

# Connections

December 2016



ST. JOHNS  
COUNTY  
CHAMBER  
OF COMMERCE

Ponte Vedra  
Recorder  
We print, we write, we analyze, we report, we connect.



Year  
in Review



(Top L-R) Chamber Member of the Year Susan Griffin (L) with Chamber President Isabelle Rodriguez (R), Chamber Golf Classic. (Middle) EDC Quarterly Breakfast exploring Transportation in St. Johns County. (Bottom L-R) Politics in St. Johns in Ponte Vedra Beach, PVBD Board of Directors Secretary Rob Schlingmann, PVBD Ambassador of the Year Lori Adams (R) with Rodriguez (L).



## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

When I was asked to write a year in review, my first thought was “where in the world do I start?” Next I thought, “and where do I finish?”

So much has happened in my almost-first-year (shy by one month) as director, and as much as I would love to go down the list of things the division has accomplished, there just isn’t enough space.

Instead I will focus on the highlights. First, I am proud to have been named the director of the Ponte Vedra Beach Division. Isabelle Rodriguez, our president and CEO, was charged with the tough task of filling the shoes of my predecessor, Sandy Kavanaugh. Sandy had been with the Ponte Vedra Beach Division for a number of years and was well-known and dearly loved throughout the community. I was fortunate to have Sandy show me the ropes and start me on the right path.

One of the division’s largest responsibilities is the Ponte Vedra Auto Show. The annual event is held in September and has become a Ponte Vedra tradition. The auto show features more than 100 classic and new show cars and brings over 3,000 people to the area annually.

In the past, it has been held on the grounds of TPC Sawgrass and this year was hosted at the Nocatee Town Center. Even with a new director, a new location, sweltering hot weather and the first Jaguars home game of the season, we were able to execute an extremely well



LIN JONES

attended family-friendly event, exceeding our normal attendance and expectations. We couldn’t have been happier!

This year, I experienced my first major hurricane living close to the shoreline and in an evacuation zone! It was an eye opener, but the tenacity I witnessed from business owners in St. Johns County, quick to pick up and rebuild not just their own properties but also help their neighbors do the same, was truly heart-warming to see.

This year also saw the election of five new board members onto the Ponte Vedra Beach Division Board of Directors. The prior board consisted of several long-time members, some that served for over six years.

Their commitment to the board and the community is commendable and greatly appreciated. My sincere thanks to Felicia Cox with Iberia Bank, Frances King with King & Associates, Michele Smith with ReMax Coastal Real Estate, Dr. Erika Hamer with Ponte Vedra Wellness Center and Christine Adams with Rogers Towers for your service. Their presence is missed at monthly meetings, but their smiles are always a welcomed sight at events.

Their support can still be felt. In fact, former board members along with the current board came together this past holiday season to help Santa.

With all that goes into preparing for Christmas, Santa needed a little assistance getting letters up to the North Pole in a timely manner. He contacted the group, and within just a few weeks the Letters for Santa Mailbox was set up at Sawgrass Village.

The Ponte Vedra Beach Division Board, along with the Ponte Vedra Family YMCA, worked together behind the scenes to get those special letters up to Santa to be answered. He was so impressed, plans are already in place to do the same thing next year.

The year was rounded out by a great

Holiday Merriment Party, where it was our pleasure to award Lori Adams the Ambassador of the Year award.

Adams is a long-time ambassador, chamber supporter and all-around great person. We are very fortunate to have her and all the volunteer ambassadors who give their time to represent and assist the chamber.

We also had the wonderful opportunity to honor Ponte Vedra Recorder Publisher Susan Griffin with the St. Johns County Chamber Member of the Year Award.

This distinctive honor is awarded to an outstanding individual and strong supporter who goes above and beyond in their commitment to expanding and improving the St Johns County Chamber of Commerce. Susan has been a member of the chamber since 1997.

She served for many years as the chair of the Ambassador Committee and was awarded Ambassador of the Year in 2004 as well as the 2016 Pat Morgan Outstanding Member Award. She is also currently the vice chair of the Ponte Vedra Beach Division Board.

She is a high-energy leader who is always willing to step up whenever asked and can always be found attending chamber events.

Thank you, Susan, Lori and all of you for the great support we’ve received from our members in the business community here in Ponte Vedra Beach. We cannot wait to get 2017 off to another great start!

## CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EVENTS CALENDAR

**Chamber Before Hours:** Held the second Wednesday of the month, this networking event introduces a new host business at each gathering.

**Chamber at Noon:** Held on the third Wednesday of the month, the event begins at 11:30 a.m. with registration. Members then have the opportunity to network before enjoying lunch. Each Chamber at Noon event includes an educational component, such as health care reform. The event also provides time for the sponsoring company to be recognized before a captive audience. It is a cost-effective way to get your company known among members and guests.

**Chamber After Hours:** Chamber After Hours events are held every fourth Wednesday of the month, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. Each month has a different host location, making for a lively and enjoyable event. Most After Hours are free, or a nominal fee is charged to

members and guests. Chamber After Hours is the perfect way to showcase your business location and amenities! For more information about chamber events, visit [www.stjohnscountychamber.com](http://www.stjohnscountychamber.com) and click on the “Members” tab.

**Power Networking Luncheon (PNL):** Held on the second Tuesday of every month, this business-to-business networking luncheon program allows participants to introduce their business to all attendees. Remember to bring a small gift or door prize to promote your business. The event is open exclusively to chamber members, and seating is limited to the first 50 respondents each month.

**Chamber Business Councils Agricultural & Environmental Council:** Meeting on the fourth Thursday of every other month, this council aims to promote, educate and provide a forum to advance agricul-

tural and environmental issues and show how these industries contribute to our quality of life. Council programs focus on our agricultural heritage and the economic contribution that this industry brings to the county. Environmental programs focus on promoting and addressing issues associated with our natural and environmental resources, sustainable development, permitting, conservation and eco-tourism.

**Historic St. Augustine Council:** Held on the second Friday of every month, council meetings are designed to bring members the most current information on tourism trends. The sessions also spotlight local and state initiatives that have economic impact on business in the historic district and work to make the nation’s oldest city a better place for residents and visitors.

**Small Business Council:** Held on the fourth Tuesday of every month,

this council works to support small businesses throughout St. Johns County. The council also strives to increase commerce while educating and serving as a resource to small business owners and their managers.

**South Beaches Council:** Meeting on the third Thursday of every month, the South Beach Council is designed for chamber members with a professional or general interest in the South Beaches area. The council is characterized by its dedication to the community and advocacy for local business issues.

**Tourism & Hospitality Council:** Meeting on the first Wednesday of every month, this council aims to further enhance the abilities of St. Johns County tourism businesses to provide first-class service to their visitors. The council aims to achieve this by being a resource for industry-specific training and educational opportunities.

JANUARY

# Chamber After Hours: Dance Alday Dance Studio

The St. Johns Chamber of Commerce Ponte Vedra Beach Division's Chamber After Hours event took place Jan. 27 at Dance Alday Dance Studio in Ponte Vedra Beach. Dance Alday, a locally owned and operated ballroom and Latin dance studio, was established 15 years ago by Allan Alday. The studio just celebrated its three-year anniversary in its current location in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Alday said they were honored to host the Chamber After Hours event and celebrate their anniversary with chamber board members and ambassadors. Dance Alday offers private lessons, group classes, practice parties and other dance options at the studio located at 820 A1A N., E17 in Ponte Vedra Beach.



Photos by Susan Griffin

Adam Horna, Carolyn Morriss, Megan Wallace and Allan Alday



Allan Alday, owner of Dance Alday



Cindy Bishop, Carol Maurer and Jeanell Wilson



Michael Lenahen and Mary Price

FEBRUARY

# Chamber Before Hours: Palm Valley Dentistry

The Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce hosted a special Chamber Before Hours event on Feb. 10 from 8 to 9 a.m. The event offered members a chance to enjoy breakfast while networking among members and guests, and was offered for free to preregistered members and guests with \$5 charged at the door for those who didn't register. The event was hosted at and sponsored by Palm Valley Dentistry, 3791 Palm Valley Rd., in Ponte Vedra Beach.

Palm Valley Dentistry offers comprehensive dentistry for the entire family with office procedures, modern facilities, an infection control program, up to date technology and a staff with a commitment to continuing education. The office has options for cosmetic dentistry, crowns and tooth whitening as well as implants, veneers and same-day care for dental emergencies. For more information, call (904) 834-2736 or visit [www.palmvalley-familydentistry.com](http://www.palmvalley-familydentistry.com).



# MARCH

## Collaboration critical to elevating small businesses, Ross tells St. Johns Chamber

### St. Johns Chamber of Commerce Annual Breakfast Highlights

#### Chamber Benefits

St. Johns County Chamber Chair Michael Scine outlined just a few of the benefits of chamber membership, including:

- Increased business presence through event sponsorships
- Advertising opportunities
- Ability to build relationships
- Information
- Education
- Advocacy

"We speak with so much more volume when we speak as a group," Scine said.

#### Chamber Accomplishments

President Isabelle Rodriguez reviewed recent chamber accomplishments, including:

- Sale of chamber's former home and move to new offices
- Visitor information center working to analyze and define the visitor experience
- Addition of Lin Jones as new head of Ponte Vedra Beach Division
- New partnership with Ponte Vedra Recorder to increase communications
- Greater advocacy under the direction of Government Relations Manager Bob Porter

### By Jennifer Logue

In 1928, Walt Disney was riding high off the phenomenal success of his cartoon character, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, when the young cartoonist was dealt a stunning business setback. While in New York on business, Disney discovered that not only did his film distributor own the rights to the Oswald character, but that the company had hired away most of Disney's animation staff. Virtually overnight, Disney's dream had fallen apart.

As he prepared to board the train back to California, however, Disney cabled his brother: "Don't worry. Everything OK." And on the trip across country, he sketched out a new character – one that

would become known as Mickey Mouse.

Today's entrepreneurs and small business owners can learn from Walt Disney's never-say-die attitude, business expert Jerry Ross told attendees at the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce's annual breakfast, held March 4 at the Renaissance World Golf Village Resort.

"Don't worry. Everything OK." Who thinks like that?" asked Ross, president of the National Entrepreneur Center. "We all need to start thinking like that."

Addressing the several hundred local business and community leaders in attendance, Ross noted that 99 percent of all U.S. businesses have fewer than 100 employees.

"We're a small business country," he said. "So anything we can do to move small businesses to the next level is critical to strengthening communities."

The key to reaching that next level, Ross said, is collaboration. Drawing on his experience with the National Entrepreneur Center, Ross recounted how the center was born after the September 11 terrorist attacks and consumers' fear of flying crippled the Orlando tourism industry. With funding and support from the City of Orlando and key business partners – including Disney – the center was founded to help revive the local business economy.

Today, the center coaches thousands of businesses each year through the efforts of a dozen organizations, all of which collaborate and share office space in the center's Orlando offices.

"At the National Entrepreneurship Center, our mission is helping small businesses move forward," Ross said. "If someone doesn't agree with that mission, they don't live in my center."

But collaboration isn't always easy. "The day we opened with eight businesses, we had eight coffee pots in the breakroom," Ross recalled. "So we had a funeral that afternoon for seven coffee pots. I told them, 'If we can't even share a coffee pot, this will never work.'"

Ross pointed to the St. Johns County Chamber's recent initiatives – including merging with the Ponte Vedra Beach chamber, moving to new offices, increasing communication and government advocacy efforts, and implementing a three-year strategic plan – as examples of how businesses can embrace the unity of purpose that transforms "cooperation" into "collaboration."

He also encouraged chamber members to collaborate with one another, sharing their successes and their setbacks so that others may benefit from the lessons they've learned.

"There are people in this room who have already gone through what you're going through right now," Ross said. "Business is not a solo sport. It's a team sport, and you can't play it alone."

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PV3-LV33931

# Chamber selects Lin Jones to lead in Ponte Vedra Beach

## Chamber names new Ponte Vedra Beach Division Director

Lin Jones, the new Ponte Vedra Beach (PVB) Division director for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, is no stranger to the Atlantic coastline. She grew up in Howell, New Jersey, not far from the ocean, and graduated from Rowan University, just a short drive from the famed Jersey shore.

Jones, who has formerly held positions as the director of marketing and media at Warm Glow Candle Company and as the executive director of Tour Indiana, succeeds Sandy Kavanaugh, who retired Feb. 16.

The director will oversee operation of the chamber's PVB Division that serves many of the chamber's 1,100 business members that have professional interests in the northeastern part of St. Johns County. She will also be charged with operating the Ponte Vedra Beach Visitor Information Center.

"Her extensive expertise in marketing strategies and sales, membership organizations and event management will prove to be an asset to the division director's position and her knowledge of the tourism industry will enhance the efforts of our Visitor Information Center at the PVB Division," said Chamber President and CEO Isabelle Rodriguez.

Jones began her career in tourism and marketing after moving to the Midwest, where in addition to Tour Indiana she worked at four destination marketing organizations, promoting three different cities in varying positions. During her 15 years in the industry, she also served as the marketing manager of the Columbus, Indiana Visitors Center and the group leisure sales manager of Visit Indy.

"I am excited to be here and I look forward to showcasing Ponte Vedra Beach and its great enterprising busi-

nesses," Jones said.

The Rowan University graduate also has extensive event planning experience. She was responsible for event staff in a 5,000 seat arena; was the event manager for Celebrate Science, a one day children's science event with over 4,000 in attendance and has planned several retail events during her time with Glow Candle Company that saw over 5,000 customers during a three-day weekend.

Kavanaugh, the former director, will stay on part-time as a resource during the leadership transition and will remain working with the chamber to plan and execute the Ponte Vedra Auto Show in September.

"Sandy (Kavanaugh) has done a phenomenal job, and I consider the opportunity to build on the successes and the strong foundation she has built a privilege," said Jones.



St. Johns County Chamber photo

**Chamber of Commerce President Isabelle Rodriguez and Ponte Vedra Beach Division Director Lin Jones**

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# MARCH



Blue Wave Coffee truck



Dr. Erika Hamer cuts the ribbon on the Nocatee location of Ponte Vedra Wellness Center.

## Ponte Vedra Wellness Center opens new Nocatee location

Chamber officials and members were in attendance March 9 when Ponte Vedra Wellness Center opened a new second location in Nocatee.

“We are thrilled to be able to open a wellness center in Nocatee and look forward to serving this community so focused on active lifestyles and healthy living,” Dr. Erika Hamer said. “We have had the support of the Ponte Vedra Beach

community for over 11 years and we really felt this was the right time to expand services into this growing, active, family-friendly community.”

Founded in 2004, Ponte Vedra Wellness Center is a traditional chiropractic neurology clinic for adults, children and pregnant women. The current Ponte Vedra Beach office is located at 100 Corridor Rd., Ste. 220.



Felicia Cox, Michele Smith and Kari Zerahn

Photos by Susan Griffin

# APRIL

## Flavor Palette holds ribbon cutting

Chef Tommy McDonough officially cut the ribbon opening his new Ponte Vedra Beach sandwich shop, Flavor Palette, April 12.

Members of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce welcomed McDonough and his family to their new restaurant, located in the Ponte Vedra Pointe Shopping Center at 880 A1A N, Suite 9.

Guests enjoyed a variety of samplings of Flavor Palette’s menu offerings, including its homemade gelatos.

“I just want to make people happy and I do that by giving them true flavor to enjoy,” McDonough told guests.



Savannah Madaffari offers guests samples of the falafel burger.



The Flavor Palette team: Yvonne Belardo, Tom and Jamie McDonough, Abigail Lieberman, Emma Cramer, Savannah Madaffari, Natalie Altmire and Jarod Magdon

Photos by Susan Griffin



Photo by Lucia Miller

THE PLAYERS Executive Director Matt Rapp with Lin Jones (left) and Isabelle Rodriguez

# Joint chamber luncheon updates attendees on THE PLAYERS 2016



David Henderson and Bob Tackett



Rae Mansoor and Thea Jeffers



Photos by Jasmine Marshall  
Nan Kreamer and Sharon Sacks



Lisa Leath and Lawrence Dioso

## By Jasmine Marshall

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce's Ponte Vedra Beach Division held a joint luncheon with the JAX Chamber's Beaches Division April 14 to discuss updates for THE PLAYERS Championship 2016.

Guest speaker at the luncheon was THE PLAYERS Championship Executive Director Matt Rapp, who detailed a number of improvements undertaken to improve

the fan experience. The chamber luncheon also recognized Rock Solid Business Law Owner and Founding Attorney John Miller for being named 2016's overall Small Business Leader of the Year by JAX Chamber. Miller thanked the chamber once again for the award and introduced two new associates, Yasmin Adamy and Teri Mai. Miller has been a part of the Beaches business community since he opened his own firm and relocated it to the area 25 years ago.

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MAY

# Membership Appreciation Awards

A dozen local business leaders were recognized for their commitment to fostering a thriving business community last week, when the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce presented its annual "Membership Appreciation Awards."

Held May 25 at the Sawgrass Golf Club, the cocktail reception and awards ceremony honored Ponte Vedra Beach Division members in a variety of categories. Ponte Vedra Recorder Publisher Susan Griffin received the Pat Morgan Outstanding Member Award and Clare Berry of Berry & Co. was recognized with the Jeff Jenkins Community Service Award. Rob Schlingmann of The

Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach was recognized as Board Member of the Year, while Former Executive Director Sandy Kavanaugh, was honored for many years of service to the chamber's Ponte Vedra Beach Division. Additional awards presented included:

**Crushing It!**: given to the member that has made the most of his/her chamber membership – Brian Anderson, Fluffy Cuts

**Curious Traveler**: recognizing the member who attended numerous events throughout the county – Carole Everitt, Colonial Quarter

AWARDS continues on Page 23



Chamber photo

Back: Sandy Kavanaugh, Rob Schlingmann, Susan Griffin, Felicia Cox, Michele Smith and Dave Danzeisen. Front: Janet Collins, Dr. Erika Hamer, Lin Jone, Isabelle Rodriguez and Frances King.

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MAY



Ilene Thrasher and Lori Adams



Dr. Erika Hamer and Jeff White



Clare Berry, Susan Griffin and Sandy Kavanaugh

Chamber photos



Bill and Nicole Constain



Carol Maurer and Anette Saalman



## Awards

Continued from 22

Pinch Hitter: honoring the member who steps up at the last minute – Carol

Maurer, Hilton Garden Inn  
 Rookie of the Year: given to a new member who has shown great initiative in attending chamber events – Dr. Sharyl Truty, Balanced Physician Care  
 Master of Social Media: recognizing the member who is most supportive of

chamber social media initiatives – Michael Mitchell, ServPro  
 Dedicated Service: given to the member who never says no and sponsors chamber events – Michelle Nemeth, FirstAtlantic Bank  
 5 Star Hospitality: given to the

member or venue that has gone above and beyond when hosting a chamber event – Sawgrass Country Club (Barry McDonald)  
 The Showman: given to the member who hosted a creative special event – Ilene Thrasher, Arbor Terrace.

JUNE

# Mainstream Boutique ribbon cutting

Mainstream Boutique held a ribbon cutting June 1 at its new location at 880 A1A N., Ste. 4, next to the Beach Diner.

Representatives from the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce joined owners Kurt and Carla Miles for the ribbon cutting at the boutique, which features a diverse assortment of women's clothing – everything from tops and jeans to little black dresses and ankle pants.

The boutique also features an exclusive line known as Mac and Me.

Part of a franchise founded 25 years ago in Minnesota, the Ponte Vedra location is the second Mainstream Boutique to open in Florida, following the opening of a store in Tampa.

The boutique was listed in the Franchise 500 list of fastest growing companies in 2015.



Mainstream Boutique owners Carla and Kurt Miles cut the ribbon on their new store, Mainstream Boutique.

Photos by Susan Griffin

# JUNE

## Chamber holds annual golf classic, 'Seasonal Blend'

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce held its annual Golf Tournament and summer Seasonal Blend June 8, bringing together business and community leaders from across the county for a day of golf and networking.

Held at the Slammer & Squire in World Golf Village, the event featured a golf tournament with a variety of course games. The daylong event concluded with a cocktail reception featuring awards, raffles, door prizes and more.

Winners of the various contests included:

- Putting contest: Sam Sissine of Brennan, Manna & Diamond
- Best dressed golfers: Pat and Jay Kane, Pop A Lock
- Longest Putt: Greg Otte, Beach 105.5
- Closest to the Pin: Chad Prizzia, Web.com
- Longest Drive: Julie Ownes, FLC Contracting; and Bill Lodise, BBT
- 1st Gross: Rogers Towers
- 2nd Gross: Ponte Vedra Wellness Center
- 1st Net: FLC Contracting
- 2nd Net: Malcolm Anthony, P.A.



Photos by Susan Griffin

1st Place Net Team FLC Contracting; also pictured: Cathy Johnston and Isabelle Rodriguez



Best dressed golfers Pat and Jay Kane of Pop A Lock



2nd Place Net Malcolm Anthony team; also pictured: Cathy Johnston and Isabelle Rodriguez

# The Palms

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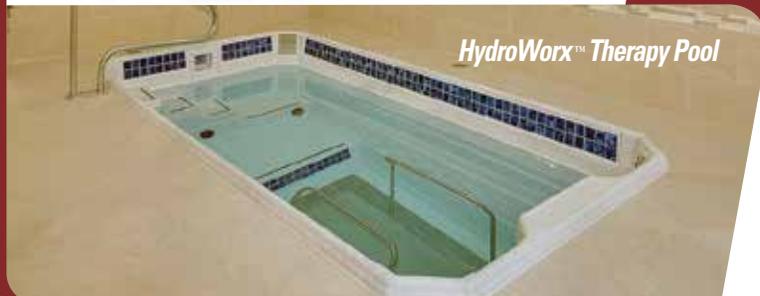
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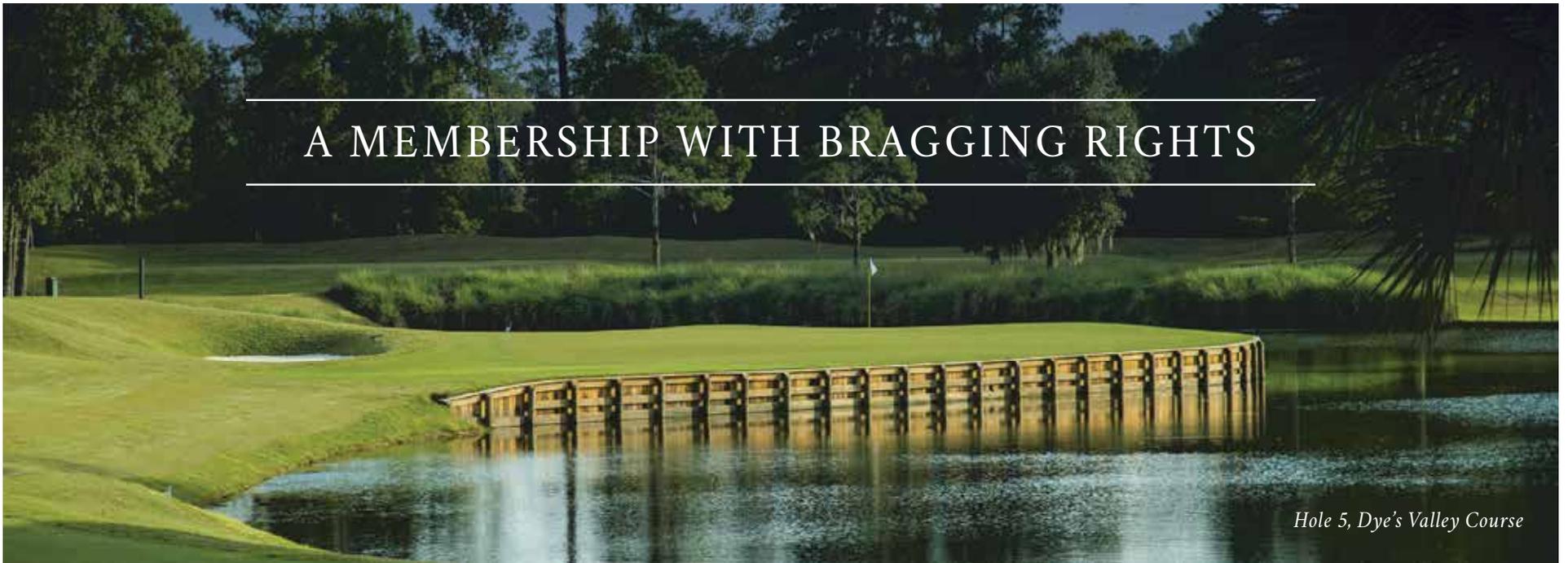


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Source: Real Value of Joining a Local Chamber of Commerce  
Shapiro Group, 2012.

PV2-LV34012

## JULY

# TPC Sawgrass upgrades key to club's future, general manager says

**By Jennifer Logue**

When it comes to planning for the future of TPC Sawgrass and its signature event, THE PLAYERS Championship, General Manager Bill Hughes says it all comes down to three little words.

Grow the game.

“(At TPC Sawgrass) we are all in charge of growing the game,” Hughes told attendees at the July 14 joint luncheon meeting of the St. Johns County and Jacksonville chambers of commerce. “Because if we don’t grow the game, we have no game.”

Achieving that goal, he said, requires an understanding that, unlike other golf clubs, TPC Sawgrass is all about showcasing THE PLAYERS Championship and serving an increasingly global audience that flocks to Ponte Vedra Beach each year for golf’s “fifth major.” He pointed to the opening of the \$32.5 million clubhouse in 2007 as a seminal mo-

ment in the elevation of TPC Sawgrass and even the PGA Tour as a whole.

“The clubhouse changed the whole complexion of what the tour is,” Hughes said. “To see what has happened since then – and it didn’t happen by luck. It’s the result of a strategic business plan, and (Executive Director) Matt Rapp and his team have executed that plan on every pillar.”

Now, Hughes and his staff are preparing for the next phase in TPC Sawgrass’s evolution as the golf course undergoes a \$50 million renovation. Hughes outlined for chamber members a number of the major upgrades happening, including re-grassing all the greens with new varieties of grass, enlarging eight greens and lengthening two holes. Other improvements underway include ripping up the driving range and making it bigger and building a new golf course maintenance facility.



Dave Danzeisen, Lin Jones, Bill Hughes and Amanda Patch

Photo by Susan Griffin

## AUGUST

## Candidates meet constituents at ‘Politics in St. Johns’

A capacity crowd filled the Hilton Garden Inn in Ponte Vedra Beach, as dozens of candidates turned out to meet with constituents and supporters at “Politics in St. Johns.”

Co-sponsored by the Ponte Vedra Recorder and the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, the event attracted candidates from races up and down the ballot including the races for county

commission, St. Johns County sheriff and the 4th congressional district race.

The following week, the chamber hosted a second Politics in St. Johns event at the Solomon Calhoun Center in St. Augustine that attracted an estimated 500 people. Nearly 350 votes were cast in the event’s straw poll, which included national as well as local races.



Photos by Susan Griffin

County Commission Candidate (District 3) Paul Waldron, Ashley Zapata and Stephanie Waldron



Elizabeth Granite-Amato, County Commissioner – and 4th Congressional candidate – Bill McClure and Kim McClure



Circuit judge candidate Malcom Anthony, Waine Banyas and Chef Izzy Sipinkoski

# AUGUST



Photo by Susan Griffin

Ed Johnson, Malcom Anthony and Recorder Managing Editor Jennifer Logue

## Recorder, Chamber of Commerce host 'Coffee with the Editor'

More than 60 business and community leaders visited the Ponte Vedra Recorder offices to attend "Coffee with the Editor."

Held Aug. 10 in conjunction with the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce's Ponte Vedra Beach Division, the event gave attendees an opportunity to meet Managing Editor Jennifer Logue and learn about the role the

Recorder plays in the community.

"The great turnout here today is both a testament to the strong St. Johns County business community and the Recorder's well-established reputation as the community's paper of record since 1969," Logue told attendees. "We are committed to being the paper readers turn to for local, original reporting they can trust."



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# SEPTEMBER



Photos by Susan Griffin

Best In show

## 1954 Cadillac El Dorado takes top honors at Ponte Vedra Auto Show

By Jennifer Logue

A 1954 Cadillac El Dorado took top honors at the 2016 Ponte Vedra Auto Show Sept. 11, claiming the coveted trophy from a field of hundreds of both new and vintage automobiles ranging from the 1920s to today.

The red convertible El Dorado owned by Ed Schenck received the Wells Fargo Best in Show Classic at the event, which featured the presentation of 30 trophies in a variety of categories. New this year was a category for golf carts, which shared space alongside displays and booths from



The Best Exotic Trophy, sponsored by the Ponte Vedra Recorder, went to Ralph Nuanez, shown here with St. Johns County Chamber CEO Isabelle Rodriguez and Brandon Starks of sponsor Fields Auto Group.

# Auto

Continued from 28

local businesses, the St. Johns County Sheriff's Office and more. The daylong event also featured a memorial tribute to mark the 15th anniversary of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Sponsored by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, the annual Ponte Vedra Auto Show regularly attracts thousands of attendees. This was the first year the event was held at Nocatee Town Center.



**Berry & Co Real Estate**

Photo by Susan Griffin

# Ponte Vedra welcomes Nona Blue

**By Jennifer Logue**

Hundreds of local residents turned out to celebrate the grand opening of Nona Blue last week, marking the latest restaurant to open in Ponte Vedra's burgeoning Sawgrass Village.

The restaurant's Sept. 14 grand opening was preceded by a VIP reception the night before. Guests walked the red carpet and posed for photos with PGA Tour golfer Graeme McDowell and his Nona Blue founding partners Joe Davi and Bill Bona.

Inside, guests enjoyed cocktails and generous samplings of the restaurant's appetizers, including firecracker shrimp, fried calamari, "Mama's meatloaf" sliders, flatbreads and more.

The following day, McDowell and his partners held a formal ribbon cutting ceremony to inaugurate their second Nona Blue location.

"It's so amazing," McDowell said of joining the Ponte Vedra community. "I've played many PLAYERS Championships here."

In addition to representatives from the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce, the Nona Blue team was joined by former New York Giants Coach Tom Coughlin, who accepted a \$15,000 donation for his Tom Coughlin Jay Fund representing all the gratuities the Nona Blue staff collected during their "Practice with a Purpose" soft opening.



Photos by Susan Griffin

**Representatives from the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce were on hand Sept. 14 to mark the grand opening of Nona Blue. Handling ribbon cutting duties was PGA Tour golfer Graeme McDowell, who owns Nona Blue with partners Joe Davi and Bill Bona.**



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## OCTOBER

### Meet the Ponte Vedra Beach Division 2016-2017 Board of Directors

The St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce welcomes the 2016-2017 board of directors for the Ponte Vedra Beach Division. The incoming board represents a broad cross-section of industries and individuals, each of whom brings years of professional experience and business acumen to their board duties.

**Chair**  
**Ed Mercel**  
**Coldwell Banker**  
**Vanguard Realty**

Ed Mercel is a successful Realtor with a penchant for network building in both sales and property management. He has more than 18 years of experience in the real estate industry, having worked for a number of leading real estate firms and property management divisions.

**Vice Chair**  
**Susan Griffin**  
**Ponte Vedra Recorder**

Susan Griffin is publisher of the Ponte Vedra Recorder, the community paper of record serving Ponte Vedra and the Beaches since 1969. Griffin also serves as publisher of the bimonthly First Coast Register magazine. The Register covers First Coast social events as well as fashion, dining and home décor trends throughout the year.

**Secretary**  
**Rob Schlingmann**  
**The Plantation at**  
**Ponte Vedra Beach**

As general manager and chief operating office of The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach, Rob Schlingmann reports directly to the president and has full financial and operational responsibility for the club, which in high season has a staff of more than 140 employees in 16 departments. In addition to managing all club operations, he oversees all functions of the Plantation's homeowners' association.

**Jennifer Belisario**  
**TPC Sawgrass**

Jennifer Belisario has worked for TPC Sawgrass, home of THE PLAYERS, for more than six years, the past four years as director of sales and marketing. She brings 10 years of successful sales, marketing and leadership experience and is responsible for managing the membership and annual pass sales, and implementing new marketing strategies and promotional initiatives to further solidify TPC Sawgrass's commitment to its members and the surrounding community.

**Steven Beyer**  
**VyStar Credit Union**

As vice president of the Jacksonville Beach branch of VyStar Credit Union, Steven Beyer is responsible for extending credit union services to more people while making a positive impact in the community.

**Toni Boudreaux**  
**Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach**

As director of development for the Cultural Center at Ponte Vedra Beach, Toni Boudreaux is responsible for managing all fundraising activities for the nonprofit organization. Working with the executive director, she oversees and coordinates all aspects of the center's contributed income, including memberships, annual fund, sponsorships, corporate partnerships, non-program events and donor retention.

**Janet Collins**  
**Sawgrass Country Club**

Janet Collins is the director of member services at Sawgrass Country Club, where she has been a key member of the staff for more than 18 years. A certified marketing professional, Collins leads the development of the club's marketing plans, overseeing membership development, budget management, social media, promotional presentations and the production and distribution of marketing materials.

**Dave Danzeisen**  
**Clean Getaway Car Wash and Detail**

The immediate past chair of the Ponte Vedra Beach Division board, Dave Danzeisen has more than 40 years of experience in the transportation and car wash industries. Danzeisen is the owner and CEO of Clean Getaway Car Wash, Classic Car Wash and Duckys Car Wash. In 2006, he developed Showboat Car Wash in St. Augustine.

**Gloria Dongara**  
**AAA**

Gloria Dongara is the life and annuities specialist for AAA Life. In this role, she helps clients ensure they are prepared for the unforeseen. A New Jersey native, Dongara moved to Ponte Vedra in 1992 as part of a relocation with Merrill Lynch, where she worked for 15 years and managed teams in the client service, cash management, draft processing and training areas.

**Sarah Hewett**  
**Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices**  
**Florida Network Realty**

Sarah Hewett is a professional sales associate with Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty. Based in Ponte Vedra Beach, she offers her clients full-service representation when they are looking to buy or sell their home.

**Rachel Landis**  
**PGA Tour**

As sales manager for THE PLAYERS and Web.com Tour Championship, Rachel Landis works with the executive director on budgets, inventory, sponsorships and more.

In addition to generating sales of event packages and corporate sponsorships, she is responsible for sales reporting, concept marketing and promotions.

# OCTOBER



Photo by Susan Griffin

Branch Manager Leidy Cuartas cuts the ribbon at the new Chase Bank branch in Nocatee Town Center. Members of the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce were on hand to welcome the bank to the local business community.

## Chase Bank opens in Nocatee

Chase Bank held a ribbon cutting ceremony and grand opening celebration last week at its new branch location in Nocatee Town Center. Branch staff include Branch Manager Leidy Cuartas (front) and (from left) Teller Connie

Mignone, Multisite Manager Travis Ramsey, Relationship Banker Ledio Simoni, Mortgage Banker Denise Cambron, Lead Teller Operations Specialist Donna Specht-Rariden and Private Client Banker Chris McLaughlin.

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NOVEMBER

# Chamber of Commerce hosts second annual veterans luncheon

By Jennifer Logue

The panelists came from starkly different backgrounds.

One grew up in a trailer with a single parent. Another enjoyed an upper middle-class upbringing as the child of a college professor and chemist. The third joined the army so he could “blow stuff up.”

Yet it was their military service and desire to help other veterans make a successful transition to the civilian world that united the three speakers at the second annual St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce veterans luncheon. Organized by the chamber’s Ponte Vedra Beach Division, the Nov. 9 luncheon at The Plantation clubhouse gave local business and community leaders an opportunity to learn about opportunities to hire veterans and how the skills military men and women develop make them responsible, valuable contributors in the workplace.

“The Marine Corps built in an exceptional level of confidence in me,” said Joe Padlo, who spent 11 years in the military before founding a commercial cleaning business that provides employment opportunities for other veterans. “When I make a decision, I’m going to stick to that decision and I’m going to run with it.”

John Fails said when he joined the military, he saw service as a way to make money that he could send home to his struggling family. “I was just thrilled to have three square meals a day,” he said. “So for me, (enlisting) was about making my own path and helping to make a path for my family.”

Serving in the military taught him how to analyze situations and problems, Fails said – skills he now uses as executive director of Bunker Labs Jacksonville, a nonprofit that helps veterans start and grown their own businesses.

Each of the veteran panelists described how serving in the military changed them as individuals and made them the people they are today.

“Remember the shy kid in school? That was me,” SFC Michael Kube said. “Becoming a drill sergeant was the last thing I ever imagined I would do.”

Doing so, however, helped him develop leadership skills while also imparting those skills to others.

“Seeing parents’ expressions when they would see how much their sons had grown up was a rewarding experience,” said Kube, who has also started his own business. “The army gave me the opportunity to help other people change their lives.”



Photo by Susan Griffin

SFC Michael Kube, John Fails and Joe Adlo share how their military experiences have translated to the workforce at the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce’s second annual veterans luncheon, held Nov. 9 at The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach clubhouse.

## Economist: No recession on the horizon, but 2017 may bring inflation

By Jennifer Logue

Economists don’t foresee a recession happening in 2017 or 2018, but inflation may prompt the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates in the coming year.

Those were a few of the economic assessments shared by Dr. Lawrence Yun at the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce’s quarterly Economic Development Council breakfast Nov. 18. Yun – the chief economist and senior vice president of research for the National Association of Realtors – contended that the zero rate of inflation seen in recent years was actually the result of lower gas prices, which offset increases in the price of food, college education and other key indicators to keep inflation at bay. He doesn’t see that continuing for much longer, however.

“In order to have another year with no inflation, gas would have to be \$1 a gallon,” Yun said, predicting that the nation could see inflation of 3 to 4 percent and prompting the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates.

In a presentation that reviewed a



Dr. Lawrence Yun

number of economic indicators – such as lifetime wealth, homeownership rates, new housing starts and increases in jobs – Yun noted that St. Johns County has bucked the trend of more significant declines in those areas seen in other parts of the country.

“The level of growth (in St. Johns County) is very unique – one of the bright stars in the whole country,” he said. “St. Johns County has been very immune.”



Photos by Susan Griffin

Flagler Hospital President Joe Gordy (center) receives the Fred Schroeder EDC Member of the Year Award from EDC Chair Victor Raymos (left) and Schroeder’s son, Dirk Schroeder.

## NOVEMBER



### Chamber Before Hours: Regions Bank

Regions Bank in Ponte Vedra Beach recently hosted local business and community leaders for a “Before Hours” networking breakfast. Members of the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

joined with bank officials to welcome chamber members and guests.

Attendees included Magen Doyle, Jeff Adams, Chelsea Schuler, Dennis Cox, Matt Price, Ed Mercel, Dane Addison and Christina Simpson.

## DECEMBER



Will Williams (center) recently celebrated one year of business at Willness Fitness in Ponte Vedra Beach with a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce.

Photo by Susan Griffin

### Willness Fitness celebrates first anniversary

Willness Fitness in Ponte Vedra Beach celebrated one year of business at a ribbon cutting ceremony in December attended by the Ponte Vedra Beach Division of the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce.

Located on Solana Road, Willness Fitness offers private training and spin classes with plans to offer yoga classes in the future.

Williams works with clients ranging from 16 to 74 years old. In addition to training clients at his gym, Williams – an Army veteran – is partnering with his wife Alison to build Operation Green Zone, a nonprofit organization that helps veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

## DECEMBER

# Chamber's PVB Division hosts holiday party

By Jennifer Logue

The Cutter & Cutter Fine Art Gallery in Sawgrass Village was the setting for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce’s “Holiday Merriment Party” for its Ponte Vedra Beach Division.

Guests enjoyed cocktails, entertainment and a buffet provided by Chef Tommy McDonough of Flavor Palette as they viewed the gallery’s art displays and networked with other business and community leaders.

A highlight of the event was the presentation of the chamber’s top two awards. St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Isabelle Rodriguez presented the Grace Hayes Ambassador of the Year Award to Lori Adams. The Chamber Member of the Year Award, meanwhile, was presented to Ponte Vedra Recorder Publisher Susan Griffin.



Sponsors of the Ponte Vedra holiday party for the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce

Photo courtesy of SJC Chamber of Commerce

Mel Cox, Sandy Kavanaugh and Felicia Cox

Photo by Susan Griffin



Chef Tommy McDonough of Ponte Vedra Beach’s Flavor Palette provided the food for the Chamber of Commerce holiday gathering.

Photo by Jennifer Logue



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