



St. Augustine Beaches NEWS JOURNAL

NEWS INFORMATION FOR & ABOUT ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH & ANASTASIA ISLAND



Photo: MEZ / ESM
floridaboardriders.com

Community First: The Rise of the St. Augustine Board Riders

by Zander Morton (FloridaBoardRiders.com)

Community first. That's the Florida Board Riders concept in a nutshell. Modeled after existing club culture in Australia and California, the Florida Board Riders provides a home for local surfers to unite as a collective. Beyond the jersey, the club is a vehicle for inner-club meetups, beach cleanups, movie nights, and—naturally—surf contests.

Utilizing a tag-team format, the Board Riders competition concept pits rival coastal communities against one another across seven divisions: 14 and under, 15-19, 20s, 30s, 40s, 50s and Women. While surfers compete directly within their age brackets, it's the collective, overall point tally that seals the victory.

"Surfing has grown so big, so fast, which is cool," says Dane Jefferys, founder of the Florida Board Riders. "But surfing has always been an individual sport. We needed to pump some fresh blood into the heart of the culture: the local surf communities."

Over the last decade, Florida's competitive surf scene had begun to fizzle. Between dwindling financial backing and the isolating screen-time of the social media age, the era of amateur and pro-am contests taking over local breaks around the state every weekend seemed dead.

The Florida Board Riders is working to reverse that tide. By revitalizing both competition and camaraderie, the club is successfully drawing some of the state's heaviest hitters back into the fold.

ST. AUGUSTINE BEACH AND BEYOND...

by Lorraine Thompson --staugbeachwatch@aol.com

As America celebrates the 250th Anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, the month of July will be packed with commemorative events and celebrations locally and throughout the country.

The City of St. Augustine, founded in 1565 by Pedro Menendez of Spain, was incorporated in 1821 after Florida was ceded to the United States. It is the oldest continuously occupied city in North America.

And although the City of St. Augustine Beach, incorporated in 1959, may be small landwise with a land area of 2.5 square miles, it, too, is ready to contribute to the celebration.

CELEBRATION EVENTS--

Flags In--Honor the nation's heroes on Thursday, July 2, at the St. Augustine National Cemetery, 104 Marine Street. This event, from 10 to 11 a.m., is hosted by the Maria Jefferson Chapter, Daughters and Sons of the American Revolution, VFW Post 2391, Honor Guard Riders, Scouting America, and the Veterans Council of St. Johns County. The public is welcome to place American flags on graves to show their respect for those who have served our country.

Fourth of July Fireworks—BE PREPARED!

The annual St. Augustine 4th of July celebration, "Fireworks Over the Matanzas" from 6 to 10 p.m. will offer challenges this year. The advice—get there early in the afternoon.

The event begins at 6 p.m. in the Plaza de la Constitución in downtown St. Augustine with a two-hour concert, featuring the All-Star Orchestra. Weather permitting, at 9 p.m., the sky lights up with a spectacular fireworks display over the historic bayfront and the Castillo de San Marcos. The concert is free and open to the public. It is suggested that concertgoers bring lawn chairs or blankets for seating. The fireworks are scheduled to begin at 9 p.m.

If you plan to drive, be sure to arrive early since parking will be part of the "fun." You may also use the free park and shuttle service that will be provided but that will require an early arrival. (continued on page 6)

"The Board Riders remind me of being a kid again," says Saint Augustine's Gabe Kling, a former WSL Championship Tour competitor and member of the Saint Augustine Board Riders team. "Growing up, I was starstruck by the talent across the state. Weekend comps were the ultimate measuring stick, and they're where I formed lifelong friendships with guys like CJ and Damien Hobgood."

Kling, alongside a solid crew including his son Kason, Benji Lange, Jonathan Wallhauser, Stephen Kaltenbach, Jody Davis, Shawn Arthur, Bethany Zelasko, and Callie Hertz, recently propelled the Saint Augustine Board Riders squad to a third-place finish at The Florida Cup in Jacksonville. That podium finish punched their ticket to the United States Board Riders National Championships at Lower Trestles in California.

While the Saint Augustine hometown team ultimately bowed out in the second round at Nationals last month, they put up a massive fight:

- Gabe Kling dropped a flawless, perfect 10-point ride.
- Benji Lange went excellent, nailing 9-point rides in back-to-back heats.
- Jody Davis and Bethany Zelasko both manufactured mid 8-point rides.

Though California's San Clemente ultimately claimed the national title on their home turf at Trestles, the gritty Saint Augustine squad undeniably

made their presence known, dropping massive scores alongside icons like Matt Archbold, Rob Machado, Shane Beschen, Ben Bourgeois, and Pat Gudauskas.

At the end of the day, it was never strictly about the result anyway. Sure, the competition matters—everyone wants to win. But regardless of the result, this tight-knit crew of scrappy surfers from small-town Saint Augustine is doing exactly what the club intended: putting the Oldest City firmly on the global surfing map. For more information see: FloridaBoardRiders.com



Photo: by Surf Station

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St. Augustine Beaches

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**“News Source for the City of
St. Augustine Beach”**

City of St. Augustine Beach



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City Manager Max Royle
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**Print Distribution Locations for
the Beaches News Journal**

- St. Augustine Beach City Hall
- Anastasia Library
- St. Johns County Pier Park
- YMCA
- Main Library
- Southeast Library

The purpose of the St. Augustine Beaches News Journal is to serve neighborhoods of St. Augustine Beach and other communities on Anastasia Island.

First priority will be given to reporting news and activities of the residents of St. Augustine Beach local communities, and other news and events that directly affects the St. Augustine Beaches areas. Second priority will be given to articles of general interest as space permits.

Information and ads should be received by the 15th of the month in order to appear in the following month's issue. Articles or information may be sent to the Beaches News Journal, 2465 US1 South PMB #8, St. Augustine Florida 32086. Information may also be e-mailed to clifflogsdon@att.net or clogsdon1@yahoo.com.

All materials submitted to the Beaches News Journal is subject to editing. Publishing of submitted information is at the discretion of the publisher. Views and opinions expressed are those of the writer and do not express the viewpoint of the publisher or editorial staff of the Beaches News Journal.

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St. Augustine Beach City Hall Update

The City Commission held its regular meeting on Tuesday, June 9, 2026, and did the following:

1. Approved a proclamation to declare Saturday, July 18, 2026, as America 250th Liberty Tree Day to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States.

2. Heard a report from Ms. Kelly Wilson, Deputy Director of the County's Department of Emergency Management, about preparations for the 2026 hurricane season, which began on June 1st.

3. Approved a conditional use permit to construct a residence in a commercial land use district at 610 A1A Beach Boulevard (the northeast corner of 5th Street and the Boulevard).

4. Approved two resolutions: the first to declare three police vehicles as surplus and to authorize their sale; the second to update the fee schedule for various permits concerning building, planning and zoning.

5. Approved a budget resolution to transfer money from road impact fees to pay for a plan to construct 4th Street between A1A Beach Boulevard and 2nd Avenue.

6. Engaged a Senior Advisor from the Florida County/City Management Association to begin the search for a new city manager.

7. Discussed regulations for electric mobility devices, such as e-bicycles and e-scooters. The City Attorney will prepare an ordinance for the Commission's July 13th meeting.

8. Reviewed a proposal to extend the contract for legal services with the



Douglas Law Firm. The contract will be on the agenda for the Commission's July 13th meeting.

9. Reviewed the proposal to prohibit the smoking and vaping of tobacco products on the City's beach and in City parks. The City Attorney will prepare an ordinance for the Commission's July 13th meeting.

10. Discussed with the Finance Director the effect on the City's budget of the proposed Florida constitutional amendment to increase the homestead exemption to \$150,000 in 2028 and \$500,000 in 2029, the options for medical insurance plans for City employees, when to hold meetings with individual Commissioners to review the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget, and to schedule a special meeting on Monday, July 27th, at 5:00 p.m., to set the tentative property tax millage for FY 27.

The City Commission will hold its next regular meeting on Monday, July 13, 2026, starting at 6:00 p.m. in the Commission meeting room at City Hall, 2200 A1A South. The public is invited to attend or may view the meeting on YouTube on the City's website, staugbch.com.

Notice from the City of St. Augustine Beach

By Max Royle, City Manager

Attention Owners of Property Bordering St. Augustine Beach. If you are thinking of a major remodeling of your property, changing its land use from residential to commercial or vice versa, or tearing down an existing building to construct a new one, the City of St. Augustine Beach can provide timely and efficient review and permitting services. The only condition is that the property will need to be annexed into the City. Persons with questions may direct them to Max Royle, City Manager, at mroyle@cityofsab.org, or telephone (904) 471-2122.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Debra Pattinson the undersigned, desires to engage in DBA business under the name of "Snootzinnpups" and registered with the Florida Department of State, Tallahassee, FL. The party will commence practice in St. John's County FL at 636 Tintamarre Drive, St. Augustine FL 32092. By: Debra Pattinson.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Kellie O'Gorman the undersigned, desires to engage in DBA business under the name of "Guiltless Glaze" (cottage food business) and registered with the Florida Department of State, Tallahassee, FL. The party will commence practice in St. Augustine, St. Johns County FL at 3445 DOT Road, St. Augustine FL 32084. By: Kellie O'Gorman

City of St. Augustine Beach July 13, 2026 Commission Meeting Agenda

The St. Augustine Beach City Commission's July regular meeting will be held on July 13, 2026, the second Monday in July, starting a 6:00 p.m. in the Commission meeting room at City Hall, 2200 A1A South. Topics on the agenda may include:

1. Report concerning mosquito control in St. Augustine Beach by Dr. Whitney Qualls, Assistant Director of the Anastasia Mosquito Control District.

2. An ordinance for first reading to regulate the operation of electric mobility devices in the City.

3. An ordinance for first reading to regulate vaping and the smoking of tobacco products on public property in the City.

4. Consideration of extending the agreement for City Attorney services with the Douglas Law Firm.

5. Request by the St. Augustine Beach Civic Association to renew the lease of the City's former police garage.

6. Review of new state requirements concerning the setting of the property tax millage for Fiscal Year 2027.

The public is invited to attend the meeting at City Hall, 2200 A1A South, or to view it on YouTube at staugbch.com.

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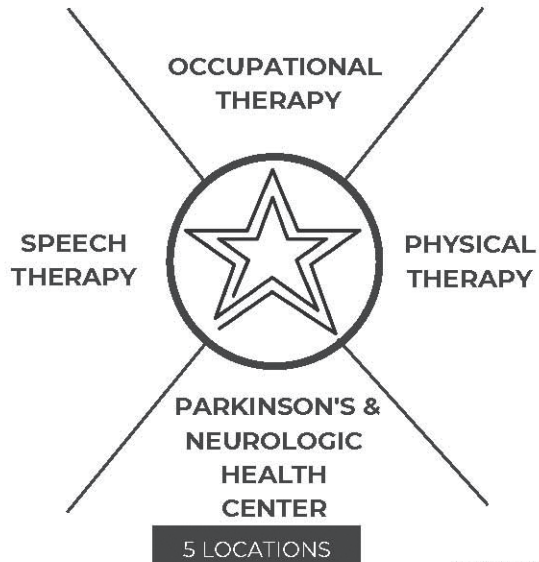
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Retreat

By Max Royle
St. Augustine Beach City Manager



Oh, gosh, and shiver me timbers, which is an expression I remember from a long-ago movie about pirates. Did a real-life Blackbeard-style pirate ever say, “shiver me timbers”? Hard to know, as I’ve never been a pirate. I’ll have to check the pirate channel on YouTube. Blackbeard must have his own channel as YouTube seems to have a channel/influencer for everything under (and over) the sun. Hold on, my patient readers will say, what’s the point of all this verbal nonsense, Mr. City Manager? Isn’t it time you stopped tormenting us with your blathering palaver?

In obedience to your question: The reason for my diatribe here, though I’m not aware of any tribe named Dia... Yikes! Here I go again, nonsensically verbalizing. I simply must get a grip and corral these dis-rupting thoughts. Dis-rupting is when you combine disrupting with interrupting. What? Get back on track, you say? OK, will do.

I am shivering me timbers over a recent newspaper article about the city manager of a mid-sized, Tampa Bay municipality who resigned because of a staff retreat that, though likely well-intentioned, figuratively blew up in his face. If I were a taxpaying resident of that city, I might have also figuratively blown up at the retreat’s \$40,000 cost and that it was held at a hotel miles away in Orlando. Apparently, there were no hotels closer to home, like in Tampa, St. Petersburg or Clearwater. If I were a member of the Tampa Bay Visitors Bureau, I certainly would be surprised at the lack of hotels—ah, focus, Max, you’ll say, remember to focus your thoughts. OK, will do.

From details in the article, it appears that the retreat’s purpose was to improve the leadership skills of the city’s senior managers. However, some who attended became distraught and later complained that the company in charge prohibited them from using their cellphones, required them to be escorted to restrooms and subjected them to other coercive practices.

My purpose here is neither to critique what happened at the retreat, as I wasn’t there, nor to question having leadership classes for managers. But I do question why a retreat was the method selected for such training and why the \$40,000 price tag didn’t compel the now-departed city manager to exercise leadership by finding a meeting facility in a nearby city where the training could have been done at possibly lower cost.

Yes, I know, retreats are used in the private and public sectors to take employees from their customary workplaces and routines so that they can be exposed, presumably without distractions, to new ideas, new ways of doing their work. I must wonder, though, if management employees are away at a retreat, who then is at the office... well, managing?

While it would be fun to take you farther down this wonderland retreat rabbit hole, space limitations in this fine publication require me to focus, show leadership and retreat (advance?) to an ending, so I will:

Public Notice City of St. Augustine Beach

The St. Augustine Beach City Commission will hold its regular meeting on Monday, July 13, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the Commission meeting room at City Hall, 2200 A1A South. The public is invited to attend or may watch the meeting on YouTube at [staugbch.com](https://www.staugbch.com).

The Friends of the Anastasia Island Branch Library on Summer Events

by Mollie Meikle

Happy Summer and Happy Summer Reading! The Friends of the Anastasia Island Branch Library does not meet in June, July, or August, but we still keep busy over the summer.

Save the date for our next Collectors Corner pop-up sale: Saturday, July 11. This sale is smaller than our bi-annual sale, and features our specialty priced and hard to find books. All books are priced at \$4 and up. The Collectors Corner pop-up sale opens early for members, 9am -10am, with doors opening to the general public at 10am. The sale closes down at 4:15pm.

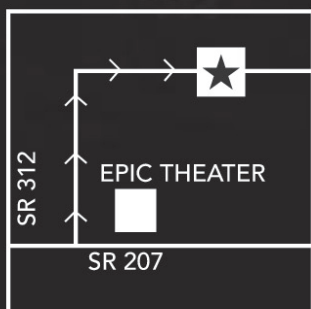
And with your calendar out, place another hold for our August Book Sale: Friday, August 28 and Saturday, August 29. Details to come! To sign up for our newsletter and email alerts, or to learn more about Friends of the Anastasia Island Branch Library, please email us at anastasiainlandfaibl@gmail.com.

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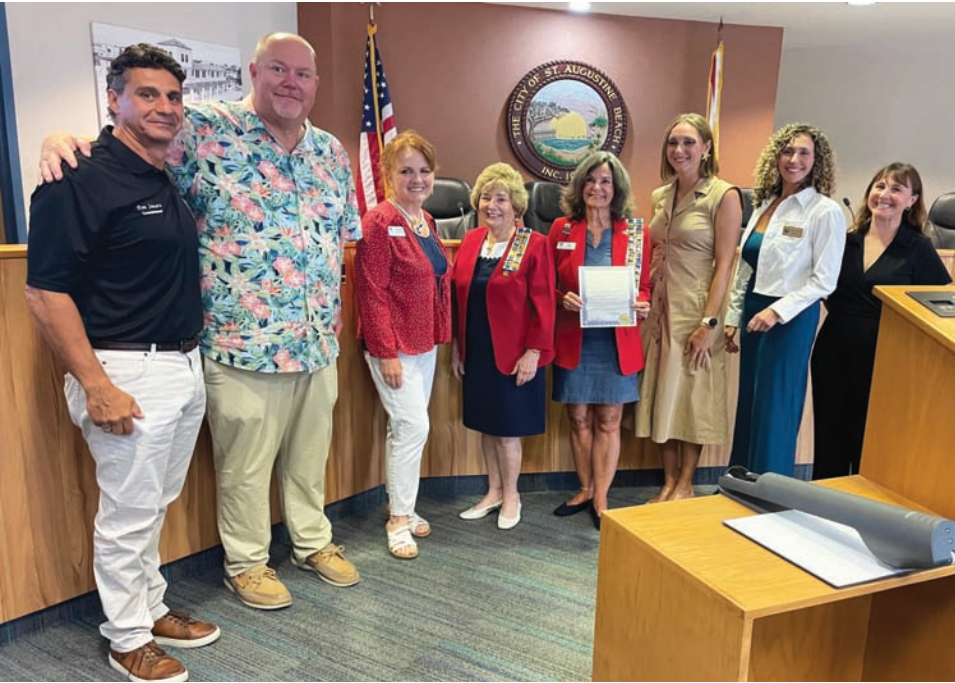
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St. Augustine Beaches

**NEWS
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To commemorate the 250th anniversary of the founding of the United States, the St. Augustine Beach City Commission at its June 9th meeting approved a proclamation to declare Saturday, July 18, 2026, as America 250th Liberty Tree Day. Shown left to right: Commissioners Don Samora and Dylan Rumrell; from the Daughters of the American Revolution Deborah Geanules, Diane Kaiser and Beth Pelzer; Mayor Beth Sweeny, Commissioner Undine George and Vice Mayor Virginia Morgan.

Recovery Meeting Space Available

The Silver Dollar 2 Club has meeting space available for 12-Step Recovery groups. Help us support the local community by hosting your meeting at our facility located at 2729 E Moody Blvd.

For availability and details, please contact silverdollariiclub@gmail.com or call 770-843-8779.

St. Augustine Genealogical Society

The St Augustine Genealogical Society holds it's monthly meeting the 2nd Saturday of each month in the Southeast Branch of the St Johns County Library. The SE Library Branch is located at 6670 US Hwy 1 South. Check in for our meetings is 12:45 and meeting starts at 1:00 PM.

Our Genealogical Society is open to all. We encourage visitors, as well as current and former members to join us. Refreshments will be served, and feel free to bring your favorite. For information visit website StAugGenSoc.org.

St. Augustine Travel Club

by Peter Dytrych

The St. Augustine Travel Club, that hosts at the Southeast Branch Public Library, will take a summer recess for the months of July and August, resuming in September. Check local papers or the library website for future announcements and emails will be sent to all attendees as well. Have a fun and safe summer! Peter and Linda Dytrych

The St. Augustine Travel Club is open to all residents and no registration is required. The program is formatted as arm-chair travel, meaning a brief lecture of the destination we cover, along with a video. We look forward to seeing our regulars and newcomers! Any questions, please call Peter at 904-797-3736.



Alzheimer's/Dementia Caregivers Support Group

If you are a caregiver for a Alzheimer's or Dementia loved one, and looking for encouragement, support and to share, this is the place for you. No one to stay with your loved one? You can bring them. We have a companion that will stay with them in the same building while you take a break and get information to help maneuver your journey.

The second and fourth Thursday of each month, 10:00am-11:00am at Homeport Christian Church, 5605 US 1 South, St. Augustine. You are not alone on this journey.

Sponsored by the Alzheimer's Association. alz.org. Contact Nancy Wright 904-347-6299 or Bebe Kelly 386-793-8414 for more information.

St. Augustine Multiple Sclerosis Support Group

The National MS Society maintains a network of affiliated groups to provide opportunities for people living with MS to connect with others in their community. Every group is unique and welcoming — contact the group leader for more information. Join Us! We are recognized by the National MS Society and the Multiple Sclerosis Foundation.

We meet every 4th Tuesday at 1:00 pm at Anastasia Library, 124 Sea Grove Main Street, St. Augustine Beach, FL 32080. For information or to RSVP, contact: Anita Clark johnita0013@gmail.com 305- 898-1432.



Come Join us First Friday, July 3rd from 5pm to 8pm for the Opening of Our July Exhibit, Featuring Artist, April Day. Here's a little background on our July Artist....

April Day is a Florida-based artist whose lifelong passion for creativity has led her to explore a wide range of artistic mediums, including acrylics, mixed media, murals, airbrushing, furniture art, and canvas painting. Today, she primarily works in acrylics and mixed media, drawn to their versatility, quick drying times, and ability to build rich layers of color and texture.

Art has been a part of April's life for as long as she can remember. As a child, she spent countless hours sketching and doodling—often during class. What she thought was a disciplinary moment when her drawings were confiscated turned into a life-changing surprise when she received a scholarship opportunity from the prestigious Pratt Institute in New York while still in middle school.

After relocating to Florida, April continued to develop her artistic talents and graduated among the top students in the art department at Coral Springs High School. There she learned the art of airbrushing and later worked alongside renowned motorcycle airbrush artist Tony Da Painter in Hallandale, Florida.

Whether painting on canvas, furniture, or other surfaces, April approaches each piece as an opportunity to create something unique—art that invites viewers to pause, connect, and find a little more beauty in the world around them.

The Art Studio is currently Celebrating 15 Years and we have special events planned all year long! Please keep up to date on all the upcoming special events by following us:

The Art Studio is located at 370 A1A Beach Blvd. in the St. John's County Pier Park and is open 7 days a week from 12pm to 5pm. We are a 501(c)(3) Non-Profit organization that brings Art and Culture to the community and offers classes, special events, exhibitions and rental space. For more information please visit www.beachartstudio.org, Facebook or call 904-295-4428.



Turtle Nests Update—looking good!

by Lorraine Thompson

The 2026 sea turtle nesting season is off to a good start based on the number of sea turtle nests already counted by environmental volunteers. Barring any major storms this could be a record season.

The mid-June report showed 564 nests along county beaches including 393 nests on the north beaches, 131 on Anastasia Island and 40 at Matanzas Inlet South. Last year's nest count at the same time in the season was 321. In 2024 it was 294 nests

Sea turtles emerge from the Atlantic Ocean to nest on our beaches generally from May 1 to October 31. Females crawl from the water late at night to lay their eggs. They deposit, on average, 100 ping pong ball sized eggs in each nest. They usually lay 2 to 3 nests per season. The eggs incubate in the sand for about 2 months before hatching. The volunteers will stake off and mark the nests once they are identified.

As the nests get ready to hatch, beach residents, visitors and businesses located at the beach are reminded that beach lighting is monitored to assure that residents and businesses are in compliance with the county's Beach Lighting Code.

All beachfront properties are required to eliminate non-compliant interior and exterior lights that are visible from the beach. Those who walk the beach at night should reduce their use of bright white flashlights which may interfere with nesting activities and cover the light with a red filter.

The nesting season continues through October or until all of the nests have hatched, whichever comes later.

If you encounter an injured, sick or dead sea turtle you are asked to call the Florida Fish & Wildlife /conservation Commission's 24 hour number at 1-888-404-3922.



St. Augustine Beach and Beyond...

By Lorraine Thompson (continued from page 1)

While some tentative parking information was available at the time of this writing, it is recommended that you check for last minute changes.

Free Park and Ride Shuttles to Downtown

Free park-and-ride shuttles will be available on July 4 from 6 p.m. until midnight via parking locations along Anastasia Blvd. Beginning at 6 p.m., Old Town Trolley Tours will provide shuttle service and will pick passengers up at one of three locations and drop them at the east end of the Bridge of Lions. (Note: You will need to walk across the bridge to get downtown and walk back across the bridge to get the shuttle back to your car.)

Passengers may park for free on Anastasia Island at:

Anastasia Baptist Church (1650 A1A South) - Parking and pick-up.

St. Augustine Amphitheatre (1340 A1A South)—Parking and pick up

R.B. Hunt Elementary School, 125 Magnolia Drive)—Parking and pick-up
St. Augustine Alligator Farm Zoological Park, 999 Anastasia Blvd. Parking only.

(Passengers must go to R.B. Hunt Elementary School to catch the shuttle). Following the fireworks, the shuttle will pick up passengers at the drop-off location at the east end of the Bridge of Lions.

DOWNTOWN PARKING INFORMATION

The downtown parking garage at the Visitor Information Center offers all-day parking for \$20 per vehicle. It's \$3 for those using the ParkStAug St. Johns County resident discount.

Parking in city-owned lots and on-street is FREE on July 4th, as it is on all national holidays.

It's up to each driver to confirm they are in a city-owned lot. The parking lot at the Castillo de San Marcos National Monument is not a city lot and is not free on holidays. The Castillo's paid parking is enforced daily from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. On the 4th of July, access to the Castillo's parking lot is restricted from 6 to 11 p.m. If you find a place to park before 6 p.m., you must pay for time up to 9:00 p.m., and your car cannot leave until about 11 p.m. Other privately owned lots will also charge for the day.

Street parking will be limited in the vicinity of the Plaza to facilitate traffic detours in the evening.

Downtown July 4th Road Closures and Changes—

Closure times and reopening times are approximate. Avenida Menendez and South Castillo Drive will be closed from 8 to 11 p.m. to accommodate this event. The Bridge of Lions will be closed to both boat and vehicle traffic. Those attending should find their parking spot well before 8 p.m. The city expects these roads to reopen between 11:30 p.m. and 12 a.m.

Additional Street Closures

Cathedral Place between Avenida Menendez and Cordova (4 to 11 p.m.)

No access to the city's parking garage from Orange Street after about 8 p.m. That curvy bit from Orange Street on North Cordova will be closed.

Picolata Road between US-1 and San Marco Avenue (8 to 11 p.m.)

San Carlos between US-1 and San Marco Avenue (8 to 11 p.m.)

Road Changes and Restrictions:

No east-bound traffic on King Street from U.S. 1 beginning at 9 p.m.

No east-bound traffic on West Castillo between North Cordova and U.S. 1, starting at 8 p.m.

There will be no east-bound traffic on W. Castillo from US-1 to North Cordova (8:00 - 11:30 p.m.)

North Cordova will be closed from Orange St. to the Historic Downtown Parking Facility entrance (8 -11:30 p.m.)

Drinking reminder-- St. Augustine enforces "no open container" laws, so be sure you drink only at the restaurants and bars.

Public Restrooms are located around the historic downtown, and more

than 150 portable toilets are at the corner of St. George Street and Cathedral Place, and near the Visitor Information Center.

While some tentative parking and other information was available at the time of this writing, it is recommended that you check for last minute changes. Visit www.floridashistoriccoast.com

For general information visit: <https://www.visitstaugustine.com/event/fourth-july-fireworks-and-concert>

Other 250th Anniversary commemorative events:

July 8th - The simultaneous reading of the Declaration of Independence

will take place in cities across the country at 6 p.m. est. in commemoration of the 250th Anniversary of the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence in front of Constitution Hall in Philadelphia. Locally, the reading will take place at the Ximenez Fatio House, 20 Aviles Street, in downtown St. Augustine beginning with a procession from Government House at 5 p.m. with the Historic Florida Militia and historian Jeff Jore leading the way through the plaza to Ximenez Fatio House. The ceremony will begin at 5:30 p.m. with Judge Lauren Blocker as the keynote speaker. At exactly 6 p.m., the reading of the Declaration locally and nationally will begin. The event is sponsored locally by the Daughters of the American Revolution, partnering with the National Society of Colonial Dames.

July 18th--LIBERTY TREE dedication

The Daughters of the American Revolution, the Sons of the American Revolution and City of St. Augustine Beach will participate in the dedication of a Liberty Tree on July 18 as part of a national project.

Historically, the Liberty Tree was a white elm outside of Boston where the townspeople gathered to protest the Stamp Act. It then became a gathering spot for those protesting other English laws. Soon other colonies followed suit by establishing their own Liberty Trees. As a celebration of America 250, the DAR and SAR are dedicating Liberty Trees across the county.

Last November, St. Augustine Beach planted a Florida live oak tree in its Veterans Park and Sculpture Garden of City Hall, located at 2340 A1A South. The dedication ceremony will begin at 10 a.m. and will include local color guards and a bagpiper. Judge Howard Gillian will be the keynote speaker. The public is invited to participate. A reception will follow. Parking is free.

(Photo of St. Augustine Beach Liberty Tree—provided)







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St. Augustine Beach and Beyond...

BEACHES-UPDATE by Lorraine Thompson

With the 4th of July falling on a Saturday this year, Friday, July 3, will be a holiday for many workers making it a three day weekend. If you're just looking for a place to relax, get wet, or just get away from the daily routine, July is a great time to go to the beach. There are approximately twelve miles of St. Johns County Beaches that allow for vehicular access. An average of sixteen lifeguard towers are staffed daily from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The guards are assisted by staff supervisors who travel the coastline in various response vehicles. Weather permitting, vehicular access is allowed year-round; however, during the months of May through October, access is limited to the hours of 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Remember that it is sea turtle nesting season. Bring your own food and beverages and be sure to clean up and remove any litter before you leave.

From March through September vehicles are required to purchase a beach driving pass. Daily and annual beach passes may be purchased at toll booths located at beach entries: Vilano, Porpoise Point, A Street, Ocean Trace Road, Dondanville Road, Matanzas Avenue, Mary Street, Crescent Beach (Cubbedge Road), and Fort Matanzas (exit only ramp). Annual Beach Driving Passes are also available. St. Johns County resident passes are \$50, non-resident passes are \$100 and ADA-accessible passes are \$40. Passes are also available during normal business hours at St. Johns County Beach Services Office, 901 Pope Road and St. Johns County Ocean and Fishing Pier Gift Shop – 350 A1A Blvd., both located on Anastasia Island. For more information about annual beach driving passes, call the St. Johns County Beach Services Office at 904-209-0331.

A year-round reminder--It is illegal to possess fireworks, consume alcohol, or create an open fire on a St. Johns County Beach.

NEW MARINE RESEARCH AND GIFT SHOP OPENS--The interactive Lastinger and Lohman Discovery and Conservation Lobby on the first floor of Whitney Laboratory's new Marine Research Center is now open to the public showcasing the laboratory's research and programs. The space includes a large-scale hanging art installation inspired by marine life and microscopic organisms. Also in the lobby is the Laboratory Gift Shop stocked with unique ocean-themed gifts including Whitney Laboratory and Sea Turtle Hospital apparel and other marine items. Proceeds from the gift shop benefit the Whitney Laboratory, Sea Turtle Hospital, and Whitney Graduate Student Association.

UF Whitney Laboratory for Marine Bioscience Whitney Marine Research Center is located at 9505 Ocean Shore Blvd. St. Augustine (in the town of Marineland). For questions, email wh-whitneylab@ufl.edu. Note: The lobby and gift shop will not be open on federal holidays and UF observed holiday dates.



Global Fine Art without crossing the bridge!

St Augustine Beach's only fine art gallery features world renown artists collected by museums, celebrities and board rooms, plus the colorful impressionistic creations of local artist and gallery owner Melodye Rouisse-Stimpel.



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The Tanner Gillespie Scholarship Endowment honors the firefighter's legacy

by Kelsey Hearn, Old City Public Relations

On Wednesday, June 17, the Shee Family and the Gillespie Family awarded four St. Johns County seniors with scholarships from the Tanner Gillespie Scholarship Endowment through the Senior Scholarships program managed by Investing in Kids (INK!), the local St. Johns County Education Foundation, to fully pay their tuition to the First Coast Technical College Firefighter Program. This year's recipients are: Zane Higginbotham, a student at Creekside High School; Tristan Larson and Addison Roberts, both students at Toco Creek High School; and Haze Hancock, a student at Bartram Trail High School. All four students are graduates from the St. Johns County School District's Class of 2026, as well as members of the St. Johns County Fire Cadet Post 343. The scholarship honors the memory of Tanner Alan Gillespie, who tragically passed in an ATV accident in November 2023.

"The loss of Tanner is something my family feels every day. Tanner and his older brother Nicholas grew up with my sons, as best friends and chosen brothers since they were all in preschool. Our families have always been incredibly close," says Chris Shee. "Being able to help young people who shared Tanner's passion for fire service has been a great way to continue his legacy. Being a firefighter was one of Tanner's biggest goals, and he achieved it. We're so proud to help these other young adults work towards their goals. It was an honor to speak with these future firefighters and share some stories about Tanner with them."

The Tanner Gillespie Scholarship Endowment was originally funded by four groups, each contributing \$25,000 for a total endowment of \$100,000: Clays For A Cause, MasterCraft Builder Group, Premier Pools and Outdoor Living, and the Shee Family. Additional funds are generated through charity endeavors, including the Fired Up Kingfish Challenge. INK!, an educational charity that serves as the sole support organization for the St. Johns County school district, oversees the endowment. Proceeds from the investment fund provide scholarships to at least one St. Johns County high school senior each year who wants to pursue a career in fire rescue. The merit-based scholarship covers tuition for the First Coast Technical College Firefighter Program, as well as required equipment and book fees.

Chris Shee is a fifth-generation Floridian who lives in St. Augustine with his wife Dawn. As founder of MasterCraft Builder Group, Heritage Development Group, and a few other companies, Shee uses his businesses as vehicles for giving back to the community – focusing on local non-profits that help women and children. Shee also owns The Tringali Barn at Heritage Farms, which he uses as a hub for charitable endeavors.



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Financial Focus

Information Provided by

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Cory Caplinger, CFP®

Five questions that could change how you see retirement

Saving for retirement is important, but it's only part of the picture. If you're within five to 10 years of your target retirement date, it's time to start thinking about what you actually want your retirement to look like. After all, getting to retirement isn't the end goal — it's what you want to do once you're there that matters.

Start by asking yourself these five questions.

When do you want to retire? The age at which you retire matters more than you may realize. Retiring early sounds appealing, but it means saving more and having less time to do it. It can also create gaps in health care coverage and income before key benefits kick in. For example, Social Security benefits can begin at 62, but at a reduced amount. Full benefits are available between ages 66 and 67, depending on birth year, and waiting until 70 means the maximum benefit. Medicare doesn't start until age 65, and penalty-free withdrawals from retirement accounts generally aren't allowed until age 59½.

For couples, timing gets even more complicated. Staggering retirement dates can sometimes maximize benefits; in other cases, retiring at the same time works better.

A financial advisor can help you sort through these decisions and find the approach that makes the most sense for your situation.

How do you want to spend your time in retirement? Many new retirees are surprised to find that having unlimited free time feels disorienting rather than freeing. Thinking ahead about how to fill the days with meaningful activity — whether that's travel, volunteering, pursuing hobbies or spending more time with family — can make the transition smoother.

It helps to sketch out what a typical week, month or even first year might look like. If there are big gaps, it's worth thinking now about what might fill them in rewarding ways.

Where do you want to live as a retiree? Some retirees stay put, while others downsize or relocate entirely. Either way, it's wise to consider whether a chosen location will work well as you get older, taking into account factors like proximity to family, access to health care, cost of living and climate.

What will your retirement lifestyle cost? It's not uncommon for retirees to discover that their travel, entertainment or leisure expenses were higher than expected. The more active and involved you plan to be, the more you will likely need to budget.

Does your retirement involve giving back? Retirement often brings both the time and motivation to be more generous. Whether the goal is helping family members, donating to charity or volunteering in the community, it's worth defining those goals and building them into an overall plan.

Now that your vision is taking shape, turn it into a plan. Work with your financial advisor to align your savings with the life you want — and revisit that plan as your priorities evolve so your retirement keeps pace with you.

This article was written by Edward Jones for use by your local Edward Jones Financial Advisor. Edward Jones, Member SIPC

The Power of a Great Beach Read

By Diane Thompson
Mayo Clinic Certified Wellness Coach



Summer in Saint Augustine has a way of inviting us to slow down. The days are longer, and the beach beckons us. We spend more time outdoors, often gathering with friends and family, and hopefully carving out a few moments for ourselves. Yet even during summer, many of us are still struggling to truly relax.

In a culture that celebrates productivity, relaxation can feel surprisingly uncomfortable. That's one reason I'm making a case for one of the simplest wellness practices available this summer: reading a good book. When was the last time you read a book you genuinely enjoyed? The written word has the power to transport you somewhere else for an hour, make you laugh, think, cry, or simply lose track of time.

Reading for pleasure is often overlooked as a wellness habit, but perhaps it deserves more attention. When we're immersed in a story, we're doing something increasingly rare: focusing on one thing at a time. We're giving our minds a break from notifications, news alerts, and endless to-do lists.

For many of us, reading creates a form of quiet presence. We aren't worrying about tomorrow or replaying yesterday. We're simply engaged in the page in front of us. That sounds a lot like mindfulness.

According to Mayo Clinic, activities that cultivate positive emotions and reduce stress can support both mental and physical well-being. Reading offers an opportunity to disconnect from daily pressures and engage in a focused, restorative activity. Beyond the science, however, many readers know something that can't be measured easily: books help us feel more human. They remind us that other people struggle, grow, make mistakes, and find their way forward. Sometimes a good story is exactly what we need.

Six of the best beach reads to help you escape:

- Remarkably Bright Creatures by Shelby Van Pelt is a warm story about friendship, grief, second chances, and unexpected connections. Perfect for the reader who needs a little hope.
- The Midnight Library by Matt Haig explores regret, possibility, and the importance of appreciating the life we're living right now. Recommended for the reader who loves big questions.
- Lessons in Chemistry by Bonnie Garmus combines humor, intelligence, resilience, and memorable characters. If you're someone who loves to laugh, this book is for you.
- The House in the Cerulean Sea by TJ Klune celebrates kindness, acceptance, and compassion. It almost feels like a hug in book form.
- Big Magic by Elizabeth Gilbert encourages readers to approach creativity with curiosity and courage.
- The Comfort Book by Matt Haig offers reflections on hope, resilience, and finding light during difficult times. Haig shows us that sometimes life isn't nearly as dark as it seems.

A great beach read asks only one thing: turn the page. There is something wonderfully restorative about becoming completely absorbed in a story. For an hour or two, we're not worrying about work, replaying difficult conversations, or scrolling through headlines.

Wellness isn't only about nutrition, exercise, and sleep. It's also about joy, recovery, and giving our minds opportunities to wander, imagine, and rest.

A great beach read may not solve your problems or help you cross items off your to-do list. But it might lower your stress, spark your imagination, and remind you that life is bigger than whatever is currently weighing on your mind.

So, this July, pack the sunscreen. Bring the water bottle. Grab a chair and head for the beach (or back yard). And don't forget the book. Your mind deserves a summer vacation, too.

Not intended as medical advice. Please check with your doctor before making health or wellness changes.

Bio: Diane Thompson Cortese is a Mayo Clinic-certified Wellness Coach, NASM certified Personal Trainer, and CEO of Wildly Capable Wellness Coaching, helping women build confidence, strength, and sustainable healthy habits, one powerful step at a time.

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Medicare Star Ratings: What They Mean and Why They Matter

Carol Bogart, Palencia Resident
904-648-6488
Carol@AskCarolB.com

by Carol Bogart, Health Insurance Advisor

You're comparing Medicare Advantage or Part D plans during enrollment season and you notice a star rating next to each plan — one star, three stars, five stars. It looks straightforward. Higher is better, right? But do you actually know what those stars measure, or whether they should influence your decision?

Medicare evaluates every Medicare Advantage and Part D drug plan each year on a scale of one to five stars. Five stars is the highest rating. One star is the lowest. The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) calculates these ratings based on dozens of measures grouped into categories like customer service, member complaints, managing chronic conditions, drug plan safety, and how often members get recommended screenings and vaccines.

The ratings are updated every fall, just before the Annual Enrollment Period begins in October. That timing is intentional — it gives you current, real-world performance data right when you need it most to make an informed plan decision.

Here's why the ratings actually matter. Plans that earn five stars are granted a unique privilege: they trigger a Special Enrollment Period that runs all year long. That means if a five-star plan is available in your area, you can switch to it at any time — no need to wait for open enrollment. You can only use this opportunity once per year, but it's a powerful option if your current plan isn't working for you.

On the flip side, plans that consistently earn low ratings — particularly those landing at fewer than three stars for three consecutive years — can face serious consequences, including termination by CMS.

That said, star ratings are a useful tool, not the only tool. A five-star plan with a narrow provider network or a formulary that doesn't cover your medications may not be the right fit. A four-star plan that includes your doctors and drugs at a lower premium might serve you far better.

Use the ratings as a starting point, not a final answer.

If you have questions about how star ratings apply to plans in your area, feel free to reach out to me at Carol@AskCarolB.com, by text at (714) 930-7165, or directly at (904) 648-6488. You can also visit www.AskCarolB.com. FL License #: W756153.

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Living with Cancer Support Group

The Living with Cancer support group has moved to Cancer Specialists of North Florida. 121 Whitehall Drive, St. Augustine 32086 on the third Wednesday of every month at 11:00 am. We still have the ability to ZOOM in if needed. This is an informal gathering for adults with any type of cancer and their caregivers.

It is open to all affected by cancer. This group will provide the opportunity to meet others in similar situations, share your stories, provide practical suggestions and offer support to each other. If you prefer to participate virtually via Zoom, please call 904-819-4793 for further instructions.

GriefShare

Please join us for GriefShare, a weekly seminar to help you rebuild your life after the loss of a loved one. Feel free to attend the sessions any time we meet in a casual and comfortable environment. Contact Melanie, rscoogn@gmail.com or GriefShare.org under Find A Group to register.

Starting May 13 2026 - August 5 2026, Wednesday, 6pm - 7:30pm
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Do You Have Community News to Share?

Do you have news, events or personal interest information that are relevant to our communities in and around St. Augustine Beach? Please forward them to the Editor for consideration for the monthly News Journal. Please contact Editor clifflogsdon@att.net or call 904-607-1410.

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Thursdays 9-10 am, 2487 A1A S. Street, St. Augustine (Use red back door entrance) For more information to restore peace and harmony, contact 843-367-1475.

The Friends of the Anastasia Island Branch Library

by Mollie Meikle

Happy Summer and Happy Summer Reading! The Friends of the Anastasia Island Branch Library does not meet in July, or August, but we still keep busy over the summer.

Save the date for our next Collectors Corner pop-up sale: Saturday, July 11. This sale is smaller than our bi-annual sale, and features our specialty priced and hard to find books. All books are priced at \$4 and up. The Collectors Corner pop-up sale opens early for members, 9am -10am, with doors opening to the general public at 10am. The sale closes down at 4:15pm.

And with your calendar out, place another hold for our August Book Sale: Friday, August 28 and Saturday, August 29. Details to come!

To sign up for our newsletter and email alerts, or to learn more about Friends of the Anastasia Island Branch Library, please email us at anastasiainlandfaibl@gmail.com.

St. Johns County Ocean and Fishing Pier Closed for Repairs

The St. Johns County Ocean and Fishing Pier is temporarily closed for repair and to strengthen the pier pilings. The project is anticipated to be completed by the end of November 2026.

During the repairs, visitors will experience minor parking impacts near the pavilion area. Please follow all instructions seen on temporary traffic signage. Permitted events and activities at the nearby Ocean Pier Park will not be impacted.

The northern St. Augustine Beach access point will be closed for the duration of the project. Beachgoers must use the south entrance to access the beach safely.

Access under the pier will be restricted. Surfers and swimmers should stay 500 feet away from the pier during construction.

The Pier Gift Shop will remain open and accessible throughout the project. The County appreciates the public's patience and cooperation while these important repairs are completed to maintain the safety and longevity of the St. Johns County Ocean and Fishing Pier.

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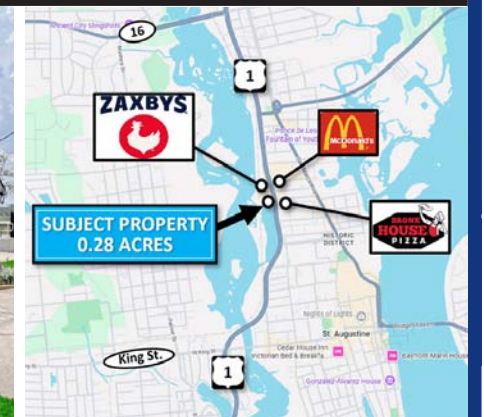
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