Celtic Music and Craft Beer Festival

Highlander Park, 903 Michigan Blvd.

Enjoy top Celtic music groups, a wide selection of local craft beers and wine, craft vendors, merchandise, and a great variety of food. VIP experience features catered meals, preferred seating, and unlimited beer and wine.

This event is a ticketed event and presented by Dunedin Scottish Arts Foundation. Purchase tickets and get more details at DunedinCelticMusicFestival.com.

December 3rd and 17th, 5–9 p.m.

Holiday Night Market

Pioneer Park, 420 Main Street

Celebrate the Season at Dunedin's Holiday Night Market events. Shop a diverse array of artisanal goods, perfect for holiday gifting, entertaining, and enjoyment. Connect with the very best of what's local—from handcrafted items to unique gifts—during the most wonderful time of the year. Enjoy complimentary gift wrapping, a visit with Santa, festive music, and some joyful holiday spirit.

For more information, please visit TampaBayMarkets.com or email TampaBayMarkets@gmail.com.

Dates and times are sublect to change. Please verify as events approach.

Date and Time to be Announced

Dunedin Holiday Tree Lighting

City Hall, 737 Louden Avenue

Kick off the holiday season with joy, light, and community spirit at the beloved Holiday Tree Lighting Ceremony. Gather together for the lighting of our beautiful holiday tree, a moment that truly captures the magic of the season. This event is presented by Dunedin Parks & Recreation. For more information, call (727) 812-4530.

December 5th, 6–9 p.m.

Holiday Boat Parade

Intracoastal Waterway

Come celebrate the return of Dunedin's Holiday Boat Parade. Decorated and illuminated boats will launch from Marker 1 Marina and parade along the Intracoastal toward Dunedin Marina. There will be more details at Dunedin.gov/Community/City-Calendar as the event gets closer.

December 12th, 3:30–9 p.m.

Old-Fashioned Christmas and Parade

Main Street and Douglas Avenue

Don't miss Dunedin's annual downtown holiday parade featuring festive floats, bands, performers, and, of course, Santa Claus! Then stay downtown for the festivities where you can enjoy live music in Pioneer Park, and activities along Main Street and Broadway including horse-drawn carriage rides, ice-skating, snow slide, kids' crafts, games, face painting, s'mores, street performers and singers, and snow flurries! Donations are accepted at the activity areas. All proceeds benefit the Dunedin for Youth Scholarship Fund. Volunteers are wanted. For more information, visit DunedinRecreation@Dunedin.gov or call (727) 812-4530.

December 19th

Dunedin Goes Carting Holiday Golf Cart Parade

VFW Post 2550, 360 Douglas Avenue

Decorate your cart or line the streets to view the parade and celebration. Carts must be decorated with holiday lights and music. All participants must ride inside a cart, as walkers are not allowed in the procession. Candy and other items may not be thrown from the carts. Printed tickets or proof of registration must be affixed to the windshield. For more information, follow them on Facebook or visit DunedinGoesCarting.com.

A HELPING HAND, SINCE 1974

By Pete Magnani, Publisher



Since 1974, the Tarpon Springs Shepherd Center has offered neighbors more than food and clothing. It has provided practical help, encouragement, and a place to turn when life becomes difficult.

The center began when a small group of local residents came together to help neighbors struggling to meet basic needs, including food, clothing, and shelter. What started as a volunteer effort has grown into a community resource serving families, children, seniors, veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and others facing a crisis. Its mission remains rooted in that original purpose: strengthening individuals and families through food, clothing, and outreach services for those who need a "helping hand UP."

Today, the center's work reaches across Pinellas and Pasco counties. Its services include a food pantry, community kitchen, homebound food deliveries, homeless outreach, family support, and referrals to community partners. A network of neighborhood pantries extends food distribution into local communities, while the Shepherd Center Resale Outlet turns donated items into support for its programs. Its outreach programs also connect more than 3,000 clients annually with family services, mentoring, job training, and referrals to community partners. Food donations from drives, retailers, and partners keep shelves stocked.

The HOPE Center, which opened in August 2020, adds a welcoming place for people who may need more than groceries. Visitors can receive a freshly prepared meal, take a shower, and do laundry. Volunteers help make the center's community meals possible, offering a warm meal and a moment of human connection to people who may be going through a difficult stretch.

The need behind the work is reflected in the center's 2025 totals: 1.75 million pounds of food distributed, valued at about $3.5 million in grocery dollars; 71,000 hot meals served at the HOPE Center; and 1,423 food boxes delivered to homebound neighbors. The center also supplied food to 16 satellite pantries. Each figure represents neighbors whose circumstances vary—a senior managing a fixed income, a family confronting an unexpected bill, or someone unable to reach a grocery store.

On Giving Tuesday, December 1st, the center is asking the community to help sustain that work. Donations will be matched dollar for dollar, up to $22,000, allowing contributions to go further as the center provides food and support close to home.

Community members can give online at TSCenter.org. The center is located at 304 S. Pinellas Ave. in Tarpon Springs. Its invitation is straightforward: Give locally. Feed locally. Help locally.



PINELLAS SCAM ALERT: KNOW THE WARNING SIGNS

By Lora Magnani, Publisher

Florida living means sunshine, beaches, and vibrant communities, but the state also faces a serious fraud problem. According to the Federal Trade Commission's 2024 Consumer Sentinel Network Data Book, Florida had the nation's highest per-capita rates of reported fraud and identity theft. Here in Pinellas County, law enforcement and consumer protection officials continue to warn residents about increasingly convincing schemes designed to steal money and personal information.

One of the most prevalent schemes involves scammers impersonating law enforcement officers. The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office confirmed in March that residents had received calls from criminals using the name of a real high-ranking Sheriff's Office official. The callers claimed their targets had outstanding warrants, unpaid citations, or penalties for missing jury duty. They then demanded immediate payment through Zelle, Cash App, Venmo, or gift cards.

Scammers can manipulate caller ID so that a call appears to come from the Sheriff's Office. They may also provide a real deputy's name, a fabricated badge number, or convincing personal details. None of that proves the call is legitimate. The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office will never call someone and demand money to resolve a warrant, citation, or missed jury summons. Anyone receiving such a call should hang up and contact the Sheriff's Office directly at (727) 582-6200.

Fraudsters are also impersonating utility companies and county agencies. Utility scammers typically threaten to disconnect electricity, water, cable, or another service unless the customer makes an immediate payment. Residents should never use a payment link or telephone number supplied in an unexpected message. Instead, contact the company through the number printed on a bill or listed on its official website.

In July, Pinellas County Animal Services and the Office of Consumer Protection warned residents about a caller posing as an animal control officer. The scammer claimed the victim's pet was undergoing surgery and demanded immediate payment over the telephone. Caller ID could even display what appeared to be an official county number. Pinellas County Animal Services does not provide veterinary services to the public, making such a request a clear warning sign.

Other scammers pose as representatives of Medicare, insurance companies, government benefits programs, banks, or credit card issuers. Their goal is often to obtain Social Security numbers, Medicare numbers, birth dates, account information, passwords, or verification codes. Once criminals obtain this information, they may open fraudulent accounts, apply for loans, change insurance coverage, or gain access to existing bank accounts.

Artificial intelligence is making impersonation scams more convincing. Criminals can copy a person's voice from a video or audio clip posted online, then use the imitation to create an emergency. Hearing a familiar voice is no longer proof that the caller is genuine. If someone claiming to be a relative requests money, hang up and call that person directly at a known number. Avoid saying the relative's name first, because doing so may give the scammer useful information. A family code word can provide another safeguard, but residents should still verify every unexpected request before sending money or sharing information.

Grandparent and family-emergency scams remain another serious threat, particularly for older residents. A caller may pretend to be a grandchild who has been arrested, injured in an accident, or stranded while traveling. Another scammer may then join the call while posing as an attorney, police officer, or medical professional. Victims are pressured to send money immediately and told not to contact other family members.



If such a call arrives, hang up and contact the relative directly using a telephone number you already know. Speaking with another family member can also quickly expose the deception. Families may want to establish a private code word that can be used to confirm someone's identity during a genuine emergency.

Home repair and contractor scams are a concern for Pinellas County homeowners, particularly after hurricanes or flooding. Fraudulent operators may arrive without being invited, claim to have leftover materials, exaggerate damage, or demand a deposit before disappearing. Others may begin work without permits, insurance, or the licenses required for the job, leaving homeowners responsible for unfinished repairs, code violations, or damage.

Before signing a contract, verify the contractor's license through the Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board or the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation. Ask for proof of general liability and workers' compensation insurance, check the company's complaint history, and obtain multiple written estimates. A legitimate contractor should provide an agreement describing the work, materials, total price, payment schedule, and expected completion date.

Avoid paying the full amount in advance and never allow anyone to pressure you into making an immediate decision. Payments should correspond with completed stages of work. Homeowners should also confirm that required permits have been obtained and request releases of lien from contractors, subcontractors, and suppliers before making final payment. Anyone suspecting unlicensed contracting can contact the Pinellas County Construction Licensing Board at (727) 582-6767. Consumer complaints may be reported to Pinellas County Consumer Protection.

The best defense is to slow down. Scammers rely on fear, secrecy, and urgency to prevent people from thinking clearly. Never provide personal or financial information to an unexpected caller, and never send gift cards, cryptocurrency, wire transfers, cash, or payments through mobile apps in response to threats or pressure.

Residents can also place a free credit freeze with Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion. A freeze makes it more difficult for an identity thief to open new accounts, although it does not prevent fraudulent activity involving existing accounts.

Anyone who suspects fraud should contact the bank, credit card company, or payment service involved as quickly as possible. Suspected scams may be reported to Pinellas County Consumer Protection at (727) 464-6200, the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office non-emergency line at (727) 582-6200, or the Federal Trade Commission at ReportFraud.ftc.gov. Identity theft victims can report the crime and receive a personalized recovery plan at IdentityTheft.gov.

Staying informed, verifying unexpected requests, and checking on vulnerable relatives and neighbors can help prevent these criminals from succeeding.

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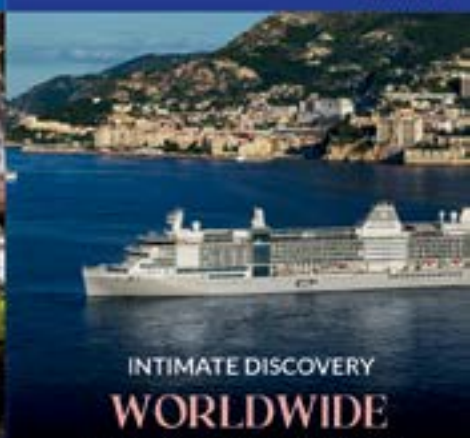
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A GREENER HOLIDAY AT HOME

A Florida holiday can feel festive without filling the trash bin with single-use decorations, wrapping, and packaging. With a little planning, homeowners can reuse what they already own, bring greenery indoors, and choose gifts that keep growing after the season ends.

Start with the decorations. The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) Extension suggests making swags and centerpieces from suitable plants already growing in the yard. Norfolk Island pine, red cedar, local pine, and beautyberry can add texture and color. Use only plants from your own property or with the owner's permission, and leave natural areas and public landscaping undisturbed. A few branches, pinecones, or seed heads can make a distinctive arrangement; save ribbons and bows for next year, and store ornaments in boxes you already have.

For gifts, think reusable before recyclable. Fabric bags, scarves, baskets, and gift bags can be used again. Newspaper, paper grocery bags, and old maps also make simple wrapping, especially with twine or a handmade tag. Pinellas County accepts paper-only wrapping paper in recycling, but foil paper, ribbons, bows, garland, and Christmas lights should stay out of the recycling bin. Reuse or donate them when possible, and check local guidance before placing anything in curbside recycling.

A simple houseplant, herb, or secondhand ornament can be just as thoughtful as a new purchase. A living plant can make a thoughtful gift, but match it to the recipient's space and Florida's climate. UF/IFAS lists rosemary, Christmas cactus, amaryllis, poinsettias, and small Norfolk Island pines among holiday gift options. Native holly can thrive in Florida landscapes, but it needs a suitable outdoor spot. Include a care note, and avoid promising a plant can be transplanted unless its needs and the recipient's yard are a good fit.

Those considering a living Christmas tree should plan ahead. UF/IFAS recommends selecting a tree suited to Florida and the available yard space. Keep it indoors only briefly—about seven to 10 days—and keep its roots moist, not waterlogged. After the holidays, allow it to readjust outdoors before planting. A living tree can grow large, so check its mature size and planting location first.

For a cut tree, find out how it can be reused after the holidays. Pinellas County encourages residents to use available tree-to-mulch programs, which turn trees into mulch for gardens. Collection rules vary by municipality, so check with your city or waste hauler before leaving a tree at the curb. Remove all lights, ornaments, tinsel, and stands before disposal.

A greener celebration does not depend on perfection or an entirely new set of supplies. Reusing decorations, choosing practical gifts, and giving a tree or greenery a second life are small steps that can make the season feel both personal and less wasteful.

Community News

FLORIDA BOTANICAL GARDENS



More than one million colorful lights will brighten the Florida Botanical Gardens in Largo during the annual Holiday Lights in the Gardens celebration. The event runs nightly from November 27th through January 2nd, from 5:30–9:30 p.m.

Visitors can stroll garden paths lined with illuminated trees, plants, and holiday displays. Highlights include a multicolored light tunnel, an 18-foot Christmas tree in the Wedding Garden, glowing animal figures, and laser projections. Local entertainers, seasonal food and drinks, and family activities add to the festivities. Families can also explore the Majeed Discovery Garden.

A suggested donation of $10 per person for guests older than 12 supports garden maintenance, educational programs, and improvements. The trails are ADA accessible, and well-behaved, leashed pets are welcome. Wheelchairs and scooters are not available for rent on-site.

Free parking is available at 12520 Ulmerton Road and 12211 Walsingham Road. Visitors should collect a color-coded entrance sticker to help locate the correct exit when returning to their vehicles. For more information, visit flbgfoundation.org/holidaylights.

CASA PINELLAS

Nearly half of the residents at CASA Pinellas' domestic violence shelter are children. Community members can support survivors this holiday season by donating to CASA's Hope for the Holidays Drive.

All gifts must be new and unwrapped. Suggested donations include LEGO sets, tablets, dollhouses, Barbies, bath and body gift sets, makeup, board games, sensory play toys, arts and crafts kits, remote-controlled cars and boats, Bluetooth speakers and headphones, and toys featuring Peppa Pig, Bluey, Paw Patrol, Disney, Star Wars, Fisher-Price, Playskool, Hot Wheels, or Matchbox. The list offers options ranging from creative and sensory activities to games, electronics, and toys.

Gift cards to Walmart, Target, or Amazon are the drive's top-requested gift. They allow survivors to choose what they need most, rather than receiving items selected for them. CASA encourages community members to consider a gift card or an item from the suggested list when making a donation.

Donations can be dropped off at 1019 Arlington Ave. North in St. Petersburg. CASA collection boxes are also available by request for groups or locations that want to help gather gifts. All donated items should remain unwrapped.

The drive supports survivors and families staying at the shelter during the holiday season. A contribution can help provide choices for adults and children as they select gifts that suit their needs and interests. CASA's 24-hour domestic violence hotline is (727) 895-4912. Visit CASAPinellas.org or follow @casapinellas for more information.











Community News

MEASE DUNEDIN HOSPITAL

Submitted by Lauretta Fernandez

Mease Dunedin Hospital is seeking volunteers for a variety of roles throughout the hospital and in the community.

Visitor Services volunteers greet patients and visitors and provide escort assistance at the main hospital and Physician Office Building. The hospital's Gift Shop needs volunteers to help staff the shop, assist with merchandising and displays, and expand its operating hours.

Volunteers can also help at the Tree House Resale Shop, supporting the hospital while serving community shoppers, or assist with creating floral arrangements.

The Carelift Van Transportation Service offers another opportunity to help neighbors access healthcare. Available Monday–Friday, Carelift provides free transportation to BayCare hospital campuses for ambulatory community members who lack reliable transportation. Volunteers can serve as part of the transportation team, helping connect residents with the care they need.

To learn more or schedule a volunteer interview, contact volunteer coordinators Lauretta Fernandez at lauretta.fernandez@baycare.org or Tina Huelsman at tina.huelsman@baycare.org. Both coordinators can be reached at (727) 734-6046.

STUDIO 1212

Submitted by Colleen Baxter

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

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

HONEYMOON ISLAND BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL

The annual Honeymoon Island Bluegrass Festival returns Saturday, December 5th, at Honeymoon Island State Park in Dunedin. Presented by the Friends of the Island Parks, the event will feature six hours of live music, from 11 a.m.–5 p.m.

The festival will also include a children's play area, food trucks, and a silent auction. Free trolley rides will take guests between the parking area and the event. Attendees are encouraged to bring beach chairs or blankets.

Early bird tickets are $18, and admission at the gate is $25. For tickets and more information, visit friendsoftheislandparks.org. The Friends of the Island Parks is a North Pinellas volunteer organization that supports Honeymoon Island and Caladesi Island state parks.

MILITARY ORDER OF WORLD WARS

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

Community News

TAMPA BAY IRISH

Building on the 50-year legacy of The Florida West Coast Irish American Club, a new Executive Board took the reins in 2023, expanding the mission to share Irish culture, history, and heritage year-round under a new name. The Tampa Bay Irish is a nonprofit, all-volunteer Irish cultural organization created to preserve, promote, and celebrate Ireland, Irish history, and Irish American culture throughout the Tampa Bay area. It hosts globally acclaimed Celtic music acts at its adopted home venue, the Andrews Memorial Chapel, a historic landmark and the second-oldest building in Dunedin.

To enhance appreciation for Irish culture, the Tampa Bay Irish also hosts whiskey and chocolate tastings, Irish film nights, Irish and Scottish dance performances, a Celtic Christmas show, a monthly Irish traditional music session at Flanagan's Irish pub, an annual St. Patrick's Day dance, and a multi-day, multi-venue celebration of Celtic music and dance in January called the Moonshine Music Fest.

Events scheduled for this fall include a Guinness & Dark Chocolate tasting concert, and its Irish Christmas. The highlight of the season is the week-long festival in January. The Fest features a Celtic film night in partnership with the Dunedin International Film Festival, an intimate and very special concert at the Chapel featuring the new album launch for Scottish sensations Skerryvore, and a full-on Celtic rock show at Edinburgh Hall.

More information about its events and annual membership options can be found at TampaBayIrish.org.

DUNEDIN WINES THE BLUES

Downtown Dunedin will host the annual Wines the Blues festival on Saturday, November 14th, from 2–10 p.m. Presented by the Dunedin Chamber of Commerce, the event will feature live music at Pioneer Park, along with wine, craft beer from local breweries, and food from area restaurants and vendors.

The lineup includes the Will Johns Band from 2–4 p.m., Ben Prestage from 4–6 p.m., Papa J & Mo' Soul from 6–8 p.m., and the Joe Marcinek Band featuring Berry Oakley Jr. from 8–10 p.m. The event poster notes that vendors are wanted, and VIP tickets are available.

For tickets, volunteer opportunities, vendor information, and sponsorship packages, visit WinesTheBluesDunedin.com.

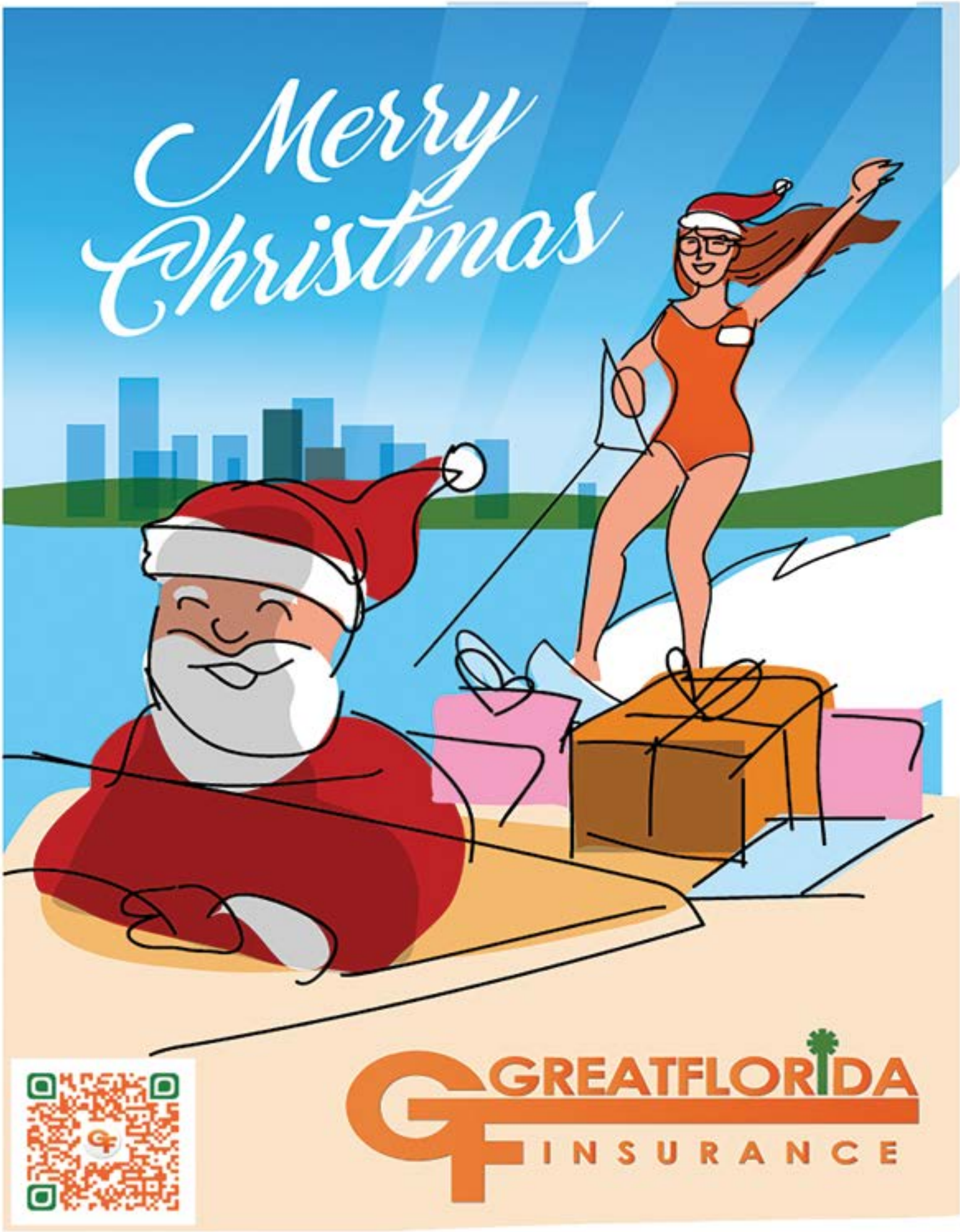
WREATHS ACROSS AMERICA

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

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






Merry Christmas
GREATFLORIDA
INSURANCE