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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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From Whig to the White House

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

Twelve-year-old Gabe Williams helped rescue dozens of sea turtle hatchlings trapped on Clearwater Beach.

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Holiday Events

Find festive parades, glowing gardens, lighted boats, and family celebrations this holiday season.

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CREDITS

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INDIAN ROCKS BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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

Do you need another copy? Ask for them at USA Grocers, CVS Drug Store, Beach Welcome Center, City Hall, and Indian Rocks Beach Library.

We hope you enjoyed our magazine. We want your input. Did you like this issue? What suggestions do you have for future articles? Call or email us.

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

Thank you for reading,

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SEE YOU AGAIN IN JANUARY!

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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
IRB Rotary Big Game Raffle	6
Beach Waves Beach Bash	7
Beach Art Center Exhibition and Art Sale	7
Rockin' for Heroes VFW Post 10094	7
Dunedin Art Harvest	7-8
SAVOR St. Pete Food & Wine Fest	7-8
The ANNIKA LPGA at Pelican	9-15
O.A.R. at the Sound	12
Rock the Rocks Crabby Bills	14
Belleair Beach Yard Sale	14
IRB Community Garage Sale	14-15
Reggae Sound Splash Fest the Sound	15
Sanding Ovations Treasure Island	19-22
Suncoast Jazz Festival	20-22
Beach Art Center Holiday Market	21
Dunedin Celtic Music & Beer Fest	21
Festival of Trees at the Long Center	21
Largo Holiday Lights Begins	26
Achieva Turkey Trot	26
Holiday Lights in the Gardens Begins	27

DECEMBER

Christmas at the Plaza Belleair Bluffs	3
Christmas Tree Lighting	4
Belleair Bluffs Tree Lighting	4
Hanukkah	4-12
Run Run Rudolph! 5k Clearwater	5
Belleair Holiday Parade and Party	5
Beach Art Center Brushes on the Beach	5
Christmas Street Parade	6
Rotary Big Game Raffle Drawing	6
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	7
City Commission Meeting	8
Clearwater Yacht Club Boat Parade	12
Lighted Boat Parade	19
Jingle Bell Family Fest Coachman Park	19
Largo Old Fashioned XMas Parade	19
Winter Solstice	21
Christmas Day	25
Boxing Day	26
ReliaQuest Bowl Game	31
Light it Up Clearwater	31
Coco's IRB New Year's Eve Party	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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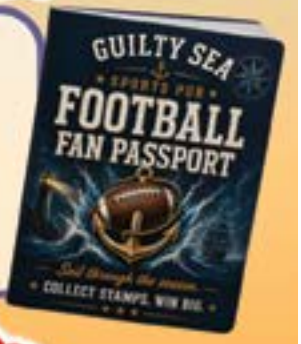


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Did You Know



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...

NO SMOKING ON THE BEACH Indian Rocks Beach has prohibited cigarettes and vaping on the city's public beaches under Ordinance 2026-04, which took effect September 8th. The City Commission unanimously approved the measure to help keep the shoreline clean and welcoming for residents and visitors.



The ordinance covers the possession and use of cigarettes, filtered cigars, electronic cigarettes, and vaping devices. It does not prohibit unfiltered cigars. Other exceptions apply to certain city-sponsored or co-sponsored events specifically approved by the City Commission, and to areas the Commission may designate for smoking by resolution.

The city says the restrictions are intended to reduce exposure to secondhand smoke, limit cigarette butt and vaping-related litter, and protect coastal resources and wildlife. Keeping discarded items off the sand can help preserve the beach environment and maintain the shoreline for public use.

Residents and visitors are encouraged to follow posted beach rules and share information about the ordinance with family, friends, and guests. The city also encourages local businesses and vacation rental hosts to inform beachgoers about the change.

The measure adds smoking and vaping restrictions to existing efforts to care for Indian Rocks Beach's public shoreline. Community members can help support those efforts by observing the rules and disposing of waste properly.

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/Events-and-Meetings/Achieva-Clearwater-Turkey-Trot.

OUR NEXT ISSUE IS IN JANUARY 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.

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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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TEN TIMES YOU SHOULD REVIEW YOUR ESTATE PLANNING DOCUMENTS

By Ray Ferrara, ProVise Management Group



When was the last time you reviewed legal documents? These important documents are created and then forgotten for years. Yet life changes, laws change, and financial circumstances change. An outdated estate plan can create confusion, unnecessary expenses, and unintended consequences.

Here are ten key situations that should trigger a review of your legal documents:

1) Even if nothing significant has changed, review your documents periodically. A quick review can confirm that your wishes remain current and that your powers of attorney are still accepted by financial institutions.

2) A change in marital status is one of the most important reasons to update documents. Newly married couples should coordinate their estate plans, while divorced individuals should promptly remove former spouses from documents and beneficiary designations.

3) If a beneficiary, executor, trustee, or agent under a power of attorney has died or become unable to serve, replacements should be named as soon as possible.

4) Review whether your current strategy still makes sense. Depending on your circumstances, a living trust, payable-on-death (POD), or transfer-on-death (TOD) designation may help simplify the transfer of assets and avoid probate delays.

5) The people you selected years ago to serve as executors, trustees, or agents may no longer be the best choice. Consider whether they remain willing, capable, and appropriate for the role.

6) Births, adoptions, estrangements, special needs, charitable interests, and changes in a beneficiary's financial situation may justify revisions to your plan.

7) Estate planning laws vary by state. If you relocate, have your documents reviewed to ensure they remain valid and effective under your new state's laws.

8) Receiving an inheritance, selling a business, purchasing property, winning a lawsuit, or experiencing a substantial increase or decrease in wealth can all affect your planning needs.

9) Retirement accounts, life insurance policies, and other assets pass according to beneficiary forms, not your will. Review these designations regularly and be sure primary and contingent beneficiaries are properly named.

10) Changes in federal or state tax laws may create new planning opportunities or require updates to your existing strategy.

The bottom line: don't procrastinate. Keeping your estate planning documents current can provide peace of mind, protect your loved ones, and help ensure your wishes are conducted as intended.

Contact us to schedule a complimentary one-hour consultation in our Clearwater office, or via Zoom, to review your estate planning strategy.

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DATA CENTERS: OPPORTUNITY, IMPACT, AND FLORIDA'S GROWING DEBATE

Data centers are buildings filled with computer servers. They support cloud storage, streaming services, online shopping, government operations, and artificial intelligence. As people and businesses use more digital services, developers are looking for sites with dependable electricity, land, fast fiber connections, and favorable tax policies. That growth has started a debate across Florida.

Supporters say data centers are an important part of modern life. New facilities can create construction jobs, attract private investment, increase property-tax revenue, and help technology businesses grow. They also provide computing power used by hospitals, schools, companies, and government agencies. Supporters believe communities that welcome data centers could be better prepared for a technology-based economy.

Critics and local officials are concerned about the resources these facilities require. Large data centers can use enormous amounts of electricity, while some cooling systems need large amounts of water. Nearby residents may also worry about noise, diesel backup generators, environmental effects, and expensive utility upgrades. Communities must also decide whether the permanent jobs and tax revenue are worth the land and infrastructure a data center may require.

Florida lawmakers addressed some of these concerns this year. A new state law created requirements for large electricity customers and added water-permitting rules for large-scale data centers. The law calls for utility rates designed to place appropriate infrastructure costs on major power users. It also allows cities and counties to control where data centers may be built through local zoning and long-term development plans. Certain projects seeking large amounts of water must provide more information, and reclaimed water should be used when practical.



The issue has reached Pinellas County, where open land is scarce and homes and businesses are often close together. In Pinellas Park, American Tower proposed replacing a light-industrial building near Bryan Dairy Road with a data-processing facility measuring about 17,000 square feet. The company said the project would be a smaller operation, not an artificial-intelligence center. The application was later withdrawn.

In August 2026, the Pinellas Park City Council approved a one-year pause on new or expanded data centers. During that period, officials plan to study how the facilities could affect utilities, public safety, the environment, and nearby properties. The pause does not mean that future projects will automatically be approved or rejected.

Pinellas County commissioners have also directed staff to prepare a resolution explaining that large, stand-alone data centers are already prohibited in unincorporated areas because county zoning does not list them as an allowed use. That position would not apply inside the county's 24 municipalities, which set their own zoning rules.

For local residents, the debate centers on several questions: Where should data centers be located, who should pay for infrastructure improvements, and what protections should be required?

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Bar & Restaurant News



BEACH BASH RETURNS Beach Waves Grill's 6th Annual Beach Bash returns November 7th, from 11 a.m.–9 p.m. Enjoy live music throughout the day, fresh seafood, and drink specials. Stone crab season will be in full swing, with stone crab ready to enjoy.

DJ D-Bo will spin old-fashioned vinyl from 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m., followed by Eric Engle from 12:30–2:30 p.m. and Shane Ryan from 3–5:15 p.m. Headlining this year's Beach Bash, Saltwater Crush will perform from 6:30–9 p.m., playing your favorite country, classic rock, pop, and alternative songs.

Come for the music and food, stay for the fun! Beach Waves Grill is located at 2300 Gulf Blvd. To view the menu, visit BeachWavesGrill.com.

CLOSED, BUT NOT FOR GOOD Monstah Lobstah & JD's Back Porch, located at 125 Gulf Boulevard in Indian Rocks Beach, closed in September as its owners prepare to rebuild the property from the ground up.

Like many businesses along Florida's Gulf Coast, the building sustained significant damage during the 2024 hurricane season. After extensive evaluations and discussions with contractors and architects, the owners concluded that additional repairs would only continue a cycle of temporary fixes without addressing the property's underlying problems.

The new Monstah Lobstah will be a multilevel restaurant designed specifically for a coastal environment. The building will include stairs and an elevator.

The rooftop will become JD's Rooftop Bar, bringing back many of the features guests loved about JD's, including live music, dancing, and piano nights. With 360-degree views of the beach and Intracoastal Waterway, the rooftop will also display historic photographs, preserved pieces from the original JD's, and a few surprises celebrating the property's history.

During construction, guests are invited to visit the company's sister restaurants: The Original Crabby Bill's, Guilty Sea Sports Pub, Jake's Coastal Cantina, and Pipo N Betty's Bakery. Follow Monstah Lobstah on Facebook for construction updates.

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

CRABBY BILL'S BRINGS BACK BREAKFAST



With Monstah Lobstah closed for rebuilding, diners looking for breakfast can visit its sister restaurant, The Original Crabby Bill's, at 401 Gulf Blvd. The restaurant has brought back its breakfast menu, which includes classics such as the Dock Breakfast, pancakes, and biscuits and gravy.

Guests can also choose from specialty dishes, including a Breakfast Cuban sandwich, Key lime pie French toast, and Cajun shrimp and grits. The full breakfast menu is available at CrabbyBills.com. For information about specials and upcoming events, follow the restaurant on Facebook or call (727) 595-4825.

FORE! FOR FALL AT BOGEY'S TAVERN Golf legends, Prohibition-era speakeasies, and Northeastern hospitality come together at Bogey's Tavern, a newly opened restaurant created by husband-and-wife team Pam Dufour and Mike D'Ottavio.

Located at 300 East Bay Drive, across from Largo Central Park, the 3,700-square-foot tavern can accommodate approximately 140 guests with indoor and outdoor dining. It also features a full-liquor bar and a private party room.
Bogey's regularly offers live acoustic music, Sunday brunch, and happy-hour specials. Its menu draws inspiration from traditional New England and Mid-Atlantic cuisine, with selections such as New England clam chowder, baked Atlantic cod, mussels, and Rhode Island calamari. Guests will also find familiar pub favorites and a rotating selection of specials.

For operating hours and the complete menu, visit BogeysTavernLargo.com. For additional information, follow Bogey's Tavern on Facebook or call (727) 314-4000.

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.





LOCAL HOLIDAY EVENTS



Indian Rocks Beach Holiday Events

December 4th, 7 p.m.

Christmas Tree Lighting

12 Avenue Park, 47 12th Avenue N

Residents and visitors alike are invited to attend this community event, which includes music, hot chocolate, and a festive atmosphere to kick off the holiday season. You can find the most up-to-date information by checking the official City of Indian Rocks Beach calendar at Indian-Rocks-Beach.com.

December 6th, 1–4 p.m.

(Line-up begins at noon)

Christmas Street Parade

Kolb Park, 1508 Bay Palm Blvd

This citywide Holiday Street Parade includes local merchants, small floats and holiday music. The parade runs through the neighborhood streets and Parade participants often throw candy, dog biscuits, and beads to the attendees along the parade route. Bring your lawn chairs, children, and your canine companions to enjoy the IRB Street Parade, ending at Kolb Park.

December 19th, 7–10 p.m.

(Boats gather at 6:30 p.m.)

Lighted Christmas Boat Parade

Intracoastal Waterway

The signature holiday event of Indian Rocks Beach. Instead of a strictly judged competition, local boaters decorate their vessels with thousands of twinkling lights and cruise up the Intracoastal Waterway, led by the Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District. The parade sets sail from the southern end of the Holiday Inn Harbourside and is easily visible from local docks, public parks, waterfront restaurants, and the bridges connecting the island to the mainland.

Nearby Holiday Events

November 26th–December 7th, 5–10 p.m.

Largo Central Park Holiday Lights & Carnival Rides

101 Central Park Drive, Largo

This family-friendly annual tradition presented by the City of Largo features a spectacular holiday light display, with more than two million dazzling LED lights. It is free to park and walk to the view lights, amusement rides are $6 for one ride, $50 for ten rides. Dogs are welcome but must remain on the leash at all times. Call (727) 587-6740 x5014 for more information.

November 27th–January 2nd

Holiday Lights in the Gardens

Florida Botanical Gardens, 12520 Ulmerton Road, Largo

The Gardens will sparkle with over one million twinkling LED lights in a multitude of colors, and lighted figures round out our display and wow guests of all ages. Donations of $10 per person over 12 years old are greatly appreciated. Donations go to help maintain the Gardens and provide programming. It also allows the Foundation to improve and expand the Gardens, such as the recent addition of the Majeed Discovery Garden. The Foundation is a not for profit 501(c)3.

December 3rd, 6–9 p.m.

Christmas at the Plaza

100 Indian Rocks Road, Belleair Bluffs

Join the Shops at The Plaza for their annual Christmas at The Plaza musical holiday event. Fresh Brass of Belleair, a brass quintet consisting of local musicians that perform and teach in Pinellas County, will be performing as well as the IRB Christian High School Ensemble. Refreshments will be served, and the shops will be open for this event.

December 4th, 6–8 p.m.

Belleair Bluffs Tree Lighting

City Hall, 2747 Sunset Blvd, Belleair Bluffs

Following a welcome by Mayor Chris Arbutine and the City Commission, the holiday tree will be lit heralding the arrival of Santa. This free event includes Santa, live music, hot cocoa bar and cookies, face painting, petting zoo and more. Sunset Blvd will be closed to all traffic to accommodate the event.

December 12th, 6 p.m.

Clearwater Yacht Club's 52nd Annual Lighted Holiday Boat Parade

Intracoastal Waterway

Clearwater Yacht Club invites you to come and celebrate over half a century of maritime magic with their 52nd Anniversary Holiday Lighted Boat Parade! Enjoy a night filled with beautifully decorated boats, festive music, and holiday cheer! This lighted, nautical event celebrates the spirit of the holidays and raises funds for sailing scholarships at the Clearwater Community Sailing Center for youth in the Boys and Girls Club of the Suncoast. The parade will launch at 6 p.m. north of the Mandalay Channel Bridge. It circles Island Estates, passes Coachman Park, heads toward the Sand Key Bridge, and ends at Clearwater Beach Marina, where judging takes place. Spectators can expect a vibrant display of boats decked out in dazzling holiday décor, accompanied by festive music and cheer. For parade routes, more information, or to register visit ClearwaterYachtClub.org or call (727) 447-6000.

December 19th, noon

Largo's Old Fashioned Christmas Parade

Downtown Largo

The parade begins at the corner of First Avenue and Fourth Street Southwest and circles the streets of Downtown Largo. Hosted by the Rotary Club of Largo, the parade features decorated floats, local dance troupes, fire trucks, marching bands, and Santa Claus.

December 31st, 8 p.m.–12:30 a.m.

Light It Up Clearwater

301 Drew St

Fireworks will light up the sky at midnight. Watch from all along Clearwater Beach, especially near the southern end of Clearwater Beach. Note that the fireworks will be set off from the north end of Sand Key, across the bridge from Clearwater Beach. Many hotels and restaurants have special events going on that night including such as Shepard's, JW Marriot, and The Edge Hotel.

Dates and times are sublect to change. Please verify event information as they approach.



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THE HIDDEN HITS: WHAT CTE RESEARCH MEANS FOR ATHLETES AND FAMILIES



By Pete Magnani, Publisher

Football fields and hockey rinks have long been places where young athletes learn teamwork, discipline, and resilience. But growing evidence about chronic traumatic encephalopathy, better known as CTE, is changing how leagues, coaches, and parents think about the repeated hits that come with collision sports.

CTE is a progressive brain disease associated with long-term exposure to repeated head impacts. Those impacts include diagnosed concussions, but also smaller blows that may produce no immediate symptoms. Over time, abnormal deposits of a protein called tau can damage brain tissue. Researchers have linked CTE pathology with problems involving memory, thinking, mood, and behavior, although those symptoms can have many other causes. At present, CTE can be definitively diagnosed only after death through examination of brain tissue.

A study published in *The BMJ* in August provides one of the clearest estimates yet of the disease among former National Football League players. Researchers identified 878 former NFL players who died from 2016 through 2021. Of the 235 whose brains were donated for study, 215—more than 91 percent—had CTE.

That does not mean 91 percent of all NFL players develop the disease. Families who suspect neurological problems may be more likely to donate a loved one's brain, creating what researchers call selection bias. To address that limitation, the study calculated a conservative minimum: even if none of the players whose brains were not studied had CTE, at least 24.5 percent of all former NFL players who died during those six years had the disease. The true rate could be considerably higher. Severe, Stage IV CTE was also associated with an increased risk of dementia among the brain donors.

Football is not alone. CTE has been identified in participants in boxing, rugby, soccer, and other activities involving repeated impacts. A 2024 JAMA Network Open study examined the brains of 77 deceased male ice hockey players, from youth competitors to professionals. Researchers found CTE in 42 of them, including 27 of 28 former professional players. After accounting for factors such as age, position, other contact sports, and reported concussions, the odds of CTE increased with each additional year of hockey played.

Those numbers also require caution. The hockey sample was small, limited to male brain donors and was not representative of everyone who plays the sport. The study cannot tell a family the absolute risk facing one particular child. Still, its dose-response pattern—more years of exposure associated with more disease—reinforces the central concern: *cumulative contact matters*.

That message is especially important in youth sports, where exposure to routine impacts can begin years before college or professional play. CDC research involving players ages 6 to 14 found that tackle football athletes sustained 15 times as many head impacts and 23 times as many high-magnitude impacts as flag football players during practices and games. The point is not that every hit causes lasting harm, or that every contact-sport athlete will develop CTE. Scientists still do not know why some exposed athletes develop the disease and others do not. The practical goal is to reduce avoidable impacts while preserving the benefits of sports participation.

Football programs are responding by offering flag football at younger ages, limiting full-contact practice, teaching age-appropriate tackling that keeps the head out of contact, and enforcing penalties for targeting or leading with the helmet. The NFL has also changed kickoff rules, penalized improper use of the helmet, tested helmets, and added unaffiliated medical personnel to help identify possible concussions. No helmet, however, can prevent the brain from moving inside the skull, so equipment should be viewed as one layer of protection rather than a guarantee.

Hockey has taken similar steps. USA Hockey delayed legal body checking until age 13 and strengthened penalties for head contact. At the professional level, the NHL uses in-arena and central concussion spotters who can require a player to be removed for evaluation after visible signs of a possible brain injury. Reducing checking, fighting, and dangerous contact—and teaching players to respect rather than exploit vulnerable positions—can decrease exposure at every level.

Florida law adds another layer of protection for organized youth teams. Programs must educate coaches, athletes, and parents about concussion risks, obtain annual informed consent, immediately remove a player suspected of a concussion, and require written medical clearance before that athlete returns. The Florida High School Athletic Association also requires annual concussion education for student-athletes and coaches.

Parents should ask whether a league limits contact in practice, trains coaches in concussion recognition, enforces head-contact rules, and follows a gradual return-to-play protocol. Warning signs after a hit can include headache, dizziness, confusion, balance problems, nausea, sensitivity to light or noise, and unusual behavior. A suspected concussion should never be treated as something to "shake off," and an athlete should not return the same day.

Sports will always carry risk, but tradition does not require ignoring new evidence. The most responsible path is neither panic nor complacency. It is to reduce unnecessary blows, recognize injuries quickly, and put a young athlete's long-term brain health ahead of the next play, shift, or game.

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Business Briefs



BOULEVARD DENTAL WELCOMES NEW PRACTITIONER Boulevard Dental Belleair, located at 1016 Ponce de Leon Blvd., has welcomed Dr. Matthew Dockus to its growing practice.

A St. Petersburg native, Dr. Dockus earned degrees in microbiology and biomedical sciences from the University of South Florida before completing his Doctor of Dental Medicine degree at Nova Southeastern University in 2015.

Dr. Dockus provides comprehensive dental care for adults and children, including root canals, oral surgery, and dental implant placement. He emphasizes strong patient relationships, individualized treatment plans, and evidence-based dentistry supported by continuing education and active professional memberships.

Dr. Dockus is now accepting new patients at Boulevard Dental Belleair. Visit BoulevardDentalBelleair.com for more information or to request an appointment.

MEDSPA EXPANDS IN BELLEAIR Olive & Honey MedSpa has expanded into a larger location at 1016 Ponce de Leon Boulevard in Belleair.

Founder Jeannine Bernstein-Cagle, DNP(c), MSN, RN, CCRN, created the practice as a welcoming destination where healthcare, aesthetics, wellness, and prevention come together through clinically guided care. A fourth-generation Clearwater resident, she brings more than two decades of experience in oral surgery, critical care, nursing education, clinical operations, and executive leadership.

The expanded space features additional private treatment rooms and more room for personalized healthcare, aesthetic, and wellness services. Bernstein-Cagle's advanced aesthetic training emphasizes facial anatomy, patient safety, precise treatment planning, and natural-looking results.

Olive & Honey also provides responsible medical management of GLP-1 therapy through individualized screening, ongoing monitoring, nutrition guidance, and support for sustainable health improvements.

The practice's name reflects the olive's associations with longevity and protection and honey's connections to nourishment and restoration.

Olive & Honey will celebrate its expanded space in November, with the date and details to be announced. For more information about the medspa and its services, visit OliveandHoneyMedspa.com.

VACATION-RENTAL FEES CHANGE Indian Rocks Beach has updated its annual vacation-rental registration fees, effective October 1st. The city adopted the new fees on September 8th after reviewing the first three years of its registration program. The registration fee is $600 per unit for both new applications and renewals. A new business tax receipt costs $26.25, while a renewal costs $10.50. The city also charges $150 for an inspection and $75 for a reinspection. Renewals submitted after the 12-month registration period expire incur an additional $200 late fee.

The fees are intended to cover the city's costs to process and regulate vacation rentals.

Business Briefs



THE ANNIKA RETURNS TO PELICAN GOLF CLUB

The ANNIKA driven by Gainbridge at Pelican will return to Pelican Golf Club in Belleair during the week of November 9th–15th. The LPGA tournament's four competition rounds are scheduled for November 12th–15th, with a $3.25 million purse. Proceeds benefit the ANNIKA Foundation, which supports girls' and women's golf.

Bradenton native Nelly Korda, a three-time winner of the tournament, is expected to compete alongside defending champion Linn Grant, Lydia Ko, and Brooke Henderson. Korda will try to become the tournament's first four-time champion.

Daily and weekly grounds tickets, along with hospitality packages such as the Lightning Lounge, are on sale at TheAnnika.com.

BOUTIQUE HOTEL PLANNED FOR BELLEAIR BLUFFS

A 100-room boutique hotel is planned for a longtime-vacant 1.67-acre lot on West Bay Drive, between Belleair Plaza and the Belleair Causeway Bridge. The Belleair Bluffs City Commission unanimously approved a development agreement with Belleair Bluffs Hotel LLC on September 14th. The company is led by local hotelier Tony Utegaard.

Estimated to cost $30 million to $40 million, the hotel would be the city's largest development since the new causeway bridge opened in 2009. At the time of the approval, Utegaard said he hoped to begin construction in the fall or winter and open the hotel in early 2028.

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.









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.



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.







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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ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND HIS THREE PARTIES

By Bob Griffin, Contributing Historian

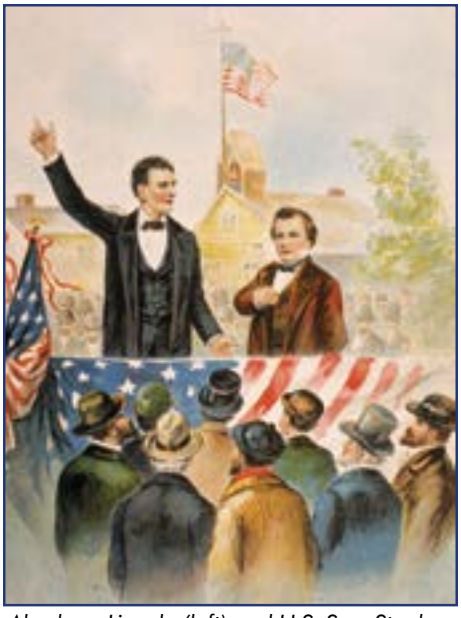
With the 2026 midterm elections approaching, it is timely to examine how American political parties have changed. Florida's major parties are Republican and Democratic. No party affiliation (NPA) is distinct from membership in the minor Independent Party of Florida. Florida also recognizes minor parties,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

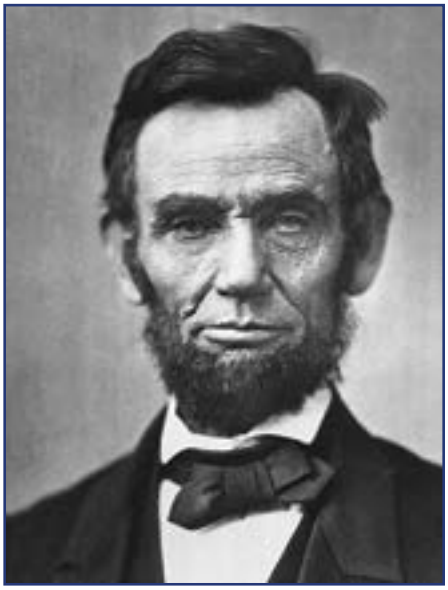


Photo by Alexander Gardner
November 8th, 1863

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.

Notable Listings by Angela Grieco, Realtor



700 West Condo
$1,265,000
19700 Gulf Blvd #202
Indian Shores



Island Way Tower
$929,000
223 Island Way #7F
Clearwater Beach



Lighthouse Pointe
$890,000
17980 Gulf Blvd #401
Redington Shores



Belleair Waterfront Home
$1,825,000
8 Sunset Bay Dr
Belleair



Waterside Former Model
$975,000
19915 Gulf Blvd #506
Indian Shores



Residences at Belleview Place
$1,900,000
85 Belleview Blvd #401
Belleair



Carriage Home Former Model
$2,300,000
6 Hibiscus Ln
Belleair



Sereno
$1,900,000
15208 Gulf Blvd #402
Madeira Beach



Onella Penthouse
$3,825,000
19816 Gulf Blvd #602
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NEW LOCATION AND RACES FOR RIDE AND RUN WITH THE STARS

From the Desk of Sheriff Bob Gualtieri



Every once in a while, it's time for a change. Since 1993, The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office's (PCSO) Ride and Run with the Stars has been held at the beautiful Fort De Soto Park. This year, for the first time, we'll be holding one of the area's largest law enforcement fundraising events in the vibrant city of Safety Harbor. Join us on Saturday, November 21st at the Safety Harbor Waterfront Park for a fun event for both families and serious runners and bicyclists.

All money raised at Ride and Run with the Stars goes to Pinellas County children and families in need through the Sheriff's Christmas Sharing Project. The holiday season should be a magical time for all children, but far too many local children are in want, with no holiday feast on the table and no presents to bring them joy. Throughout the year, our deputies are out in the community, meeting families and hearing their stories. Our dedicated Victim Advocates help victims of domestic violence, burglary, and other crimes, and get to know who might need a little extra assistance. Our close ties with the community allow us to make sure families who are experiencing difficulties because of economic hardship or who are victims of crime get the holiday help they need.

We have an exciting lineup of events this year. For all ages and skill levels we have the one-mile Family Fun Run, where people can walk, jog, skip, skate, or even cartwheel along an easy and scenic route. People have been asking for some longer races, and we listened. In addition to our usual 5K run, we've also added a 10K run. For bicyclists, this year we have both a 10-mile and a 62-mile ride.

If you're coming to race, the fun starts early, with registration and check-in beginning at 6 a.m. and the first races starting at 7 a.m. But for those families who just want to support a worthy cause and have a great time doing it, the Family Fun Run begins at 8:30 a.m. and there are lots of events and demonstrations that follow. At 10 a.m. one of our K-9 teams will give a demonstration, and at 10:30 a.m., Santa and Mrs. Claus will arrive by helicopter. Kids can share their Christmas dreams with them and pose for photos. We'll also have a kids' midway area with bounce houses and other family-friendly activities, including displays from our robot and drone teams and our specialty law enforcement vehicles.

Before Christmas, PCSO members are given wish lists from families in need and gather for a big shopping day. The kids ask for toys, electronics, bikes, and scooters. For younger kids, their parents often ask for educational toys, but they also request necessities like diapers, wipes, and bedding. Using funds raised at Ride and Run with the Stars, PCSO shoppers get as much as they can to make sure the kids have a great holiday season.

You can support Ride and Run with the Stars in a variety of ways. Visit our website, rideandrunwiththestars.com, to find out how to enter a race, donate to our basket raffle, or sponsor a family for the Christmas Sharing Project.

CAN PROBIOTICS HELP MANAGE BLOOD SUGAR?



Probiotics are commonly promoted for digestive health, but researchers are also examining whether they can help manage blood sugar. Findings are encouraging for adults with prediabetes or Type 2 diabetes, although probiotics cannot replace medication, exercise, or a healthy diet.

Probiotics are live bacteria or yeasts found in fermented foods and dietary supplements. They may influence the collection of microorganisms in the digestive tract, known as the gut microbiome. The microbiome may affect blood sugar by influencing inflammation, insulin sensitivity, the intestinal barrier, and how the body processes nutrients.

Recent reviews of clinical trials suggest that probiotic or synbiotic supplements may produce modest improvements in blood sugar. Synbiotics combine probiotics with prebiotics, which are fibers that feed beneficial intestinal bacteria.

A 2025 review of 48 studies found small improvements among people with prediabetes or Type 2 diabetes. On average, fasting blood sugar dropped by about seven points, while A1c—a measure of average blood sugar over two to three months—fell by about one-third of a percentage point. Other research found slightly greater improvements, but the overall evidence remains limited.

Results vary because researchers have tested different types and amounts of probiotics for different periods. Products containing Lactobacillus and Bifidobacterium are among the most widely studied. Supplements containing several strains may provide greater benefits than single-strain products. However, researchers have not identified the best probiotic, dosage, or treatment period for managing blood sugar.

Probiotic products are not interchangeable. A benefit associated with one formulation does not mean every product labeled "probiotic" will produce the same result. Consumers should look for labels that identify individual strains and list the number of live organisms expected through the expiration date. Independent quality verification, such as a USP seal, may offer additional reassurance.

Food sources include yogurt, kefir, sauerkraut, kimchi, and other fermented products, although not every fermented food contains live probiotic cultures. People with diabetes should check nutrition labels because flavored yogurts, sweetened drinks, and similar products may contain considerable added sugar.

Probiotics usually cause only mild, temporary gas or bloating in healthy adults. People who are severely ill, immunocompromised, hospitalized, or using a central venous catheter should consult a physician before taking them.

For most people, probiotics are best viewed as a possible addition to established care—not a primary treatment. Prescribed medication, a high-fiber diet, regular exercise, adequate sleep, weight management, and appropriate medical care remain the foundations of blood sugar control. Because responses vary, tracking glucose readings can help patients discuss any noticeable changes with their physician or diabetes care team.

Editor's note: This article is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional medical advice. Consult your healthcare provider before beginning a supplement or changing your diabetes treatment.









COUNTY PASSES 2027 BUDGET

Pinellas County commissioners adopted a balanced fiscal year 2027 budget on September 24th, setting the General Fund property tax rate at 4.4989 mills. County officials say the rate is the lowest since 1989, marks the fifth reduction in six years, and is less than 1 percent above the full rollback rate.

The vote followed nine months of review as commissioners weighed rising costs, state and federal requirements, and calls to limit property taxes. The fiscal year began October 1st and runs through September 30th, 2027.

A mill represents $1 in tax for every $1,000 of taxable property value. At the adopted rate, a property with $200,000 in taxable value would owe about $900 in county General Fund taxes. That estimate does not include other taxes or assessments, and it is based on taxable value after applicable exemptions, not market price.

A lower rate does not necessarily mean a lower overall tax bill. Changes in taxable value, exemptions, and rates set by other authorities can affect what property owners pay. The county says its share accounts for less than one-third of a typical Pinellas property tax bill; schools, municipalities, transit, and other authorities make up the rest.

To reduce the rate, departments under the county administrator were directed to cut more than $16 million. The adopted budget eliminates dozens of positions, though the county did not specify how many were filled.

Transportation infrastructure, including roads, bridges, and sidewalks, lost $1.5 million. Human Services and other departments cut or found alternate funding for programs such as homelessness services and assistance for sexual assault victims. The reduction for those services exceeds $1 million.

The Sheriff's Office, the largest recipient of General Fund money, reduced its initial request by $7 million, including 10 vacant positions. Its budget still increased 4.7 percent as costs rose. The Clerk's Office cut $297,000, and Business Technology Services reduced its budget by $3.1 million, including five positions.

County officials say the budget protects life, health, and safety. The General Fund helps pay for the Sheriff's Office, Medical Examiner, courts, and other justice-system partners. It also supports transportation, drainage, and traffic management, although some planned spending was reduced.

After public opposition, commissioners kept funding for Weedon Island and Shell Key preserves for one year. Their funding beyond fiscal year 2027 remains unresolved.

The county also changed parking rates at its three beach parks and boat ramps, which officials estimate will generate about $3 million annually. During an earlier budget vote, commissioners lowered countywide property taxes by about $6 million from the original proposal, citing flat reserves, revised parking fees, and other savings.

The capital plan continues to prioritize life-safety projects, maintenance, and work supported by dedicated or outside funding. It also maintains spending for beach nourishment, coastal management, drainage, environmental protection, hurricane readiness, and transportation.

The budget supports Pinellas Recovers, a federally funded program for people affected by Hurricanes Debby, Helene, and Milton. That federal funding is separate from the General Fund tax rate.

The budget pairs a historically low General Fund rate with fewer positions, reduced funding for some services, and higher parking fees. The coming fiscal year will show how those changes affect county services and projects.

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.



Community News

ACTION 2000 IRB (A2K)

Submitted by Daryl Frahn

Oktoberfest on the Beach was a success! The weather cooperated, the crowds came out, and Oktoberfest on the Beach brought the community together for a festive celebration. Guests enjoyed Bavarian costumes, lively German music, brats, Wiener schnitzel, and German beer.

A2K thanks everyone who attended, volunteered, sponsored, and helped make this year's festival a success. Your support means so much to A2K and the community we all love.

Oktoberfest is A2K's major annual fundraiser, providing resources to beautify public spaces and preserve the unique character of Indian Rocks Beach. Thanks to the community's generosity, A2K is ready to move forward with several projects.

A2K is preparing to replenish the landscaping in front of the Beach Art Center, restoring an area damaged by Hurricane Helene and bringing back its welcoming appearance. The organization also plans to refresh the Gulf Boulevard medians with consistent plantings to create a more attractive, cohesive look along the main thoroughfare.

These projects are about more than plants and landscaping. They're about restoring the community, taking pride in shared spaces, and preserving the Old Florida charm that makes Indian Rocks Beach unique.

Every ticket purchased, sponsorship received, volunteer hour contributed, and act of support helps make Indian Rocks Beach a little more beautiful. Thank you for being part of the A2K community.

A2K also looks forward to taking part in upcoming community celebrations, including the holiday tree lighting and street parade. These events bring neighbors together, create lasting memories, and celebrate what makes Indian Rocks Beach a wonderful place to call home.

IRB Action 2000 is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to preserving the small-town character of Indian Rocks Beach while enhancing public spaces for residents and visitors. For more than 20 years, A2K volunteers have supported beautification, preservation, public art, historic markers, and other community projects.

Learn more, get involved, and help keep Indian Rocks Beach beautiful. Visit IRBAction2000.com/oktoberfest for more information.

CALVARY EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Save the date for the 22nd annual Winterfest on the Rocks on Saturday, February 13th, 2027, from 10 a.m.–4 p.m. at 1615 First Street in Indian Rocks Beach.

The family fundraising festival will feature indoor and outdoor activities, including music, entertainment, vendors, food trucks, a silent auction, prize drawings, children's games, and a patriotic pet parade honoring Presidents' Day. Visitors can also enjoy an old-fashioned bake sale, Girl Scout cookies, pulled pork plates, and hot dog specials.

For information about sponsorships, vendor participation, or silent auction donations, call (727) 595-2374 Monday–Thursday, 9 a.m.–1 p.m., or visit CalvaryIRB.org/winterfest.



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.

VACATION DONATIONS

Submitted by Diane Daniel

After a stay, give it away! Visitors, if you have leftover food you can't take home with you, please consider donating it to locals in need. To donate directly to pantries, visit VacationDonations.org/food for details. There also are Vacation Donation bins at some condo buildings, Plumlee Vacation Rentals office, Indian Rocks Café, and at Goin' Coastal. For your convenience, when possible, Vacation Donations will pick up food at your rental (IRB only). We accept unopened food and beverages, both perishables (fresh) and nonperishables, such as canned and boxed goods. When we do pick up, we will take everything! Most donations go to the Beach Community Food Pantry in IRB (which has its own bin outside).

To condos/apartment complexes with vacation rentals and shops with tourists: We'd love to put one of our donation bins on your property during high season. We do all the work!

For pickup, bin signup, or volunteering, call or text Diane at (727) 201-2333 or email vacationdonations@gmail.com.



Showcase Home Now Open!

Hopefully the political fighting in Washington will calm down now that the elections are over. That's probably wishful thinking. Being the eternal optimist, however, I believe that the housing market along the Pinellas Beaches will increase in activity. Housing prices here have remained somewhat level for the past two years, but home costs are poised to increase very soon. In the last years between 2019 to 2024, **housing price increases in Pinellas County grew at a pace of 11.57% annually!** That could well happen again based upon the Supply & Demand reality with the limited number of lots along the beach communities. We have been very busy building many new homes these past few years, and anticipate even more residential construction starting in 2027.

As such, we not only have a beautiful waterfront home in Indian Rocks Beach to show to prospective waterfront homebuyers, we have now opened an elevated furnished home in Madeira Beach, at the lowest price for new home construction along the Pinellas Beaches.

Our "Bimini Breeze" & "Bimini Harbor" homes were developed with the goal in mind to provide the most affordable home pricing along the beaches. Our model home 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. As with all the home prices we provide our customers, the price we quote is all inclusive, including site selection, the architect, structural & civil engineers, permitting, construction, site work, all to the Certificate of Occupancy! One Stop Shopping!! We also assist with mortgage financing for our customers.

Our new elevated home 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, all quality specifications throughout. **All at prices starting at only $375/sf Living Area ($178/sf Total Roofed Area).**

Our furnished Madeira Beach Showcase Home is now open. 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



Community News

BEACH ART CENTER

Submitted by Hope Fitch-Mickiewicz

The Beach Art Center is heading into the holiday season with a new community-wide art experience, special exhibitions, its annual Holiday Market, and opportunities to get creative through classes and workshops.

On Saturday, December 5th, Brushes on the Beach: A Plein Air Art Walk & Celebration will connect Gulf Coast beach communities through a day of outdoor painting and an evening gallery celebration.

From 10 a.m.–3 p.m., visitors can follow the Art Walk to discover artists painting at beaches, parks, waterfront locations, local landmarks, and businesses. Along the way, attendees can meet the artists and watch familiar scenes become original works of art.

The event is free to attend and will take place rain or shine. RSVPs are encouraged to help organizers plan and ensure an official Art Walk booklet is ready at check-in. Registered attendees should bring their emailed pass on December 5th to pick up a booklet containing an artist location map, artist biographies, and the event schedule. Walk-ins are also welcome.

The celebration continues at the Beach Art Center from 5–7 p.m. with a Gallery Show & Celebration featuring paintings created that day. Guests can meet the artists, bid on their favorite works in a silent auction, and enjoy live music, passed hors d'oeuvres, and drinks.



Brushes on the Beach is a participating event of Art Everywhere, Creative Pinellas' countywide celebration bringing arts experiences to communities throughout Pinellas County. The event receives partial funding through a Creative Pinellas Month of the Arts grant, with additional support from Visit St. Pete/Clearwater to welcome residents and visitors to experience the beach communities through art.

The center will also host an Elizabeth Barenis Exhibition & Art Sale on November 7th, from 6–8 p.m. Barenis' work appears in murals and public art in St. Petersburg, Dunedin, and Clearwater, in galleries throughout Tampa Bay, and at St. Pete–Clearwater International Airport. Her vibrant, nature-inspired paintings use a distinctive Abstract Precisionism style to transform Florida's palms, flowers, and landscapes into bold compositions of shape and color. The evening will feature a specially curated selection of her work. Admission is $5 for nonmembers and free for members.

The annual Holiday Market takes place November 21st, from 9 a.m.–4 p.m., offering unique, artist-made gifts, including art, jewelry, handcrafted pieces, and more.

A Holiday Gallery Show & Art Sale on December 12th, from 6–8 p.m., will offer another opportunity to discover and purchase original works by local artists. Artists interested in submitting work should watch for the center's upcoming Call to Artists.

Visit beachartcenter.org to RSVP for Brushes on the Beach, learn more about upcoming events, and explore the full schedule of creative classes and workshops.

FRIENDS OF THE IRB LIBRARY

Submitted by Diane Daniel

This year marks the 150th birthday of the modern American library -- and the Indian Rocks Beach Library has been around for a third of that time! We continue to renew our collection with more books for children and adults. Come see our new titles and browse in our second-hand bookstore! We also welcome book donations to fill the store and little free libraries around town (see a list on the library's website).

Our next Florida Explorers programs will be held on November 14th and December 12th at 11 a.m. We use books and nature programming to introduce kids to our state's unique marine ecosystem. Activities include art, reading, and crafts. Participation in the Saturday morning programs is free, but registration is required. Visit the city website for the link to our signup form.

Meanwhile, our regular programming continues. Next up in our "On the Rocks" book club is the novel "How to Stop Time" by Matt Haig. The books are in the library and ready to check out. The group meets on the last Tuesday of the month at 4 p.m. The next meeting is November 24th. There will be a break in December, and the club will start back on January 26th.

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

Happy holidays to all, and we look forward to seeing you at the Library!

For more information, call (727) 596-1822. For updates and news, see us on Facebook, at Indian Rocks Beach Library, and Friends of IRB Library.

CITY OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH

Submitted by Mishelle Hargett

Indian Rocks Beach has been named Best Beach Town by Creative Loafing, recognizing a community known for its Gulf shoreline, local businesses, and close-knit atmosphere.

The city's beaches and sunsets are a major draw, but residents say Indian Rocks Beach offers more than coastal scenery. Neighbors greet one another, local businesses serve as community gathering places, and longstanding traditions bring people together throughout the year.

Families make memories along the shore and at Kolb Park, while visitors can explore local dining, outdoor activities, and the city's waterfront. Community events also give residents and guests opportunities to meet, celebrate, and support local organizations.

The recognition reflects the contributions of the people who help shape the city, including residents, business owners, volunteers, community organizations, visitors, and Team IRB members. Their time and involvement help maintain the welcoming character that many residents value.

Indian Rocks Beach officials and community members thanked those who support the city and make it a place where people enjoy living, working, and visiting. The Creative Loafing designation celebrates both the city's natural setting and the people who make Indian Rocks Beach feel like home.

Community News

ROTARY CLUB OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH

Submitted by David Kline

We are well into the 2026 pro football season. Watch parties are in full swing, tailgating is a focus for many football fans, and all of our favorite teams are still in the hunt for that elusive trophy and ring.

For the 24th consecutive year, IRB Rotary will be 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 from our fundraisers. When you invest in Rotary, you help to change lives!

This year's 'Big Game' will be played at SoFi Stadium in Inglewood, CA on Sunday, February 14th, 2027. The Big Game Raffle will award the lucky Grand Prize winner two tickets to the 60th edition of the Big 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.

We invite you to join us at our annual BGR Drawing Party which will be on Sunday, December 6th, starting at 2:30 and will be hosted by our friends at Guilty Sea Sports Pub in Indian Rocks Beach. Guilty Sea will have all the day's football games on their many TV's. The drawing will take place at approximately 5:30 p.m. Fun, football, and excitement are guaranteed! Someone will be going to Santa Clara!

Tickets are five chances for $20 and are now available from any IRB Rotarian, at the Rotary tent at the Rock the Rocks Music Festival/Market on November 14th, starting at noon, at Crabby Bill's main restaurant in IRB, at the BGR drawing party, or by contacting David Kline at (727) 418-1673 or DavidKline92@gmail.com.

The Rotary Club of IRB has begun planning for the 2027 edition of Rotary Runs the Beach, which will be on Saturday, March 6th on the beautiful sands of Indian Rocks Beach.

Beautiful weather, the blue waters of the Gulf and plenty of competition await participants. If you have run/walked with us in past years, welcome back. If you have never joined us, this will be a great time to start. Scan the QR code on the flyer below for more details.

INDIAN ROCKS BEACH HISTORICAL MUSEUM

Submitted by Joan Johnstone

The Indian Rocks Beach Historical Museum invites you to visit as we begin a new year!

The museum is located at 203 Fourth Avenue North, directly across the street from the post office.

Kick off the holiday season by joining us for our annual luncheon and membership meeting on November 7th at noon. Please bring a dish to share and enjoy an afternoon with an interesting surprise speaker. The meeting will also include the election of officers and board members for the coming year.

The museum is open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m.–2 p.m. Stop by to explore the history of Indian Rocks Beach, and browse the Gift Shop for interesting items that reflect our history and more. If you haven't seen Shifting Sands, our informative film, come by and watch it.

Groups interested in arranging a museum tour may call (727) 593-3861 and leave a message.

BELLEAIR GARDEN CLUB

Submitted by Carol Mears

On Wednesday, November 4th, at 12:30 p.m., local author and photographer Linda Rhodes will present "Nature Through the Lens: Photography & Tablescaping" at the clubhouse, 903 Ponce de Leon Blvd., Belleair. Open to all; refreshments will be served.

"Snip, Root & Grow: Plant Propagation Made Easy" is Thursday, November 12th, from 5:30–7 p.m. Guests will propagate plants for the club's February sale. The program is free for members; nonmembers are invited to make a $5 suggested donation. Pizza and salad will be served.

The Holiday Harvest Market in the Bluffs takes place Saturday, November 21st, from 10 a.m.–2 p.m. at Belleair Bluffs City Hall and Park. Hosted by the garden club and Candles for Caterpillars, the free market will feature artisans, gifts, seasonal décor, garden items, specialty foods, live music, children's activities, a flower bar, and a nature scavenger hunt. Proceeds support both nonprofits.

Members can attend the club's Holiday Party & Potluck on Wednesday, December 2nd, from 11:30 a.m.–1 p.m. at the clubhouse. Details about its charitable initiatives will be announced.

On Wednesday, December 9th, at 12:30 p.m., Carlson Wildwood Florist will lead a hands-on holiday floral-arranging program. Registration details and fees will be announced.

The club will collect donations for its Junk & Jewels Sale on Saturday, December 12th, from 10 a.m.–noon at the clubhouse. Accepted items include household goods, jewelry, books, art, garden tools, and home décor. Volunteers will help unload. For details, visit belleairgardenclub.com. New members are welcome.

CASA PINELLAS

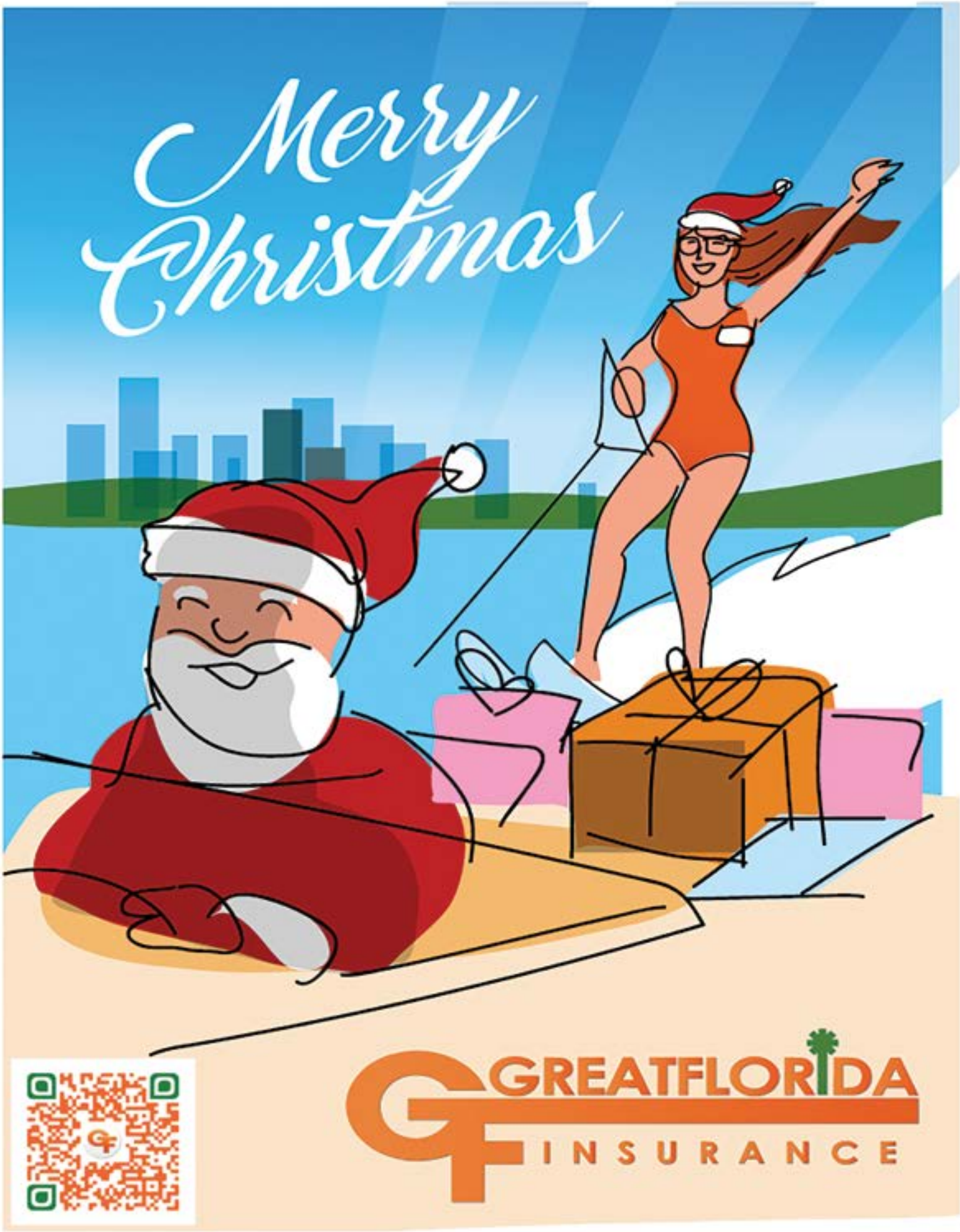
Nearly half of the residents at CASA Pinellas' domestic violence shelter are children. Community members can support survivors this holiday season by donating to CASA's Hope for the Holidays Drive.

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.


Merry Christmas
GREATFLORIDA
INSURANCE