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ONE OF US

Kelly Punancy

as told to **ANTHONY RICHARDS**

Kelly Punancy is the owner of Pouring Grace and Bubbles, which offers a mobile bar and pancake bar options that people can use at events or parties. Punancy and her husband moved to Callahan from Miami in 2022 and pride themselves in offering unique experiences for any occasion taking place in the Northeast Florida area

Tell us a little about yourself and how you came up with the idea for Pouring Grace and Bubbles.

It all started in 2021 as a mobile bar in Miami, where I am originally from.

But then, we moved up to North Florida and Callahan in 2022 because my husband is a police officer, and he got a job up here.

Our wedding is where this journey all began because we originally wanted a mobile bar for our wedding but couldn't find one.

It turned out there was like one in all of Miami, so we definitely saw that there was a need for it and decided to start the business.

We started by buying a horse trailer and converting that into a mobile bar we could take around.

Did you know you wanted to continue the business once you moved to Northeast Florida?

Yes, but that's also when we decided to make some changes.

We changed the name to Pouring Grace and Bubbles and sold the horse trailer and purchased a mobile tap truck, where it has taps in the back of the truck, so now people can just get their own from the tap instead of me pouring it for them.

It was pretty much a whole rebranding, but because we were already in the event industry, I knew what was out there and that I wanted to offer even more options.

I realized that the idea was needed just as much up here as it was down in Miami, so there's definitely a place for us here.

We also came up with a new idea and also started a pancake bar service, so now we have that on top of the mobile bar, which is good to give people those options.

The pancake bar is the perfect fit for all



photo by **ANTHONY RICHARDS**

ages.

What kind of menu options do you have?

We have a whole menu of options, but yes, we can also always create a person's own favorite as long as it's with the toppings on hand.

However, we also have certain mixtures that we have found are among the favorites people choose in case they just want to choose and go and not stand there picking their toppings.

The churro and Oreo crumble are two examples, with the Oreo obviously being perfect for the chocolate lovers out there.

People can add anything they want from nuts to blueberries to coconut flakes. Whatever they wish to top their pancakes with.

Right now, I'm working on a strawberry version where it's kind of like a strawberry shortcake, because we've always had strawberries, but it's one of those flavors people are always excited about more.

It's the type of business where your imagination can really run wild especially when it comes to new menu items.

Also, every pancake is prepared and cooked to order so it is always hot when served to guests.

Where do you travel to cover events?

We go all the way down to St. Augustine and throughout the area for events, and because we're up in Callahan, we even go into Southeast Georgia to places like St. Mary's.

At first it was different not being from

here and figuring out where everything is, but the GPS has definitely helped a lot.

Now we're starting to figure out where things are, which makes it so much more easier, especially when you are a mobile business and go to different places.

What do you enjoy most about your job?

My favorite part is helping bring an event I'm at to life by adding to the atmosphere that is created.

There's nothing like seeing the smile and expressions on people's faces when they walk up to our bar or order some pancakes.

Knowing that you had something to do with the event being a fun time for those that attended means a lot, and it's a very prideful thing.

Whether it's birthday parties, weddings, gender reveals or whatever you're celebrating, we want to add to the party.

Have you always been a creative person?

My creativity really started as a teenager, but I had never really been in the event industry before and focused on the customer service side instead.

I was a manager for a luxury pet resort, so I guess I went from doing events for dogs to helping do events for humans.

If I didn't like what I'm doing it wouldn't be the same. I can definitely say that I'm passionate about what I do and the events that hire me.

And also, without my husband, none of this would have been possible. I'm the one that comes up with the ideas and he makes them come to life.

What do you like most about living in Northeast Florida?

I like it better here than Miami, because it is a lot slower pace than Miami with less traffic around, and that's something we definitely enjoy and have gotten used to.

What is the best way for people to inquire about using you for their next event?

The website is the best way to go and it's pouringgraceandbubbles.com. Once you're there, you can fill out the content form and I should get back with you in about 24 hours.

IN THE BUSINESS OF DEVELOPING GREEN THUMBS

Garden of Eatin' offers steps to tranquil outdoor space

story and photos by
ANTHONY RICHARDS

Everyone has a farmer inside of them, and Garden of Eatin' located in St. Johns is there to help people discover that and has been doing so for the past 12 years.

"Our raised gardens are really unique because everything is ready to go," said Valerie Furey, who owns Garden of Eatin' along with her husband Zak. "We build and plant everything, so literally all the client has to do is water. It is perfect for people who want an instant garden or for those who are new to gardening."



Koi ponds can add to an outdoor space.

Part of the process also includes going back to the client's home and replanting and building up for the next season of growth as well.

According to Furey, being there for their clients throughout the entire garden maintenance process is something that they pride themselves on.

"Our gardens are always perfect, and we make sure of that," Furey said.

There are various types of gardens that a client can purchase, such as salad bowl gardens, juicing gardens, herbal medicine gardens, flower-cutting gardens and even fairy gardens, which are popular for children.

One of the things that inspired the Fureys to begin Garden of Eatin' is that they were hearing from a lot of people who mentioned how they downsized or lived in a condo and miss having a garden.

"We wanted to bring gardening to people on a small scale, but where they could still enjoy picking beautiful fresh produce without the labor of a large garden," Furey said. "There's nothing like going outside and harvesting a gorgeous salad and having it right then

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8 ■

A large photograph of a restaurant interior with a wooden cutting board in the foreground containing various cheeses and meats. The text "NOW SERVING" and "sunday brunch" is overlaid on the image. A QR code is located at the bottom center.

1912 OCEAN BAR & ROOFTOP

NOW SERVING

sunday brunch



An herb garden on the property at Garden of Eatin' in St. Johns.



An outdoor sauna.



Garden of Eatin' wants to help transform outdoor areas.



There are a variety of raised garden beds a client can choose from.

GARDEN

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

and there. In that scenario, you know exactly where it came from and that it's truly organic."

They have even carried garden beds up four stories for those who live in apartments, proving that nothing will stop them from helping someone get a little green in their life.

Valerie has been a certified herbalist for 31 years and she makes her own herbal wellness teas and tinctures that people can use to help support a healthy lifestyle through a natural approach.

"We make our herbs in a liquid form, so you get all those medicinal benefits as opposed to a plant where they usually just dry it and that's it," Furey said. "I trained with Rosemary Gladstar, who is pretty much the most famous herbalist in this country. The quality we can provide by doing everything so fresh and natural can

make a huge difference."

Furey turned her focus to being an herbalist because she had hereditary high blood pressure, and it started when she was 14 years old.

"I knew I wanted to solve the problem and get better instead of just masking it," Furey said. "Herbs saved my life, and now 31 years later I'm still doing my part to help people."

However, helping people be their own farmer's market and feel better is not all that they do at Garden of Eatin', as they also offer many other outdoor home renovations, such as the construction of pergolas, koi ponds and outdoor saunas.

"All of the products we do deal with things that are made with a nature-oriented theme to it, such as the stones that we use for our outdoor fireplaces, we get from up in Georgia," Furey said. "It's all about trying to make a person's home and outdoor space a little more tranquil."

Another passion of the Fureys is the rescue and care of animals, including

turtles, which they soon hope to convert one of their koi ponds on site into a turtle pond to serve as a sanctuary for turtles.

One of the more curious herbs growing in their herb garden is dandelion, which according to Furey is right where it belongs with the rest of the herbs.

"People are like, 'Why are you growing dandelions,' because to most people it's a weed, but it's actually one of the most incredible medicinal plants," Furey said. "It's great for the liver, it helps to cleanse the blood and it's great for the skin. We grow tons of it, so if you see it growing in your yard, know that you can eat the whole thing, and it's great for teas and tinctures."

Appointments can be made with Garden of Eatin' by calling or texting 386-972-1891.

"Pretty much whatever size or type of garden a person is looking for, we can make it happen," Furey said. "We like to be versatile and creative."



Bromeliad and mangave are waxy plants.



Purple salvia



Sylvester palm

GARDEN VICTORY

Expert offers advice on creating a great garden

story and photos by
SHAUN RYAN

Looking to plant a beautiful spring garden?

Then Kathy Esfahani, owner of Kathy's Gardens & Nursery, has some bad news for you: It's too late.

But she also has some good news: Florida has a 12-month growing season, so you can now confidently plant a beautiful spring/summer garden.

"We have blooming flowers all year long," she said.

That means flowers like snapdragons and pansies will not survive into the fast-approaching hot months, but bougainvillea, hibiscus, mystic spires, pentas, vinca and succulents are great



Kathy Esfahani is the owner of Kathy's Gardens & Nursery.

for this time of year. Other flowering plants you might try are bush daisy, gaillardia, porterweed and salvia.

If you'd like to attract butterflies and hummingbirds, try bottlebrush and shrimp plants.

Esfahani knows what she's talking about, having been in the business here for the past 17 years. And those new to the Sunshine State or simply new to gardening quickly learn the value of seeking out expert advice.

"The most important thing to know is: the right plant in the right place," Esfahani said.

That means knowing where the sunlight falls in your yard. Some plants love it. Others thrive best in shade. That may sound simple, but shadows from nearby trees and other houses can spell dramatic changes at different times of the day. It can be helpful to note the patterns of sun and shade on your property hour by hour — even take photos as a guide.

And don't completely trust those little tags attached to plants you buy. They may say "full sun," but that

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 ■



Bougainvillea trained on a stick.

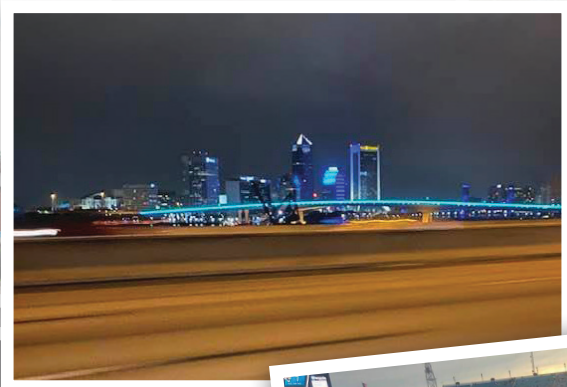


A banana plant



Shrimp plant

FACES OF *The First Coast*



Faces Of The First Coast is an exclusive feature for First Coast Register readers to get to know prominent business leaders in Northeast Florida's coastal communities.

If you would like to be featured in Faces of the First Coast, please contact us at (904) 285-8831.

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Clareberryrealestate.com

Lucky me! I have been a Realtor in my home, Northeast Florida, for nearly 40 years. I grew up in Jacksonville and moved to the beach in my 20s. I studied architecture and interior design in college, feeding my love of homes and style. After graduation, I worked in media, where I learned the art of listening and asking questions, marketing and advertising.

In 1985, I transitioned from media to real estate, joining Watson Realty's Ponte Vedra office. It was meant to be! Serving customers by customizing promotions for their homes and researching housing options for buyers is exciting. The reward of finding a seller or a buyer the perfect home is what keeps me charged up about real estate. In 1990, I moved to the original Marsh Landing Realty, where I learned about lots and builders and the development process.

In 1993, I opened my own brokerage, Berry & Co. Real Estate. Our first listing was The Ponte Vedra Carlyle, 48 new condominiums on Ponte Vedra Boulevard. That was an exciting time – new residences in a premier location, with Lodge membership included for every purchaser!

Berry & Co. Real Estate continues to be a robust general brokerage. We have helped hundreds of buyers and sellers with their residential real estate needs. We take pride in our market knowledge – it is the foundation for the extra level of service we provide our customers.

My customers describe me as “one of our most trusted advisors”... “responsive, kind and honest”... “always felt we were in good hands”...”stands out from the rest regarding professionalism, true customer satisfaction and a real passion to do things the right way.” I help make buying and selling real estate efficient, enjoyable and rewarding by applying my knowledge and insights for the benefit of my customers.

While homebase for our office is Ponte Vedra Beach, we also are active in neighboring Jacksonville Beach, Neptune Beach, Atlantic Beach and Nocatee as well as greater Jacksonville. Our real estate market is ever-changing and always intriguing. I'm grateful for the challenges and opportunities each new day brings.



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Bright red salvia blooms



Water fountains with celosia behind them

VICTORY

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

doesn't tell the whole story.

"Full sun up north is totally different than full sun in Florida," Esfahani said. "I actually plant roses in our morning sun and afternoon shade, because the heat in Florida is just so extreme."

If you're looking to create a landscape that turns heads, what you plant, where you plant it and how you present it can make all the difference. And it starts with knowing which plants are annual and which are perennial.

Annuals bloom the brightest, but are

temporary. Perennials last for years, at times looking beautiful and other times not so much. But the right combination can produce the best results, assuming that you don't want to replant your entire landscape every four to six months.

Esfahani recommends planting 10% annuals and 90% perennials.

The best places for annuals: by the street — especially around the mailbox, near the front door and in the living spaces of the back yard. Fill out the rest with perennials.

Then, planting at different elevations will produce the most satisfying effect. Add dimensions and heights. Get those annuals up where you can see

them, rather than waiting until they can grow large enough to stand above the surrounding foliage. This principle holds true with planters of various sizes, which can be further enhanced with cascading flowers.

Kathy's Gardens & Nursery, located at 196 N. Roscoe Blvd., Ponte Vedra Beach, is a good place to take your questions. Esfahani and her staff are valuable resources, and designers there can help create that ideal landscape. In addition, the business sells not only flowers, but trees, pavers, planters, water features and more.

It is open 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Saturday. The primary phone number is 904-655-7373.

MAKE SURE YOUR AIR CONDITIONING SYSTEM IS READY FOR THE SUMMER HEAT

story by **SHAUN RYAN**

Hot and humid weather is right around the corner, so this is the best time to make sure your HVAC system is up to the challenge.

Zach Collins, co-founder with wife Crissy of World's Greatest Heating & Air, recommends an annual maintenance, which should suffice if done correctly. While no company can guarantee an HVAC system won't eventually fail, proper maintenance is important.

In fact, spring and fall are the offseason, and many HVAC businesses will offer specials on the work.

One of the most important issues is duct leakage. Collins' team can seal ducts from the inside using Aereoseal technology, which also removes human error from the equation.

One important thing residents can do to extend the life of their system is change the filter monthly. In fact, the better the filter, the more critical it is to change it. Dense filters trap more dust and pollen, but that also means they can clog up more frequently. And a clogged filter will restrict airflow, which could

actually damage the equipment.

Collins recommends installing a one-inch-thick filter with a MERV rating of 8.

But what should you do when your HVAC system stops working? Suddenly, the home is stiflingly hot. And homeowners with young babies or elderly parents will be tempted to react emotionally. That could open the door to an expensive mistake.

A system will last between 10 and 20 years, but many homeowners take them for granted until a crisis hits.

"Air conditioning in this area is not something you want to be reactive on," said Collins. "That's when you make emotional decisions."

And emotional decisions can lead to dissatisfaction.

It's a good idea to consider the age of your equipment, whether it cools or warms properly, whether your energy bill seems high and the quality of your air is sufficient. Make a list of what you may need, and what you might like to have. Take the time to find a contractor you trust while everything is working well; ask questions, get answers and

approach your HVAC status logically.

Make sure the contractor is licensed and insured and has received all the proper training to both install and service the equipment.

Collins highly recommends getting at least three estimates before having the work done.

When purchasing a new system, it's very important to get the right size. Numerous factors contribute to what professionals call the home's "tonnage."

"If you oversize it, you won't dehumidify properly," Collins said, "and if you undersize it, it's not going to keep up."

Collins, who has been working in this field for 26 years and is licensed in three states, said each state is different. If you were able to move a "3-ton" home from Northeast Florida to Arizona with the same orientation, square-footage and foliage, it might only be a "2-ton" home there.

For more information about World's Greatest Heating & Air, which serves communities throughout Northeast Florida, go to worldsgreatesthvac.com.



A large crowd was on hand for the event.

A NIGHT IN THE VINEYARD RAISES \$175K FOR MONIQUE BURR FOUNDATION

photos by **SUSAN GRIFFIN**

The Monique Burr Foundation for Children's annual charity fundraiser, A Night in the Vineyard, at SoNapa Grille in Jacksonville Beach raised \$175,000 during the event.



SoNapa Grille hosted the event as a partner.



Guests enjoy a fun night during the Night in the Vineyard event.



Bold City Classics provided entertainment on the night.

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Ed Burr.



Jennifer and Jason Ryan.



M.G. Orender and Mary Bear.



Tanya Ramos-Puig, CEO of the Monique Burr Foundation.



CAMPS PROMISE A SUMMER OF FUN

Summer is fast approaching and for many young people, that means signing up for camp. Here's a helpful list of some of the season's top offerings.

THE KNIGHT SCHOOL

The Knight School is planning summer chess camps at various locations throughout the area. Camps will run between May 28 and Aug. 9. For information, go to tksjacksonville.jumbula.com, email Coach Reb Phillips at reb@theknightschool.com or call 904-514-0569. Sessions are as follows.

The Bolles School: May 28-31, June 17-21, July 8-12, July 29-Aug. 2 and Aug. 5-9

The Discovery School: June 3-7, June 10-14, June 17-21 and July 15-19

J. Allen Axson: July 15-19
Jacksonville Country Day School: June 10-14, June 24-28 and July 22-26

Jewish Community Alliance: June 12-16, June 24-28, July 8-12 and July 22-26

San Juan Del Rio Catholic School: July 8-12 and July 15-19
National TKS Summer Camps: June 5-9 and June 7-9 in Birmingham, Alabama

TOMMY HULIHAN CAMPS

Basketball Camp

At: Beaches Chapel School Gym, 610 Florida Blvd., Neptune Beach.
Phone: 904-349-2611
<https://tommyhulihanbasketball.com/basketball-camp/>
There will be five sessions. Dates TBA

All Sports Camp

<https://tommyhulihanbasketball.com/all-sports-camp/>
At: St. Paul's Gym, 212 5th St., North Jacksonville Beach
Bring a lunch Monday through Thursday. Pizza lunch provided on Fridays.
Eight sessions from 8 a.m. to 3

p.m. for boys and girls in K-6:
June 3-7, June 10-14, June 17-21, June 24-28, July 8-12, July 15-19, July 22-26 and July 29-Aug. 2

EPISCOPAL SCHOOL OF JACKSONVILLE

Day Camp weeks

June 3-7, rising K-2, 3-5, 6-8
June 10-14, rising K-2, 3-5, 6-8
June 17-21, rising K-2, 3-5, 6-8
June 24-28, rising K-2, 3-5, 6-8
July 15-19, rising K-2, 3-5, 6-8
July 22-26, rising K-2, 3-5, 6-8
July 29-Aug. 2, rising K-2, 3-5, 6-8

Also offers a variety of weeks with special focus for different age groups: lacrosse, speed development, volleyball, inshore fishing, sculling, studio art, "Minion Mayhem," softball, novice rowing, football, basketball, horseback riding, tennis, track and field, beach fishing, cross country, "Eagle Arts," baseball, drivers education, cheer, strength training, musical theatre, photography, "Clay Play," ceramics, wrestling, improv comedy, music and model United Nations.

They also offer a variety of academic programs.

Go to esj.org/summer for information. Camps are divided across four campuses.

ADVENTURE LANDING

2780 S.R. 16 St. Augustine
904-827-9400
st-augustine.adventurelanding.com/groups/day-care-summer-camp
1944 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville Beach
904-246-4386
jacksonville-beach.adventurelanding.com/groups/day-care-summer-camp

3'N MOTION

425 S. Legacy Trail, suite D-102, St. Augustine

info@3nmotion.org
904-334-3095

Kids Summer Dance Camps for kids ages 5-11 are available 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. (or half days) on June 3-17, June 24-28 and July 8-19.

There are weekly themes, crafts, games, water slides and a field trip to the IMAX Theater.

Go to 3nmotion.org.

CODE NINJAS

258 Solana Road, Ponte Vedra Beach

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microcontrollers, Roblox to robotics, Become a YouTuber, digital art creation and more. There are four locations: Baymeadows, Fleming Island, Ponte Vedra and World Golf Village.

For information, go to codeninjas.com/ponte-vedra-beach-fl/camps or call 904-834-2359

Camps are:

Makey Carnival Games Day Camp: April 19, 8:30 a.m. to 4

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16 ■



THE KNIGHT SCHOOL

SUMMER CHESS CAMPS!

RUNNING MAY 28TH - AUGUST 9TH
WEEK-LONG HALF-DAY MORNING
OR HALF-DAY AFTERNOON
OR FULL DAY CAMPS



SCAN THE QR CODE
TO REGISTER

THE BOLLES SCHOOL
MAY 28-31, JUNE 17-21, JULY 8-12,
JULY 29-AUGUST 2, AUGUST 5-9

THE DISCOVERY SCHOOL
JUNE 3-7, JUNE 10-14,
JUNE 17-21, JULY 15-19

J. ALLEN AXSON
JULY 15-19

JACKSONVILLE COUNTRY
DAY SCHOOL
JUNE 10-14, JUNE 24-28, JULY 22-26

JEWISH COMMUNITY ALLIANCE
JUNE 12-16, JUNE 24-28,
JULY 8-12, JULY 22-26

SAN JUAN DEL RIO
CATHOLIC SCHOOL
JULY 8-12 & JULY 15-19

NATIONAL TKS SUMMER CAMPS
JUNE 5-9 & JUNE 7-9
BIRMINGHAM, AL



BEGINNERS WELCOME



NEW STRATEGIES &
TACTICS EACH WEEK!



SPACE IS LIMITED

[HTTPS://TKSJACKSONVILLE.JUMBULA.COM](https://tksjacksonville.jumbula.com)
[REB@THEKNIGHTSCHOOL.COM](mailto:reb@theknightschool.com)

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

2012 and August 2013.
Vienna, Austria: July 5-Aug. 1
Quezon City, Philippines: June 29-July 26

Interchange Reciprocal Youth Exchange

For youth born in 2009 or 2010.
Host in Jacksonville, June 28-July 14
Visit to Italy, July 15-31

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Summer workshops at three locations:
• 880 U.S. A1A N., Suite 6, Ponte Vedra Beach.
• 9802 Baymeadows Road, Suite 14, Jacksonville
• 1406 Kingsley Ave., Suite E, Orange Park. orangeparkartclasses.com

GENERATION Y JAZZ CAMP

For kids in grade 5 through high school.

Where: Friday Musicale, 645 Oak St., Jacksonville.
9 a.m. to 4 p.m. July 29-Aug. 2.
For information, go to fridaymusicale.com.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 17 ■

p.m.

Become a YouTuber: May 28-31, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. to noon. also, 12:30 to 4 p.m.

Future Minds AI Academy: June 3-7, 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., 8:30 to noon

Operation CODE Breakers: June 3-7, 12:30 to 4 p.m.

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Phone: 904-982-1871

Email: cisvjax@gmail.com

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■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 16

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Summer Cooking for Older Kids

For kids age 12 and older (parents optional) or 10-11 with an adult.

6:30 to 9 p.m. Mondays. Dates are: June 3, June 10, June 17, June 24, July 1, July 8, July 15, July 22, July 29 and Aug. 5.

LIMELIGHT THEATRE

11 Old Mission Ave., St. Augustine.

Two camps for kindergarten through grade 3: Disney Week (10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday, June 3-7) and Movie Week (10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday through Friday, June 10-14)

Two camps for grades 4-6: Broadway Week (2-5 p.m. Monday

through Friday, June 3-7) and Decades Week (2-5 p.m. Monday through Friday, June 10-14)

For further information, go to limelight-theatre.org/youth-programs.

SURF INTO SUMMER SURF CAMP

For ages 6 and older. Surfboards, sunscreen and snack included.

Jacksonville Beach and Ponte Vedra Beach camps run from 8:45 to 11:45 a.m. Monday through Friday.

Camp sessions: June 3-7, June 10-14, June 17-21, June 24-28, July 1-5, July 8-12, July 15-19, July 22-26, July 29-Aug. 2 and Aug. 5-9.

For information, contact Scott Holmes at 904-962-SURF or go to surfintosummer.com.

THE LINK

The link, 425 Town Plaza Ave., Ponte Vedra (Nocatee), is offering several camps between May 28 and Aug. 5. Camps are open to members and nonmembers. To register, go to thelink.zone/summercamps or call 904-469-0334.

Creative Culinary

Kids will learn to cook and acquire

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18 ■



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Czech Republic Delegation

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Jacksonville, Florida

July 22 - Aug 2
Camp location is in Riverside 32204

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for youth born between Sep 2012 - Aug 2013



Vienna, Austria
July 5 - August 1
1 spot left



Quezon City, Philippines
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1 spot left

Interchange Reciprocal youth exchange

for youth born in 2009 or 2010



Italy

Host in Jax
June 28 - July 14

Visit to Italy
July 15 - July 31

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[kids' summer fun guide]

■ CONTINUED FROM PAGE 17

essential life skills, such as kitchen safety, sanitation, proper knife technique and more.

For ages 5-13

There are six sessions, all from 9 a.m. to noon: May 28-31, June 3-7, June 24-28, July 8-12, July 29-Aug. 2, and Aug. 5-9.

LEGO Robotics, Drones, Carrera Cars and Sphero

Led by an experienced coach, this camp offers a hands-on STEAM learning experience that combines play with technology.

For ages 6-12

There are 11 sessions, all from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.: May 28-31, June 3-7, June 10-14, June 17-21, June 24-28, July 1-5, July 8-12, July 15-19, July 22-26, July 29-Aug. 2, and Aug. 5-9.

Let's Get Creative Art Camp

A fun-filled camp where kids can unleash their creativity and craft dream designs. Activities include marbling mastery, sugar scrubs and jar art, clothing transformations, resin magic, aromatherapy candle making and colorful abstract art.

For ages 5-12

There are six sessions, all 1-4 p.m.: May 28-31, June 3-7, July 15-19, July 22-26, July 29-Aug. 2, and Aug. 5-9.

Kids In The Kitchen

A blend of fun activities and essential culinary skills. Activities include sample cooking, etiquette, kitchen safety and organization and creativity in cooking.

For ages 5-12

There are three sessions, all from 9 a.m. to noon: June 10-14, June 17-21, and July 15-19.

Dance and Tumble

Kids will have an opportunity to learn and practice their dance and tumble skills, engage in fun games and unleash their creativity with crafts.

For ages 5-12

There are two sessions, both from 9 a.m. to noon: June 24-28 and July 8-12.

Olympic Style Fencing

Learn the craft behind one of the earliest Olympic sports from a fencing expert.

For ages 6-13

There are two sessions, both from 9 a.m. to noon: June 10-14 and June 17-21.

— Compiled by Shaun Ryan



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 World Golf





The Yards held an open house for its new event space, called the “Greenhouse,” in late March.



The Greenhouse combines a mix of both outdoor and indoor event space to be used.

THE YARDS HOLDS OPEN HOUSE FOR NEW VERSATILE EVENT SPACE

‘Greenhouse’ aims to be community place to celebrate anything and everything

story and photos by ANTHONY RICHARDS

The Yards continues to be more than just golf, tennis or pickleball, but instead strives to be a social hub for the community, and they took that a step further with the introduction of its latest new event space called the “Greenhouse.”

An open house was held for the Greenhouse in late March at its location at 254 Alta Mar Drive in Ponte Vedra Beach, where members of the community were able to tour the 4,000 square feet of air-conditioned indoor space as well as 3,000 square-foot of covered patio and outdoor space accompanied by views of its golf course.

According to Anna Washington, director of sales and events, the goal behind the new event center is to be able to host any occasion from weddings to corporate gatherings, charity galas and everything in between.

“We definitely just want to be a center for the community and be a place where everyone can just come and have fun, spend time with their family and friends and celebrate anything that’s going on in their lives,” said Avery White, with marketing communications at The Yards.

The space used to be an old maintenance facility used by The Yards, but when a new maintenance facility was built on Solana Road, the space was available for an upgrade and a major one took place indeed.

It is definitely safe to say that the days of the structure being used to store maintenance equipment is far in the rearview, as it has completely been revamped.

“I’m not sure who had the amazing idea, but transforming the existing building has been something really cool to watch take place,” Washington said.

One of the common opinions gathered from the open house is the appreciation from those who attended of the combination of both indoor and outdoor space, which offers so many options for an event taking place and allows for weather



Four thousand square-feet of air-conditioned indoor space makes up a large portion of the venue.

to not be as big of a factor in whether an event is a success or not.

“We also have A/C and heaters, so no matter the time of year, you can host your event comfortably either inside or out,” White said. “We have mobile bars so people will be able to be served from anywhere in the space. We definitely love that versatility.”

The size of the venue space also allows for its share of flexibility as the combination of indoor and outdoor space presents the ability to host an array of large gatherings to more quaint sizes while still feeling intimate and not too spacious.

“We’ve hosted about 300 (people) already, so we like to say we can host about 350-plus, and we want to open it up to corporate events and conferences as we we’re already working closely with Marriott Sawgrass,” Washington said.

Some of the bar staff was on hand during the open house as attendees were given samples of some of their alcoholic beverage offerings.

“We can do all in-house bartending and beverage services, so their bar packages are always through us, which is always really convenient for people hosting because it’s one less thing they have to think about,” White said.

The Yards is a semi-private club, with golf and pickleball open to the public and tennis as the lone members-only facility.

For more information about hosting an event at the Greenhouse at The Yards, call 904-285-5552 or email info@playtheyards.com.

THE AMELIA ENJOYS RECORD-BREAKING YEAR



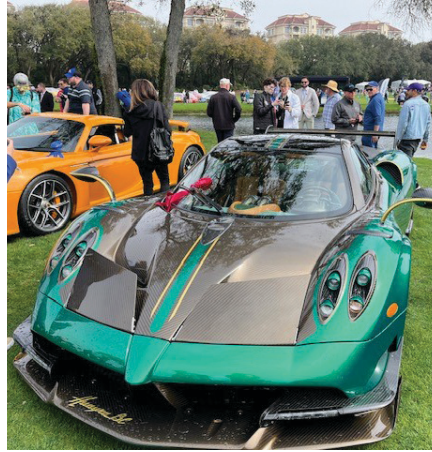
Attendees look over a car on display at the 29th Annual The Amelia Concours d'elegance.



The Amelia allows attendees to take a step back in time with some classic cars.

photos by **ADELE MCGRAW**

A record of more than 27,000 people attended the showcase throughout the four days of the event during the world-renowned concours d'elegance's 29th year.



Exotic cars, such as this Pagani, are popular by spectators at the show.



Several ribbons were awarded to this Duesenberg by the judges.



Felicia Cox and Donna Orender.

GENERATION W, UNF HOSTED **WOMEN'S** LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

photos by **SUSAN GRIFFIN**

Women from across the area attended the annual leadership conference that Generation W hosted at the University of North Florida on April 5.

First Horizon Bank is proud to be a partner of the "Believe Generation W 2024" conference empowering women. Prior to the conference, First Horizon Bank employees spent part of the day teaching financial literacy to Generation W's high school girls.

First Horizon Bank is committed to the communities in which it serves.



First Horizon Bank check presentation to Generation W is presented by Cherrie Dye, Felicia Cox, Yasmin Brophy, Donna Orender, Alicia Somers, Denise Akers.



William Messer and Melanie Messer



Rethreaded was a vendor at the event.



Dr. Heidi Hanna and Sorrel Thomson.

MOCA MARKS CENTENNIAL

story and photo by **SHAUN RYAN**

The Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year.

The oldest contemporary art museum in the American South and the second oldest in the nation traces its roots to four visionary women: Merrydelle Hoyt, Louese Washburn, Rose Tharp and Edith Harrison, all members of the Jacksonville Women's Club. In 1924, they founded the Jacksonville Fine Arts Society, the museum's original name.

Over the next century, the museum hosted exhibits by many notable artists. In 2009, it became affiliated with the University of North Florida.

MOCA celebrated its history April 6 with its Centennial Gala, the theme of which was New York in the 1970s, inspired by the museum's current featured exhibition, "A Walk on the Wild Side." Food was catered by Chef's Garden Catering & Events. Attendees were treated to art by Corey Kolb, performances by the River City Rollin Crew, music from DJ Timo Weiland, themed cocktails and a full bar.

On Feb. 29, a Project Atrium exhibit by renowned artist Frank Stella was unveiled. "Jacksonville Stacked Stars" is a multi-story installation. It and accompanying prints of Stella's other



Visitors marvel at the enormous Frank Stella installation, "Jacksonville Stacked Stars."

work comprise the artist's fourth show at MOCA, the last being "Frank Stella Unbound" in 2018.

Speakers at the Feb. 29 event included MOCA Jacksonville Executive Director Caitlin Doherty, Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan, presenting sponsor Preston Haskell and UNF



A screen print of "York Factory II" by Frank Stella



The Feb. 29 event at MOCA attracted a large group of supporters.

President Moez Limayem.

"Jacksonville Stacked Stars" will be on exhibit until Aug. 18. "A Walk on the Wild Side" will be on exhibit until July 7.

MOCA is located at 333 N. Laura St. For information, go to moca-jacksonville.unf.edu.

ARTIST'S WORK HAS PHOTOGRAPHIC QUALITY

story and photo by **SHAUN RYAN**

Shan Fannin of Austin, Texas, was the latest artist in Richard C. Kessler's "Next Originals" series to exhibit at the Grand Bohemian Gallery in St. Augustine.

Fannin is a photorealist painter specializing in depictions of cars, trucks, motorcycles, airplanes and boats. She captures shiny chrome and rustic metals with equal skill. Even so, she puts her own ideas into the image and says her paintings are 90% realistic and 10% abstract.

Her exhibit opened at the gallery on March 1, and she met with the public during First Friday Art Walk festivities.



Fannin works in acrylics from photos she has taken, usually at a car show where some of the most interesting subjects will be on display. She never paints in black and surprises her viewers by painting not the colors they believe something to be, but rather the colors she actually sees.

She launched her career in 2015 and completes between 25 and 30 pieces a year.

Nine artists were selected for the "Next Originals" series out of 1,800 artists to apply. As one of the winners, Fannin saw her work exhibited in New York City's Times Square and also at several Grand Bohemian galleries.

To learn more about her, go to shanfannin.com.



YESTERDAY, TODAY, TOMORROW: HISTORIC HOME IN FULL BLOOM COMES FULL CIRCLE

story by JANET WESTLING & KATIE HUGHES JOHNSON

photos by LAURA JOBE/FIRST COAST PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPHY

The home at 1993 Largo Road stands the test of time, with grace and elegance.

YESTERDAY

What began as a 216-acre Spanish land grant in 1793, as a unique parcel, was later transferred to the Craig and

Hendricks families and was then passed down through generations until it was sold as residential parcels after the Civil War.

In 1921, Telfair Stockton, bought 80 acres of land north of the Mitchell estate for a new San Marco subdivision and business center. The street names and business district were inspired by the Piazza San Marco in Venice, Italy.

TODAY

Step inside 1993 Largo Road and experience a beautiful historic San Marco home that has been well loved, well lived and lovingly cared for through the years.

Just steps away from the vibrant shops and restaurants of San Marco Square, this historic home, built in 1938, emanates a rich sense of history and charm, evident from its inviting exterior to its well-appointed interiors.

Original hardwood floors grace the entirety of the home, with recently refinished upstairs flooring. The main floor boasts spacious living areas, an office, bonus room, guest bedroom and full bathroom, while upstairs, one finds the primary bedroom, two

additional guest bedrooms and two full bathrooms.

An attached two-car garage and a sizable driveway offer ample parking.

Nestled on an expansive quarter-acre lot, there's plenty of potential for adding a pool and creating a backyard sanctuary. Just a brief stroll away to Taverna, Starbucks, Oceana, Maple Street, a newly built Publix, among others, makes everyday conveniences easily accessible.

This is a charming community, adorned with majestic trees and scenic parks with proximity to downtown, Riverside and beautiful beaches!

TOMORROW

The historic homes of San Marco continue to attract residents from young and old for its charm, its walkable neighborhoods, its riverfront mansions, eclectic architecture, chic bistros, trendy bars and convenience to downtown Jacksonville and its beautiful beaches.

The home is listed by Katie Hughes Johnson at REMAX Specialists PV for \$1,995,000.

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THE BUSINESS OF ART

A look behind the scenes at art investment and sales

story and photo by **SHAUN RYAN**

There's a reason why the noun "artist" is so often preceded by the adjective "starving." Even some of the greatest names in the art world have had to struggle, and all too often their work never achieves full popular appreciation until the artist passes on.

Van Gogh, for instance, sold only one painting during his lifetime, and for that he is said to have been paid 400 francs.

Consider then the challenges faced by those who buy and sell art for a living. The world is filled with people who say they love art and yet are not willing to purchase it; they browse galleries the way they might museums, wallets and pocketbooks forgotten.

But knowledgeable, industrious

purveyors know how to inhabit the niche market and turn a profit.

"It's a tiny market," said Alex Graves, who with his father, John Graves, operates Graves International Art, headquartered in St. Augustine.

The family business, founded in 1978, defied the odds and has grown into one of the world's most respected dealers of art that dates between the 1500s and today.

Perhaps the secret to the business's success is the deep appreciation father and son have for the object of their trade.

"I'm doing this because I love art, and I love humanity, I love history, I love the analog world, which I'm trying to keep alive," said the elder Graves.

"This is a true passion and dedication," said his son. "It's not even a job. It's not even a career. We have dedicated our lives to this."

HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Forty-six years ago, with earnings from a temporary job and a \$600 loan from

his father, John Graves opened his first, 600-square-foot shop in St. Augustine's Lightner Antique Mall. His stock, as the name of the venue implies, was antiques.

"You can't go into the art business without any money," he said. "But I could start out with some antiques."

After his first month in business, Graves earned enough money to pay for his second month's rent.

In fact, business was good enough that he was able to sell off the antiques and purchase his first artworks, original posters by Marc Chagall and Pablo Picasso.

He moved his business to the San Marco area near where he was living in Jacksonville. The shop occupied half a building, the other half a barbershop where he would meet members of the community who would help him develop his enterprise. He may not have had the kind of money it took to purchase an original work by Picasso,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28 ■

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1504 Barrs St., known as the "art house."



Several residents took part on the tour during the two-day event.

RAP HOME TOUR CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

photos by **SUSAN GRIFFIN**

This year marked the 50th anniversary of the Riverside Avondale Preservation Society's Home Tour, where residents in the Riverside and Avondale communities of Jacksonville welcome residents into their homes.

Many of the homes are historic in nature and present a unique look that intertwines both the past and the present in their design or architecture.

There were 11 stops on this year's tour, including a business and a fire station. There were some owners that would not allow photography, so they are not included as part of the images below.



It was not just the homes that were featured on the RAP Home Tour, but also the yards.



The RAP Home Tour has been a staple for the past 50 years.



The backyard at 2981 Riverside Ave.



There were some unique sights around the yard at 2821 Riverside Ave.

ARTIST CREDITS CHILDHOOD IN GALLERY FOR CAREER

story by **SHAUN RYAN**
Contributed photo

Artist Jack Graves III is on a journey of discovery. His art tends to grow organically in what he describes as visual poetry or, for the viewer, a kind of Rorschach image.

“I think there are three different ways of creating a work, and the least beneficial is when you actually map something out and try to construct it,” he said. “It kind of always turns out to be a horse by committee.”

He’s found that the best work begins with one or two ideas and grows from there.

“It’s creating a feeling and a seeing of these things that you wouldn’t have originally thought went together,” he said, “but once it’s there, it just leads you toward finding out that — at least within the definition of art — it does work.”

He said one of the biggest payoffs comes when he is done with the work, looks at it

and says, “So that’s what that would look like!”

Graves grew up around art of every kind. His father, John Graves, is founder and owner of Graves International Art. Without having had that experience, Jack Graves said he probably would not have pursued art as a career.

“It was made tangible and accessible to me young enough that I was hard-headed enough to believe it was possible,” he said.

Otherwise, he might have turned his talents in a different direction.

“I’d have been one of these people that would have used the talent of artistry within a profession and then found time to paint as a hobby when I’m 55 or something,” he said.

As a child, he enjoyed drawing, and was intrigued by visual things.

“If you’re looking at African sculpture compared with a Warhol Mick Jagger print compared to a Japanese woodblock, it’s like all three of those give you a definite feeling, and they’re all different,” he said.

“Growing up around all that was huge.”

Another unexpected influence arrived when he was in boarding school. A fellow student from Japan left a pen in his dorm room, but it wasn’t just any pen. It was an incredibly fine utensil made by Mitsubishi. This happened about the time Graves was drawing a lot of elaborate, detailed designs on paper. The ink appealed to him because, as a youth, he had a penchant for black.

“They thought I was colorblind all through elementary school,” he said, laughing. “They were like, ‘He only ever uses a black crayon.’ But I thought it was cool.”

He calls these early ink pieces the cornerstone of all his work. It definitely illustrates his exploration of the evolving image.

“I knew if I started in the corner and covered a whole page in disciplined design, and continued to make it more and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 26 ■



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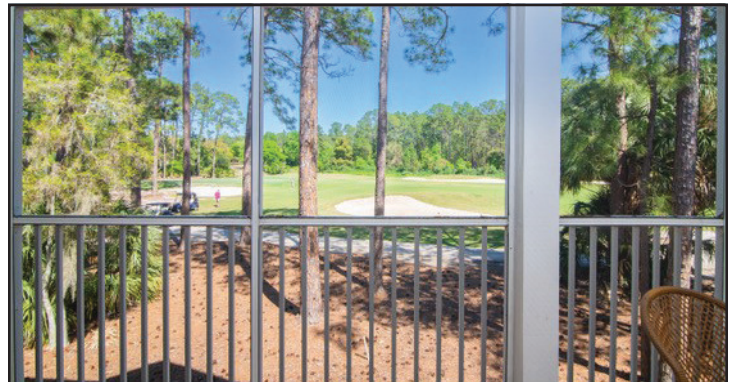
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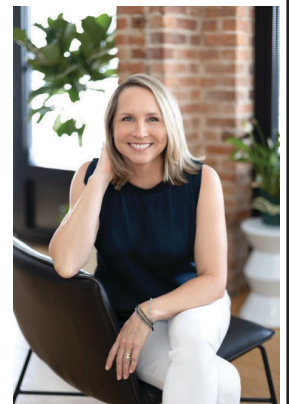
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[first coast arts]



Artist Jack Graves III with a recent work, "Lee Miller Icon II (Man Ray)." The original acrylic painting on canvas measures 8 by 7 feet.

ARTIST

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25

more disciplined and ornate — you can't not call that art," he said.

Those works, so reliant on the line, prefigure his later use of imagery and color. What these elements offer is an ongoing source of discovery.

"You want the piece to continuously live," he said. "You're always coming back and finding something new, or always finding something invigorating or pleasing about this."

Graves is known for his many series, which came about as the result of his dislike of monotony. When he begins a series he must first be sure his interest will sustain him through at least 50 to 100 entries.

The Aura Series consists of a variety of concentric circles, where the width and color of each evokes a feeling.

"I definitely wanted to create kind of this floating reverberation with the viewer," he explained.

Determining the number of circles in a given work relies on a kind of sensibility he has. He compared this to finding that point on a spirit level when the bubble is centered. Likewise, he "sees" the best color for that circle.

His Diamond Series plays with color, placement and variations, and it is interesting to compare one piece with another.

His Icon Series largely features the faces of famous people, typically using the black line and then playing with the coloring. He compares his earliest pieces in this series to the work of Jackson Pollock. Later, he moved increasingly toward more realistic images, somewhat reminiscent of the work of Roy Fox Lichtenstein. In his most recent icons — most notably images of Doutzen Kroes, Cara Delevingne and Kate Moss — the size of the face in relationship to the canvas, as well as its placement, contribute to a refinement of entries in this series.

His most recent Female Face Icons return to the power of the line, what is essential to elicit what Graves calls Plato's concept of the ideal.

"I'm like: Let's think about a female face; let's see what I subconsciously think about where the chin goes, where the eyes go," he said. "And then, how few lines I really need to do that."

Viewing these pieces, one is reminded of some of Matisse's line drawings.

Graves has also experimented with sculpture and has created several notable murals, most during his time in Charlottesville, Virginia.

"I'm just fortunate and happy that I can do this for a living," he said.

Learn more about Graves and his work at gravesinternationalart.com and jackgravesiii.com.

A DEEP DIVE INTO WOMEN'S SPORTING FASHION

story by ANTHONY RICHARDS

The latest exhibit to grace the halls of the Cummer Museum takes a look back at the styles of women's fashion when playing sports.

The exhibit is called Sporting Fashion: Outdoor Girls 1800 to 1960 and will serve as the museum's major spring showcase, having started in March and open to the public until May 19.

It is a traveling exhibit organized by the American Federation of Arts and the museum at the Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising in Los Angeles, and the Cummer marks the final stop on its national tour of museums.

According to Kim Kuta Dring, director of learning and engagement with the Cummer Museum, the unique idea for the exhibit began at the most grassroots level, after curator Kevin Jones got the idea for the exhibit 15 years ago after noticing an old scarf at a flea market that had the words "outdoor girl" sewn on it.



PHOTO BY BRIAN DAVIS

Skiing ensemble from the 1930s.

"That was the genesis for the entire exhibit, especially with his background in the fashion industry," Dring said.

"As a museum, we're always looking for opportunities to present things that people can relate to."

What makes the pieces of the exhibit even more unique is that each of the outfits has been previously worn by real women during the time periods mentioned, so they are not just theatrical pieces or material made solely for display.

There are so many different sports and the outfits associated with them shown throughout the exhibit, including archery, skating and skiing, so it delves beyond just the stick-and-ball sports.

The exhibit seeks to capture the true essence of each time period during the exhibit so that those viewing it can imagine what it would be like if they played those sports during that time as opposed to today.

"Women never wore pants, it was all long skirts and things that covered their

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37 ■



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ART

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 23

but he had cultivated the essential contacts and was able to broker sales at a small commission.

He began to purchase his own art and moved his shop to Jacksonville's Lakewood Plaza, where he really began to taste success.

In 1986, he moved his gallery to Gates of Olde Mandarin next to friend Paul Hanson's former Tree Steakhouse and then later to Riverplace Shopping Center next to the former Stein Mart, all the time growing in success.

But when the Gulf War broke out, Graves foresaw an economic downturn approaching and decided to make an even bigger relocation.

ON THE MOVE

Graves moved his family to the small town of Somerset, Virginia, on land once owned by President James Madison. Located right on the Constitution Highway, the family occasionally saw U.S. presidents drive past.

Graves turned a small outbuilding into a little gallery and set a sign out at the roadside inviting passersby to visit his Old Somerset Print Shop. He opened other galleries — in Washington, D.C., and Orange, Virginia, and finally a very large one in nearby Gordonsville next to a five-star French eatery, Restaurant Pomme.

Finally, Graves moved to Court Square in Charlottesville, Virginia, where in 2017 the infamous riots took place — directly across the street from the gallery.

"So, we moved out of there and came back to Jacksonville," Graves said.

A DIFFERENT KIND OF MOVE

In 2011, while the gallery was making a name for itself in Virginia, Alex Graves took his first step into the world of



John and Alex Graves are surrounded by some of the artworks they collect and sell.

art sales.

"I quite simply started coming in just to hang out and see if I could help," he said.

At first, he started coming into the gallery one day a week. Then, two. Then, three days, four and finally all week long. He worked on commission and invested 65 cents on every dollar he earned into purchasing art.

At the time, the internet was impacting the market in a big way, and major online sites began to contact the Graves gallery about selling there. With an appreciation for digital commerce that so often resides with youth, Alex Graves steered the gallery to join 1stDibs and Artsy, and eventually artnet.

The move to online commerce immediately proved its worth. Sales over the internet overwhelmingly dwarfed those made in person because the gallery's reach had increased so dramatically. And at a time when the cost of maintaining a "brick-and-mortar" establishment was a serious concern, online sales offered a second benefit: much reduced overhead.

By 2019 after the family relocated to St. Augustine, virtually all of the business was conducted online. Still, John and Alex Graves will meet with people at the Prairie Creek home by appointment. Occasionally, they also meet local

customers at their homes to assess the available space. And the business does appraisals for those living within 100 miles.

Operating a business like this requires a high level of trust, and Graves International Art takes authenticity very seriously.

KEEPING IT REAL

John and Alex Graves acquire art three ways: from private collections, other art dealers and auctions, though the latter is no place for the amateur. It requires a very high level of expertise.

"Unless you're buying from Christie's, Sotheby's, Phillips, you'd better know what you're doing," said Alex Graves.

The greatest volume of art that Graves International Art deals in is prints — real, handmade prints created by the artist. Authenticating them requires a deep knowledge of paper — the size, source materials, the presence of screen impressions and any possible watermark. Each attribute signifies the norms of a specific historic place and time and must match the artist's circumstances. Is the image produced via intaglio engraving, lithography or silk screen? How was the paper created and what medium was used?

Another factor is whether the work is signed — and the presence of a signature is no guarantee that it's real. In

fact, prints predating 1900 tended to be unsigned.

"Whistler learned if he signed his print, he'd get 10 more shillings for it," said John Graves.

Even today, many artists don't sign their prints. So the authenticator is not easily impressed by signatures, numbering or certificates of authenticity. There is simply no substitute for expertise.

"Even if you know it is real, it is not real unless you can prove it," said Alex Graves.

If prints require enhanced knowledge, original works pose even greater challenges.

"You'd better know where that piece came from," said the younger Graves.

An authenticator may need to consult with archives, estates, museums and international experts. He may need to travel to other countries. And he must be realistic.

"In 46 years, I haven't had anybody offer me an authentic Picasso painting," said John Graves. When encountering an original work that requires a level of authentication beyond his expertise, Graves knows where he can turn to get the best possible determination.

When it comes to trust, Graves had some advice for art collectors.

"We own everything we sell, and I think that makes a big difference," he said. "The best person in the art business to trust is someone who is actively buying and selling the work as a dealer, not someone who wrote a book about the artist and not someone who took it in consignment without a single dollar of risk going into it. Someone who is actually finding it, authenticating it, buying it themselves and successfully selling it — that's who you should trust."

Prospective art collectors can learn more at gravesinternationalart.com. John Graves can be reached via email at gravesfneart1@gmail.com and by phone at 904-547-2591. Alex Graves' phone number is 904-460-5100.



Bloom — Steamed buns/furikake/sweet kimchi butter. Add sunny-side egg with chili crunch and cilantro!



A painting of a lotus flower



Hokkaido Scallop Crudo (truffle aioli, roasted nori-truffle vinaigrette, citrus-bonito emulsion, seasonal truffle)

TABLE TALK

LOTUS A BROAD BRUSHSTROKE *of culinary genius*

Like the lotus flower's mystery, Chef Honan teases our senses

story and photos by
LEIGH CORT

I was immersed in the adventure of dining at Lotus long before I arrived. Open since late 2023, Lotus's reputation had been circulating through the grapevine with raves coming from regional chefs, visitors to St. Augustine that fortunately landed in this exquisite new restaurant and local foodie friends. I quickly realized that finding my own voice to describe Chef Barry Honan's distinctive style was going to be a challenge!

Although I didn't have to remove my shoes in this pint-size meticulous setting, being surrounded by natural woods and quietly designed features, we were immediately welcomed to feel that



Chef Barry Honan

we were in a Chef's discreet Japanese home even before being seated. Lotus is a breath of fresh air when you realize that a sought-after reservation guarantees an unforgettable treat.

St. Augustine has been considered an art Mecca for decades. With Barry's specialties as his canvas, he fits into this scene flawlessly. At Lotus, the emphasis

is on Chef's philosophy — the same story that is shared by the lotus flower: "Lotus symbolizes a profound integration of my thoughts, emotions, intuitions and desires. You have to break free from the mud to bloom into beauty."

Without question, the restaurant is better enjoyed if you know why it was created.

Arrive prepared to enjoy reading the menu; bring a culinary dictionary or use your cell phone to translate the descriptive dishes. There are many ingredients you'll want to investigate. It will assist you in making dining selections.

There is a modest curated list of wine and beer — and for saké fans, The Drunken Whale is a perfect small bottle of warm embracing nearly traditional sake. You'll be introduced to a parade of Chef's dishes that unfold with more food than seems possible for today's cost! Lotus is a restaurant that cares about educating you, especially on

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34 ■

TABLE TALK

THE THRILLING FLAVORS OF SPRING

story and photos by
LEIGH CORT

From the first fragrant breeze of spring to the last glow of Indian summer, we'll seize any excuse to go off to the beach or woods, city or countryside to find something deliciously tempting once you find your favorite places. As a genuine and proud "foodie," I adore the people who make food come alive.

Our region from Coastal Georgia to Northeast Florida is flooded with a tidal wave of exceptional culinarians, talented chefs and restaurant professionals who design, sell, recommend and create food with great passion. We're in a hyper casual, eco-minded era where the hot restaurants don't require gowns, ties or jackets — and many don't even take reservations. Diners do their homework; they read everything available to find out where to go and who to worship.

Pictures tell a story, especially when it's gorgeous food and beaming chefs! Convivial entertaining on rooftops, guided adventures introducing you to a multitude of tasting venues, supper clubs with unforgettable shareables and jazz ... all are developing with rampant culinary excitement. Who doesn't love to experiment with new patterns of eating, revitalize our attitudes toward mealtimes, the central events of our day. Our free time, our leisure, is truly precious and we don't want to waste any of it.

Even if you must rearrange the schedule of meals, take a cue from other countries — like breakfast at midmorning, lunch in midafternoon or a light supper of tapas later in the evening. Don't forget that you can also enjoy springtime by taking a siesta after lunch, then dine later at night ... or perhaps making "high tea" at 4 in the afternoon as the main meal. Eating lighter at dinner is easy and fun ... by enjoying several small dishes as the entrée.

This season, let's visit a generous variety of flavors and textures — enjoyable for all appetites large and small. Our new style of eating leaves you feeling satisfied — not stuffed. Dining is a ceremony worth lingering over for its own sake. Food is naturally beautiful and

can be discovered as lovely works of art. And some you can even create yourself!



The Vilano Vixen Cocktail

PESCA by Michaels, nestled in the heart of Vilano Beach, is a culinary haven that offers a unique blend of local and coastal flavors created by Chef Michael Lugo. His menu is a celebration of the region's bounty, with a special spotlight on the handcrafted Vilano Vixen Cocktail. This signature drink, served in an iconic puffer fish glass, features St. Augustine vodka, passionfruit, orgeat, lemon and soda — embodying the vibrant spirit of Vilano Beach. Each sip promises a taste of the local essence, making PESCA Vilano not just a dining destination but a sensory journey through Florida's coastal delights. It's not eating out; it's an evening or lunch or happy hour out at PESCA! The dreamy rooftop is one of the most inviting outdoor dining and relaxing spots where you can sit by the firepit or watch the lighted skyline of historic St. Augustine with a perfect vista. www.pescavilano.com

Chez L' Amour offers "bites, bubbles and jazz at the house of love." A star-studded launch only months ago finds guests clamoring for Chef Ellie Schultze's exquisite small plates, the restaurant's calling card. Equally alluring is the perfect balance to anyone's romantic night out with great music



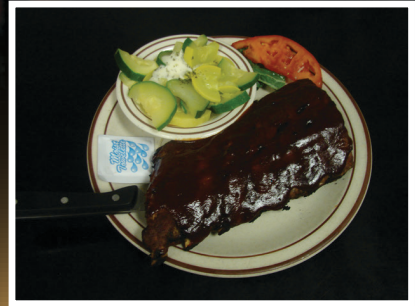
Bites, bubbles and jazz at the house of love

— internationally acclaimed musicians in the spotlight with the most talented local entertainers. Chef's dishes are meticulously crafted for guests who love exotic, locally sourced ingredients that deliver fresh unique flavors. The Garden Caprese is a masterpiece of fresh veggies over stracciatella with olive oil, citrus white balsamic reduction and basil. Lamb Boulettes served with smashed English peas, feta, mint, golden raisins, minced lamb and pork is delightfully shareable — but you might not want to part with a tiny taste! www.bitesbubble-sandjazz.com

Italian Cooking Classes by Diana Testa is a unique and different way to enjoy spring's bounty of authentic Italian food that isn't served at your table. You can learn how to do it yourself at one of her cooking classes in-home, at breweries, coffee shops, retail gourmet markets, restaurants and private venues. With a true passion for teaching, and

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[wine & dine]

ST. AUGUSTINE FOOD + WINE FESTIVAL RETURNS MAY 8-12

story by **SHAUN RYAN**
Contributed photos

The tasty food, the wine and the merriment are back. The fourth annual St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival presented by Publix will take place on May 8-12.

It will highlight celebrity guest chefs, local chefs, celebrity winemakers/proprietors, live music, artisans, farmers, local craft spirits and beers, along with renowned wine, spirits and beer brands from around the globe. And it's important to

note that tickets include all food and beverage tastings.

"What we've tried to do is really, in a five-day period, give everybody a taste of everything that a bigger festival would offer, but on a smaller scale," said festival founder and director Jan Gourley.

About 3,000 people are expected to attend.

The festival offers a wide variety of events for all tastes and budgets, from large scale tasting events to intimate learning experiences. Guests can also save nearly 40% with festival ticket packages (availability is limited). Patrons attending Friday and Saturday festivities can save an additional \$10 on those tickets by entering the promo code PVR10, named for The Ponte Vedra Recorder.



Tiffany Derry

TV personality and celebrity chef Tiffany Derry will participate in several events, including Smoke on the Walk, and will host a cooking demonstration at the Saturday Grand Tasting's Publix Cooking Demo Stage.

Derry appeared on season seven of Bravo's "Top Chef," earning the title of "fan favorite" and finishing in the top four. Her quiet confidence, warm Southern

charm and culinary expertise made her a natural selection for "Top Chef: All-Stars," where she was again a finalist.

She went on to more television appearances on shows such as "Chopped," "Chopped Kids," "The Great American Recipe," "Beat Bobby Flay," "Tournament of Champions," "The Great American Soul Food Cook-off," "Bar Rescue," "Top Chef Junior," "Top Chef Amateurs" and more.

In 2016, she and business partner Tom Foley founded T2D Concepts, which operates her current restaurants in Texas: Roots Chicken Shak and Roots Southern Table and her spice and apparel line.

Here's a look at the St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival schedule:

- Wednesday, May 8: "River Walk Tastings" in the historic district at San Sebastian Winery and the Homewood Suites St. Augustine San Sebastian from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Includes souvenir glass, with trolley shuttle, live music and food-and-drink tastings at both venues. The progressive tasting tours will start at both locations this year. Taste delicious bites from La Cocina International Restaurant and more.

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CONTINUED ON PAGE 35 ■



Italian Cooking Classes by Diana Testa

SPRING

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 30

raised in a small Northern Italy town between Como Lake and Milan, she brings a true understanding and zesty personality into her classes. Author of her new cookbook "Diana's Italian Recipes Like Nonna Used to Cook!" she shares an insight into the Italian culture that punctuates her love and passion for cooking. Do not miss learning how to make her Garden "laminated" Pasta with basil and edible florals that will wow you! www.ItalianCookingLessonsJax.com



I. Bee Boards

L Bee Boards — A newcomer to the Northeast Florida catering menu is Lizbeth Califf. She loves crafting charcuterie boards as it affords clients the opportunity to enjoy vibrant seasonal elements like fresh berries, local honeycomb and colorful flowers. These ingredients not only enhance the visual appeal but add a burst of flavor and aroma. Juicy strawberries, succulent raspberries and plump grapes infuse the board with sweetness, while the rich complexity of honeycomb provides a contrasting texture. Delicate flowers, such as orchids, contribute to the board's aesthetics and offers those spring vibes. Together, they create a symphony of colors and flavors, making the charcuterie experience notable. To Lizbeth, who loves creating charcuterie spreads, this is an opportunity to try new combinations of cheese, meats and even newly introduced ingredients that are popular this year. Additionally, her hand-crafted culinary adventure is a form of artistry that's rewarding and enjoyable! www.LBeeBoards.com

So if you're entertaining or dining out this spring, remember that good parties are a frame of mind. Start with the assumption that the whole point is for you and company to enjoy yourselves. Whenever I host a gathering, I know it's going to be memorable because of the secret ingredient: my friends and family!



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LOTUS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 29

your first visit. All servers are brilliantly capable of imparting the exact descriptions so that you can navigate Chef's lavish culinary voyage.

One amazement that solidified my respect for Chef Honan upon arrival was when, in the middle of a busy dinner night, he acknowledged his team of chefs with appreciation for their work. With an open kitchen for all guests to view and hear the quiet, detailed work that was taking place, it was superb to watch Chef and his crew in action. Finally, when you taste the complex shareables or seasonal ramen entrees, the entire experience seems beautifully orchestrated and worth the wait.

A glimpse into Lotus' inventive dinner menu integrates modern Japanese cuisine with French techniques. Start with fresh water poured into a lovely bamboo goblet, settle the lovely black linen napkin on your lap and begin with the Hokkaido Scallop Crudo (truffle aioli, roasted nori-truffle vinaigrette, citrus-bonito emulsion, seasonal truffle). Taste the complex hints of spice, ethereal slices and a dish worth savoring. You



Bamboo Lotus cups

may think every dish is almost too gorgeous to eat. But you must ease into the vibe of beautiful food that masterfully unfolds before your eyes.

As origami is the art of folding paper into beautiful intricate shapes, Chef Honan's food reminds me of his magical journey of food — like paper that is considered a symbol of elegance and creativity. He pushes the limits of his imagination for guests to enjoy his creations as people have perfected the ancient art of origami for centuries.

The ramen entrees bring a lovely touch when with every course you receive a change of silverware and bowls.

The “Spicy Tan Tan” is a highlight of Sesame Sichuan-coconut broth, three-month aged white miso from Kyoto, spicy ground pork, toasted sesame, green onion, chili oil, ajitama! Equally delightful “Garlic Noodle Mazemen” is worth a look with blue crab/koji-butter, ajitama, cilantro, scallion, toasted sesame, fried garlic, togarashi.

With an illustrious career making his way through elite kitchens (including Le Bernardin in NYC, Thomas Keller's Per Se and The French Laundry), we're fortunate that Chef Honan chose to bring his lovely innovation to St. Augustine. His restaurant is a “creative obsession” filled with delightful surprise and artistry.

Even his words fill you with amazement as he states, “I navigate the delicate balance between finding myself and losing myself, unveiling a culinary journey that resonates with the essence of human connection and self-discovery.”

Lotus is so much more than an elevated ramen concept. It's where you can lose yourself in the moment and surrender to Chef Barry Honan's nightly innovations that expose your culinary fantasy to his broad brushstroke of genius!

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FESTIVAL

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 32

- Thursday, May 9: “Harvest Awards & Tastings” at Bozard Lincoln, 550 Outlet Mall Blvd., St. Augustine, from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. This is an opportunity to taste fare from some of Northeast Florida’s best restaurants, presented by St. Johns Food Service and Jacksonville Magazine. A curated group of restaurants has been invited to participate. A group of culinary judges will officiate as the restaurants compete for the Harvest Award. Guests will receive a wine glass.

- Friday, May 10: “Epicurean Master Classes” at Publix, 170 Village Commons Drive, St. Augustine, from noon to 1 p.m. Foley Family Wines, wine pairing with charcuterie and cheese will be featured. Veterans United Craft Brewery Tasting & Pairing will be held 1:30 to 2 p.m. Master classes are part of every really big food and wine festival, said Gourley, adding, “It’ll be really, really cool.”

- Friday, May 10: “Smoke on the Walk” from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Walk of Champions, 1 World Golf Place, St. Augustine. This all-inclusive showcase features the Southeast’s most celebrated chefs and grill masters with wine, beer and spirits. Live music will be provided by Remedy Tree. Enjoy unlimited beverage tastings in a souvenir glass, along with delicious grilled, smoked and roasted gourmet bites — all included in the ticket price.

- Saturday, May 11: “St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival, Grand Tasting” from 2 to 5 p.m. at Walk of Champions, 1 World Golf Place, St. Augustine. These all-inclusive culinary and beverage tastings will be offered in the beautiful lakefront surroundings of the Walk of Champions, the centerpiece of World Golf Village. Tickets include a souvenir cup for unlimited beverage tastings of more than 300 wines, beers and spirits.

There will be live music on the Jacksonville Magazine Music Stage from the band Chillula. Other highlights include the new “Taste of Tallahassee” and the Champions Brand Brews Alley. The cooking demonstrations on the Publix Cooking Demo Stage are set for 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. with Tiffany Derry and 4 to 4:30 p.m. with Christine Seely, St. Johns Food Service. About 15 restaurants are expected to participate. Guests can vote for their favorite tasting bites and drinks in the People’s Choice Harvest Awards, presented by St. Johns Food Service and Jacksonville Magazine.

- Sunday, May 12: “Sunday Mother’s Day Jazz Brunch,” a family-friendly event, will be held 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. and again at 1-3 p.m. at the St. Johns County Convention Center, 500 S. Legacy Trail. The all-inclusive priced ticket includes live music, brunch buffet with carving station, indulgent sides, made-to-order omelet station, seafood station and a variety of desserts. There will be a Bloody Mary bar, champagne, mimosas and unlimited beverage stations that include wine, beer, spirits, coffee, iced tea and soft drinks. In addition, moms will receive a rose upon arrival.

“It’s great having the Mother’s Day brunch,” said Gourley. “It’s just a great way to end the festival.”

Gourley created her first food and

wine festival in 2013 in Savannah, Georgia. It was a success — that is, until COVID-19 forced it to shut down.

Around that time, the St. Johns Cultural Council approached Gourley, asking her to create a similar event here. The rest is, as they say, history.

Since establishing the festival, Gourley has gone on to found the Louisiana Food & Wine Festival in Lake Charles, Louisiana, (set for Sept. 19-22 this year), and Whiskey, Wine & Wildlife in Vilano Beach, which is set for Nov. 7-10 this year.

The St. Augustine Food + Wine Festival is made possible in part by support from St. Johns Cultural Council, Florida’s Historic Coast: St. Augustine/Ponte Vedra and a 2024 St. Johns County Tourist Development Grant.

The festival’s primary official nonprofit partner is Vilano Beach Main Street, a 501(c)3 organization. The festival donates a portion of ticket sales and 100% of the Main Event’s silent auction proceeds to Vilano Beach Main Street. The festival has also created a culinary scholarship with its nonprofit partner, First Coast Technical College.

The most up-to-date festival information is available on the website, staugustinefoodandwinefestival.com, and the festival’s social media channels: Facebook, Instagram and X.



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Inline skating attire during the 1890s.

FASHION

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 27

ankles,” Dring said. “We know this is not the case nowadays but it’s fun to look back. These are things that we don’t even think about today.”

According to Dring, the exhibit stops in the 1960s because that was when the curator noticed that there were less dramatic changes being made to women’s sporting outfits and they began trending more similar to today’s fashion.

The Cummer is also working with many local organizations to host several

[first coast arts]



Motorcycling gear from the 1930s.

interactive demonstrations, as well as fashion and art programs.

Sporting demonstrations included members of the Palm Valley Academy Middle School cheer team, Jax Pickleball Store and the Jacksonville Women’s Rugby Football Club.

The Florida Ballet Company will be hosting a demonstration on May 3 and the LPGA and USGA will be holding a girls golf interaction on May 17. Each



Cheerleading outfit from the 1950s.

demonstration is from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. and are free for guests with admission into the museum.

“Typically, at museums we’re looking and touching, and that’s why doing these demos with a number of local Florida organizations is so important to us,” Dring said. “These are real people demonstrating the real sports that they play.”

The Cummer is open every day of the week except Mondays and hours can be found at cummuseum.org. Adult tickets are \$20, while students (ages 6 to 17), seniors, military and educators receive a discounted rate of \$15.

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Artist Al Razza and gallery owner Dede Sweet in front of Razza's 96-by-48-inch work, "Turbulence."

story and photos by
SHAUN RYAN

The newest art gallery in Ponte Vedra Beach did more than simply open its doors Saturday, April 13; it fairly burst onto the scene with an eye-popping exhibition of original works by acclaimed mixed media artist Al Razza.

Owner Dede Sweet and Gallery Director Carri McGregor welcomed a large contingent of art lovers to Sweet Art Gallery, 310 Front St., Sawgrass Village, for the elegant event. This is actually Sweet's second gallery location, the first being in Naples. She prides herself on the quality of artists she exhibits.

"We represent fabulous artists — over 39," Sweet said. "They're all really lifetime achievement artists."

The galleries only deal in original works.

"We don't do any giclées, any prints, any greeting cards or anything like that," Sweet said. She plans to bring three to five of her artists to the local gallery for each exhibit.

"We'll be doing great shows," she said. "We're very excited to be in Ponte Vedra."

Razza, whom Sweet has represented for about eight years, is the gallery's first featured artist. His works are large and bright and dynamic.

"Most of my work is abstract, although it draws inspiration from nature, and maybe technical things," he said.

Razza works with different mediums: acrylic, oil, enamel. But he also uses "foreign objects," screens, plastics, paper and more.

"They're very physical works," he said. "Very tactile works."

A 54-by-48 inch portrait of Marilyn Monroe, done predominantly in blue and titled "Shades of Marilyn," is an excellent example. The paint is applied over varying patterns of wall covering, and in one area, lace. Viewers are drawn into the image via the textures of these elements.

Other works owe something to the artists who Razza said helped to make him who he is: William Turner, Mark Rothko and Gerhard Richter.

But make no mistake: These works are all Razza, unique to him and to his vision.

"I can just bury myself in my own thoughts and explore the depth of my own mind," he explained. "So everything that happens



Carri McGregor, gallery director for the Sweet Art Gallery in Ponte Vedra, stands next to three works by Al Razza, clockwise from top left: "November Kites," "xzlin" and "Love Potion."

happens because of my connection to my soul."

Razza has had numerous exhibitions in museums and galleries. His work is so popular that, at a show at the Coral Springs Museum of Art, 380 people showed up to claim the 80 seats provided.

Sweet represents several woman artists of note, such as Mary Ann Flynn-Fouse, who in 1958 became the first woman to exhibit at the Cleveland Museum; and Brenda Belfield, who created 60 stained-glass windows at the Washington National Cathedral and the American Embassy in Saudi Arabia.

To learn more about Sweet Art Gallery, its artists and exhibitions, go to thesweetartgallery.com or call 904-686-ARTS (2787). Gallery hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday and by appointment.

The Razza exhibit will be displayed until May 15.



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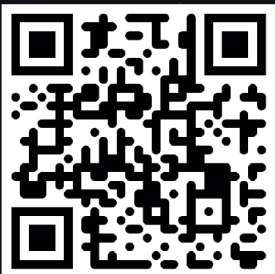
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