

JULY 2026

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St. Augustine Observer



NEWS INFORMATION FOR & ABOUT RESIDENTS OF SOUTHERN ST. JOHNS COUNTY FL



Spring 2026 SJC 101 Citizens Academy Class Photo

SJC 101 Citizens Academy Develops Informed Community Leaders with Spring 2026 Graduation

Provided by Tyler Jarnagin, Public Affairs Manager

St. Johns County has completed its Spring 2026 SJC 101 Citizens Academy, graduating 28 residents and bringing the total to more than 90 alumni since its launch in 2024. The Office of Public Affairs produced a video to recap the Spring program.

Held twice annually in the Spring and Fall, the SJC 101 Citizens Academy is the County's official civic education program, designed to provide residents with a comprehensive, behind-the-scenes look at local government. The program connects participants with more than 30 County departments and all Constitutional Offices, offering direct access to the services, personnel, and operations that support daily life in St. Johns County.

Throughout the 12-week program, participants engaged in interactive sessions, facility tours, and hands-on demonstrations across key service areas, including public safety, utilities, growth management, health and human services, public works, and parks and recreation. Sessions were strategically aligned with national observances and seasonal priorities, such as National Public Health Week, National Public Works Week, and hurricane season preparedness, providing timely context and relevance to County operations.

The program concluded June 2 with a formal recognition of graduates by Clay Murphy, Chair of the Board of County Commissioners, and Joy Andrews, County Administrator, during a Board meeting.

"This is what it's all about," Chair Murphy said. "We are opening the doors to government to our citizens in a real effort for transparency. We want people to be able to see where their tax dollars go and how they're used."

"The one takeaway I want our residents to leave with is a true sense of curiosity," Andrews said. "It's not necessarily any specific data point, fact, or statistic. It's really about your willingness to be a part of a very authentic dialogue. I think we have gotten that from every single graduate of this program... We're building trust one student at a time."

SJC 101 is designed to strengthen transparency, enhance civic awareness, and encourage community engagement by helping residents better understand how to access services, navigate County resources, and participate in local government. By fostering direct interaction with County staff and leadership, the program equips participants with the knowledge needed to become more informed and active members of the community.

The program also directly supports

Celebrating 4th of July In St. Augustine

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. 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. (continued page 9)

the St. Johns County Strategic Plan by advancing the priorities of Community Trust and Organizational Excellence. By increasing public understanding of County operations and creating meaningful opportunities for engagement, SJC 101 helps build confidence in local government while showcasing the professionalism, innovation, and commitment of County staff.

Graduates are encouraged to remain engaged by applying for volunteer opportunities on County advisory boards and committees, participating in public meetings, and supporting community outreach efforts. Information on current

board and committee vacancies, including application details, is available on the St. Johns County website.

Since its inception, the program has continued to expand its reach and impact, reinforcing St. Johns County's commitment to openness, education, and public engagement. As the program grows, the County is also preparing to launch the SJC 101 Alumni Alliance to foster continued connection, collaboration, and involvement among graduates.

Residents interested in participating in a future SJC 101 program can learn more and register at www.sjcfl.us/sjc101. Classes are selected on a first-come, first-served basis.

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Cliff Logsdon Publisher/Editor

(904) 607-1410

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The purpose of the St. Augustine Observer is to serve residents of St. Augustine area Communities.

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

Information 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 St. Augustine Observer, 2465 US1 South PMB #8, St. Augustine Florida 32086. Information may also be e-mailed to clifflogsdon@att.net.

All materials submitted to the Observer is subject to editing. Publishing of submitted letters and 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 Observer.

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St. Augustine Shores Community

The Shores Service Corporation
Shores Homeowners Association
(904) 794-2000

www.staugshores.org

Shores Monthly Meetings

• **Shores Service Corporation's** monthly meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month. Meetings are at 6 p.m. at the Riverview Club.

• **Conquistador Condominium** Board meetings are held on the fourth Monday of each month at 5 p.m. at the Riverview Club. Please call to confirm that the meeting will be held.

• **Fairview Condominium:** Board meetings are held on the second Tuesday of every other month at 4 p.m. at the Fairview Condo club house.

• **Greens Condominium:** Board meetings vary. Owners please contact Sovereign and Jacobs at 904-461-5556.

• **Casa Bella Condominium:** Board Meetings will be bi-monthly on the 3rd Monday of the month, still held at 6 P.M. Meeting location will still be posted on the bulletin board 48 hours prior to each meeting. Contact: Community Association Manager – Kandice Williams – 904-461-9708 Ext. 205 – kwilliams@maymgt.com or Community Association Assistant – Vicki Collins – 904-461-9708 Ext. 231 – vcollins@maymgt.com.

St. Augustine South Community

St. Augustine South Improvement Assoc.
709 Royal Rd. St Augustine, 32086

email: info@staugsouth.com

www.staugsouth.com

(904) 615-6916

2025 SASIA Board Members

President: Justin Miller
1st VP: David Rieger
2nd Vp Open
Secretary: Open
Treasurer: Tony Dawson
President Emeritus Jerri Sue Dawson

Board:

Vicki Cofone Oonna Hueck
Frances Lundberg Clark Monahan
Rik Sikes

Community Meeting

Enjoy the summer. There are no meetings held in July or August. We hope you can join us when we resume on September 16th. Speaker details will be published closer to the event.

Community meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm at the SASIA clubhouse, except July and August.

Classes at the Clubhouse

Weekly classes at the clubhouse are open to the public. You do not need to be a resident in St. Augustine South to participate.

Square Dancing – Mondays 7:00-9:00 pm Come and join the fun and dance with others. Contact caller, Mike Akers, with any questions: michael.akers@bellsouth.net or (904) 466-8663. Movin' with Melinda – Tuesdays and

Thursdays 8:30-9:30 am Move and groove in a low to medium impact exercise class with music from the past and present. A \$5.00 donation is requested. Contact Melinda at slidermomma@yahoo.com.

REFIT and Rev+Flow with Onika - Tuesdays and Thursdays 6:00-7:00pm REFIT combines powerful moves and music to create an exciting, fun workout for all ages. Rev+Flow is a one-of-a-kind workout that increases strength, builds muscle and increases mobility.

Beginning Line Dancing – Wednesdays 1:00-2:30pm Have fun as you boot, scoot, and boogie while learning to dance. Join Dianne and Ingrid for a beginning level line dance class. A \$5.00 donation is requested.

Intermediate / Advanced Line Dancing – Mondays 10:00am-12:00pm and Wednesdays 3:00-5:00 pm Join Jinny for an intermediate/advanced level line dance class. A \$5.00 donation is requested.

PERCUSSION PLAY! Mondays at 5:00p.m. and Wednesdays at 10:00a.m. A rhythm & movement class for babies & toddlers ages 6 months- 4 years, with a caregiver. Join us for an hour of community and musical exploration through movement and bonding with your little one. Each class will be filled with singing, playing with instruments, and other fun activities! \$15. Email staugsouthpercussionplay@gmail.com to reserve your spot!

Residents interested in becoming SASIA members may do so at www.StAugSouth.com

Community Classifieds

The Observer offers free community classified listings for USPS selected addresses in Southern St. Johns County and paid subscriptions. Classified ads will not be printed without a name, address and phone number included with the request. 5 items or less should be sent. Free ads are not for Business or Personal Service ads. Placement is not Guaranteed.

Business, Service, seeking work, etc. may be placed in the classified section: (1-4 lines) \$5, (5-9 lines) \$10, (10-14 lines) \$15, (15-19 lines) \$20. Ad \$10 for single line border. Ads should be paid in advance before placed. Send your listing and payment, if required, to Observer, 2465 US1 South PMB#8, St. Augustine, 32086 or email your ad to clifflogsdon@att.net. Deadline is the 15th of every month for the next monthly issue.

FOR SALE: Snapper riding rear mount mower, 28 inch cut. Like new \$1500. Contact Bob Gilmer 571-332-7617.

FOR SALE: 1984 Macintosh 512K with mouse, keyboard, software disks. \$1200.

FOR SALE: (1) Original framed antique prints with 4 currier Ives \$200. (2) 4 Besse Buttman \$200. (3) Maxfield Parrish misc collection of prints and ephamerg \$400. (4) Harrison Fisher prints and book plates \$200. Call for info. 904-540-1806.

FOR SALE: New clothing for sale. Some with tickets from \$1 up. Women sizes medium and large. Text 904-687-3362.

FOR SALE: (1) Tan 2 1/2 year old 83" L-shaped sofa Queen size pull out bed slept on only 1 wk "Best pullout slept on". 4 throw pillows. Great condition. Moving must sell. \$300 b/o. (2) Hamilton Beach 5in1 coffee maker. Listed \$120 online. Was mailed 2 in error so still in packaging. \$75. (3) Black wood desk keyboard center pull out. 2 drawers and slide out section. Lots of storage. 4ft long 21/2ft Ht. Clean. Moving must sell. \$50 Susan before 6pm 7days 904-599-2498

FOR SALE: Bahamas Style Couch W34" X L69" X 24" H Cushions are a beautiful pastel design with Bamboo Design sides. Cushions are in excellent condition including Two White Wicker bookend side tables each has one draw 24" H Good Deal \$60. Call 904-472-4465

FOR SALE: Long Haul Original Cowboy Boots Size10.5 Made USA Genuine Brown Leather Fine looking Boots Excellent Condition \$24 Please Call

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WANTED: I buy old records and some vintage stereo equipment. I am not a reseller. I only use for my own enjoyment. If you're looking for a good home for your records, please call John at 904-325-9802.

WANTED: Happy retired Early Morning Walking Partner. Text 904-687-3362.

WANTED: A garage in Belle Haven Condominium Complex in Saint Augustine. 35k offered. Call 518-330-9427.

WANTED: Looking for a roommate to share my house. It will have your own bed, dresser, and bathroom. Use of kitchen and laundry. Preferably a college student going to Flagler or other school. I'm asking \$850 with a \$500 security deposit for August 1st. If interested please call 860-514-1325

WANTED: A garage in Belle Haven condominium complex Saint Augustine. \$37,500 offered.

FOR SALE: (1) 2012 Mac Mini with 8 gb of ram and hard drive with operating system. \$75. (2) 2006 Mac Pro with 8 gb memory and 2 hard driven. \$75. Call 904-607-1410.

PUBLIC NOTICE: Notice is hereby given that Debra Pattinson the undersigned, desires to engage in DBA business under the name of "Snoozinnpups" 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

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Shores Communications Corner

News & Information from the St. Augustine Shores Service Corp.

Welcome to summer Saint Augustine Shores HOA Members!
Happy 250th Birthday America!

Summer is upon us; the pool is opened after being closed for 4 days as shiny new filters were installed. Staffing at the pool is finally nearly filled. Pool passes are offered for family or single annual, family or single monthly, and family or single daily.

Turning lemons into lemonade is what staffing at the Shores office has been doing everyday since the first of June. Trustworthy, smart and friendly volunteers have been overseen by hard working volunteer Board members to keep our doors and activities open and running. Residents have been nothing more than patient, encouraging and delightful. We have been actively searching for the best fit for our immense and beautiful community. This can't happen soon enough, but stability, knowledge and experience is what we envision along with GREAT people skills.

There was an accident that took the Shores sign out at the Southern entrance, it will be removed and replaced as insurance funds become available. It isn't a good look but everything takes time.

Committee signups and descriptions for each committee is on the VESTA website or come by the office and or the next Board Meeting. Together we will bring back the joy and community spirit with your involvement.

The June 11, Board of director meeting was again well attended and very long. These meetings will be shorter going forward and we appreciate your attendance and comments. Thank you for taking an interest in our community and for your feedback.

The July Board meeting will be July 9, 2026 at 6:00 pm in the Riverview Club at 790 Christina Dr.

Donna Coates, President

Saint Augustine Shores Service Corporation

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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.

Alzheimer's/Dementia Caregivers Support Group

Caring for a loved one with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia can be overwhelming, emotional, and isolating. That is why a local support group is inviting caregivers in our community to come together for encouragement, education, and connection. Come join us. You are not alone.

Alzheimer's/Dementia Caregiver Support Group meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month, 10am at Homeport Christian Church, 5601 U.S. 1 South, St. Augustine, FL 32086. Call Nancy Wright 904-347-6299 or BeBe Kelly 386-793-8414 for more information.

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Shores Service Corporation

July 2026 Monthly Activity Calendar						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 9am Kickboxing reflections room 9:30 Waterfront Yoga 10am Water Aerobics	2 11am Mens Prayer group	3 Happy 250th Birthday America!
5	6 12pm Hand & Foot 3:30 Zumba reflections room	7 10am Water aerobics 12pm Mahjong 12pm Waterfront yoga 3:45 Barre Reflection	8	9 9am Kickboxing reflections room 9:30 waterfront yoga 10am Water Aerobics	10 10am Zumba reflections room 11 am Mens Prayer	11
12	13 12pm Hand & Foot 3:30 Zumba Reflections	14 10am Water Aerobics 12pm mahjong 12pm waterfront yoga 3:45 Barre reflections	15	16 9am kickboxing reflections 9:30 waterfront yoga 10am water aerobics	17 10 am Zumba 11 am Mens Prayer group	18
19	20 12 pm Hand & Foot 3:30 Zumba reflections	21 10am Water Aerobics 12pm mahjong 12pm waterfront yoga 3:45 Barre reflections	22	23 9 am kickboxing reflections 9:30 waterfront yoga 10am water aerobics	24 10 am Zumba reflection 11 am Mens Prayers	25
26	27 12 pm Hand & Foot 3:3 Zumba Reflections	28 10am Water Aerobics 12pm Mahjong 12pm Waterfront yoga 3:45 Barre Reflections	29	30 9am Kickboxing 9:30 Waterfront Yoga 10am Water Aerobics	31 10 am Zumba reflection 11 am Mens Prayers	

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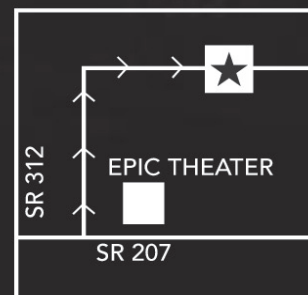
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SASIA News and Calendar of Events

July 2026

SASIA News and Calendar of Events

All events are held in the SASIA Clubhouse at 709 Royal Road. If you wish to contact SASIA please email info@staugsouth.com.

Check out SASIA's Facebook page www.facebook.com/staugsouth, Nextdoor page (search for St. Augustine South Improvement Association), and Instagram page www.instagram.com/saintaugsouth/. Like and follow us so you can see what is happening at the SASIA clubhouse each week.

Meet the Candidates for St. Johns County Commissioners Forum

St. Augustine South Residents, come meet the candidates running for St. Johns County Commissioners on Wednesday, July 15th at the SASIA clubhouse (709 Royal Road). This is your opportunity to hear directly from the candidates and to ask questions about the issues that matter most to our neighborhood.

6:00 PM: Social Hour (meet the candidates one-on-one)

6:30 PM: Forum Begins (opening statements followed by a voter Q&A)

Learn about the 2026 primary candidates for County Commissioners so you can make an informed choice in the primary election in August. Hope to see you there!

Shore Drive Cleanup

Saturday, September 5th

9:00am - 12:00 pm, or whatever time you can spare

Our June 6th Cleanup was a great success; we collected 339 pounds of trash from the neighborhood. So far, all our Cleanups have totaled 1,107 pounds of trash. Mark your calendar for September 5th. Meet us at the clubhouse at 9:00am and help keep St. Augustine South beautiful and clean. Wear close-toed shoes - pickers, gloves, and trash bags are provided. School will be back in session; this is a wonderful way for students to earn community service hours.

Community Meeting

Enjoy the summer. There are no meetings held in July or August. We hope you can join us when we resume on September 16th. Speaker details will be published closer to the event.

Community meetings are held the third Wednesday of each month at 7:00 pm at the SASIA clubhouse, except July and August

Food Truck Nights

Food Truck Nights are the second Friday of each month from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at the Clubhouse, (709 Royal Road, 32086)

Friday, July 10th – Eighty Twenty Burgers

Friday, August 14th – Wingin' It

Friday, September 11th – Heart & Soul Food Truck

Food Truck events are subject to change in the event of inclement weather. Check our social media for updates.

Upcoming 2026 Events

Saturday, November 7th, Fall Festival

Saturday, December 5th, Arts and Crafts Fair

Saturday, December 12th, Photos and Crafts with Santa

Dates are subject to change.

The Wildflower Meadow Group

by Marlene Land

The Wildflower Meadow Group meets the first Saturday of each month at about 8:30 a.m. by the Riverview Clubhouse and we usually work for a couple of hours. All ability levels are welcome. Our goal is to preserve the wildflower meadow, learn about native plants that grow in this area, and enjoy the outdoors. We're an informal group without officers or dues and hope you will join us. We occasionally visit state and county parks, and welcome newcomers.

Call Cindy at 904-797-3931 or Marlene at 305-968-0447 for more information. If we can't answer leave a message and we'll call you back. Call for more information about the meadow and our walks to state and county parks.



Interested in the Civil War?

Please join our Civil War Discussion Group. Our next presentation will be TUESDAY, JULY 14, 2026 at 1pm, at the Anastasia Branch library in Sea Grove.

The JULY presentation will be with Len Whiteside, The Ubiquitous Union General Benjamin Butler. He is characterized as colorful, military bungler, sharp legal practitioner, and civil rights activist. He was a man of contradictions who made some positive contributions to the Union success in the war, while also committing actions detrimental to the war effort.

We hope you can join us. For questions or comments, please contact Len Whiteside at armyfam831@gmail.com



Opportunity Observer & Beaches News Journal

The Observer is seeking marketing person to reach local business organizations for advertising in the local community newspapers. If interested please contact Cliff Logsdon at 904-607-1410

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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.

"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



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. Johns County Fishing Pier Closed for Repair

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.

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.

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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.

St. Augustine South Reflections

by Ruth Hope

Noseeums!!! Since the few wet days arrived in June, so have the noseeums: in abundance. They really make walking my dogs in the morning and evening very unpleasant – getting into my eyes and nostrils. Mosquitos are out too – annoying buzzing around one's ears – but they respond to insect repellent. Noseeums, or gnats, do not. I have bought mesh head nets for my husband to hang from a baseball cap and me to hang from a visor. The problem hasn't yet got bad enough to use the nets!

The rain has also brought out a crop of interesting fungi: barometer earthstar, *Astraeus hygrometricus*. I first saw one in a neighbor's garden at the beginning of May. iNaturalist identified this native but didn't tell me anything further about it. By mid-June there was a heavy crop under the edge of the trees at Lewis Point, and so I searched for more information using Google.



The earthstar is a Florida native fungus, about the size of a quarter, in the family Diplocystidiaceae that is well known for its moisture-sensitive, star-like opening and closing behavior.

In June, the laggards in the annual mass migration north of yachts and other sailing boats were still heading up the Intra-Coastal Waterway. I am told, by two different neighbors who have done this in their youth, that the boats are under hired crews that take them up to Norfolk and the Chesapeake Bay area for hurricane season. In general, they go as fast as they can so that the crew can return south and make the journey

again on another vessel. Although El Niño is forming in Pacific, and experts say it will likely turbocharge extreme weather, NOAA forecasts a quieter than average hurricane season in Florida this year. I don't know how that can be possible, but another hurricane season like 2025 will be very welcome!!

Conditions have been right in gardens along Shore Drive to give spectacular displays of rain lilies and Indian blanket in June. There was also an amazing display of American germander in a County-owned lot on Argus Rd. We used to get wonderful displays of Indian blanket at the south end of Shore Drive Waterfront park. But over recent years, frequent mowing has given us a uniform appearance of manicured grass, but few wildflowers. This is also so in the meadow across from Rutgers Rd and Shore Drive. In 2020, my COVID project was documenting the biodiversity of that meadow, over several months, on iNaturalist. It, too, is a manicured lawn these days.



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St. Augustine Orchid Society

by Janis Croft

Angraecums for the Home

Alan Koch will speak about Angraecums and their relatives for the home grower. This program looks at the many miniature and compact African species and their hybrids that do well in the home. He will offer lots of great cultural tips on growing them.

Alan owns and operates Gold Country Orchids where he specializes in miniature and compact Cattleya's along with miniature species. His nursery is located on 10 acres of land in Lincoln, California where he grows about 250,000 orchids. Alan has been published in the Orchid Digest, the American Orchid Society magazine, as well as many International Publications and is an internationally known and highly enjoyable speaker.

Plants will be available on the sales & raffle tables. The St. Augustine Orchid Society welcomes all to our monthly meetings. No charge.

<https://www.staugorchidsociety.org>

When: July 7, 6:30 to 9 pm

Where: Memorial Lutheran Church

Drive around to the back entrance

3375 US 1 South, St. Aug 32086



Diaries of a Shores Grand-Dad

by Dirk Schroeder

The question is - how much do you love your Country? The answer - it's the 250th Anniversary of our United States so maybe you will love it a little more this year. To me, it feels a little bit weird when you can say that you have experienced one-fourth of our American history (do the math). Approximately ten generations could take you back to the founding of our country. We've got trees older than 250 years in St. Augustine and certainly our local history goes back another 10 generations - back to 1565. The first mass in America was given on the grounds of the Mission Nombre De Dios and Thanksgiving would happen here in St. Augustine an entire generation before Jamestown. You may love and celebrate these facts since politics and social media psy-ops do not involve our local history (although there may be some that will argue about it's true American origins versus it's Spanish history).

So, if the question is, will you celebrate our 250th Anniversary on July 3-6th more this year and do you really love your country - what is your answer. Is your answer based on your own personal experience and belief system or built on the ideas and opinions of so many others who apparently know better? Today, there are more opinions than ever before and sifting through the fact and the fiction is most challenging. Of course, if it's on Social Media or the Internet it must be fact based (Sarcasm). And if it's on your favorite News or Variety Channel (pick your favorite alphabet soup letters) it must be true (Sarcasm). There are no "Invisible Hands" behind those microphones (more sarcasm) and they all tell you how to love or hate America.

For a short paragraph, let's look at the hate. Origins of hate are typically "Envy" (great movie, by the way) - they have something I don't have and somebody owes me. If I don't get that put into my bubble, I hate everyone outside my bubble and that can be everyone from your own family to 7 Billion others on the planet (take your pick). Unless you have not traveled to other countries, you may want to shelve your envy and hate. We are always told that America is hated here and there but when people visit here, they usually leave inspired. Visitors realize why our 250th Anniversary is so relevant - it built on the backs of millions of Americans to get to this time and place and they see, taste and feel our freedom. You want to hate it here, travel and visit elsewhere and, if you like it there better, there is your new love, time and place.

As a legal immigrant, it is particularly enjoyable to celebrate American greatness, to pledge my loyalty, my allegiance and my gratitude to one God-blessed Nation and to love this awesome State of Florida and our incredible City of Saints since 1979. 250 years is a relevant American milestone. On that note, I wish everyone, as always, a Sunshine State of Mind.



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**Question: What is the Economic Impact of Real Estate in Florida?
And what is the Economic Impact of the Sale of a Home?**



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According to Lawrence Yun, Chief Economist of the National Ass'n. of Realtors (NAR), who was here in St. Augustine recently to attend a District 1 Conference, the Real Estate Profession accounted for \$473.7 Billion in Sales in FL. or 25.8% of the Gross State Product in 2025. According to Yun, the Total Economic Impact of a Home Sale is approx. \$133,560. Very Interesting Statistics.

Question: What is the Outlook for the remainder of 2026?

For the National Outlook, Dr. Yun sees Existing Single Family Sales to be revised to 4% increase

over 2025 and New Home Sales equal to 2025 results. The Average Home Price in 2025 increased 3% and the prediction for 2026 is an increase of 4%. Mortgage Rates are expected to remain around 6.5% unless there's an earlier resolution

between the US and Iran. Job Gains are expected to remain strong although the Unemployment Rate is expected to go from 4.3% in 2025 to 4.6% in 2026. The Overall Forecast - NO RECESSION.

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Dirk Schroeder

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Schroeder and Yun 2026



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.



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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.

Families Anonymous Support Group

At your wits end? Tired of lies? Is someone you love destroying your family harmony? Families Anonymous is a free weekly meeting for mothers of addicted loved ones. We have walked your path and are here for you.

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.

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, rscogg@gmail.com or GriefShare.org under Find A Group to register.

Starting May 13 2026 - August 5 2026, Wednesday, 6pm - 7:30pm
Crescent Beach Baptist Church St Augustine, FL 32086

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.

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? Please forward them to the Editor for consideration for the monthly Observer. Please contact Editor clifflogsdon@att.net or call 904-607-1410.

Celebrating 4th of July In St. Augustine

(continued from page 1)

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 Drive 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 Liberty Tree—provided)



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Wednesday, July 15th

6:00 PM: Social Hour (meet the candidates one-on-one)
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709 Royal Road, 32086



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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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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