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COUNTY HOSTS MEETINGS TO HELP SOUTH COUNTY HOMEOWNERS APPLY FOR REPAIR ASSISTANCE

Staff Report



Hillsborough County is holding a series of community meetings throughout the county over the next few weeks to help residents apply for assistance to repair their homes under Affordable Housing Services' Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program.

The first five of the eight community meetings were held in April, and the remaining three will be held in May. Hillsborough County Affordable Housing Services staff will be at each of the meetings to help residents complete and submit their application.

The Hillsborough County Owner-Occupied Rehabilitation Program is designed to ensure low, very low and moderate-income Hillsborough County families have the opportunity to live in safe, decent and sanitary homes. This is not a home remodeling program but rather a program aimed at assisting the community with immediate needs for rehabilitation due to the condition of the home. The countywide initiative utilizes the State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) program to rehabilitate the homes of residents who live in unincorporated Hillsborough County, Plant City and Temple Terrace. The City of Tampa has its own rehabilitation program.

The program provides financial assistance to homeowners who cannot afford to bring their homes into compliance with the Florida Building Code or make other necessary repairs affecting life, health, safety and accessibility. There are income restrictions, and the program focuses on single-family homes that have been homesteaded as a primary residence for at least two years.

Application forms will be available at all the meetings and are also available online at https://hcfl.gov/oor. Residents who cannot attend the meetings and do not have access to a computer can call 813-635-1810 to have an application mailed to them. The meetings will be held on the following dates and times:

• Friday, May 1, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at Town 'N Country Library Community Room, located at 7606 Paula Dr. in Tampa.

• Thursday, May 14, 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at Gardenville Recreation Center, located at 6219 Symmes Rd. in Gibsonton.

•Wednesday, May 20: 10 a.m.-2 p.m., at Balm Park and Community Center, located at 14747 Balm Wimauma Rd. in Wimauma.

Eligible funding may be used for:

• Roof repair or replacement.

• Failure of electrical, plumbing or HVAC systems.

• Failure of structural systems, such as floors and structural walls.

• Exterior/interior deterioration (walls, foundation, porches, siding, etc.).

• Water heater replacement.

• Accessibility improvement (ramp, widening doorways, countertops, bathroom and kitchen modifications, etc.).

• Lead-based paint remediation or other environmental issues.

• Weatherization activities (doors, windows, air conditioning, roofs, insulation and energy-efficient appliances).

Demolition-reconstruction may be offered for homes whose repairs exceed 50 percent of the appraised value according to the property appraiser valuation.

For more, email affordablehousingservices@hcfl.gov or call 813-635-1610.

WSCQ FOUNDER EXPANDS COMMUNITY CONNECTION WITH RADIO & PODCAST

By Brad Stager



Keeping informed of the events and shifting tides of Sun City Center (SCC) has become another digital aspect of life for its residents, whether through the modern podcast or the old school pulse of frequency modulation.

Vern and Elysa Hendricks are married and also bound by the shared endeavor of About the Town, a podcast detailing the community's activities and resources, as well as airing announcements from SCC officials and hosting guests such as Hillsborough County Sheriff deputies who deliver personal safety tips.



According to Vern, the podcast is a way to stay active by doing something enjoyable and meaningful.

"I spent 10 years as a morning host and director of programming for Sun City Center's low-power, local community radio station, Sun Radio, WSCQ, 96.3 FM," he wrote in an email. "I spent almost as much time per week as I used to spend on my full-time job, so I decided to dial it back and yet be able to do something that I really enjoyed. So, I created this, with the cooperation of my wife who co-hosts the program."

Creating something useful for his neighbors is part of the motivation, added Vern.

"The idea behind this is to create a repository of information that people who live in Sun City Center, or who are interested in our town, can find information about the many things that this community has to offer," he said.

You can listen to About the Town at https://rss.com/podcasts/about-the-town/.

Besides working on About the Town, Vern is also the producer for Veterans Corner Radio, a local podcast focusing on military and veteran interests. Veterans Corner Radio has a worldwide audience keen to be informed about veteran and military related legislation and resources and is hosted by retired Air Force Col. Joe Muhlberger. It can be found via most online podcast distributors and at https://veteranscorner-radio.com/.

Then there is WSCQ-LP, 96.3 FM — a low-power transmission that serves as the over-the-air auditory soul of the community. It broadcasts the familiar, melodic music popular with SCC's residents and provides an essential public affairs role as well. It exists not only as radio waves but also as a digital stream at https://wscqfm.com/.

IN THIS ISSUE:

RIV. COMMUNITY PLAN.....PG 3
LENNARD FOOTBALL STARS.....PG 6
STRAZ SEASON.....PG 16
YUENGLING TOURS.....PG 20
EYE ON BUSINESS.....PG 34

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PROJECT I CAN RECEIVES $575,000 GRANT US REP. KATHY CASTOR

Staff Report





U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor and dignitaries presented a $575,000 ceremonial check to Adonai's Second Chances, Inc. supporting the expansion of the Project I Can youth program.

Adonai's Second Chances, Inc. (ASCI), Hillsborough College, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, the Tampa Police Department, Mt. Zion AME Church of Riverview and youth advocates gathered on Sunday, April 12, to celebrate the award of a $575,000 grant from the Justice Department for Project I Can (PIC).

The Honorable Kathy Castor, a member of the United States House of Representatives, presented the ceremonial check to ASCI. Castor had continued to advocate for her district and the residents of Hillsborough County by securing resources to support local communities. A longtime supporter of youth initiatives, she noted that the grant would provide expanded opportunities in partnership with Hillsborough College, the Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office, the Tampa Police Department and Hillsborough County.

Project I Can (PIC), a mentoring and leadership program offered by Adonai's Second Chances, a program of Mt. Zion African Methodist Episcopal Church in Riverview, designed to help youth ages 12 to 20 make positive choices and decisions in their daily lives. The program focused on education, leadership, self-confidence, guidance and the exploration of life choices, all aimed at developing the next generation of leaders.

The award allowed for the expansion of the program to serve additional youth in the community. ASCI officials said announcements would be made when the application process opened.

The ceremonial check presentation took place at 3 p.m. at Mt. Zion AME Church, located at 5920 Robert Tolle Drive in Riverview.

Adonai's Second Chances, Inc., incorporated in 2018, had served children and families throughout the Tampa Bay area. The organization's mission focused on providing comprehensive solutions to the economic, educational, social and housing needs of youth and families, while ensuring each participant recognized their value and their right to second chances and opportunities in life. Visit www.ascbuildingfutures.com.

COUNTY PRESENTS DRAFT GOALS, CONCEPT MAP FOR RIVERVIEW PLAN

Staff Report



The Riverview Community Plan, originally adopted in 2005, comprises 13 goals and strategies to inform community development. The board of county commissioners requested that the plan be updated in conjunction with the Tampa Hillsborough Expressway Authority U.S. Highway 301 Study.

The update process has included a series of community meetings. The feedback and input collected from residents during these previous meetings were incorporated to prepare the draft vision, goals and concept map for the Riverview Community Plan.

In the next round of community meetings scheduled for early May, the project team will present the draft vision, goals and concept map to the community. Residents will be able to review the draft contents and offer further input, which will be used to finalize the community vision and goals, refine the concept map and create strategies for each of the plan's goals.

Meeting dates and locations:

• Saturday, May 2, 11 a.m.-1 p.m., at Collins PK-8 School, located at 12424 Summerfield Blvd. in Riverview.

• Tuesday, May 5, 6-7 p.m., via a virtual meeting. Register using the QR code or go to the project website.

• Wednesday, May 6, 6-8 p.m., at Riverview High School, located at 11311 Boyette Rd. in Riverview.

For more information on the Riverview Community Plan update, please visit the project website; https://planhillsborough.org/planriverview/.

Thank you to the Riverview community for your continued participation and support throughout this planning process.

CYPRESS CREEK CO-OP RETURNS TO ITS COMMUNITY-DRIVEN ROOTS

By McKenzie Brown

After a decade of delivering fresh, affordable produce to local families, Cypress Creek Co-Op is celebrating 10 years in business while returning to the flexible, community-driven model that started it all.



Founded by single mom Cassie Adams, the co-op began as a simple solution to a common problem. While working at a wholesale produce market, Adams often brought home more fruits and vegetables than her family could use. She reached out to neighbors, offering to share the excess, and within just a few weeks, more than 60 families had joined in.

Today, that small neighborhood effort has grown into a thriving network of more than 35,000 members across the Tampa Bay area.

Cypress Creek Co-Op continues to provide weekly produce bins filled with a mix of fresh fruits, vegetables and pantry staples, along with optional add-ons like beef, seafood and Amish goods. The bins are designed to be both affordable and convenient, with medium bins priced at $30 and large bins at $40. Specialty options, including keto and fruit-only bins, are also available.

"Our goal has always been to make fresh food more accessible," said Adams. "When you buy in-season and in bulk, families can save significantly while still eating healthy."

The co-op prioritizes local sourcing whenever possible, though Adams noted that some items must come from outside Florida due to growing conditions. Each week's bins are thoughtfully curated, typically including a balance of fruits and vegetables, such as strawberries, bananas, leafy greens, potatoes and seasonal favorites.

While Cypress Creek Co-Op previously expanded to include a physical storefront in Apollo Beach, the business is now leaning back into its original virtual roots. Customers can order online for convenient home delivery or attend weekly pickup events, including a popular Saturday pickup at the BayCare HealthHub at 2470 Bloomingdale Ave. in Valrico.

Delivery is available throughout Brandon, Valrico, Lithia, Riverview, Ruskin, Gibsonton and Sun City Center, with evening time slots and low delivery fees. Orders placed by 4 p.m. are eligible for same-day delivery.

Beyond providing fresh food, the co-op remains deeply connected to the community, offering volunteer opportunities and supporting local families and first responders throughout the year.

As Cypress Creek Co-Op enters its second decade, Adams said the mission remains the same: helping families eat well, save money and stay connected.

If you have any additional questions or inquiries, you can email Cypress Creek Co-Op at cypresscreekcoop@gmail.com. Its Facebook group is available for updates and questions.

HC SOUTHSHORE CAMPUS HONORS STUDENT EXCELLENCE AWARDS

Staff Report



Barb Caleca (right), Dr. Jennifer China (center) and Nicholas Caleca (left).

Hillsborough College SouthShore Campus celebrated student achievement, leadership, and academic excellence at its 53rd Annual Student Excellence Awards Ceremony on April 10 at the Kings Point Veterans Theater, located at 1900 Clubhouse Dr. in Sun City Center.

The event recognized outstanding students, faculty and staff while bringing together community supporters committed to student success. A highlight of the evening included a $10,000 scholarship donation from the Interfaith Social Action Council, led by Barb and Nicholas Caleca, along with an additional $5,000 contribution to the campus' new workforce training facility.

The ceremony showcased the Harvesting the Future campaign, led by campus President Dr. Jennifer Wells China in partnership with philanthropist Danita Dickman, aimed at expanding educational opportunities through a new workforce training building.

The event underscored the college's continued commitment to empowering students and strengthening the future workforce through education and community investment.

Founded in 1968, Hillsborough College (HC) is currently the fifth largest community college in Florida's State College System, serving more than 46,000 students each year at its five campuses, three satellite locations and online platform. HC offers more than 200 academic pathways - including a Bachelor of Science in nursing, associate in art and associate in science degrees, college credit certificates, postsecondary adult vocational certificates, advanced technical diplomas and certificates, as well as continuing education and lifelong learning courses - designed to equip students with essential skills for immediate employment, career advancement and long-term success.



Dr. Jennifer China (right) with philanthropist Mrs. Danita Dickman (left) at the Student Excellence Awards.

The College plays a pivotal role in strengthening the educational, economic and social fabric of the Tampa Bay region. With an annual budget of over $161 million and more than 2,100 employees, the College is a major economic driver and community anchor. Over 84 percent of graduates stay in the local community, and together, HC and its alumni contribute more than $1.3 billion in added income and economic impact to Hillsborough County.







PELICAN PLAYERS PRESENTS *FARCE OF NATURE* FROM MAY 14-16

Staff Report



Cast members of "Farce of Nature" bring fast-paced comedy and over-the-top characters to life during a rehearsal with the Pelican Players Community Theater, as the group prepares for its performances at the Kings Point Veterans Theater in Sun City Center.

The nonstop hilarity of *Farce of Nature,* presented by the Pelican Players Community Theater and penned by the noted playwriting team of Jessie Jones, Nicholas Hope and Jamie Wooten, focuses on one chaotic day in the life of the Wilburns, owners of a struggling fishing lodge in the Ozarks.

As in every farce, there are wild and unusual happenings, mistaken identity, frenzied confrontations, ridiculous disguises and secrets exposed as the family deals with a Witness Protection snitch, a cop dressed as a maid, a discontented wife and outrageous unexpected guests.

"This play is a laugh riot, and we can't wait to bring it to you," said Director Paul Ansell. "We have a terrific cast that will keep you laughing from beginning to end as they introduce you to a long-suffering wife, a scatterbrained policewoman, mobsters, a struggling actor, a ruthless businessperson ... and even a visit from some unwelcome wildlife."

The assistant director is Michele Whelan, and Laurie Failing is the stage manager.

The part of Wannelle is played by Carol MacAlister, with D. Gene Wilburn played by Wayne Keyes, Jenna by Diane Keyes, Maxie by Nina Rago, Carmine by Guy Bailey, Ty by Bob Horvath, Lola by Alesia Bischoff, Sonny by Ron Banaszak and Roxanne by Michelle Horvath.

Audiences from Sun City Center and all surrounding communities will have four opportunities to see the play, starting Thursday, May 14, at 6:30 p.m.; Friday, May 15, at 6:30 p.m.; and Saturday, May 16, at 1:30 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. The doors open 30 minutes before curtain. Tickets are on sale now at the Kings Point Box Office from 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Evening performances are $18; they are $15 for the matinee. Tickets will also be sold at the door for each show; no credit cards are accepted at the door, and correct change is appreciated. Reserved, cabaret-style seating plus open bleacher seating are available. Bring your own drinks and snacks.

All performances are at the Kings Point Veterans Theater in the North Clubhouse, located at 1900 Clubhouse Dr. in Sun City Center.

Founded in 1981, the Pelican Players Community Theater, a 501(c)(3) organization run by volunteers, aims to promote the dramatic arts through the staging of productions and educational activities.

All profits go toward the Pelican Players Scholarship Fund, handled by Community Foundation Tampa Bay, benefiting local students pursuing the arts.

STUDENTS, ROTARIANS INSTALL PEACE POLE PROMOTING GLOBAL UNITY

Staff Report





A spirit of unity and global goodwill marked the Peace Pole Planting Ceremony held on March 26, at Gannon University's Ruskin campus. Under sunny, bright skies, students, faculty, Rotarians, and community members gathered outside the Academic Building to witness the installation of a new Peace Pole — positioned at the edge of campus so it can inspire both passersby and visitors.

Peace Poles are part of a worldwide initiative supported by Rotary International, promoting the message, "May peace prevail on Earth." Since its introduction decades ago, tens of thousands have been planted across the globe, each serving as a visible reminder of humanity's shared hope for peace.

This project was a collaborative effort between the Sun City Center Rotary Club and Gannon University. Former 2024-25 Rotary District Governor Chevon Baccus played a pivotal role in bringing it to life, helping design a pole featuring award-winning artwork created by children from around the world. The images reflect how young people envision peace through kindness, unity and understanding.

The ceremony opened with welcoming remarks from Dr. Walter Iwaneko, president of Gannon University, who traveled from the university's main campus in Erie, Pennsylvania, to participate. Attendees included Baccus, members of the Sun City Center Rotary Club and Gannon faculty and students.

A highlight of the event was a musical performance by Diego Carneiro, a Rotary Peace Fellow from Brazil. As part of Rotary's Peace Fellowship program, which trains leaders in conflict resolution and peacebuilding, Carneiro added a reflective tone with a moving cello performance.

Students from Gannon's PA, PT, OT and SLP programs also participated, placing small flags representing countries around the world around the base of the pole, symbolizing unity and shared purpose.

The ceremony reflected a strong partnership between Rotary and Gannon University and a shared commitment to promoting peace locally and globally.

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EIGHT LENNARD SENIORS CONTINUE FOOTBALL CAREERS AT COLLEGE LEVEL

Photos & Story By Shanise "Nisey" Spruill



Ronnie Willson
Culver Stockton College

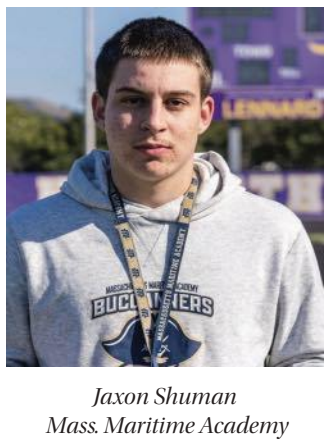




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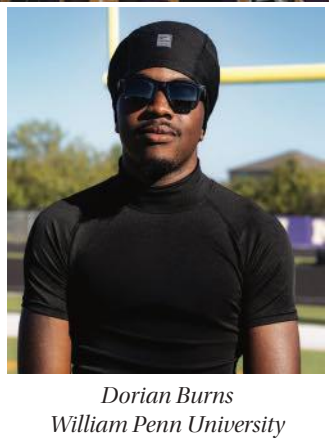
London Green
Valdosta State University



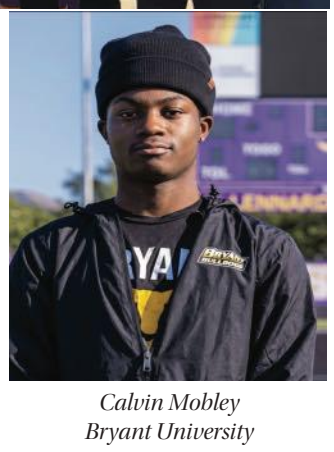
Jaxon Shuman
Mass. Maritime Academy



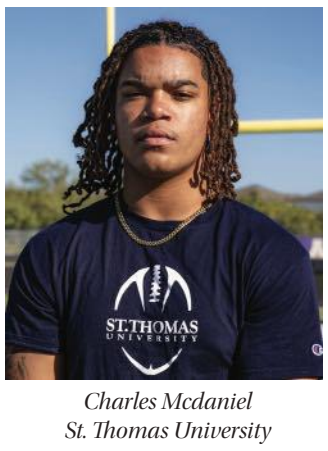
Jaiden Jones
Missouri Southern State



Dorian Burns
William Penn University



Calvin Mobley
Bryant University



Charles Mcdaniel
St. Thomas University

The Lennard High School football program is celebrating a milestone moment as eight members of its Class of 2026 senior team have officially committed to continue their academic and athletic careers at the collegiate level.

The group represents a cornerstone class for head coach Karingus Benton and his staff, who began building the program three years ago. From the coach's perspective, this senior class holds special significance—not only for what they accomplished on the field, but for how they helped shape the culture of the program from its early stages of development.

Coach Benton said this group played a major role in elevating Lennard football, helping establish expectations and demonstrating that student-athletes from the program can successfully transition to the next level.

"This senior class has been meaningful in a way that stands out," Benton shared, noting their growth both on and off the field. He emphasized that their leadership helped set the tone for younger players and contributed to building a stronger, more unified team identity.

Among the signees, London Green will continue his career at Valdosta State University after setting a school record for career touchdown receptions, leaving a lasting mark in Lennard's record books.

Calvin Mobley earned a full athletic scholarship to Bryant University, a Division I program, recognized for his standout performance and dedication.

Jaxon Shuman will attend Massachusetts Maritime Academy, where his relentless work ethic and drive were described by coaches as a model for others in the program.

Jaiden Jones, who will play at Missouri Southern State University, was highlighted as the emotional leader of the team—often described as the "heart and soul" who helped hold the group together over multiple seasons.

Charles McDaniel, who transferred to Lennard during his junior year, will continue his career at St. Thomas University and was credited with strengthening team bonding and leadership.

Malik Hope, headed to Florida A&M University, joined the program during his junior year and quickly became a strong teammate and mentor to younger players.

Ronnie Willson, who will attend Culver-Stockton College, transferred in during the spring of his junior year and earned respect for his consistent work ethic and leadership on the field.

Dorian Burns, bound for William Penn University, was part of the program's earliest group under the current coaching staff and helped lay the foundation for what the team has become today.

Together, the eight athletes represent both the history and the future of Lennard football—proof of a program that has grown through persistence, development, and a shared commitment to excellence.







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SAINT LEO PSYCHOLOGY PROFESSOR OFFERS STRATEGIES TO BEAT "SENIORITIS" BEFORE GRADUATION

Dr. Tammy Lowery Zacchilli


Dr. Tammy Lowery Zacchilli, professor of psychology at Saint Leo University.

One of the most exciting milestones students in high school and college face is graduation day. All the hard work has led to this moment, but for some seniors, the anticipation can lead to decreased motivation, lack of effort, and burnout, commonly known as senioritis.

Signs of senioritis

Skipping class or other campus events. Once the mid-spring semester hits, it sometimes seems like sleeping in or hiding away in your room is more desirable than going to class or attending extracurricular events. This can become a slippery slope that can do more harm than good.

Procrastination. Procrastination can take on different forms, such as submitting assignments that are late, incomplete, or not your best work. This can occur if students experience a lack of motivation toward schoolwork.

Fear about the future. Some students can't wait for the next chapter to begin, but many students experience fears about the future. This is completely natural, but focusing too much on fear could distract students from completing their goals successfully.

Fatigue. Completing college or graduate school applications can be overwhelming and time-consuming. It's natural to feel fatigue during this process, but students should not let it cause them to lose sight of the end goal.

Tips for seniors

Celebrate the small wins. Every step forward is progress, whether it's finishing an assignment, submitting an application, or attending a networking event. Recognizing these moments can boost motivation and keep students moving forward.

Avoid saying "I'll do it later." Recognize the signs of procrastination and push through the tendency to delay tasks. Tackling assignments right away can help students feel better and more accomplished.

Stay engaged in activities you enjoy. With only a few weeks left until graduation, students should not miss out on fun activities happening at their school or university. These moments create lasting memories.

Tips for family and friends

Acknowledge and validate their feelings. Senior year can be stressful and emotional. Let your senior know that it is normal to feel overwhelmed, anxious, or even excited about the future.

Celebrate wins. Recognize milestones, no matter how big or small. Celebrating achievements can motivate seniors to continue working hard.

Be aware of mental health signs. Watch for persistent sadness, loss of interest in usual activities, changes in sleep or appetite, irritability, or withdrawal from friends and family. Graduating from high school or college is an amazing achievement, and senioritis is only temporary. The future is bright.

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FRESH FINDS: RUSKIN FRESH MARKET HOSTS TWO-DAY ANNIVERSARY EVENT

By Emma Snider



The Osprey Observer team picked up fresh fruits, vegetables and had a tour of Ruskin Fresh Market.

Ruskin Fresh Market is honoring its beginnings as a small family-run business through celebrating with the community to thank them for all of their support.

Since their opening in 2024, Ruskin Fresh Market has been a community staple for fresh fruits and vegetables from Ruskin, other parts of Florida and across the United States. To celebrate its upcoming monumental occasion of two years in business, Ruskin Fresh Market will be holding a two-day anniversary market. Food trucks, local vendors, artisan goods and more will be at the market on Saturday, April 25, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. and on Sunday, April 26, from 11 a.m.-3 p.m. to celebrate Ruskin Fresh Market's two-year anniversary.

"We are so grateful to the community for supporting us these past two years and hopefully many years to come," said Nicole Ferrera, a founder and CEO of Ruskin Fresh Market. "We are excited to continue expanding and always becoming better."

Ruskin Fresh Market started as an idea for a local community produce store by Nicloe and David Ferrera's father, David. With the need for a local produce store for the Ruskin community, the Ferrera family decided to open the Ruskin Fresh Market on April 26, 2024.

Aside from its anniversary, Ruskin Fresh Market held another event in April called Foodie Friday.

Ruskin Fresh Market continues to serve the community as a hub for all things fresh. From its delicious fruits and vegetables to its assortments of Amish jams, pretzels and chips, local Ruskin honey, milk and cheese and the new addition of local grassfed beef, Ruskin Fresh market is the perfect one-stop shop for all of you grocery needs.



Ruskin Fresh Market celebrates its two-year anniversary with a community weekend market featuring food trucks, local vendors and artisan goods April 25-26 at its Ruskin location.

For more information regarding Ruskin Fresh Market's two-year anniversary event, you can visit it on Facebook at www.facebook.com/p/Ruskin-Fresh-Market-61557238503209/ or at its storefront, located at 2619 14th Ave. SE in Ruskin.

PERSONAL CARE AT THE HEART OF SUN CITY CENTER FUNERAL HOME

By Olivia Clark



Staff members at Sun City Center Funeral Home provide compassionate, personalized care to families in the community.

Sun City Center Funeral Home has built its reputation on providing compassionate care and personalized services for families during some of life's most difficult moments. Since becoming part of Foundation Partners Group in January 2017, the funeral home has maintained its family-oriented atmosphere while continuing to serve the community with dignity and respect.

Established with a mission centered on honoring each life, Sun City Center Funeral Home focuses on guiding families through the grieving process with understanding and support. Nicole Sharp, funeral director, emphasized the organization's commitment to thoughtful service.

"Our mission has always been to honor each life with dignity, respect and meaningful tribute while supporting families with guidance and understanding every step of the way," said Sharp.

What distinguishes the funeral home is its deep connection to the local community. Its staff actively participates in organizations such as the Sun City Center Rotary, the Southshore Chamber of Commerce and the Daughters of the American Revolution, while also supporting causes including the Walk to End Alzheimer's and the Out of the Darkness Walk.

"We take the time to listen and understand each family's wishes, ensuring every service reflects the unique life being honored," said Sharp.

Sun City Center Funeral Home offers a full range of services, including traditional funerals, memorial services, cremation options and celebration of life gatherings. Personalization plays a central role, allowing families to incorporate meaningful elements such as music, hobbies, cultural traditions and special tributes.

In addition to its general services, the funeral home takes pride in honoring veterans. With a former member of the military on staff, it assists families in securing military honors, coordinating with national cemeteries and incorporating patriotic elements into services.

"It is a true honor to serve veterans and their families," said Sharp.

Beyond services, the team remains committed to supporting families long after arrangements are complete, offering guidance, resources and a compassionate presence.

"We want residents to know that we are here not only in times of loss, but also for pre-planning and guidance or simply for a cup of coffee and a chat," said Sharp.

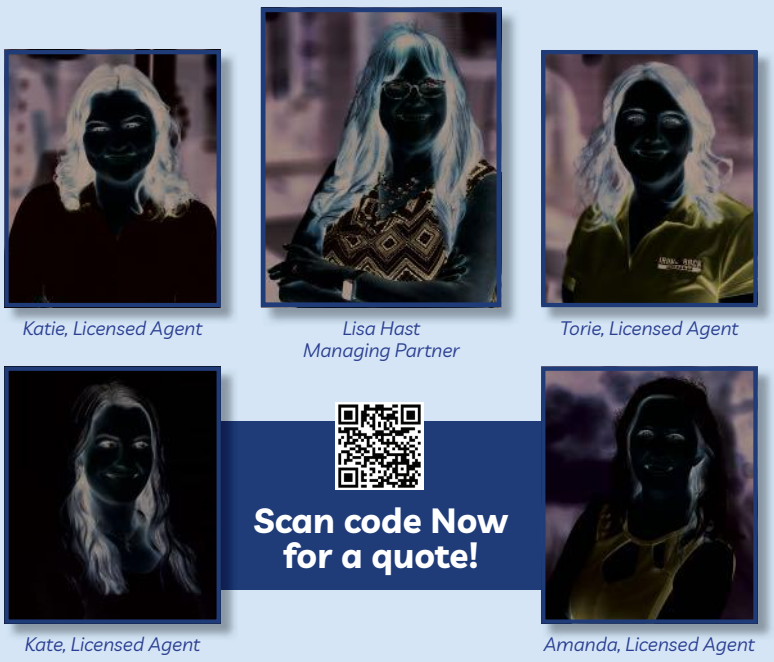
For the staff, the most meaningful aspect of their work is helping families find comfort during difficult times.

Sun City Center Funeral Home is located at 1851 Rickenbacker Dr., Sun City Center, FL 33573. For more information, call 279-8330.

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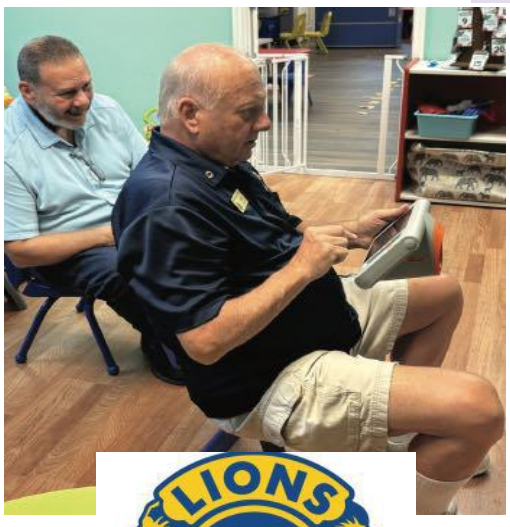


HCA Florida Brandon Hospital

119 Oakfield Drive, Brandon, FL 33511

RIVERVIEW LIONS CLUB TAKES SHAPE, BRINGING CENTURY-LONG LEGACY OF SERVICE TO THE COMMUNITY

By Libby Hopkins



For more than 100 years, Lions Clubs have served with uncommon kindness, putting the needs of their neighbors, their communities and the world first. Through the incredible work of Lion and Leo members and the support of their association and their global foundation, they are serving a world in need.

'Driven by service, united by values, strengthened by diversity' are core beliefs of Lions Club members. Lions Bernadette and Bob Kalle have been charter members of the Fishhawk Lions Club for the past four years. They have been involved in projects like the collection of eyeglasses for reuse, early vision screening of children, volunteering at ECHO, the collection of food and clothing for foster children and playing Santa to raise money for charity, among other community events.

"As time passed, we saw a need to reach out to the greater Riverview community and provide service to our hometown," said Bob Kalle.

The couple decided to form a new Riverview Lions Club chapter.

"Since the club is still in formation, there is flexibility in the actions of the club," Bob Kalle said. "Currently, we are meeting the first and third Thursday of the month at the Riverview Public Library. However, as the club grows, the needs of the members of the club will determine any change in the schedule."

At the heart of everything Lions do are the values that inspire their service and the people they serve. Their core values consist of commitment to service, dedication to excellence, appreciation of diversity, dynamic collaboration, personal and professional integrity and spirit of innovation. "The goals of the club will be determined by the members," Bob Kalle said. "As a new club, there are many administrative actions that need to take place, and the club is focused on creating that foundation. Once the club is chartered by the Lions Club International, we will start to determine the actual goals of the club. We do know that we have an interest in continuing to screen the vision of children and want to be known for that action."

"We would like to have a community reputation and perception of our Lions motto, 'We Serve,'" Bob Kalle said. "As any service club, we are always looking for new members that would like to serve the community. There are no rules about participation since everyone is a volunteer. The door is open to any idea of any member about the direction of the club."

Contact Bob Kalle at 813-625-9985 or at bkalle813@gmail.com.

LEAGUE PROVIDES DISABLED ATHLETES A CHANCE TO COMPETE

By Nick Nahas



David Ramos, CEO and commissioner of A League of Their Own (ALOTO), has helped expand the Tampa organization to the Riverview area, providing a place where adults with unique abilities come together to enjoy the game of baseball. The inaugural season starts on Saturday, April 11.

ALOTO was founded by Stephenie Coonrod and Dennis Mueller, both of whom were inspired by their children with Down syndrome.

A League of Their Own provides athletes with mental and physical disabilities a chance to compete in sports that they normally wouldn't have the opportunity to partake in. Participants in the league are 18 years and older. According to Ramos, it has athletes in their 60s.

Ramos is also the executive director and founder of First Steps Learning, which provides services to intellectually disabled adults. The agency has 12 employees, who were rigorously screened and are compassionate toward others. The former assistant principal in Hillsborough County teamed up with A League of Their Own to give disabled athletes a chance to show their individuality and give them a sense of community. In his time working with children with autism and Down syndrome, he developed a love for that community and started his agency, First Steps Learning, and brought his clients to the league.

"The league is one of the happiest environments. These are folks that have often never been seen their entire lives because of their disability," said Ramos. "Oftentimes, they are marginalized and their needs are considered last, and many of them have never played in a sports league. I wanted to give them an opportunity to shine."

Ramos' clients have aged out of school and don't have many social activities. As a part of his agency, his clients are given the opportunity to go out and have a fun time, and this also provides the parents some relief. He wants them to have an opportunity to compete in a league, have fans cheer for them, have the announcer say their name and have walkout music. ALOTO wants to give the players that special feeling that major league players experience.

A League of Their Own wants to expand to other areas besides Riverview and Tampa to help serve more people with disabilities. It has raised funds for the cause but still needs volunteers and donations to get things off the ground. The Tampa Bay Rays donated a field with artificial turf to the league. The astroturf is necessary for players who are nonambulatory and use wheelchairs to get around the bases safely.

"This community has so much love," said Ramos. "They just want to be seen, to be normal and to not be treated differently. Seeing their joy is my favorite part of the job."

For more information, or if you want to volunteer or donate to the league, visit www.alotoriverview.org.





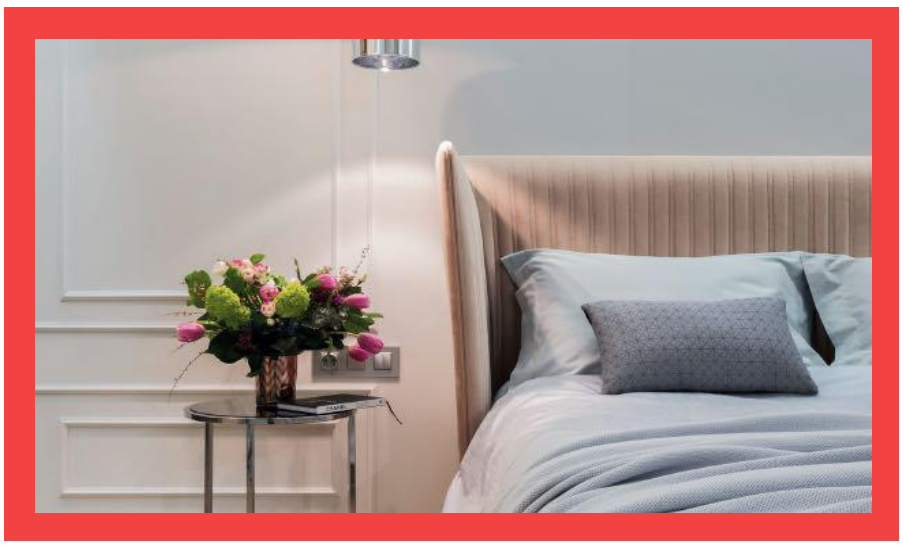
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SENATOR MOODY HONORS HCA BRANDON NURSE WITH FLORIDA'S FINEST AWARD

Staff Report



Sharon Gibbs, director of critical care at HCA Florida Brandon Hospital, (center) stands with Jeff Pollier after being honored with the Florida's Finest Award by Sen. Ashley Moody due to Gibbs' quick actions during a heart attack.

What began as a life-or-death moment in a community garden has become a powerful story of survival, teamwork and recognition at HCA Florida Brandon Hospital. Recently, Florida Senator Ashley Moody honored Sharon Gibbs, director of critical care at HCA Florida Brandon Hospital, with the Florida's Finest Award for her heroic actions that helped save the life of Jeff Pollier.

Jeff Pollier and his wife, Robin Pollier, were present for the surprise presentation, making the moment even more meaningful.

Just months earlier, Jeff Pollier collapsed from a heart attack while gardening with Robin Pollier at their plot in the community garden in Sun City Center. By chance, Gibbs was nearby and immediately sprang into action. She began CPR while others retrieved an automated external defibrillator, or AED, delivering the critical care needed to restore his heartbeat.

Emergency responders transported Jeff Pollier to HCA Florida South Shore Hospital, where physicians identified severe blockages in three major coronary arteries. He was then transferred to HCA Florida Brandon Hospital for advanced cardiac care, where a multidisciplinary team performed a lifesaving quadruple bypass surgery.

During the award presentation, Moody recognized Gibbs not only for her quick thinking and clinical expertise but also for embodying the compassion and readiness that define health care professionals across Florida. Her actions serve as a powerful reminder of the importance of CPR training and access to AEDs and the impact of being prepared to act in an emergency.

Stories like Jeff Pollier's highlight the critical role of teamwork across HCA Florida Healthcare facilities. From the immediate response in the community to advanced cardiac care in the hospital, every step played a part in giving him a second chance at life.

Now reunited and thriving, Jeff and Robin Pollier stood alongside Gibbs during the ceremony, a full circle moment that underscored the lifesaving difference one person and one team can make. For Jeff Pollier, that difference means more time with his wife, his family and the life they have built together.

Jeff Pollier described his recovery in simple terms: "I'm living on bonus time now."

For the team at Brandon Hospital and South Shore Hospital, it is a reminder of their shared mission: to care for and improve human life.

HILLSBOROUGH CELEBRATES STANDOUT JROTC CADETS, NAMES CADET OF YEAR

Staff Report





C/CDR Andrew Papp from Riverview High School.



C/LTC Isabelle Rivera from Newsome High.

Hillsborough County Public Schools (HCPS) announced its JROTC Cadet of the Year at a special event held at the University of South Florida. The district announced the top 10 cadets, along with the overall winner at the year-end awards program. C/Lt Col Vidyarth Sathya from Middleton High School took home the top honors for Cadet of the Year.

HCPS has 28 Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps (JROTC) programs and over 5,000 cadets this school year. Currently, there are 11 Army JROTC programs, nine Navy programs, seven Air Force programs and one Marine Corps program. Each cadet that was nominated from the programs went through a rigorous board selection process to be considered for the top awards.

"The competition for Cadet of the Year is highly competitive, making this recognition a significant accomplishment," said Van Ayres, superintendent of schools. "Congratulations to each of these outstanding cadets on being named among the very best — your hard work and dedication truly set you apart."

This year's winners are:

Top winner: C/Lt Col Vidyarth Sathya from Middleton High

C/LTC Marielis Pena from Brandon High

C/Col Charlotte Belloso from Durant High

C/LTC Isabelle Rivera from Newsome High.

C/CDR Andrew Papp from Riverview High

For more information about the JROTC programs at HCPS, visit the district website at www.hillsboroughschools.org.

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Family Bingo, Genealogical Society, Sisterhood Luncheon & More....

Compiled by Jenny Bennett
jbennett@ospreyobserver.com

South Bay Genealogical Society Meeting

The South Bay Genealogical Society meeting on Tuesday, May 19, will be held at the South Hillsborough Elks Lodge No. 2672, located at 1630 S. U.S. 41 in Ruskin. An optional roundtable discussion begins at 10:30 a.m., followed by a sit-down luncheon at 12 Noon. At 1 p.m., its guest speaker, Debbie Smyth, will present 'Probate Records: Looking Beyond the Will.' The cost is $18 per person, which includes the meal and presentation. For reservations and meal selection, call Vicki at 360-608-1647.

Safe Families For Children Music Bingo

Join Safe Families for Children on Friday, May 15, for its music bingo fundraiser. The event will take place at Wellspring Church, located at 705 Ninth St. SE in Ruskin, with doors opening at 6 p.m. and bingo starting at 6:30 p.m. Come early to get your table. Bingo is $25. Southern BBQ LLC will be serving meals, with all proceeds benefiting Safe Families for Children. Along with music bingo, there will be raffles and other prizes. This event is sure to be fun for anyone.

Beth Israel Sisterhood's Luncheon & Installation of Officers

Beth Israel Sisterhood is having its annual Luncheon and Installation of Officers on Tuesday, May 5, at 12 Noon in Beth Israel's social hall, located at 1115 E. Del Webb Blvd. in Sun City Center. The Showtimers, a talented group of women who perform songs from Broadway musicals, will entertain the attendees. The luncheon is for Sisterhood members only, but new members are always welcome. You don't need to be a member of Beth Israel to join the Sisterhood. Sisterhood is a great way to meet other women and share fun times while watching, and participating in, interesting programs. Many exciting programs are planned for next season, starting in the fall. To RSVP for the luncheon or join the Sisterhood, contact Donna at sisterhood@jcscc.org.

Community Service Scholarship

Applications are now being accepted by the Democratic Women's Club of Southeast Hillsborough County for this year's Sandra Morehouse Community Service Scholarship. Visit the website at https://sehillsboroughdwc.org/ and scroll down to access the application. Applications must be received by Thursday, April 30, and can be emailed to smorehousescholarship@gmail.com.

Impact Teen Huddles

The Impact Program is now offering Teen Huddles, a faith-based small group 'huddle' intended to help students understand God's word, ask honest questions and learn how to apply biblical truths to real-life situations. Students in sixth through 12th grade meet on the second and fourth Mondays of each month from 6:30-7:45 p.m. at 3115 Lithia Pinecrest Rd. in Valrico. For more information, contact Kayla Dorman, an Impact intern, at kdorman@whatisimpact.com or 863-220-3829.

Music And Art Homeschool Day At Cracker Country

Discover some of Florida's rich music and art history at Cracker Country Music and Art Homeschool Day on Tuesday, May 12. While visiting the museum's historic buildings, homeschoolers can participate in activities designed to make late-19th-through-early-20th-century art and music come alive.

Enjoy live musical demonstrations on the dulcimer, mandolin and conga drum; make your own musical instrument; and do some 'everyday' chores, like churning butter and cleaning laundry on a washboard.

Advanced ticket purchase is required from its website at https://floridastatefair.com/event/homeschool-day-music-art/.

MEALS ON WHEELS EXPANDS TO APOLLO BEACH, CALLS FOR COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Staff Report



Meals on Wheels of Tampa is expanding its reach into the Apollo Beach area, bringing critical meal delivery and companionship services to more homebound seniors and individuals in need. With the expansion comes an urgent call for additional volunteers, drivers, donors and recipients to help sustain and grow the program.

Each day, the organization prepares and delivers approximately 1,000 meals across Hillsborough County. For many recipients, the service provides far more than food.

"We nourish the body and our mission is delivered in the last mile by 1,400 volunteers," said CEO Mandy Cloninger. "The knock on the door is more than a meal; it's a daily check-in."

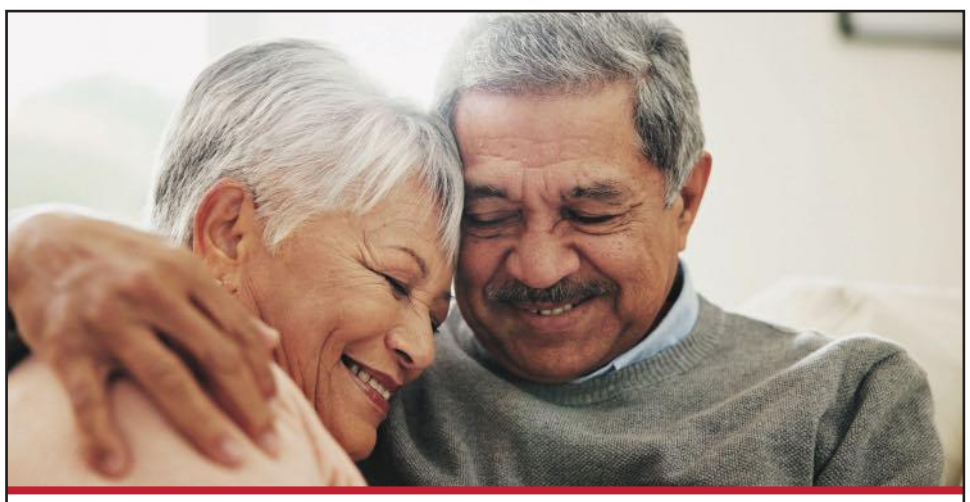
Its meals are designed to meet a variety of dietary needs, including heart-healthy, renal and diabetic options. Each recipient receives a daily hot meal along with a side dish, ensuring both nutrition and consistency. Currently, the organization operates 113 delivery routes and 18 distribution points throughout the county, including a pickup location at First Baptist Church of Riverview.

Despite the scale of the program, affordability remains a priority. Eighty percent of recipients pay less than $2.50 per meal, made possible through community donations and volunteer support. Meals on Wheels of Tampa is privately funded and does not accept direct government funding, relying instead on the generosity of local residents and organizations.

Beyond nourishment, the program addresses a deeper need — human connection. For many homebound individuals, a volunteer's visit may be the only interaction they have all day. These brief but meaningful encounters help reduce isolation, improve mental well-being and provide a vital safety check.

Founded in 1975 by Tampa resident Gloria Fuentes, the organization began by delivering just 14 meals. Today, it has grown into a cornerstone nonprofit, serving thousands while staying true to its mission of helping seniors maintain independence in their own homes.

As the Apollo Beach expansion begins, community involvement will be key to continuing that mission. Those interested in volunteering, donating or receiving services can learn more at the website at www.mowtampa.org.



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MANY HANDS . . . GETTING READY FOR SATURDAY OUR LADY'S PANTRY: PART ONE – DRIVERS AND WEIGHING IN THE DONATIONS

Staff Report



"Our Lady's Pantry traces its beginnings to December, 1999," said director Tom Bullaro. "At that time, a dozen parishioners from Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission first stuffed their cars with food, week after week, to share with 25 families in need.

"Those dozen parishioners were soon joined by dozens more as, little by little, more people came for food, and more cars were needed to bring in those groceries," he said. "We didn't have our first small truck until 2008. And then, little by little, we outgrew that truck as well.

"Today, about 700 clients come through our drive-through Pantry every two Saturdays," he added. "We now have two big refrigerated trucks to bring in tens of thousands of pounds of food every week. Thankfully, Dave Mariconda has taken the lead in organizing our team of drivers and helpers and maintaining our trucks. And Kim Kordalski works closely with Dave in scheduling pickups."

The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) has a provision under Section 170(e)(3) that allows food markets to take enhanced tax deductions for donating apparently wholesome food to qualified 501(C)(3) non-profit food banks, like Our Lady's Pantry. What this means is that we receive donations of food from a dozen venders to share with our clients every Saturday. A few of these venders donate more than once a week.

"Every day is its own day," said Kordalski, who is the assistant director of the Pantry, "but it all begins before dawn, most of the year."

"We like to take off by 6 a.m.," said Mariconda. "The later we go in the morning, we run into so much traffic and construction.

"But we don't just jump in the truck and take off. Once we turn the ignition on, we do a quick walk around."

"Many boxes of food are too heavy for one person to lift, and venders do not help," said Mariconda. "For this reason, we ask for a helper to ride along with the driver to help load donations onto our truck."

Once a driver returns to Wimauma, he or she unpacks the truck, loading boxes onto our fork lift, then drives it to the scale at the entry of the Pantry. Here it is weighed, the store identified, and the donation recorded.

"One of us is standing by the scale," said Kordalski. "We note the store, the weight, and the product type of food (i.e., bakery, meat, dairy, prepared food, produce and non-perishables). on our clipboard.

After the food has been weighed, the driver sets the boxes on the floor, where other hands scoop it up, sorting it further by eggs, produce, meats/frozen foods, and non-perishables. Once all the donations are in, Kordalski sends the numbers to Feeding Tampa Bay, so each store gets tax credits for their donation.

Our Lady's Pantry provides an average of300 clients are coming through a drive-thru-Pantry every week for groceries. It is located at16650 U.S. Highway 301 S. Wimauma. Contact tom@ourladyspantry.com.

To read, "Getting Ready for Saturday" Part Two, www.ourladyspantry.com.

COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING ENHANCED BY AI

Staff Report



By the time some patients report symptoms of colorectal cancer to a care provider, tumors have had a chance to grow or metastasize out of colon. At later stages, cancer is much more difficult to treat. Fortunately, more people are aware of the lifesaving value of routine colon cancer screenings, including colonoscopies. Now, when specialists enlist smart technologies like GI Genius, colon cancer screening can be more powerful and effective than ever. Used to assist in polyp detection through enhanced visualization during a colonoscopy, GI Genius was the first artificial intelligence system of its kind available in the U.S. It offers immediate analysis of video-imaging data, flagging potential problem areas so physicians can take a closer look to identify and remove precancerous polyps.

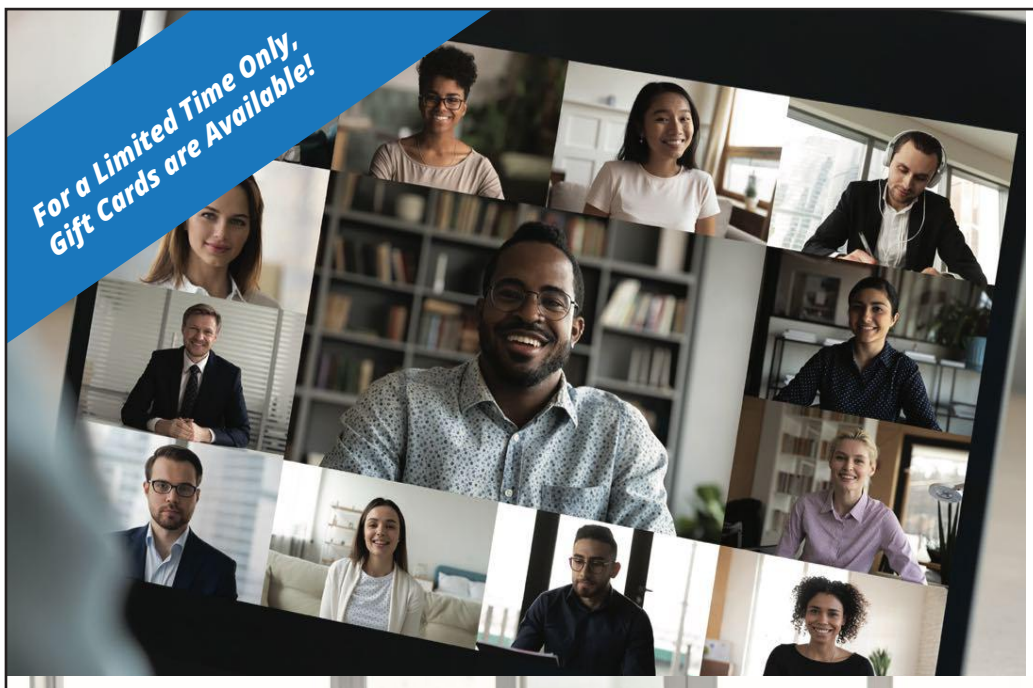
"It's an intelligent endoscopy module," says Adnan Muhammad, MD, FACG, a board-certified gastroenterologist and physician lead for AdventHealth West Florida Division Gastroenterology. "AI-assisted colorectal screenings using the GI Genius give us accurate, real-time analysis of lesions, including precancerous polyps and other abnormalities. It enhances our viewing and diagnostic capabilities."

Guided by the physician, the GI Genius module adds the power of AI to routine colonoscopy. By instantly flagging trouble spots for the gastroenterologist to assess, the GI Genius module offers an extra level of accuracy. The GI Genius module has been shown to increase adenoma (precancerous lesions) detection rate by up to 14.4%.

"The GI Genius works in concert with our routine screening equipment," says Dr. Muhammad. "It examines the video feed from the endoscope as we work, offering accurate identification of lesions. It is highly effective."

Recent research shows that the GI Genius positively identified 99.7% of lesions. It is a smart guide and a step forward in protecting patients' health and wellness with early, lifesaving colon cancer screening.

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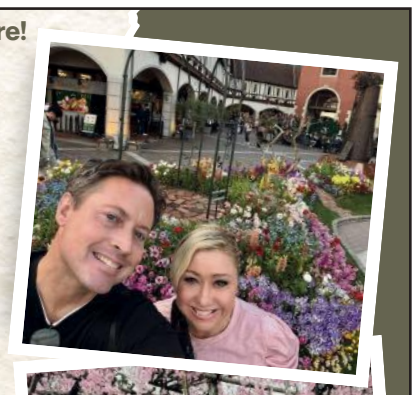
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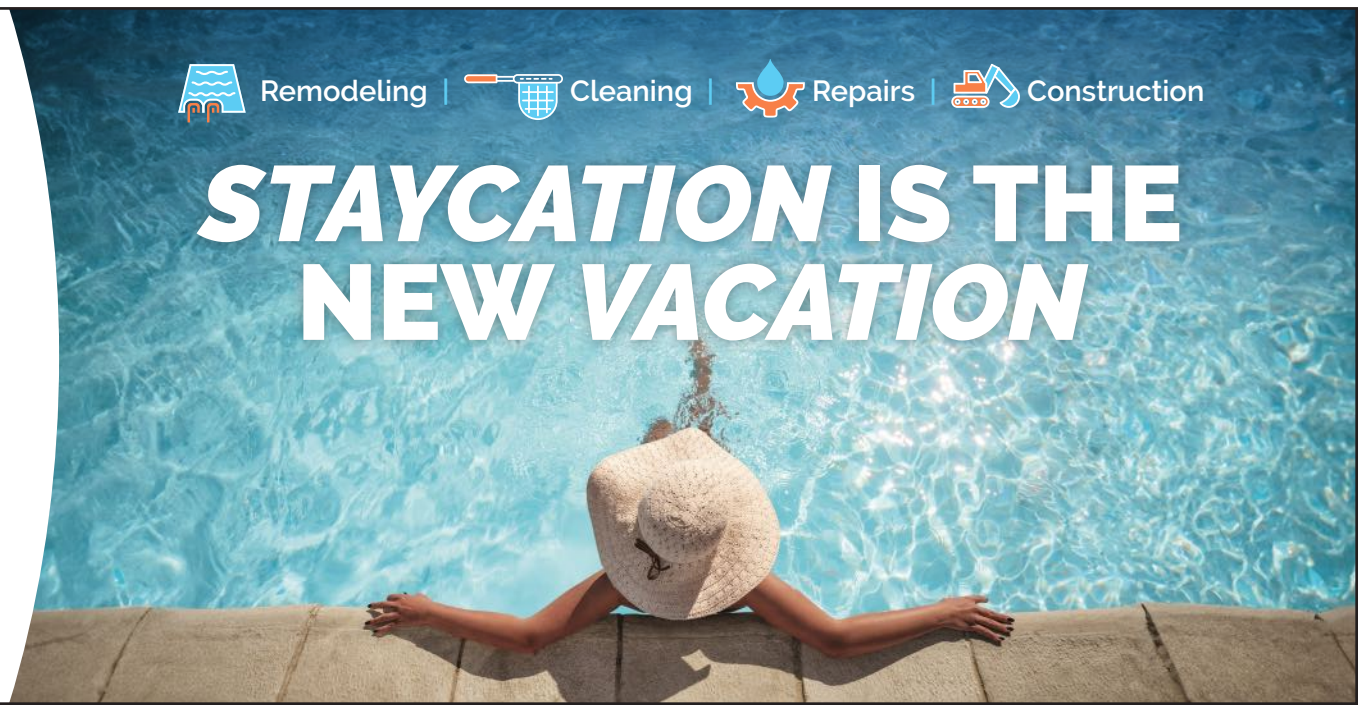
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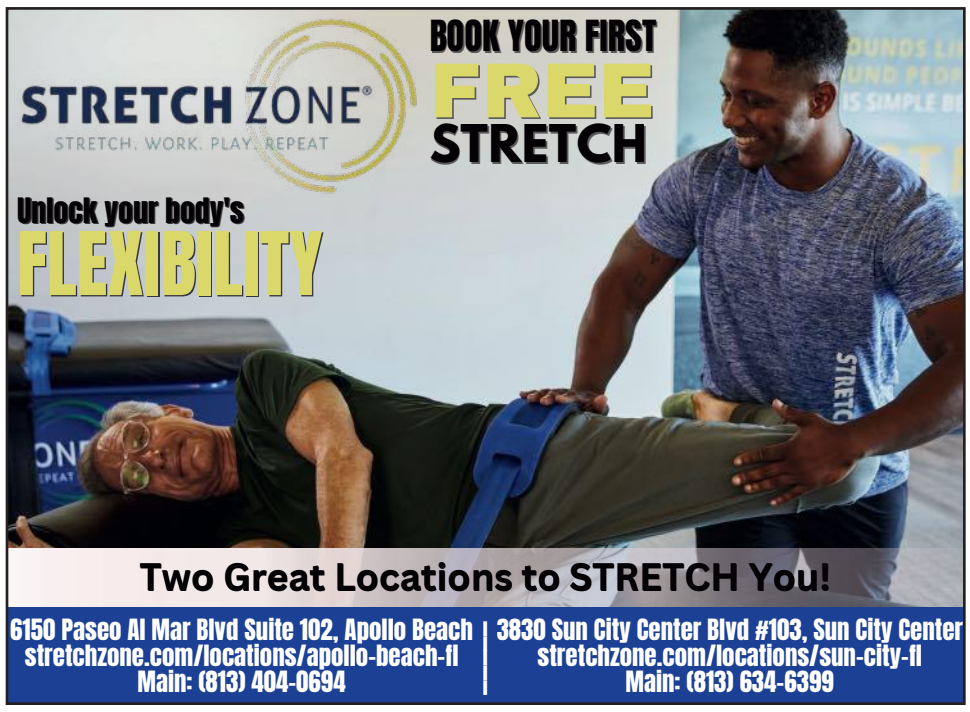
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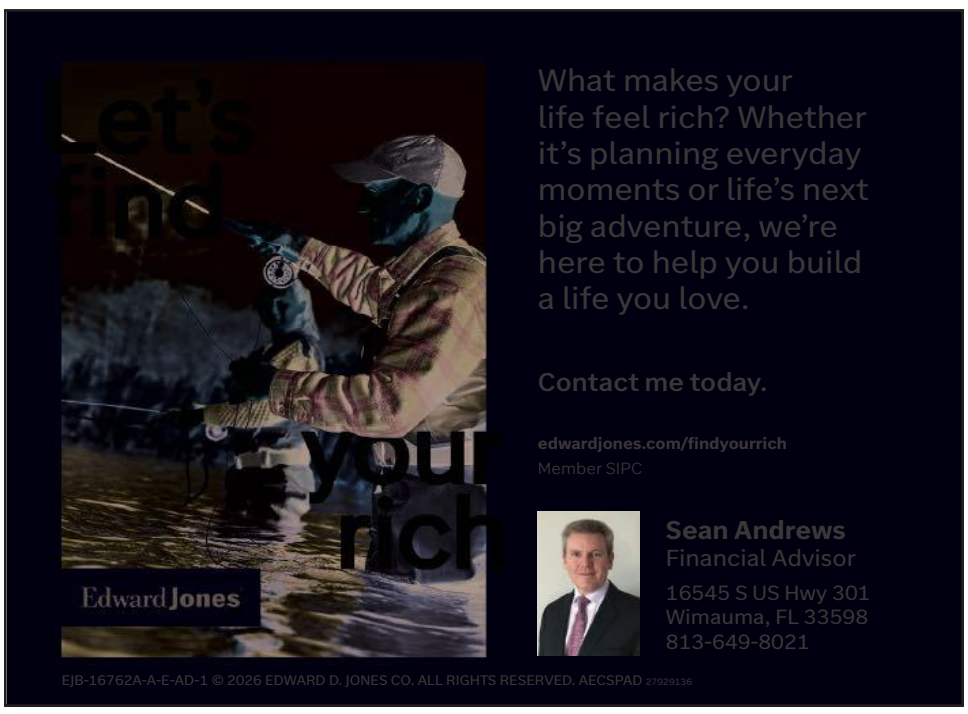
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STRAZ CENTER BROADWAY SEASON INCLUDES WICKED, HAMILTON & MORE

Staff Report



Photo by Joan Marcus

(L to R) Tyler Fauntleroy and Jimmie J.J. Jeter in Hamilton national tour.



K yra Belle Johnson and Fergie L. Philippe in Disney's Beauty and the Beast. Photo by Matthew Murphy Photo by Matthew Murphy

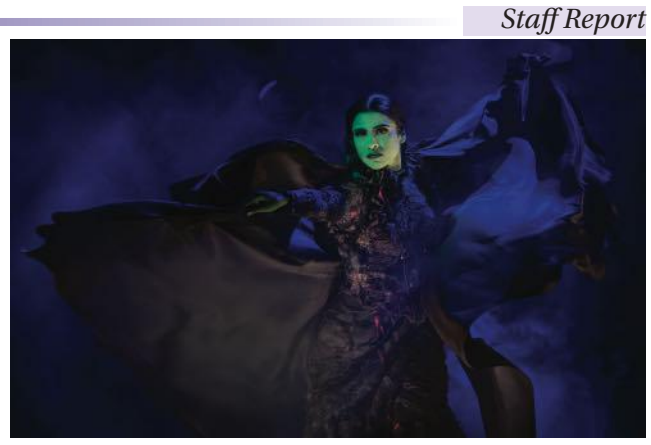


Photo by Joan Marcus

Jessie Davidson as Elphaba in the national tour of Wicked.

Straz Center for the Performing Arts is delighted to announce the 2026-2027 Bank of America Broadway at Straz Center season. The schedule includes Buena Vista Social Club™, 'Twas the Night Before ... by Cirque du Soleil, Death Becomes Her, The Great Gatsby, The Sound of Music, Boop!® The Musical, Disney's Beauty and the Beast, Operation Mincemeat: A New Musical and the return of Tampa's most "popular" musical Wicked. In addition to the nine-show package, the season features the Florida premiere engagement of Oh, Mary! and encores of Hamilton and Jersey Boys.

"We're excited to welcome another exceptional season of Broadway to Straz Center and to share these extraordinary productions with the Tampa Bay community," said Straz Center President and CEO Greg Holland. "From beloved audience favorites to award-winning new productions, this season reflects the creativity, energy and artistry that make Broadway so special. Whether returning to experience a longtime favorite or discovering something new, audiences will find performances that inspire, entertain and bring us together. We look forward to experiencing it with you."

Buena Vista Social Club™ runs Oct. 6-11. It's been years since legendary singer Omara Portuondo last entered a recording studio. Once known as the "Queen of Feeling," her voice was celebrated throughout Cuba — until she vanished from the spotlight. When an ambitious young record producer brings her a rare opportunity, the elusive diva must finally reckon with her past.

'Twas the Night Before ... by Cirque du Soleil runs Nov. 18-29. It's the holidays, and this year, things are different. For years, Isabella and her father have read "A Visit from Saint Nicholas" together, but now Isabella feels she has outgrown the tradition. When the magic of the poem comes to life, a snowstorm separates them and sends them on a fantastic journey.

Death Becomes Her runs Dec. 8-13. The Tony Award-winning musical comedy is based on the classic 1992 film, with direction and choreography by Tony winner Christopher Gattelli. It has been described as "a laugh-filled, tuneful musical to die for" (Variety) and "*a cheek-aching laughter roller coaster — the most fun night out!*" (The Daily Beast).

The Great Gatsby runs Jan. 19-24. Based on the novel by F. Scott Fitzgerald, the Tony Award-winning musical brings the Roaring Twenties to life in a story of love, wealth and tragedy. It has been called a "*Broadway extravaganza that explodes with life and energy*" (Entertainment Weekly).

Wicked returns Feb. 3-28, telling the story of two unlikely friends in the Land of Oz — one born with emerald-green skin and extraordinary talent, the other bubbly and popular. Featuring songs like "Defying Gravity," "Popular" and "For Good," Wicked has been called "*a magical Broadway musical with brains, heart and courage*" (Time Magazine).

The Sound of Music runs March 9-14. For 65 years, this Rodgers and Hammerstein classic has remained one of America's favorite musicals. Directed by three-time Tony Award winner Jack O'Brien, the story of Maria and the von Trapp family continues to captivate audiences with themes of love, resilience and the power of music.

Boop!® The Musical runs April 20-25. Inspired by the iconic Betty Boop character, the show follows Betty's adventure as she escapes her black-and-white world for a colorful journey in New York City. It has been described as a "*show-stopping rainbow of joy*" (The Daily Beast) filled with heart and humor.

Disney's Beauty and the Beast runs May 4-16. This marks Disney's first North American touring production of the beloved musical in more than 25 years. Featuring an Oscar-winning score by Alan Menken and Tim Rice, the production includes classic songs like "Be Our Guest" and "Beauty and the Beast," along with spectacular new sets and costumes.

Operation Mincemeat: A New Musical runs June 1-6, 2027. Set in 1943, the show tells the true story of a secret Allied mission that helped turn the tide of World War II. An Olivier Award winner for Best New Musical and a multiple 2025 Tony nominee, it has been called the "*No. 1 Broadway Show of 2025*" (Entertainment Weekly).

In addition to the season package, the Straz Center will present the Florida premiere of **Oh, Mary!** April 6-11, 2027. The dark comedy explores the life of Mary Todd Lincoln in the weeks leading up to Abraham Lincoln's assassination. Declared "*one of the best comedies in years*" by The New York Times, the production earned two Tony Awards, including Best Direction of a Play, along with multiple other honors and a Pulitzer Prize finalist designation.

For more, call the Straz Center Ticket Sales Office at 813-229-7827 or outside the Tampa Bay area at 800-955-1045 or visit www.strazcenter.org

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HOW MCAULEY FINE JEWELRY TURNS MEMORIES INTO MASTERPIECES

By Kelly Wise Valdes



Ed McAuley and Joe Martin share a moment in the shop where their legacies meet — Martin's Jewelers became McAuley Fine Jewelry.

McAuley Fine Jewelry has become one of Brandon's most trusted names in fine jewelry, known for its blend of craftsmanship, customer care and multi-generational expertise. Whether you need jewelry repair, inspection, cleaning, ring sizing, watch battery replacement, appraisals or a custom-designed piece, McAuley is your one-stop shop for all your jewelry needs.

The store's reputation is reflected in the words of customer Terry Vassalotti, who shared, "I have to say it was a real pleasure working with McAuley Fine Jewelry. When my mom passed nearly nine years ago, I was left with her wedding ring. I didn't want to wear it as a ring but wanted to repurpose it into a pendant to honor her."

Vassalotti's experience highlights the personal attention McAuley Fine Jewelry is known for. McAuley's expert jewelers ultimately created a meaningful custom pendant using her mother's diamond and a sentimental stone of her own.

"I found out that I had enough credit with the gold I brought in to pay for the setting as well as the gold necklace that fits perfectly," said Vassalotti. "I met the owner, Ed, when I picked up the finished job, and he couldn't have been a nicer guy. I can't recommend them enough."

Since taking over the business in 2017, Ed and Jenn McAuley have guided the store through significant growth in staff, a new location, and new technology including laser welding, CAD and 3D printing.

"We purchased the old Carson Optical building and moved the jewelry store from 664 Oakfield to 201 S. Kings Avenue," said Jenn.

Even with these changes, one thing has remained constant: McAuley Fine Jewelry's commitment to exceptional service.

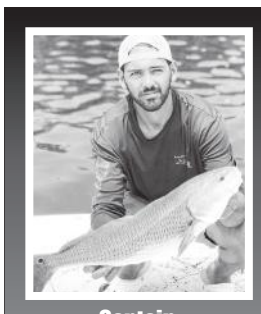
"Service and craftsmanship are where we excel," said Jenn. "Our jewelers have years upon years of experience."

Custom design continues to be a major part of their identity.

"We recommend an appointment [for custom designs]," said Jenn McAuley. "We typically will have two consults. If you don't know what you want, Ed listens for styling cues. Also, we'll talk about using any old scrap gold jewelry you may have."

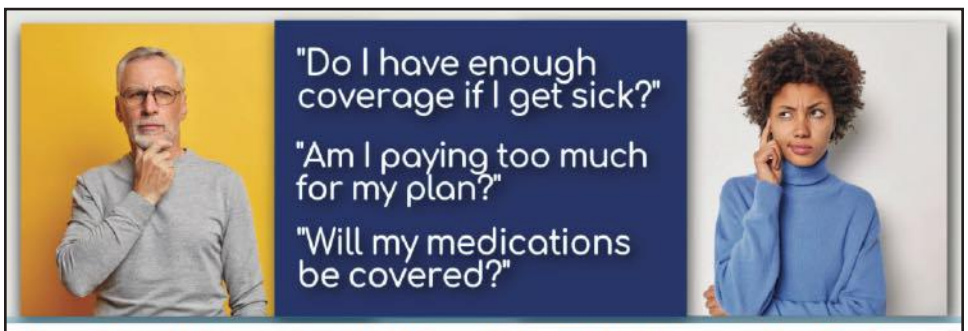
"Our younger employees are learning from our jewelers with tons of experience," she added, "It's fun to have people come in and see how they can be creative. Due to our small business size, we still have the ability to operate with freedom."

McAuley Fine Jewelry is located at 201 S. Kings Ave. in Brandon. For more information, call 813-689-8124, visit https://mcauleyfinejewelry.com/ or follow the store on Facebook.


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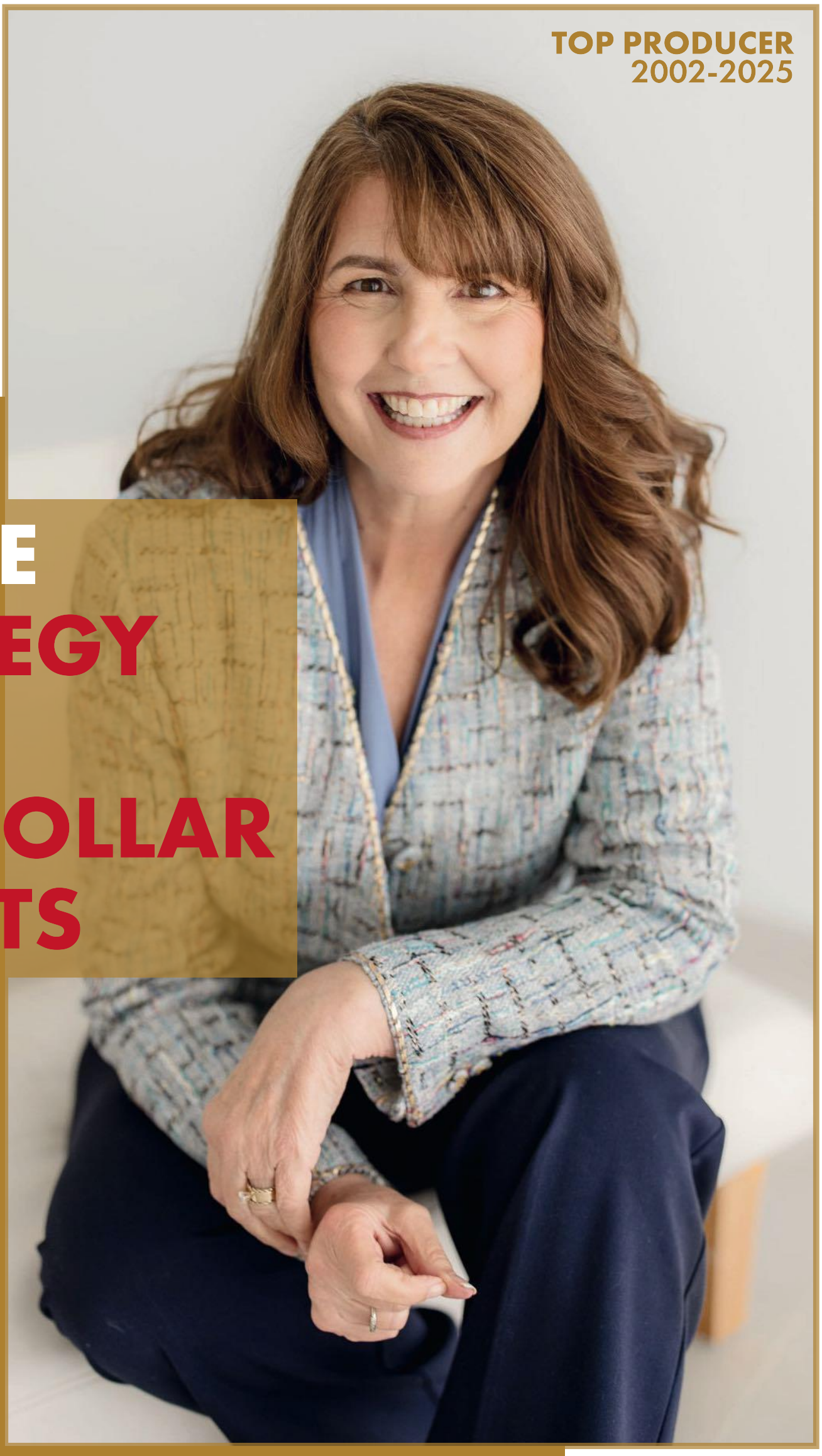
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TOURS RETURN TO THE YUENGLING BREWERY AFTER 8-YEAR HIATUS

By Jane Owen



After an eight-year pause, brewery tours are officially returning to the Yuengling Tampa Brewery. Bookings went live on March 15 for visitors to begin making reservations, and tours began on March 20. The experience offers guests a behind-the-scenes look at America's oldest brewery brewing beer inside Florida's oldest operating brewery.

The relaunch of tours gives beer lovers and history enthusiasts alike the opportunity to learn about the craftsmanship and tradition that define the Yuengling name. Brewed locally in Tampa for more than 26 years, the brand is rooted in the company's nearly 200-year legacy as a sixth-generation, family-owned and operated American brewery.

Originally constructed in 1958 by the Schlitz Brewing Company, the Tampa facility was one of the most advanced breweries of its time. Ownership later transferred to Stroh's Brewery before being purchased by Yuengling in 1999, making Florida the company's second home behind the breweries in Pottsville, Pennsylvania — and the oldest brewery in America. Today, the Yuengling Tampa Brewery continues the family brewing legacy, blending tradition with modern brewing technology to produce its iconic beers for the Southeast region.

The Yuengling Draft Haus & Kitchen opened on-site in Tampa in June 2023. Since then, the only public access to brewery tours was through the restaurant's monthly Eagle Series Beer Dinner Experiences — chef-curated, multicourse beer pairing dinners featuring Yuengling favorites, like Traditional Lager, alongside small-batch, limited-release Eagle Series beers. The return of regularly scheduled tours now makes the brewery experience accessible to a broader audience of visitors to the Draft Haus & Kitchen beyond these exclusive, ticketed events.

Tour Experience Details

Yuengling Tampa Brewery Tour highlights include: • An overview of Yuengling's almost 200-year heritage.

• Insight into Florida's oldest operating brewery.

• A guided behind-the-scenes look at the brewing process.

• Photo opportunities throughout the facility.

• Opportunity to taste the broader portfolio of Yuengling brands and special, limited-edition beers only available on-site.

Tours will be available on Fridays and Saturdays, with plans to expand availability in the future.

Tickets start at $10.95 per person, and tours are open to all ages. Guests ages 21 and up may upgrade their experience to include a guided beer flight tasting.

The Yuengling Tampa Brewery is located at 11109 N. 30th St. in Tampa. To book tickets, visit www.yuengling.com/tampa/. For more information, visit the website or call 813-488-6444.

ABSOLUTE SURGICAL HOSTS FREE ADVANCED WELLNESS SEMINAR MAY 12

Staff Report

Residents of Sun City Center and the surrounding Southshore communities are invited to an upcoming wellness seminar designed to showcase new, non-surgical options for improving strength, mobility and overall quality of life.

Absolute Surgical Specialists will host a VIP Wellness Event on Tuesday, May 12, from 3 to 6 p.m. at its Cypress Village Boulevard location. The seminar will feature live demonstrations, educational discussions and hands-on opportunities to learn about emerging medical technologies now available locally.



The event will be led by Dr. Craig E. Amshel, who founded Absolute Surgical Specialists in August 2005 after completing general surgical training in Phoenix, serving as an Army surgeon during Desert Shield and finishing a fellowship in colon and rectal surgery in Miami. Since opening his practice in Sun City Center, Amshel has remained dedicated to serving the Southshore community with fast, high-quality gastrointestinal surgical care.

A hallmark of his practice is efficiency and accessibility, guided by his philosophy: "Your time is just as important as my time." Patients are typically able to schedule appointments within a week and are seen promptly upon arrival, reflecting a patient-centered approach that has defined the practice for more than 20 years.

During the seminar, attendees will learn about Emsculpt Neo, a non-invasive treatment that simultaneously builds muscle and reduces fat while improving circulation, strength and range of motion. The technology is also FDA-approved to help address joint and back pain by enhancing muscle performance and reducing atrophy.

The event will also highlight Emsella, a breakthrough pelvic floor treatment that uses high-intensity electromagnetic energy to strengthen muscles affected by incontinence and other conditions.

Dr. Amshel's practice continues to expand with the growing community, including the addition of an in-house surgical suite in 2017 at 1046 Cypress Village Blvd. This allows procedures such as colonoscopies, endoscopies and select surgeries to be performed more efficiently and cost-effectively than traditional hospital settings.

Adding to the community-focused atmosphere, Local Brew Company will offer complimentary tastings during the event. The neighboring business, known for its craft beverages and welcoming environment, reflects the seminar's emphasis on connection, education and local partnership.

Attendees will also have access to live demos, consultations, event-only pricing and free swag. Reservations can be made by calling 813-633-0081 or visiting www.Absolutesurg.com.

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TIPS FOR STRESS-FREE TRIPS WITH AUTISTIC CHILDREN AND ADULTS



As we head into the warmer months, many families start thinking about vacations, staycations and simply getting out to enjoy life a little more. For families like ours, traveling with an autistic loved one can feel overwhelming at times. But I want to encourage you to travel, make memories and truly enjoy the experience.

The key is preparation ... and a little flexibility.

Start with what you know works best for your loved one. Familiar items can make a big difference. Pack their favorite snacks, comfort items like blankets or toys and anything that helps regulate or calm them. If your child or adult thrives on routine, try to keep parts of that routine consistent, even while away.

Think ahead about your environment. If you're staying in a hotel, request a quieter room. If you're going somewhere new, look at photos online or talk through the experience ahead of time so it feels more predictable.

Plan your days, but don't overplan them.

Build in breaks. Allow time to rest. Know that not everything will go exactly as planned, and that's OK. Some of our best memories have come from the moments we didn't expect.

One thing that has helped our family is having a 'backup plan.' If something becomes overwhelming, we pivot. Maybe that means stepping outside, taking a car break or even calling it a day early. Success doesn't mean doing everything; it means everyone feeling safe and supported.

And let's be honest, there may be moments. Loud moments. Uncomfortable moments. Moments where you feel like all eyes are on you. I've been there. Take a breath. Give yourself grace. You are doing your best, and that is more than enough.

Most importantly, don't let fear stop you from living life.

Our families deserve joy. Our loved ones deserve experiences. And we, as parents and caregivers, deserve to make memories alongside them.

If you're looking for support, resources or community connection along the way, there are organizations like Experienced Autism Alliance here to help families navigate the journey. Learn more at https://autismalliancefl.org/.

So, whether it's a big trip, a weekend getaway or just a day out in your own community, go for it. Prepare, stay flexible and embrace the journey.



HURRICANE AWARENESS: PREPARE AND STAY SAFE



Hurricanes are powerful and destructive natural disasters that can cause significant damage to communities, infrastructure and the environment. Understanding hurricanes, how they form, their potential impacts and the importance of preparedness can help reduce the risks they pose to individuals and communities.

The Dangers of Hurricanes

While hurricanes are known for their strong winds, they can cause a variety of dangerous effects:

1. Strong Winds: Winds can cause buildings to collapse, trees to fall and power lines to snap, as well as flying debris.

2. Flooding: Heavy rainfall can lead to flash flooding and river flooding, submerging roads, homes and infrastructure.

3. Storm Surges: A storm surge occurs when strong winds push seawater onto the land, causing coastal flooding and damage, often the most deadly aspect.

4. Tornadoes: Hurricanes can spawn tornadoes, which can further increase damage and risk.

5. Power Outages: Power can be out for up to seven days.

6. Food Shortages: With the lack of power, stores are closed, refrigerators no longer work and transportation of food becomes difficult.

Preparing for a Hurricane

Proper preparation can save lives and reduce property damage. The SouthShore Disaster Council is hosting two hurricane preparedness symposiums, one on Saturday, May 30, at 10:30 a.m. at Calvery Church, located at 1250 E. College Ave. in Ruskin, and the other on Thursday, June 11, at 10:30 a.m. at Sun City Center United Methodist Church, located at 1971 Haverford Ave. in Sun City Center.

Please attend one of these informative presentations, which will include HCFR, HCSO, local utilities and other catastrophe and disaster preparation and recovery resources. Learn your evaluation zone, how to prepare your home, how to deal with evacuations and how to shelter in place.

Conclusion

Hurricanes are among the most powerful and destructive natural disasters, but with proper awareness, preparation, and action, the risk they pose can be minimized. Educate yourself and make a plan.

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HONEST FOOD GUY GIVES REVIEWS AT A LOCAL RESTAURANT NEAR YOU

By Libby Hopkins



Adam Turner aka The Honest Food Guy has a passion for food and sharing his reviews of local restaurants on his Facebook page.

Adam Turner has been a paranormal investigator, been on the T.V. show Pawn Stars and is know in the community as The Honest Food Guy. "I love food," Turner said. "Until high school, I really didn't get to experience different foods. My high school had a culinary class as an elective. That's when I started trying new things and that's where I feel in love with food."

His passion for food then turned into telling people about food. "I started writing on Trip Advisor and social media," Turner said. "I started a food page on Facebook when we moved to Florida, Honest Respectful Food Reviews of Hillsborough County and I would write my reviews there. Last year a restaurant owner asked me why I didn't make content as well. I told him I had no idea how and he convinced me to try. The rest is history." The Honest Food Guy was born!

Turner and his family visit local restaurants and give honest food review of what they eat. "Almost everything has been positive," Turner said. "Most restaurant owners have been extremely welcoming and love my vision. They are open to it."

Turner goes into the different restaurants as just a regular customer. "I don't do the normal influencer thing and have these places pay me to come in. I come in unannounced, buy my own food, and give a real and honest review," Turner said. "The only way to be real is to come in as a normal customer without anyone knowing I am there. I believe less than five restaurants have taken offense to this and even a few took to social media to try to discredit me. It's sad but beyond my control when this happens. Some people don't care for honesty, but most do. I have formed amazing relationships with some of these owners, and I am so grateful for that."

Every day is an adventure for Turner and his family. "I love the unknown. I get excited to try these places and whether the score is high or low, I love getting to tell people about these places," Turner said. "It is advertisement whether I enjoy it or now. The people who choose to hate me completely ignore the end where I invite everyone to come try it for themselves, regardless of what I think. I love involving my family on the journey. My kids think it's the greatest thing ever and I am leaving a legacy for them to continue."

If you would like to learn more about The Honest Food Guy, you can visit his Facebook page at https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61571945455265.

HILLSBOROUGH UNVEILS NEW ONLINE SYSTEM TO RESERVE CAMPING SPOTS

Staff Report





Want to get away somewhere close to nature, with plenty of room to relax and just feet away from a wide array of recreational opportunities? Booking a spot at one of Hillsborough County's almost 200 campsites in three of its most popular conservation parks just got a lot easier.

The county has unveiled a new online reservation system, which means that prospective campers no longer need to arrive early and in person to reserve a spot at Edward Medard, E.G. Simmons, or Lithia Springs Conservation Parks. The online system allows campers to see when and where vacant campsites are available and to reserve and pay for the specific site(s) up to six months in advance. Additionally, campers can search for sites with the amenities they desire, including electricity, water, picnic tables, grills and campfire rings.

Camping fees remain the same: $24 per site per night, $18 for those ages 55-64 and $12 for Hillsborough County residents ages 65 and older. All three conservation parks allow for both RV and tent camping.

In addition to camping, these conservation parks offer many other distinct amenities. Edward Medard Conservation Park, located at 6140 Turkey Creek Rd. in Plant City, is home to a 700-acre reservoir, observation tower, hiking trails, a disc golf course, picnic shelters and a large playground area. Lithia Springs Conservation Park, located at 3932 Lithia Springs Rd. in Lithia, includes picnic shelters, hiking trails, canoe rentals, an ADA-accessible playground and picturesque views of the Alafia River. The centerpiece of the park is a large freshwater spring that is popular with swimmers year-round. E.G. Simmons Conservation Park, located at 2401 19th Ave. NW in Ruskin, borders Tampa Bay and offers a large boat ramp facility, canoe/kayak rentals, a beach and swimming area, picnic shelters, fishing areas, two playgrounds and 200 acres of mangroves reserved for a bird and wildlife sanctuary.

The following number of campsites are available:

- E.G. Simmons Park, 103 sites.
- Lithia Springs Park, 45 sites.
- Edward Medard Park, 43 sites.

RV campers are limited to stays of 30 consecutive days per park; tent campers can stay up to 14 days within a 30-day period. A maximum of two dogs or cats is allowed. Also, the individual who reserved the campsite must be physically present at check-in.

For more information regarding camping options at Hillsborough County's conservation parks, please visit the website at www.hcfl.gov/camping.

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SUMMER CAMPS 2026

Special Section, More Inside!





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SUMMER 2026: DISCOVER THE BEST LOCAL CAMPS FOR LEARNING, ADVENTURE AND FUN



Spring is almost here, and summer is just around the corner — which means now is the perfect time to start planning a season full of discovery, creativity and fun. To help families get a head start, the Osprey Observer team has once again rounded up the best local programs for our annual Summer Camp Guide, a special pullout section designed to connect students with unforgettable summer opportunities across the community.

From performing arts and STEM to sports, outdoor adventures and enrichment programs, this year's guide highlights camps for nearly every interest and age group. Budding performers can take center stage at Music Showcase and the Florida Academy of Performing Arts, where children immerse themselves in acting, singing and dance through themed musical theater camps. Young artists can also explore dance, theater and music through the Patel Conservatory, which offers more than 100 camps and classes taught by working professionals. Music lovers won't want to miss School of Rock, featuring genre-themed camps for ages 7–18, or Center For Dance Arts, known for its wide range of dance instruction and award-winning competition teams.

For hands-on creativity, AR Workshop provides engaging DIY camps that build confidence and imagination, while Camp Mirage keeps kids moving with action-packed mornings full of creativity and play.

Families looking for outdoor or traditional camp experiences will find plenty of options, including Cedarkirk Camp & Conference Center, Circle F Dude Ranch and Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, which blends thrilling rides with animal encounters and education. Horse lovers can saddle up at TLC's Gypsy Haven, while sports-minded campers can stay active through Fellowship Church sports camps or daily adventures at High 5 Inc..

Academic and STEM-focused families will appreciate enrichment options from Mathnasium, Skill Samurai and Code Wiz, while Kids 'R' Kids Circa FishHawk delivers themed camps that blend learning with fun. With more than 25 locations, YMCA of Tampa Bay also offers something for every camper, from arts and gymnastics to zip-lining and pool time.

Be sure to explore the full Summer Camp Guide for dates, pricing and registration details — and don't forget to enter our Summer Camp Sweepstakes, where one lucky family will win a free week of camp. With so many outstanding options, Summer 2026 is shaping up to be one to remember.

Families are encouraged to register early, as many camps fill quickly and offer early-bird discounts, scholarships or flexible scheduling options. Summer camps provide more than entertainment — they help children build confidence, friendships and lifelong skills while giving parents peace of mind. Whether your child wants to explore a new passion or deepen an existing one, this guide is your go-to resource for planning a summer filled with growth, joy and memorable experiences close to home.



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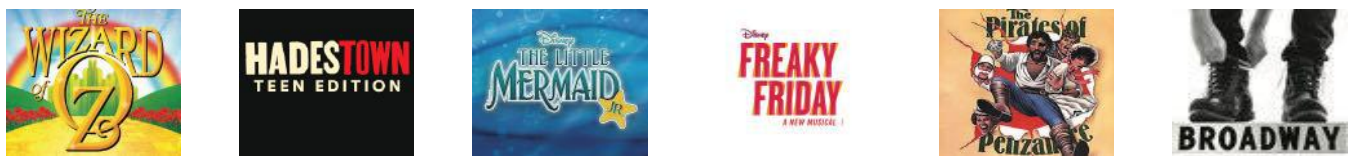
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Past Summer Shows



Florida Academy of Performing Arts | Located in Music Showcase (813) 490-ARTS FAOPA.org



SUMMER CAMPS 2026





PAGE 24

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DANCE, THEATER AND MUSIC PROGRAMS OFFERED AT STRAZ CENTER THIS SUMMER

By Olivia Clark



Registration for the 2026 Summer Camps and Classes is now open at the Patel Conservatory, the accredited performing arts school at the Straz Center for the Performing Arts in downtown Tampa. The Summer session runs Monday, June 1 through Friday, July 31, and the programs in dance, theater and music are carried out for students aged 3 through adult.

Each summer, the conservatory opens its doors to those who want a first experience in the arts and to those who desire more advanced, preprofessional training. Families from across the Tampa Bay area enroll in the programs, which offer both creative enrichment and more formalized skill development during the summer months. Classes are conducted by working artists and experienced instructors in a professional performing arts environment.

They can take dance courses in the Next Generation Ballet Summer Intensive, which has five, three-, and two-week sessions for ages 11 through college, and dorm housing is provided for older students. Younger dancers can join the Junior Intensive and other camps appropriate for their age, designed to enhance their technique, strength, and performance quality.

These students will get the chance to rehearse and perform in fully staged productions like Seussical, Jr. and Aladdin KIDS in which they will get acting, singing and stage movement experience. There are other specialty camps for fundamental acting skills and Shakespeare, and older students have the chance to audition for the Broadway Intensive production of Catch Me If You Can.

Music offerings include jazz, choral and chamber intensives, a singer-songwriter camp, and a number of workshops focusing on particular instruments. Younger students also learn about composition, rhythm and collaboration through weekly camps like The Science of Music and World Drumming and Storytelling.

Tuition rates differ for each program, with most week-long camps costing $475 and multiweek intensive programs charged at higher rates depending on the length of the program. There are scholarships with the financial aid priority deadline being Friday, February 28. Auditions or placements are required for some programs before registration, and early enrollment is recommended since enrollment is limited.

For a complete schedule or to register, go to www.patelconservatory.asapconnected.com or www.patelconservatory.org. For more information, call 222-1040 or email admissions@strazcenter.org.

CEDARKIRK BLENDS FAITH, ADVENTURE AND LEADERSHIP FOR SUMMER 2026

By Olivia Clark



Tucked away on 170 wooded acres along the Alafia River, Cedarkirk Camp and Conference Center continues its longstanding tradition of offering a place apart for children and teens to grow in faith and community. Owned by the Presbyteries of Tampa Bay and Peace River, Cedarkirk has served the region since 1971 and welcomes more than 1,000 campers each summer.

While its residential camps remain a cornerstone of the ministry, Cedarkirk is placing added emphasis on its growing day camp program. Mandy Goff, Program Director, said the camp launched day camp two years ago and saw participation more than double in its second year. In response to family needs, Cedarkirk has added early drop-off from 8-8:30 a.m. and late pick-up from 5-5:30 p.m. for an additional fee.

"We are really trying to focus on our day camp program and make it affordable for families in this area," said Goff.

Day camp serves students who have completed kindergarten through fifth grade. Cedarkirk is also piloting a small middle school day camp during the final week of summer, Monday, July 27 to Friday, July 31, with limited space available. Residential camps continue to run Sunday to Friday for students who have completed third through 12th grade, while Explorer Camp provides a two-night introduction to overnight camp for children who have completed first through third grade.

Goff explained that a typical day camp day begins at 9 a.m., with drop-off beginning at 8:30 a.m. Campers join residential campers for morning songs before rotating through scheduled activity blocks that include zip lining, canoeing on the river, climbing the rock wall, arts and crafts and hiking. Campers swim daily, weather permitting, and share family-style lunches together. Each afternoon concludes with Bible study, worship and snack before pickup from 4:30-5 p.m.

Goff said creating community is central to the experience. Technology is not permitted, encouraging campers to build friendships, engage with nature and participate in shared traditions such as group songs and family-style meals. With approximately 30 summer staff members and small day camp groups of 12-14 campers per session, Cedarkirk continues to prioritize connection, outdoor adventure and spiritual growth.

Llearn more or register at www.cedarkirk.campbrainregistration.com.





& ACTIVITY GUIDE



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A LOOK INTO HIGH 5'S SUMMER CAMP PROGRAM FOR AGES 5-12

By Emily Harper





High 5 Inc. is a multipurpose facility committed to positively impacting the community. Located in Brandon, High 5's programs are divided into five pillars: learn to swim, special needs education, after-school care, sports and recreation and community partnerships.

From Monday, June 1, through Friday, August 7, High 5 offers summer camp for ages 5-12. This weekly program is Monday through Friday, 7 a.m.-6 p.m., for the main campus, and Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m.-6 p.m., for the off-site campus at Bevis Elementary School.

A typical day at the main summer camp consists of a wide variety of engaging activities. During the day, campers rotate through swimming, outdoor sports, gym games, playground time, arts and crafts, hands-on STEM experiences and Gamers Grotto (a supervised and age-appropriate video game room). The off-site location's camp is similar in structure, minus the pool. However, it does offer water activities on some days of the camp.

"What truly sets our camp apart is the experience we're able to provide on our beautiful, expansive campus and the wide range of activities we offer. Our programming is thoughtfully designed to balance fun with learning, physical activity with creativity and structure with exploration," said Jada Spano, vice president of operations.

Families can expect a safe and fun environment where children play and learn while making lifelong summer memories. High 5's experienced staff creates a welcoming atmosphere, keeping safety as their top priority.

"We focus on creating a safe, inclusive and supportive environment where every child feels valued and encouraged to grow," said Spano.

One of the most anticipated moments of camp is the 'World's Largest Swim Lesson'. Happening on Thursday, June 25, this global event promotes water safety and drowning prevention.

Spano stated, "Our campers love being part of something so meaningful and memorable, and families appreciate the important life-saving skills it reinforces."

Registration for the summer camp is now open on the website at www.high-5inc.org/camp. The main campus camp costs $175 per week, with a one-time $40 registration fee for the summer, while the off-site camp is $90 per week.

MATHNASIUM CAMPS KEEP MATH SKILLS SHARP DURING SUMMER BREAK

By Libby Hopkins



Make It a Mathnasium Summer!

Summer is a season full of possibilities, longer days, new experiences and the perfect opportunity for kids to grow in confidence. It's also a powerful time to strengthen math skills in a way that feels positive, engaging and stress-free. At Mathnasium, summer learning doesn't pause; it accelerates, giving students the chance to build skills, explore new ideas and feel proud of their progress.

"Learning loss happens when students are not consistently engaged with content," said Mathnasium owner Nicole Pestano. "Therefore, summer is a pivotal time due to the long break. Research shows that during those few short months, students forget what they have learned and lose essential skills. Staying engaged helps students build skills and confidence so they don't have to play catch-up in the new school year."

While some students use summer to reinforce essential skills, others are ready to push ahead, and younger learners are just beginning to form the foundations that will support future success. Mathnasium supports students at every stage of learning, from building foundations to tackling advanced challenges.

At Mathnasium, summer learning is never one-size-fits-all. Every student begins with a personalized assessment that identifies strengths, gaps and learning styles. From there, Pestano and her team create an individualized learning plan tailored specifically to each child. Students who need extra support receive targeted instruction to rebuild confidence and close learning gaps. Students who are on track keep their skills sharp and steady. Advanced learners are challenged with deeper concepts that keep them engaged and motivated. And its youngest 'Great Foundations' students develop number sense, problem-solving skills and a love of math that sets them up for long-term success.

Summer is also the ideal time to get ahead without pressure. Mathnasium sessions are engaging, encouraging and flexible, making it easy to balance learning with vacations, camps and family time.

"We're proud to be a Step Up for Students provider, making personalized math learning accessible for more families," added Pestano.

Learn more about summer camps at www.mathnasium.com/ruskin or call 813-819-MATH (6284). Mathnasium of Ruskin is located at 3062 19th Ave. NE in Ruskin. You can also contact Mathnasium of Riverview, located at 13388 S. U.S. 301 in Riverview, by calling 813-565-1102 or visiting www.mathnasium.com/riverview.

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FLORIDA ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS OFFERS FUN MUSICAL SUMMER CAMPS

By Libby Hopkins



The Florida Academy of Performing Arts (FAOPA) is a local nonprofit organization that was established to support the performing arts through programs at the academy and in the Brandon community.

FAOPA is committed to providing extraordinary theater experiences that educate, challenge and inspire students and their surrounding communities. FAOPA fosters self-discovery, creativity, confidence, group responsibility and pride in accomplishment.

"FAOPA celebrates the professional artistic disciplines of music, dance and the visual arts," said Danielle Sanchez, academy director of FAOPA. "We strive to be a model of excellence in theatre for all our audiences."

FAOPA and Music Showcase have offered summer camps, day camps and musical theater camps for many years.

"The day camps consist of singing, dancing, arts and crafts, intro into theater through improv," Sanchez said. "Our musical theater camps are for all ages and skill levels. We offer a variety of shows throughout the summer. Students work on choreography, blocking, stage direction and character development. Throughout the process, we watch students grow in confidence and self-esteem as they become blooming actors on the stage."

FAOPA is currently working on the camps they will be offering this summer to the community.

"We will offer musical theater camps and day camps," Sanchez said. "Our musical theater camps are two weeks long. Day camps are one week long. We have our middle school/high school groups that meet in the afternoon/evening."

The cost for musical theater camp is $295 plus a service fee. Day camps are from 9 a.m.-1 p.m. for half day and from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. for whole day. Day camp is for kindergartners through age 10, and the cost is $230 plus service fee.

"Parents love our musical theater camps," Sanchez said. "They love watching where their student starts and end up as well as seeing the difference. They love to watch their children grow in self-esteem and find the confidence to stand on the stage with their peers in the show. ."

If you would like to learn more about FAOPA and the camps it will be offering this summer, you can visit its website at www.faopa.org/ or call 813-490-ARTS (2787). FAOPA is located at 402 Oakfield Dr. in Brandon.

TEN WEEKS OF FUN AWAIT FAMILIES AT TAMPA YMCA SUMMER CAMPS

By Olivia Clark



Summer will arrive soon, and the Tampa Metropolitan Area YMCA is getting ready for another season of adventure, learning, and friendship. Registration is now open for Summer Camp at Campo Family YMCA, Spurlino Family YMCA, and North Brandon Family YMCA. Campers ages 6-15 can enjoy 10 weeks of fun activities in a safe and organized setting.

Each location offers a unique mix of Signature Camp and specialty options. Signature Camp allows kids to rotate through activities such as swimming, STEM projects, arts and crafts, outdoor education, and team-building games. Counselors support campers throughout daily activities designed to build confidence, promote friendships, and keep campers active during the summer.

Campo Family YMCA in Valrico features specialty camps that include sports, creative arts, and teen leadership programs. Spurlino Family YMCA in Riverview offers many athletic and enrichment camps, along with popular options for teens. North Brandon Family YMCA in Seffner provides sports, drama, gymnastics, and adaptive camps, ensuring families can find a program that fits their child's interests and abilities.

Teens have new opportunities this year, with three unique experiences tailored for ages 13-15. Programs focused on leadership, such as Junior Lifeguard Camp and Counselor in Training, help participants build responsibility, communication skills, and hands-on experience that lasts beyond summer. The Junior Teen Camp program introduces participants to outdoor exploration, basic archery, scenic trails, and lake adventures while fostering confidence and creativity.

Families can enhance the regular 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. camp day with optional add-ons, which vary by location. These may include swim lessons, open swim, sports, high ropes, horseback riding, and gymnastics. During registration, families can choose available add-ons specific to their YMCA. A nonrefundable deposit of $10 per week, per camper is due at registration, with separate deposits for specific teen leadership programs.

Tampa YMCA camps are ACA-accredited, which means they have gone through a thorough review by the American Camp Association focusing on health, safety, and program quality standards. This distinction places Tampa YMCA camps among a select group of accredited day camps in Florida.

Registration is available online at the website www.tampaymca.org, where families can view session weeks and age group details. Sessions fill up quickly.



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CIRCLE F DUDE RANCH CELEBRATES 75 YEARS OF ADVENTURE AND TRADITION

By Kelly Wise Valdes



Circle F Dude Ranch Camp is excited to celebrate its 75th year, marking a milestone for the Lake Wales camp that has welcomed generations of young people. Camp Director Benjamin Moss said the camp's longevity comes from staying true to its mission while adapting to the needs of each new generation.

"Circle F has remained special because it has always stayed true to its purpose — helping young people grow in confidence, character, and independence — while thoughtfully evolving with each generation," Moss said. "Since 1952, families have trusted us to provide a place where kids can unplug, build real friendships and discover who they are beyond screens and schedules."

During the summer, Circle F welcomes about 200 campers per session, evenly split between boys and girls. Campers spend their days immersed in activities such as horseback riding, waterfront programs, arts, team and individual sports, ax throwing, paintball, boating and climbing towers.

The camp sits on 500 acres of southern live oak forest surrounding a spring-fed private lake, creating a scenic backdrop for exploration and adventure.

Many of Circle F's traditions have remained unchanged, Moss said, including opening and closing campfires, cabin living, horseback riding and more. "Those moments connect today's campers with generations who sat around the same fire before them," he said.

Moss said climbing, adventure sports, leadership pathways and more intentional skill development have helped shape the modern Circle F. "The balance between tradition and innovation is what defines modern Circle F, honoring our roots while preparing campers for the world ahead," he said.

Circle F will host an open house in May to give families a firsthand look at camp life. Moss said visitors can expect tours, staff introductions and opportunities to explore activity areas. "Visitors will tour cabins and activity areas, meet our leadership team and staff, see programs in action, and get a real sense of daily life at Circle F."

For more information, visit the website at www.CircleFDudeRanchCamp.com or call 863-676-4113.

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PAGE 28

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CAMP CRISTINA OFFERS ADVENTURE & LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT ALL SUMMER

By Olivia Clark





At Camp Cristina in Riverview, the summer is set for exploration, skill enhancement and outdoor fun. Registrations are now open for the camp's 10-week summer program designed to offer hands-on and natural confidence-inspiring experience.

Signature Camp at Camp Cristina features a rotating line-up of activities for children that take place all day long and include swimming, STEM projects, arts and crafts, outdoor education and team-building games. Campers are closely monitored and grouped according to age, with counselors providing guidance in a structured environment where children can remain physically active and mentally stimulated.

Camp Cristina has a variety of specialty camps for older campers with particular interests. In Horse Camp, participants learn the basics of grooming, go on trail rides, and gain confidence working with horses. Swim Camp focuses on water safety and swim instruction with certified staff to help campers build skills in and around the water. Lifeguard Camp offers aquatics leadership skills, teamwork, and hands-on training that generates responsibility and prepares young adults for future certification opportunities.

Campers can also take part in Adventure Camp, which includes activities like archery, exploring the lake, and team challenges that promote cooperation and problem-solving. The Counselors in Training and Junior Lifeguards programs offer leadership skills, communication skills, and hands-on training in a nurturing environment focusing on growth and responsibility.

Thus, families can add on to the traditional camp day, which runs from Monday to Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., with weekly add-ons such as swim lessons, gymnastics and extended care. Add-ons vary according to the age group and availability and can be chosen during registration. There is a nonrefundable deposit at registration and a separate deposit for select teen leadership programs.

Camp Cristina is one of the Tampa YMCA's ACA-accredited camps, which is reflected in the national standards for safety, staff training, and program quality. This places the camp among the few day camps in Florida, meeting the standards set by the American Camp Association.

For further information or to register, go online to https://www.tampaymca.org/letscamp or the Tampa YMCA registration portal. Families are advised to register their children at the earliest opportunity to avoid missing out on available sessions.

ULTIMATE SUMMER WITH BUSCH GARDENS TAMPA BAY CAMPS

Staff Report



Your search for summer plans is over. Families looking ahead to summer camp 2026 will find a wide range of engaging, educational and adventure-filled options at Busch Gardens Tampa Bay, where camps are designed for animal lovers, thrill seekers and curious minds of all ages.

Busch Gardens summer camps offer children and teens the chance to unplug and connect with animals, nature and one another in a dynamic, hands-on environment. Campers explore wildlife, learn about conservation and animal care, enjoy thrilling rides and shows, and build friendships that often last long after summer ends. These experiences are not only fun, but also meaningful, helping campers grow in confidence, curiosity and teamwork.

Busch Gardens' summer programs are led by carefully selected, highly trained professionals who know how to balance education with excitement. The park offers a variety of educational summer day camps for students from kindergarten through 12th grade, with sessions tailored to different age groups and interests. Campers enjoy close-up animal encounters, behind-the-scenes experiences, themed games and crafts, age-appropriate rides, live shows, and interactive learning activities. Each camper also receives souvenir keepsakes, including a camp T-shirt and water bottle, along with opportunities to return to the park after camp hours.

For older students seeking a deeper adventure, overnight resident camps provide a one-of-a-kind sleepaway experience. Based in a secure on-site lodge, these all-inclusive camps immerse rising seventh through 12th graders in a blend of wildlife education and adrenaline-pumping attractions. Campers gain exclusive access to animal care areas, interact with park professionals, and experience the park in ways not available to regular guests.

Busch Gardens camps are accredited by the American Camping Association, offering parents added confidence in program quality, safety and staff training. Priority access to attractions, enriching educational content and unforgettable behind-the-scenes moments consistently place these camps among the top summer programs in the region.

With options ranging from early elementary students to teens—and even specialized programs for those exploring future careers—Busch Gardens Tampa Bay continues to be a standout destination for summer camp 2026 registration opportunities. Register at www. buschgardens.com.



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**Limited capacity, a waitlist is expected!*

In order to continue to make our programs affordable and accessible for families, High 5 proudly accepts school readiness!

OFF-SITE CAMPUS | 7AM - 6PM

Bevis Elementary School - 5720 Osprey Ridge Dr, Lithia, FL 33547

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**Pools and field trips NOT included at the offsite location*

SUMMER FUN INCLUDES:

- POOLS/DIVING BOARDS (MAIN CAMPUS)
- ON-SITE FIELD TRIPS (MAIN CAMPUS)
- GAMERS GROTTO
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- INDOOR GAMES
- ARTS & CRAFTS
- PLAYGROUND
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HIGH 5, INC.
CAMP HIGH 5



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& ACTIVITY GUIDE

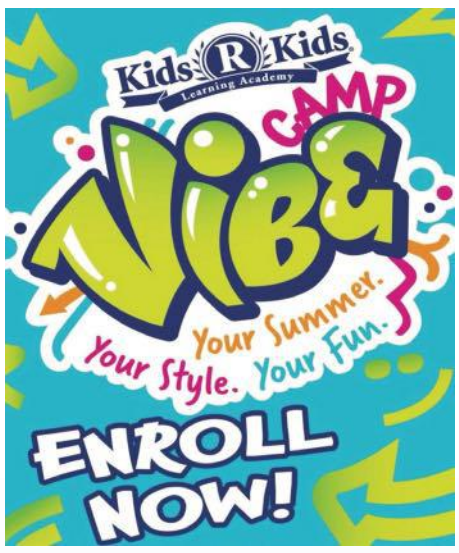


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KIDS 'R' KIDS LAUNCHES CAMP VIBE, BLENDING EDUCATION AND FUN

Staff Report



Families across the greater Tampa area are gearing up for summer, and one local program is already drawing attention with a blend of fun, learning and adventure. Camp VIBE at Kids 'R' Kids Learning Academies is now enrolling, offering children a dynamic camp experience designed to inspire creativity, teamwork and personal growth.

Each week of Camp VIBE introduces a new theme, giving campers fresh opportunities to explore different interests through hands-on activities, interactive lessons and engaging field trips. From creative projects to team-building exercises, the program is structured to keep children excited while helping them discover new passions and build confidence.

Organizers say the goal is simple: create an environment where learning feels like an adventure. Campers are encouraged to think big, try new things and develop friendships along the way. With a balance of structured programming and playful exploration, the camp aims to deliver an experience that children will remember long after summer ends.

The program is part of Kids 'R' Kids Learning Academies, which serves families in Valrico, Brandon and the surrounding Tampa communities. The Circa Fishhawk location in Lithia offers a secure, technology-enhanced environment with trained educators, live-stream classroom access and controlled entry systems, providing peace of mind for parents.

Beyond summer camp, Kids 'R' Kids offers accredited programs for children ranging from infants to age 12, including preschool and before- and after-school care. The school emphasizes a well-rounded approach to education, focusing on physical, emotional, social and intellectual development through play and structured learning.

As a family-owned and operated organization, the academy encourages strong parent involvement and prioritizes the individual needs of each child.

With spots expected to fill quickly, families are encouraged to schedule a tour and learn more about what Camp VIBE has to offer.

Kids 'R' Kids Circa FishHawk is located at 5815 Kids Crossing Dr. in Lithia. Call 813-654-7000. Hours of Operation: 6:30 a.m.-6 p.m. Visit the website at www.kidsrkids.com/circa-fishhawk.

DISCOVER CREATIVITY AT OVERFLOW FINE ARTS CAMPS

Staff Report

This summer, families in the Valrico area can explore a unique arts experience designed to inspire creativity and confidence in kids. Overflow Fine Arts offers engaging summer camps where students are encouraged to discover and develop their talents in a safe, welcoming environment. With a strong focus on belonging, every child is given the opportunity to grow artistically while building friendships and social skills.

Camps are offered in flexible sessions from 9am–1pm or 2pm–6pm, making it easy for families to find a schedule that works. With a low teacher-to-student ratio of 1:10, campers receive personalized attention and guidance throughout their experience. Pricing ranges from $225 to $275 depending on the camp selected, and families can take advantage of early bird discounts available through May 1st.

A Fun, Faith-Filled Approach to the Arts

Overflow Fine Arts blends creativity with purpose through its Fine Arts and Fun Arts programs. Campers will sing, act, dance, and create art while learning teamwork, focus, and confidence. Rooted in a mission to help students discover their God-given gifts, the program emphasizes growth through encouragement and hands-on learning.

Snacks are included daily, and campers are asked to bring their own lunch. Clothing recommendations will be shared with families ahead of time to ensure students are comfortable and prepared for all activities.

Building Confidence, Community, and Talent

More than just an arts camp, Overflow Fine Arts creates an environment where kids feel safe, valued, and inspired. Whether your child is experienced or just beginning to explore their creativity, this program offers a supportive space to try new things and build lasting skills.

For more information or to register, families can visit www.overflowfinearts.com or call 813-777-3808.

Stay connected on social media at @overflowfinearts for updates and highlights throughout the summer.

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SUMMER CAMPS 2026









PAGE 30

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CEDARKIRK, CIRCLE F DUDE, PATEL, MATHNASIUM AND MORE....

Compiled By Jenny Bennett

Cedarkirk Camp & Conference Center

Cedarkirk Camp & Conference Center, located on 170 acres of woodlands, wetlands and uplands near the Alafia River, will have summer overnight and day camps starting on Sunday, June 7, and finishing on Friday, July 31. Campers can sign up for a week or the whole summer. Day camp is available for campers who have completed kindergarten up to those who have completed fifth grade and is priced at $230 per week. Day campers must bring their own lunch. Overnight camp is available for campers who have completed first through 12th grade and starts at $555. Cedarkirk is located at 1920 Streetman Dr. in Lithia and can be reached at 813-685-4224. For more information and to register, visit www.cedarkirk.org.

Circle F Dude Ranch

Circle F Dude Ranch, located in Lake Wales, welcomes boys and girls from all over the United States and the world for one to three-week sleepaway camp sessions. Kids range in age from 6-16. Circle F fosters grit, growth and a love for the outdoors. With the perfect blend of Western flair and classic camp fun, it gives kids the kind of summer they'll never forget. Visit Circle F Dude Ranch for an open house on May 9, from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. meet the leadership team, try activities and learn about summers on the ranch, RSVP at admin.gazeboevents.com. For more and to sign up, visit www.circlefduderanchcamp.com.

Mathnasium

Summer is the perfect time for kids to grow in confidence and strengthen math skills without pressure. At Mathnasium, summer learning accelerates with personalized plans designed for every stage — from building foundations to tackling advanced challenges. Students receive targeted support, stay sharp or move ahead while enjoying engaging, flexible sessions that fit busy summer schedules. Parents often see gains not just in skills but also in confidence and attitude. This summer, help your child return to school prepared, motivated and excited about math. To find a location near you, please visit www.mathnasium.com.

The Patel Conservatory

The Straz Center's Patel Conservatory offers arts education courses and programs in dance, theater and music, with 100-plus camps and classes available. Students are instructed by passionate, working artists with a taste array of professional performance experience and exemplary curriculum vitae. Running from Monday, June 1, to Friday, July 31, full and half-day camps are available weekly for ages 4-18. The cost varies depending on the camp; financial aid and scholarships are available. Visit the website at www.patelconservatory.org or call 813-222-1040. Open House scheduled for Thurs,, May 14, from 5-6 p.m.

Busch Gardens

For more than 25 years, Busch Gardens Tampa Bay has provided children with inspiring, exciting and educational experiences through some of the best Tampa summer camp options. There are a wide variety of summer day camp options to fit your child's grade level and interests. One of the reasons to choose Busch Gardens as your summer camp include it being accredited by the American Camping Association, meaning parents can trust that the camp meets high standards for safety, staff training and program quality. Also, campers get to enjoy the adrenaline rush of rides as well as the unique opportunity to meet animals up close. Beyond the fun, campers experience activities that are both enriching and educational, providing a well-rounded experience.

For information, visit the park website at www.buschgardens.com.

Jam Room Music

Jam Room Music is a new concept in music stores, combining retail and lounge areas with space to jam. It knows the unique joy that occurs when musicians create music together and believes everyone should have that experience. Its goal is to build up the local music community by providing everything musicians of all skill levels need and creating a welcoming environment to spend time around music. Jam Room Music is offering half-day summer camps from Monday, June 8, through Friday, July 10, at its Valrico location at 1040 Bloomingdale Ave. Visit www.jamroommusic.com or call 813-709-7822 for information.



& ACTIVITY GUIDE

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ROCK SCHOOL, HORSE CAMP, BUSCH GARDENS, SKILLS & MORE...

Compiled By Jenny Bennett

Camp Mirage Brandon

Camp Mirage Brandon is an activity-based summer camp built around movement, creativity and hands-on fun. Its promise is simple — campers will go home tired, a little dirty, smiling and excited to come back the next day. It offers half-day camps for grades K and up, running from 9 a.m.-12 Noon, with before and after-care available from 7:30 a.m.- 5:30 p.m. Weekly tuition ranges from $125-$185 depending on age group, a membership discount program is available which provides 10 percent off tuition and a reduced rate for before and after care. Camp Mirage Bramdpm is located at 2913 John Moore Rd. in Brandon. Visit www.campmiragebrandon.com or call 813-825-2234.

Fellowship Church

Fellowship Church, located at 15326 FishHawk Blvd., in Lithia will be holding a weekly sports summer camp from Monday, June 1, through Thursday, July 23. Camp will be Mondays through Thursdays from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. and will cost $150, with a sibling discount available. Campers must bring drinks and a snack, as well as wear sports attire; a camp shirt will be provided. Visit its website at www.fellowship.church or call 813-655-7431.

Music Showcase And The Florida Academy Of Performing Arts

Music Showcase and the Florida Academy of Performing Arts (FAOPA) will host their annual summer camp this summer starting on Monday, June 1. Campers will be immersed in acting, singing, dancing and more throughout the summer. In Musical Theater Camp, campers will learn about working collaboratively, the art of stage character, voice projection, props and working with a set, with productions for all ages and skill levels. FAOPA's day camp will include activities to explore instruments, acting, singing and art, with themed weeks like Harry Potter, Wicked, superheroes and more. Free early drop-off, free late pickup, scholarships and sibling discounts. Music Showcase is located at 402 Oakfield Dr. in Brandon. Visit www.faopa.org.

Skill Samurai

Skill Samurai's STEM Camps give students hands-on experience with today's most exciting technologies. Campers explore Minecraft and Roblox through creative game design, learn responsible content creation in YouTube Studio and discover the fundamentals of artificial intelligence. Designed for curious minds, these camps build problem-solving, creativity and confidence in a fun, supportive environment. Perfect for beginners and experienced students alike, Skill Samurai helps children turn interest in technology into real-world skills that last a lifetime locally. Visit www.skillsamurai.com/fl-brandon/camps or call 813-761-2832

TLC's Gypsy Haven Riding Camps

Come and learn about horse riding and grooming at TLC's Gypsy Haven's summer camp, which offers hands-on experience and education. Camps run from Tuesday-Thursday from 9a.m. - 2p.m. from Tuesday, June 2, through Thursday, June 25, and Tuesday, July 7, through Thursday, July 30. Group lessons are also available on Fridays and Saturdays. Visit the website at www.tlcsfarms.com or call Tammi on 813-842-4236 for information. TLC's Gypsy Haven is located at 4325 Keysville Rd. in Lithia.

School of Rock Valrico

Let your budding musicians join School of Rock this summer for a variety of music-themed camps, including Taylor Swift and Classic Rock Rewind. There are different themes for different age groups, with camps suitable for ages 7-18. Camps are available for full or half days, with the earliest available drop-off being at 8:45 a.m.

School of Rock is located at 3244 Lithia Pinecrest Rd., #104, in Valrico. Visit www.schoolofrock.com/locations/valrico or call 813-397-8828.









SUMMER CAMPS 2026







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PAGE 32

YMCA, CODE WIZ, AR WORKSHOP, VIBE CAMP, HIGH 5 INC. & MORE

Compiled By Jenny Bennett

High 5 Inc.

Brandon's High 5 Inc. is inviting students to embark on an exciting and adventurous journey where your child will experience the thrill of summer camp. Daily activities will include pool time, outdoor play, field games, arts and crafts and more, including field trips.

Camp is offered Monday through Friday from 7 a.m.-6 p.m. at High 5 Inc., located at 405 Beverly Blvd. in Brandon. Campers can sign up for individual weeks or throughout the entire summer. Visit www.high5inc.org or call 813-689-0908.



YMCA Summer Camp

With over 25 different summer camp options throughout the Tampa YMCA area, there's something for every camper to enjoy. From art and gymnastics to zip-lining and splashing in its pools, the Y is the ultimate summer destination with friends, fun and adventure. Summer camps start on Monday, June 2, and run all summer. Register at www.tampaymca.org/letscamp.

Code Wiz

Code Wiz, located at 16132 Churchview Dr., Ste. 105, in Lithia, teaches coding and robotics to children, its camps are hands-on, student-driven and designed to foster curiosity and independence. Campers are encouraged to explore, problem-solve and create at their own pace, with guidance from coaches to support their individual learning journeys. Camps will run throughout the summer and are available for mornings, afternoons or full days. Visit www. codewiz.com/fishhawk-fl.

Kids 'R' Kids

Looking for a summer camp that combines fun, education, and adventure? Look no further! Kids 'R' Kids Learning Academies has created the perfect summer escape for kids to learn, grow and explore in a safe and exciting environment. Camp VIBE involves a new theme designed to empower campers through amusing activities, fascinating field trips, timely lessons in teamwork and so much more. Campers will have their eyes opened to limitless possibilities and their minds focused to ignite their passions. Let them catch the VIBE of summer! Kids 'R' Kids is located at 5815 Kids Crossing Dr. in Lithia. www.kidsrkids.com/circa-fishhawk/programs/summer-camp.

AR Workshop

AR Workshop is a craft studio offering hands-on classes for campers ages 5-17. The hands-on classes are designed to inspire creativity, confidence and fun in a supportive studio environment. Both full and half-day camps are available at its location in Valrico at 1046 Bloomingdale Ave. Visit its website at www.arworkshop.com/brandon for more information and to register.

Center For Dance Arts

The Center For Dance Arts offers dance instruction in various genres, from beginner to advanced levels, for students ages 2-18. It is also the home of an award-winning competition team. It will be offering summer camp; visit its website at www.mycfda.com or call 813-657-1500 for more information and to register. The Center For Dance Arts is located at 929 E. Brandon Blvd. in Brandon.

Easterseals School For Limitless Learning — Inclusive Summer Camp For Neurodiverse Learners

Get ready for an exciting and inclusive adventure designed specifically for neurodiverse young learners and those with other disabilities in kindergarten through second grade. Packed with hands-on and interactive STEAM activities, it's a supportive space where every child can explore, grow and thrive. The Easterseals School for Limitless Learning is located at 2460 Bloomingdale Ave., Ste. 170, in Valrico, and the summer camp is available for six weeks from Monday, June 15, to Friday, July 24, with morning, afternoon and all-day sessions available. Visit its website at https://florida.easterseals.com/get-support/areas-of-support/early-childhood-care/easterseals-school-for-limitless-learning.

CAMP WEEKS:

YOUTH SPORTS $200 (6TH–12TH)	JUNE 1ST-5TH 9AM-1PM
FUN ARTS CAMP $275, (K–5TH)	JUNE 8TH - JUNE 12TH 9AM-3PM
SPORTS CAMP $200 (6TH–12TH)	JUNE 15TH-JUNE 19TH 9AM-1PM
OVERFLOW YOUTH THEATER $275, (6TH–12TH)	JUNE 22ND-JUNE 26TH 9AM-3PM
DANCE CAMP $200, K–5TH)	JUNE 22ND-JUNE 26TH 9AM-1PM
LEGO CAMP $200, (K–5TH)	JUNE 29TH- JULY 3RD 9AM-1PM
DANCE CAMP $200, (6TH–12TH)	JUNE 29TH - JULY 3RD 2PM-6PM
KID'S MUSICAL THEATER $275, (K–5TH)	JULY 6TH-JULY 10TH 9AM-3PM
ART CAMP $200, (K–5TH)	JULY 13TH– JULY 17TH 9AM-1PM

Overflow's

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LEARN MORE: overflowfinearts.com

SURVIVOR LEADS LOCAL EFFORT FOR BLOOD CANCER UNITED

Staff Report

For Riverview resident Craig Beckinger, life is measured in two chapters: before cancer and after. Now a survivor, Beckinger is turning his personal journey into purpose as he campaigns for Blood Cancer United's 2026 Visionary of the Year, raising critical funds to support local families battling blood cancers.



Beckinger is the founder and CEO of ABC Event Planning.

Beckinger, representing Tampa Bay and North Florida as an All-Star Visionary candidate, said his diagnosis reshaped everything.

"Priorities became clear. Time felt fragile. And survival became deeply personal," he shared. "Surviving didn't just give me a second chance — it gave me a responsibility to help others facing the same fight."

His campaign carries an added layer of meaning this year. Beckinger is dedicating his efforts to the memory of Jill Jofko, his 2023 campaign manager, who passed away from cancer on February 3. He described her as selfless and deeply committed to helping others, saying her legacy continues to inspire the work.

Through Blood Cancer United, funds raised stay within the local community, providing treatment assistance, transportation to chemotherapy, emergency financial support, support groups and patient resources, as well as funding for lifesaving research and advocacy.

In 2023, Beckinger's campaign raised more than $150,000 — a milestone he hopes to build upon this year with the help of community support and a series of upcoming fundraising events.

One of the highlights is the fifth annual 'Runway for a Cause' fashion show, scheduled for Saturday, April 25, from 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m. at Aloft Midtown, located at 3650 Midtown Dr. in Tampa. The event will feature spring and summer fashions provided by Dillard's, along with appearances by local personalities, including Babs and Meredith from Wild 94.1, Miss Tampa Halle Burton and Mrs. Universe USA Ambassador Amber Uhler. The brunch and silent auction fundraiser is expected to draw strong community participation.

Additional fundraising efforts include raffle opportunities, such as a $1,000 lottery board featuring scratch-off tickets and a Powerball drawing, as well as a premium 4.5-liter bottle of Jameson Irish whiskey imported from Dublin, Ireland. Winners will be announced during a Facebook Live drawing in mid-May.

The campaign will culminate with a grand finale event at the Motor Enclave, located at 6500 Motor Enclave Way in Tampa, on Friday, May 15, at 7 p.m.

"Every dollar represents hope for a family walking through one of the hardest seasons of their lives," he said.

Beckinger is the founder and CEO of ABC Event Planning. Contact him at 561-876-6845 or email cab92807@gmail.com.

TRAX FEDERAL CREDIT UNION EXPANDS SCHOLARSHIPS, LOANS & TOOLS

By Emma Snider



Trax Federal Credit Union has been a proud member of Central Florida for decades. From Scholarships and loans to credit services and financial education courses, Trax is a one-stop shop for your financial needs.

Trax Federal Credit Union offers many services for a variety of financial needs. To begin, Trax offers three different scholarships for their customers. Any Trax member, from high school seniors to college and trade school students, is eligible to apply for one of its three scholarships. The Trade/Vocational Scholarship offered by Trax aims to provide its recipients with $500 to further their education. The Trax Academic Scholarship provides a sum of $1,000 to incoming and collegiate-level recipients. Finally, the Giorgianni Legacy Scholarship, named after Trax Federal Credit Union's former CEO, Pete Giorgianni, for his contributions that shaped the current youth program, awards one outstanding recipient with $2,500. Trax aims to support its members in their professional developments through financial aid.

"We're proud to serve our members not just as a financial institution, but as a trusted partner on their financial journey" said Chelsea Smith, marketing manager at Trax Federal Credit Union. "Our focus is on giving members the tools and flexibility they need to move forward at every stage of life, with products designed around their needs."

In addition to Trax Federal Credit Union scholarships, Trax offers a wide range of loans to its members, including student loans, credit builders, auto loans, mortgages and HELOCs. With Trax's current HELOC campaign, lasting until Tuesday, June 30, members who get a HELOC will be eligible to receive rates as low as 3.99 percent APR for the first six months of their loan term. Also, with one of Trax Credit Union's unique credit cards, members can experience competitive rates and no annual fees.

With Trax Federal Credit Union's introduction of its SavvyMoney credit service, members can monitor their credit report daily, set goals, track progress towards credit goals and receive personalized loan offers based on their credit score right from the mobile app. Additionally, Trax members have access to the free digital financial education courses, which cover topics such as saving for a big purchase, budgeting and retirement planning.

To learn more about Trax Federal Credit Union scholarships and services, visit www.traxcu.com.





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OSPREY OBSERVER SOUTHSHORE EDITION APRIL 2026 Vol. 1, Iss. 3

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Edited by: Jenny Bennett

EYE ON BUSINESS

To Submit Business News & Press Releases Mail Attn: Business Editor, 2109 Lithia Pinecrest Rd., Valrico, FL 33596
Fax 657-4469 | Email: jbennett@ospreyobserver.com
Deadline: 15th of each month.

Shadetree Apartments Is More Than A Place To Live — It's A Place To Belong

From the moment you arrive, you'll feel the sense of community that sets Shadetree Apartments in Ruskin apart. Residents enjoy fun and engaging events, on-site food trucks, and thoughtful experiences that make Shadetree a place people are proud to call home for the long term. At Shadetree, you'll find a perfect balance of peace, comfort and connection. Every space is designed to help you slow down, recharge and truly feel at home. It's proudly pet-friendly; with two spacious dog parks, dog water fountains, outdoor pet washing stations and plenty of room to run and play, your four-legged family members are just as welcome here as you are. Whether your lifestyle is active, laid-back, social or somewhere in between, Shadetree Apartments fits your rhythm. Schedule a tour at www.shadetree.apartments, meet its friendly team and experience firsthand why life at Shadetree isn't just lived — it's enjoyed.

CoastalVerify Launches as Rebrand and Expansion Of Keeler Notary And Fingerprinting

Veteran entrepreneur Diana Keeler has launched CoastalVerify, a verification services company serving the Tampa Bay region. The business is a rebrand and expansion of Keeler Notary & Fingerprinting, now offering identity verification, LiveScan fingerprinting and property intelligence services.

CoastalVerify provides secure identity checks and electronic fingerprinting for employment screening, licensing and regulated background checks, helping organizations streamline compliance with state and federal requirements. The company also introduces Property Risk Snapshots, a field-based service for remote property owners, investors, HOAs and managers. Reports document property conditions, occupancy indicators and risk factors to help monitor assets remotely. Keeler brings over 30 years of federal experience in risk analysis, compliance and investigative oversight.



For more information about CoastalVerify and its services, email diana@coastalverify.com.

The Derby: A Fundraising Event Benefiting ECHO

Join us on Saturday, May 2, at the Hillsborough County Fairgrounds for The Derby, an elegant and entertaining evening in support of ECHO and its mission to assist families in crisis.

Guests will enjoy classic mint juleps and a silent auction featuring a variety of exciting items. Attendees can also experience the refined atmosphere of Mi Casa Cigars and take part in a Best Hat Contest, with prizes awarded for standout derby styles.

All proceeds from the event will directly support ECHO's life-stabilizing programs, helping provide essential resources and hope to local families in need.

Dress in your finest derby attire and be part of an unforgettable night of community, generosity and celebration.

Register at https://host.nxt.blackbaud.com/registration-form/?formId=076c-3d4a-096f-4c61-91ca-fe4f503076dc&envId=p-R_SIAr_08kaEfm_tZ_laVw&zone=usa.

Hand & Stone Massage And Facial Spa Grand Reopening

Hand & Stone Massage and Facial Spa recently celebrated its grand reopening with a ribbon cutting from the Valrico FishHawk Chamber of Commerce. Hand & Stone is your escape button in the middle of real life. The moment you walk in, everything slows down. The lighting is soft, the air smells clean and calming and the front desk greets you like it's been expecting you. It feels upscale without being intimidating — luxury that's actually approachable.

What makes the Bloomingdale location stand out isn't just the menu — it has a membership model. Clients can join a monthly membership program that makes it affordable to come regularly because it isn't meant to be a once-a-year luxury; it's routine self-care.

Hand & Stone Massage and Facial Spa is located at 855 E. Bloomingdale's Ave., Ste. A, in Brandon. Visit its website at www.handandstonebloomingdale.com to see the full range of services available.

Southern Construction

Southern Construction, based in Valrico, is a full-service general contracting company dedicated to delivering quality craftsmanship and turnkey solutions across residential and commercial projects. With a team of licensed professionals and decades of combined experience, it specializes in custom home construction, road and infrastructure development, remodeling and full-scale restoration services.

Whether building your dream home, modernizing your space or responding to unexpected damage, it brings precision, efficiency and care to every project. Its restoration experts are certified in water, fire, mold and trauma cleanup, ensuring properties are restored safely and quickly to their preloss condition. From concept to completion, it manages every detail — permits, design, construction and inspections — so clients can focus on what matters most. Its reputation is built on integrity, reliability and results that stand the test of time.

Visit its website at www.southernconstruction.net for additional information.







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STRAIGHT FROM THE SHORE

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SHAWNA'S MONTHLY MARKET UPDATE

Tax Day is behind us, spring is in full swing and Apollo Beach buyers are on the move!
April historically brings the highest buyer activity of the year across the SouthShore, and 2026 is proving it. Inventory is up, prices are stable, and deals are getting done. Your timing could not be better. Let's make a move!

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Beds: 5 Baths: 4/1



5720 TORTOISE PL, APOLLO BEACH, FL 33572

List Price: $879,900 SOLD

Beds: 3 Baths: 3/0



830 MANNS HARBOR DR, APOLLO BEACH, FL 33572

List Price: $1,250,000 SOLD

Beds: 4 Baths: 3/1



5720 TORTOISE PL, APOLLO BEACH, FL 33572

List Price: $1,349,000 ACTIVE

Beds: 4 Baths: 3/0



NEIGHBOR SPOTLIGHT

Jess and Chris just got their keys! First home in Apollo Beach, a whole lot of happy going on. This is exactly why I do what I do. Congratulations you two!

Chris & Jess | New homeowners, Apollo Beach
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