



Volume 19, No. 8

March, 2024

FOCUS

The Official Monthly Newspaper of Main Street Fort Pierce



Saint Patrick's Day Block Party!

On March 17th, the streets will come alive with festivities, music, and the spirit of the Irish. Whether you're Irish or just Irish-at-heart, everyone is invited to join in on the celebration.

SEE PAGE 13

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Sunday, 8 a.m. (English), All Year

Sunday, 9:30 a.m. (English), December 10th, 2023 thru April 7th, 2024

Sunday, 11:00 a.m. (Creole) or 10 a.m. when there is no 9:30 a.m. Mass

Come join us in worship, outreach, and celebration!



Notre Dame Catholic Church

Fort Pierce, Florida



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring Is In the Air!

by Donna Sizemore



Remember to set your clocks back on Sunday, March 10th or Saturday evening before you go to bed. The first day of Spring is March 19 — more sunshine and daylight to enjoy all that downtown Fort Pierce has to offer. This is a very exciting and busy time for *Main Street Fort Pierce*. In addition to our monthly *Friday Fest* and *Coffee with the Mayor* events we have several other events going on this Spring.

We are very excited to share with you that the *Main Street Fort Pierce Annual Reverse Raffle Event* will take place on Saturday evening April 20th at the *Pelican Yacht Club* on Hutchinson Island. This year's event is to be bigger and better than ever before and with the iconic theme of "It's Five O'clock Somewhere!" RIP Jimmy Buffet. More information and ticket sales will be available at the *Main Street Fort Pierce* website.

Main Street's mission is to preserve, promote and build on historic and natural treasures of our downtown waterfront and

the **Platts/Backus House** needs repairs/renovations so we've added an additional event this year to raise the funds — "Talk Derby to Me!" This event will take place on May 4th and the time will coincide with the actual Kentucky Derby. We plan to make this an annual event. There will be a limited number of tickets sold. Ladies start shopping for that perfect hat because there will be a hat contest! Men prepare your taste buds for Bourbon Tasting and maybe a horse race of your own. All proceeds from this event will go towards the restoration of the **Platts/Backus House**.

This house is stop #8 on the *Zora Neal Hurston Dust Tracks Heritage Trail*. AE (Bean) Backus was a friend of author Zora Neal Hurston. He was a self-trained artist who painted Florida landscapes. He launched the movement of the *Highwaymen* who were a group of artists around the Fort Pierce area who quickly created Florida folk art featuring landscapes from oil paints on Upson Board used as roof sheeting. From 1950-1980 they would anonymously sell the art out of the trunks of their cars on A1A and US 1 from Daytona to Miami.

After Backus became established as an artist he was able to purchase the Platt House built by Dr. Platts in 1896 at 122 Avenue C to use as a new art studio. It was close to his former studio so he would not lose clients from the move. He continued creating art here from 1960 until his death from a heart attack in 1990.

Today the original Platts-Backus House has been restored as the headquarters of Main Street Fort Pierce. The street in front of the house was renamed A.E. Backus Avenue in honor of Fort Pierce's famous artist. The house is now used as an art gallery and to host art exhibitions (<https://www.yelp.com/biz/historic-platts-backus-house-fort-pierce>). If this building could talk, can you imagine the stories that it would tell?

Speaking of art exhibitions. Hats off to an amazing *Art Show* in February, by Anita Prentice, Doretha Hair Truesdell and Jack Shelton and a huge thank you to all of those who attended.

In closing, I'd like to mention that *Main Street Fort Pierce* is looking to hire an Events Coordinator. This position is part-time. If you are interested, please visit <https://mainstreetfort-pierce.org/open-position-marketing-events>. *Happy Spring!* ❖



MAIN STREET FOCUS FORT PIERCE

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Mayor Linda Hudson invites you to join her for Community News, Special Announcements, Complimentary Steamworks Coffeebar coffee, Orchid Island Juice, Breakfast Treats, and more!

Friday, March 15, at 8:00 a.m. at the Fort Pierce Yacht Club
700 N. Indian River Drive

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HOSTED BY
Fort Pierce Yacht Club, Main Street Fort Pierce, Orchid Island Juice Company, Steamworks Coffeebar and Eatery and The City of Fort Pierce. Call *Main Street Fort Pierce* for more information at 772-466-3880.




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Join Us at *Friday Fest* on March 1st with Live Music by Checkmate

Calendar

Dine, Shop and Enjoy Beautiful, Historic, Downtown Fort Pierce!



Get the **DISTRX** app for all the latest downtown specials and events!

MONTHLY EVENTS

March 1, Friday: *FRIDAY FEST AT MARINA SQUARE* — 5:30 to 8:30 p.m.; live music by **Checkmate**; sponsored by **Cobbs Landing** and **Little Jims** restaurants; Please remove all vehicles from the permitted Friday Fest road closure area (Marina Way & Melody Lane) by 2:00 p.m.; *Facebook*—Main Street Fort Pierce, 466-3880; mainstreetfortpierce.org.

March 3, Sunday: *BACKUS MUSEUM JAZZ & JUICE EVENT* — 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

March 15, Friday: *COFFEE WITH THE MAYOR* — 8:00 a.m. at the **Fort Pierce Yacht Club**, 700 N. Indian River Dr.; *Sponsor* – **St. Lucie Historical Society**; *Facebook*—Main Street Fort Pierce, 466-3880; mainstreetfortpierce.org.

March 15, Friday: *ARTWALK* — 5 to 8:00 p.m.; Various studios and shops open throughout the downtown area; artstlucie.org.

March 16, Saturday: *FUN RUN FUNDRAISER FOR ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION MANATEE CENTER 5K* — 6:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m.; The Treasure Coast Manatee Foundation, in partnership with The Manatee Center, is hosting the annual Manatee Center 5K, 1 mile walk, and kids run.; TCMF Manatee Center 5K, One-Mile, & Kids Run (runsignup.com).

March 17, Sunday: *DOWNTOWN FORT PIERCE ST. PATRICK'S DAY BLOCK PARTY*— 12 p.m. to 11 p.m.

March 30, Saturday: *COLOR FORT PIERCE BEAUTIFUL EVENT HONORING EDWIN BINNEY* — 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.; Fort Pierce Riverwalk — Fort Pierce Art Club.

WEEKLY EVENTS

Wednesdays: *Wednesday Green Market & Food Co-Op* — rain or shine 12:00 to 6:00 p.m., Downtown Marina Square; 971-8480.

Saturdays: *The Jazz Market* — 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.; north side of the Downtown Fort Pierce Library; Jazz & Blues Society, 460-5299, jazzsociety.org.

Saturdays: *Ft. Pierce Farmer's Market* — 8:00 a.m. to Noon; Marina Square on Melody Lane; Market Manager, 940-1145.

LIVE MUSIC DOWNTOWN

Wine Down Wednesday
Fort Social in the Galleria on the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month, 6 to 8 p.m.
TheFortSteakhouse.com

Sailfish Brewing Company
facebook/Sailfish Brewing Company

Pierced Cider
Facebook @piercedcider

Cobbs Landing
cobbs-landing.com

Bottom's Up Public House
facebook.com/bottomsuppublichouse

121 Tapas on the Water
facebook.com/121tapasonthewater

SUNRISE THEATRE & SUNRISE BLACK BOX

772-461-4775 • sunrisetheatre.com
Tuesdays: *Jazz Jam at the Sunrise Black Box Theatre* — 7 to 10 p.m.; 460-5299; jazzsociety.org.

MANATEE OBSERVATION & EDUCATION CENTER

429-6266 • ManateeEducationCenter.org

DOWNTOWN FORT PIERCE LIBRARY

462-2787 • www.st-lucie.lib.fl.us/

SUNDAY DOWNTOWN CHURCH SERVICES

Common Ground Vineyard Church; 460-5414, commongroundvineyard.com.

First Church; 464-0440, firstchurchfp.org.

Fort Pierce Haitian United Methodist Church; 940-6728, haitianmethodist.org.

Notre-Dame Mission Catholic Church; 466-9617, notredamecc.com.

St. Andrews Episcopal Church (founded 1893); 461-5009 mystandrews.org.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION

A.E. Backus Museum
772-465-0630 • backusmuseum.com

Bud Adams Gallery of Historical Photographs
772-462-1795 • 2nd Floor of P.P. Cobb Building

Fort Pierce Police Athletic League
772-370-6162 • fortpiercepal.com
Volunteers needed: 772-466-0606

Fort Pierce Jazz & Blues Society
772-460-5299 • jazzsociety.org

Fort Pierce RiverWalk Center
600 North Indian River Drive
772-489-6473 • cityoffortpierce.com

Heathcote Botanical Gardens
772-464-4672 • heathcotebotanicalgardens.org

National Navy UDT-SEAL Museum
772-595-5845 • navysealmuseum.org

St. Lucie County Marine Center
772-462-3474 • stlucieco.gov/marine_center

St. Lucie County Regional History Center
772-462-1795 • stlucieco.gov/history

			
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Mayor's Message **Coast Guard's Historic Presence in Fort Pierce**

by Linda Hudson, Mayor, City of Fort Pierce



The *U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla 58*, which just celebrated its 80th birthday, and the *City of Fort Pierce* are pursuing a "Coast Guard City" designation by making special efforts to acknowledge the professional work of the *Coast Guard* men and women assigned to this area.

Coast Guard Cities regularly reach out to *Coast Guard* personnel and their families and make them feel at home in their "home away from home."

In Fort Pierce, since the mid-1930s, the *United States Coast Guard* (USCG) is part of the Miami sector. Its territory includes the waters from Sebastian to Stuart, and Lake Okeechobee. Station Fort Pierce, located at 900 Seaway Drive, safeguards the Treasure Coast specializing in search and rescue, maritime law enforcement and marine environmental protection. Created in 1790, the USCG is a maritime, military, multi-mission service unique among the United States eight

military branches for having a maritime law enforcement mission with jurisdiction in both domestic and international waters and a federal regulatory agency mission as part of its duties.

Since 1942, Flotilla 58, located at 1400 Seaway Drive, has been serving the boating public of Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County. During World War II, Flotilla 58 members used their boats to patrol the sea, performed many rescues, and patrolled the waters to prevent looting of wrecked vessels. Flotilla 58 provides direct support to the *Coast Guard* and the boating community in Boating Safety Courses, Vessel Safety Checks, Marine Recreational Boating Safety, Aviation and radio operations, and strong fellowship among members.

Fort Pierce is proud to have the *Coast Guard* in our city. Please consider reaching out to the command staff to see how you can contribute to the well-being, comfort and quality of life of these military personnel in our community. Contact USCG Fort Pierce Commander at 772-464-6100 or Flotilla 58 Commander Karl Hontz at hontzkarluscgaux58@gmail.com. ❖



RICHARD K. DAVIS CONSTRUCTION: HISTORY WITH A STRONG FUTURE



R.K. Davis Construction staff in front of the 46,800 s.f. Total Truck Parts building project in Port St. Lucie.

When Richard K. Davis ran away from his West Virginia home at 15-years old in 1945, he made his way to South Florida, traveling through Fort Pierce. Though he eventually returned home to West Virginia, Florida kept calling his name. After graduating from West Virginia University, marrying his high school sweetheart, Nancy, and being awarded a Purple Heart for his service in the Korean War, he moved his young family to Fort Pierce in 1958. Richard founded **Richard K. Davis Construction Corporation** in 1960 and, after 64 successful years, the company has become a professional and philanthropic leader on the Treasure Coast.



Mr. Richard K. Davis

Richard's son Douglas joined the company in 1980 after receiving his degree from the University of Florida. In 1997, when Richard retired, Douglas assumed the second-generation position of company President and steered the company through a new era utilizing his more than forty years of business experience. Douglas completed many notable projects during his tenure: the Humane Society of St. Lucie County, Expert Shutters in Port St. Lucie, and Palm City Presbyterian's Huizenga Family Life Center in Palm City.

Richard and Douglas were joined by associate Roger Priest in 1989. Roger graduated from Clemson University and used his technical training in design to assist with the company's many design/build construction projects. With Douglas' retirement in 2021, Roger continues as the company's President. Some of Roger's recognizable projects include Westside Church's grand 1,740 seat sanctuary, more than 350,000 s.f. of plant expansions for Pursuit Boats over the span of four years, Maverick Boat Group's expansion in 2021, and Trinity Episcopal Church in Vero Beach.

The company's future continues to look bright with the next incoming generation of family! Dalton Smith, Douglas' son-in-law, joined the company in 2019 and has already tackled significant construction projects like the 46,800 s.f. Total Truck Parts, a classroom building expansion for Christ Lutheran School in Port St. Lucie, and several projects for John's Island Club in Indian River Shores. Armed with a business administration degree from Florida Tech, Dalton will prove to be an asset to the company, guiding us with



The R. K. Davis Construction volunteer crew helped rebuild the Jaycee Park on Fort Pierce South Beach.

Richard K. DAVIS
CONSTRUCTION CORPORATION
CGC 013084 CCC 053853
P. O. Box 186, Fort Pierce, FL 34954
772.461.8335 | www.rkdavis.com

his business knowledge into many more prosperous years.

Brian "Andy" Chambliss, another soon-to-be son-in-law, joined the company in 2021 and hit the ground running. Andy took on long-time client Whole Family Health Center completing many projects in both Fort Pierce and Vero Beach. Andy, with a degree in biochemistry, gained a love for construction through past experience in building and maintaining cell towers. Current projects include a golf maintenance facility for McArthur Golf Club and an expansion for Prodim Systems in St. Lucie County.

Richard K. Davis' grandson, Nathan, graduated from Florida Tech with a construction management degree and joined the company last year. Nathan currently assists the other project managers while gaining great experience through their tutelage. He is already slated to manage his own projects in 2024.

The company's future continues to grow stronger with each new generation of project managers and administrative staff. ❖



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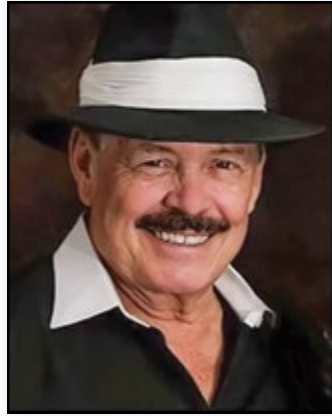
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In Loving Memory of Don Bestor, Jr. – Community Supporter and Music Aficionado



cover model.

Like his father, Bestor, Jr., was an accomplished professional musician, and whether you've dined at local favorites like **2nd Street Bistro**, upscale eateries like **Stuart's Café Martier**, or enjoyed Tuesday or Wednesday evening **Jazz Jams at the Sunrise Black Box**, the **Fort Pierce Yacht Club**, **Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens**, or any number of private parties, special events, and fundraising events between Jupiter and Sebastian, you've likely been entertained by the magic Bestor created on the keyboard. Locally, Don was often the man behind the soundtrack of many of your favorite events and activities here on the Treasure Coast because, for many years, Don served as the president of the **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society**, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the importance of music and music education and providing opportunities for live, professional music throughout the region.

Don Bestor, Jr., was born into music royalty, and he was fortunate enough to love music as much as it loved him. Don's father, who was his namesake, was the famed bandleader for the Jack Benny Radio Program and also the guy who came up with the jingle for J-E-L-L-O, and Don's mother, Beulah, was a

Like so many members of the **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society**, Bestor enjoyed a successful career as a professional musician and had the opportunity to play with and for some of the legends of show business. But you'd have to spend a lot of time with him before you were able to tease that information out of him because he's typically more likely to toot someone else's horn instead of his own. That tendency to help encourage up and coming musicians, particularly those who have a passion for performance music and potential, is one of the reasons why **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society**, a very small nonprofit organization, has been so successful for more than a quarter of a century.

Under Bestor's leadership, members of **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society** have provided master classes and performances in local schools, mentored some of the area's newest talent, and helped ensure that the art of live performance and the soundtrack of our lives will continue for generations to come. Since its inception, **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society** has provided more than \$100,000 in scholarships for area students pursuing a career in performance music or music education. Accomplishing all this with a small group of dedicated volunteers is nothing short of miraculous, but under Don's leadership, members of **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society** have proven to be believers in the magic of music and the miracles it makes.

To say that Don played the piano would be a colossal understatement. Don didn't just play a piano — his fingers on a keyboard had the ability to melt away the ivory and turn



the hammered vibrations of a keyboard and strings into something as smooth as butter or as light as a breath. Don Bestor, Jr., gave a piano life and turned that inanimate object into magical music. Whether it was sweet and soulful, bluesy or ballsy, rockin' or rich — it all depended on how Don wanted his audience to respond. He was not just good; he was more than masterful at the keyboard.

And while Don may not have achieved the kind of fame (or notoriety) his dad did, he became a legend in the hearts of all those he did meet and whose lives were touched by his musical magic and his lightning-fast sense of humor. It would be hard to find a single musician Don performed with during his lifetime career of making music who would not have at least one story of Don's world-class sense of humor and quick ability to launch a grenade of hilarity or send flying a snarky comeback. It would be even harder to find someone who didn't have a story about Don's generosity or love of music.

Last year, while he was battling the illness that was slowly robbing him of his breath, he and his beloved wife, Debbie, traveled to a place that had been advertised as a feline rescue facility. They rescued Sam, a cat whose back story was already tragic, but who was so secretly and profoundly ill that within hours of bringing him home, Don and Debbie were at an emergency veterinary facility trying to save Sam's life. Nearly ten thousand dollars later and after helping Sam defy the extraordinarily high odds of failure the vet had advised for an animal they'd just met, Don and Debbie were finally able to welcome a recuperating and exceptionally grateful and loving Sam into their family.

When asked if they had ever considered the cost involved and how much it impacted them financially, Don was shocked that such a question would even come up for consideration. After all, the little guy was sick and needed help, explained Don. He was equally loyal to friends and fellow musicians, too, and his heart had an abundance of space for helping young musicians who were serious about learning the craft, sharing suggestions, tips, connections, and helping to launch the musical dreams



of scores of youth through scholarships, mentoring, and connections they made as a result of their affiliation with the **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society**. But for Don, everything came back to making and sharing music. Everything.

Don Bestor wanted to play piano more than anything else — towards the end of his life, he shared that he wanted to play piano more than he wanted to breathe. During one hospital stay, he

had a keyboard brought into his room, and he performed and provided music for the other patients, nursing staff, and to help himself heal enough to go home, where he could go back to playing again. Even in the weeks when his days were filled with Hospice and hospitals, Debbie would become a roadie and carry all Don's equipment and set it up at a restaurant, club, or other gig, and Don would configure his oxygen tube and tank to be as discreet as possible before blowing the crowd away with his larger-than-life talent.

If you've enjoyed live music during the past 25 years on the Treasure Coast, there's a very distinct possibility that Don Bestor was either behind that music — or at least behind the keyboard. So many events, venues, restaurants, and activities that have happened in the area have had a soundtrack provided by Don or members of the **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society**.

Don died early in the morning on Wednesday, February 21st. And while the music will continue, just as Don would have wanted, all of us who had an opportunity to spend time with Don and enjoy his musical magic, are wandering through the world that is a little out of step today. It's as if, without Don, we're having a little trouble finding the right key. We know he would laugh about that and try to tactfully tap a little harder on a key note to help us out, and somehow, just knowing that helps us realize that, though he may have completed his concert here on earth, he's left behind a legacy of love, laughter, and music that all of us will carry with us until it's time to take our own final bow. We are grateful for Don Bestor, Jr., for his leadership of **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society**, is friendship and humor, and most of all, we are grateful to have been part of the magic of his music and the place he loved to call home. 🌹

City of Fort Pierce Water Resources



Did you know that **Fort Pierce Utilities Authority (FPUA)** provides drinking water to nearly 23,000 customers from the *City of Fort Pierce* and some of unincorporated St. Lucie County? The water is sourced from the Surficial Aquifer (~100 feet below the surface) and the Floridan aquifer (~1,000 feet below the surface), and is treated right here in Fort Pierce by **FPUA** water professionals. In fact, over 50 **FPUA** employees dedicate their daily work and careers to ensuring that your drinking water is safe, free from contaminants, and tasty too.

Every March, **FPUA's** Water Resources department competes in the "Best Tasting Drinking Water Competition" hosted by the *Florida American Water Works Association*. This is a fitting time for the competition because we also observe "World Water Day" on March 22 to bring attention to the importance of safe drinking water, and proper management of water resources for the Fort Pierce community.

FPUA's Water Resources department is committed to providing safe, high quality water to your tap every day. We are vigilant in meeting the challenges of new regulations, source water protection and water conservation in delivering water to your home. **FPUA** Water Resources ensures that the quality of finished water production from our water treatment plants meets or exceeds stringent federal and state drinking water requirements.

We operate two water treatment plants; one plant uses lime softening to purify drinking water from the Surficial Aquifer, while the other uses reverse osmosis for water from the Floridan Aquifer. Together, these plants serve nearly 23,000 water customers with clean, safe drinking water:

- 277 million gallons produced on average per month.
- 9 million gallons produced on average per day.

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Throughout the year, **FPUA** takes great pride in the quality of Fort Pierce's water, and great pride in our dedicated **FPUA** professionals that monitor the quality of the entire water distribution system. All **FPUA** water resource professionals and technicians are licensed by the *Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP)* with Level 3, Level 2 or Level 1 water operator licenses. Level 3 is the entry-level certification with Level 2 and Level 1 requiring progressively more technical knowledge and experience.

FPUA hosts annual *Water Distribution Certification* training for people who may be interested in a Water Resources career, as well as **FPUA** water resources professionals progressing in their career. The training is led by the *Florida Rural Water Association* and approved by the FDEP. The certification training provides proof of educational eligibility to sit for the State Water Distribution Certification Exam.

The **FPUA** Water Resources staff ensures that there will be plenty of water to meet the existing needs of Fort Pierce, continued city growth and health, as well as unincorporated St. Lucie County's needs. In addition to delivering excellent drinking water, the **FPUA** Water Resources Department provides fire protection to the city and surrounding service areas.

FPUA's Henry A. Gahn Drinking Water Plant hosts an onsite laboratory certified to perform drinking water testing required by state and federal environmental agencies. The findings of these tests are included in **FPUA's** Annual Water Quality Report.

Learn more about Fort Pierce's high-quality drinking water at: <https://fpua.com/WaterQualityReports>. ❖

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Celebrate *Saint Patrick's Day Block Party* in Beautiful Downtown Fort Pierce

Get ready to paint the town green as Downtown Fort Pierce gears up for an epic *Saint Patrick's Day Block Party!* On March 17th, from 12 p.m. to 11 p.m., the streets will come alive with festivities, music, and the spirit of the Irish.

Hosted by **Sailfish Brewery**, **2nd Street Bistro**, and **Public House**, this event promises a day filled with fun for all ages. Whether you're Irish or just Irish-at-heart, everyone is invited to join in on the celebration.

One of the highlights of the day will undoubtedly be the live music. Join us for the energetic rhythms of the *Jerzi Olivia Band*, the infectious melodies of *Jesse & The Thieves*, and the lively sounds of *Rezen 8*. These talented local bands will entertain the crowd with classic hits, setting the perfect backdrop for a day filled with unforgettable festivities.

Feeling hungry or thirsty? Indulge in a variety of treats and refreshing beverages. From Irish classics to modern pub grub, there's something to satisfy every craving. Grab a pint of Irish Red Ale crafted fresh from **Sailfish** or add some flare to your beverage with a bit of Irish luck green!

But that's not all! Don't miss the *Vendor's Village*, hosted by **Notions and Potions**, where local artisans and vendors will showcase their wares. From handmade crafts to unique gifts, you're sure to find something special to take home.



No Saint Patrick's Day celebration would be complete without the unmistakable sound of bagpipes filling the air. Prepare to be enchanted as skilled bagpipers take to the streets, adding a touch of tradition to the festivities.

And for the little leprechauns in your life, bounce houses will provide hours of entertainment and laughter. Let them expend their energy while you kick back and enjoy the lively atmosphere.

So, gather your lucky charms, shake off the dust from your finest green attire, and prepare for a day filled with luck, laughter, and leprechaun-inspired shenanigans in Downtown Fort Pierce. And don't overlook the convenience of free parking available at the Downtown Fort Pierce parking garage. It's bound to be a shamrockin' good time! ♣

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Show Your Fort Pierce Pride by Volunteering at the 2024 Great American Cleanup on Saturday, March 9

Residents, visitors, business owners, and organizations in Fort Pierce are invited to participate in the **2024 Great American Cleanup**, an annual community event aimed at enhancing the beauty and cleanliness of the city. Hosted by the *City of Fort Pierce* and *Keep Fort Pierce Beautiful*, this year's cleanup will take place on Saturday, March 9, from 8:00 a.m. to noon.

Participants can look forward to a rewarding experience as they join forces with fellow community members to undertake various beautification projects throughout Fort Pierce. Whether it is sprucing up the downtown area, cleaning along Moore's Creek Linear Park, or tidying up Causeway Park near South Bridge, there are numerous opportunities for volunteers to make a meaningful impact.

To kick off the event, volunteers will gather at the **Manatee Center** parking lot at 480 N. Indian River Drive at 8:00 a.m. Upon arrival, they will receive a complimentary breakfast to fuel their efforts, along with t-shirts, safety gear, and goody bags (while supplies last). Teams will be formed, and supplies distributed, ensuring that everyone is well-equipped to tackle their designated projects.

For those who prefer to pick up their supplies in advance, arrangements can be made to collect them at the Public Works Compound, located at 52 Savannah Rd. in Fort Pierce. Advance pickup is available on Wednesday, March 6, from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m., or Friday, March 8, from 8 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The **Great American Cleanup** is not just about sprucing up the city; it is also an opportunity for students to earn community service hours for scholarships and graduation. Additionally, it encourages group participation, making it an ideal activity for families, businesses, civic organizations,

sports teams, schools, churches, and other community groups to come together and give back.

In conjunction with the cleanup efforts, Fort Pierce will also be celebrating Arbor Day on March 9. The city will mark the occasion by dedicating a tree at the *Jetty Park* roundabout on Seaway Drive and A1A, with the ceremony beginning at 10 a.m. This dedication underscores Fort Pierce's commitment to effective urban forest management, a dedication recognized with the *Tree City USA* designation for thirty-five consecutive years by the *National Arbor Day Foundation*.

To register for the **2024 Great American Cleanup** and be a part of this impactful community initiative, interested volunteers can sign up online at <https://cityoffortpierce.com/383/Great-American-Cleanup>.

Join us as we come together to beautify and strengthen the vibrant community of Fort Pierce! #lovethafort #cleanthefort #keepfortpiercebeautiful. ❖

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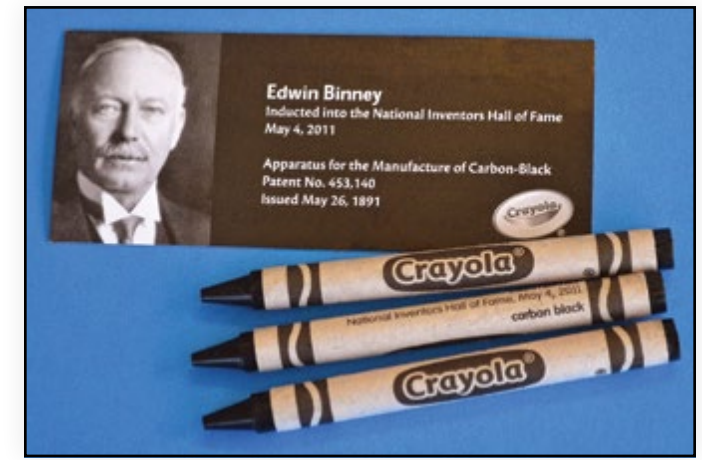
Inaugural Color Fort Pierce Beautiful Event is Calling All Crayola® Crayon Lovers

The monument and fountain are gone and with them the knowledge of the many contributions to Fort Pierce and St. Lucie County by Edwin Binney, the creator of Crayola® Crayons and CEO of Binney & Smith, today known as Crayola®.

The Fort Pierce Art Club's **Color Fort Pierce Beautiful** event will honor Edwin Binney, on Saturday, March 30 from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. at the *Fort Pierce Riverwalk Park*, 600 Indian River Drive. The event will include a visual history tour of Edwin Binney and his family in St. Lucie County by the **St. Lucie County History Museum**. The event is free to the public.

The event will also include a mini-Crayola® Experience where people of all ages can learn about the history of Edwin Binney in St. Lucie County and play with the company's creative art tools.

Three Crayola® Corporate Executives from Easton, Pennsylvania, are scheduled to attend the Saturday event and to see



Binney's much loved city and county on March 30th. Crayola® continues to manufacture crayons with the same formula loved by parents, educators, and artists for over 120 years.

The March 30th **Color Fort Pierce Beautiful** event will include the unveiling of a new portrait by local artist, Bezo, in the morning at a special VIP breakfast for sponsors and other officials. Children will be invited to judge the *Edwin Binney Look Alike Contest* for Fort Pierce's first honorary "Edwin Binney" and give the award.

In 2023, the club submitted a nomination for Edwin Binney to be in the *Florida Hall of Fame* for his philanthropic contributions. We are still awaiting the outcome of the nomination.

Go to www.fortpierceartclub.org for up-to-date information on the event at the *Fort Pierce Riverwalk*, 600 Indian River Drive from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

If you wish to be a sponsor of the event, contact Rodger Stone at 518-378- 6546. Sponsors will get to meet and speak with the Crayola® at the VIP Breakfast held from 9 a.m. until 10 a.m. at the **Fort Pierce Yacht Club**, 700 Indian River Drive, Fort Pierce, before the main event opens at Riverwalk. ❖

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Art of the Fantastic Features Original, Timeless Works of Adventure and Fantasy Illustration at the Backus Museum

The A.E. Backus Museum presents the *Art of the Fantastic: Imaginative Illustration from the Korshak Collection*, on view March 8 through April 28. The *Korshak Collection* features works by pioneering artists from over a century of published science fiction, horror, and fantasy. These original adventure



AE Backus Museum & Gallery
Outdoor Mural Plaza

and fantasy illustrations appeared on the covers and pages of timeless novels, and in classic pulp magazines from the 1930s through 1960s such as *Amazing Stories*, *Weird Tales*, *Fantastic Adventures*, and *Wonder Stories*. The exhibition features 40 works from this notable private collection by such masters as Aubrey Beardsley, Arthur Rackham, Gustave Doré, Howard Pyle, Virgil Finlay, Kelly Freas, J. Allen St. John, Frank



The Brothers Hildebrandt (Greg b. 1939; Tim 1939-2006). *The Balrog*, 1977. Acrylic on board, 35 x 42 in. Courtesy of the Korshak Collection.



Rogers, Hubert (1898-1982). *Crisis in Utopia*, 1940. Oil on board, 21 x 21.5 in. Courtesy of the Korshak Collection.

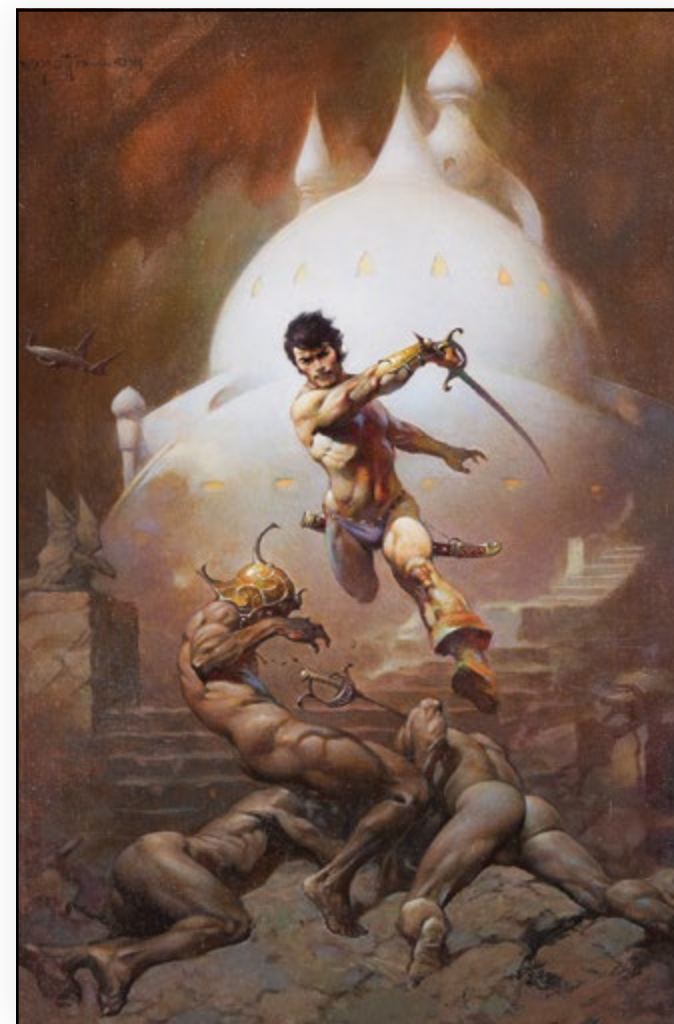
Frazetta, and Michael Whelan. With outstanding images of Martian princesses, Arthurian legends, ethereal fairies, alien invaders, imaginative pasts and fanciful, uncertain futures, *Art of the Fantastic* is far and away a superb survey of the extraordinary. The exhibition will be on view starting next

month at the **Backus Museum** located at 500 North Indian River Drive in Historic Downtown Fort Pierce.

As a young man, Stephen Korshak, founder of the Collection, grew up and was inspired by great art in his home. His father, Erle Korshak, was the publisher of the pioneering science fiction book company, *Shasta Publishers*. Shasta ushered

in the transition of important science fiction literature from magazines printed on cheap pulp paper to hardcover, library-quality books. Much of that art lived with Korshak at his home and at his father's company office in Chicago.

In the past, many art scholars differentiated fine art from illustration, but today illustration is regularly regarded as fine art with many talented artists choosing to work in this field. A few of the best-known artists who worked in illustrated fine art include Norman Rockwell, Maxfield Parrish, and Andy Warhol, all of whose work has been used in advertisements, magazines, and featured in fine art exhibitions.



Frazetta, Frank (1928-2010). *Swords of Mars and Synthetic Men of Mars*, 1974. Oil on canvas board, 19 x 13 in. Courtesy of the Korshak Collection.

The full *Korshak Collection* consists of approximately 100 paintings, drawings, and etchings of published illustration including works from classic and notable contemporary fiction stories such as Edgar Rice Burroughs's *Tarzan of the Apes* and John Carter/ *The Princess of Mars*, J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Goethe's *Faust*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Edgar Allan Poe's *The Pit and the Pendulum*, and Cervantes's *Don Quixote*, among others.

"It wasn't so long ago that there were rigid boundaries and gatekeepers that felt it was important to keep the artistic creations borne from popular culture at a distance and separate

Continued on page 18 ...



Rackham, Arthur (1867-1939). *Alice's Adventure in Wonderland*, 1907. Pen and ink with watercolor on paper, 10.5 x 7 in. Courtesy of the Korshak Collection.

BACKUS MUSEUM ... continued from page 17



Fortescue-Brickdale, Eleanor (1871-1945). The Moth, 1917. Watercolor and gouache on paper, 11.5 x 18.5 in. Courtesy of the Korshak Collection.

from art for art's sake," says Backus Museum Executive Director, J. Marshall Adams. "Those old boundaries are dissolving or have vanished as people today focus on the art, the skill, and the imagination required to enchant the viewer, to instill wonder and make concrete what was only a dream before. Art of the Fantastic is for viewers who love art, for readers who appreciate a good visual story, and for the geeks and nerds who have inherited the earth today and are drawn to marvel at the classics."

Art of the Fantastic: Imaginative Illustration from the Korshak Collection's opening reception will be held on Friday, March 15 from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m., with remarks at 6:30 p.m. Current members are always free; not-yet members are \$20 – or join this evening as a member for 12 months of inspiring arts and culture. ❖



Bok, Hannes (1914-1964). A Rose for Ecclesiastes, 1963. Gouache on illustration board, 11 x 16 in. Courtesy of the Korshak Collection.

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City of Fort Pierce Calls for Youth Award Nominations

Are you inspired by a middle or high school student who has gone above and beyond to accomplish an achievement, excelled in academics or athletics, or has overcome personal adversity to create a positive change in their life or for those around them? The Mayor and Commissioners want to hear from you!

The City Commission is accepting nominations for the first-ever City of Fort Pierce Youth Award Recognition Program. The deadline to submit nominations is Sunday, March 31.

This award program seeks to showcase the talents, celebrate the achievements, and highlight the positive efforts of our youth to improve Fort Pierce. Twice during the year, our citizens, business owners, and social and civic leaders have the opportunity to actively demonstrate their support for the young people in our community and recognize them for their accomplishments.

To nominate a deserving youth, please complete the online

nomination form. Nominees must meet the following award eligibility requirements:

- Reside in the City of Fort Pierce.
- Provide proof of address.
- Have a cumulative GPA of 2.8 or higher.
- Be in the middle or high school.
- Be of good character.
- Must meet the award eligibility criteria.

Youth can be nominated in six categories:

1. Innovator Award
2. Beyond the View
3. Humanitarian Award
4. Visionary Award
5. Role Model Award
6. Student-Athlete Award

Award recipients will be announced in June 2024. For more information, please visit the Youth Award Recognition Program. If you have questions, please contact Audria V. Moore, at 772.467.3184 or amoore@cityoffortpierce.com.

Call For Artists – Applications Now Open

Are you ready to be part of a transformative project that enhances our city's cultural vibrancy? Following the tremendous success of the inaugural PAD Mural Program, the Fort Pierce Redevelopment Agency (FPRA) is thrilled to announce the launch of the second phase of this artistic initiative.

Important: If you applied during the previous cycle through Survey Monkey, please note that due to technical difficulties, you will need to reapply to be considered for this round. New Application Platform: Café at www.callforentry.org.

The PAD Mural Program aims to turn key locations in Fort Pierce into captivating works of art, contributing to the aesthetic appeal of our beloved city. This initiative not only beautifies our surroundings but also provides a unique platform for local artists to showcase their talents. Why participate?

Contribute to Community Identity: Your artwork will become an integral part of Fort Pierce's visual identity, fostering a sense of pride and unity among residents.

Showcase Your Creativity: The Mural Program provides a canvas for you to express your creativity, reaching a wider audience and leaving a lasting impact.

Support Cultural Vibrancy: Join us in our mission to revitalize and celebrate the unique character of Fort Pierce, making our city an even more vibrant and culturally rich place to live.

How to apply: visit www.callforentry.org to access the new application platform. Submit your application and be part of the artistic movement that is shaping the future of Fort Pierce. The application deadline is March 13.

Let's come together to create art that transforms our city and showcases the incredible talent within our community. If you have any questions or encounter issues during the application process, please visit the city's website at <https://cityoffortpierce.com/1056/Peacock-Arts-District-Mural-Program>.

Thank you for being a crucial part of the Fort Pierce arts community. We can't wait to see your artistic visions come to life on our city's walls! #lovethafort #paintthepad. ❖



Love, JAZZ Community: Coming in Like a Lion

by Don Bestor

March — whether it comes in like a lion or a lamb, it is one of the best months of all on the Treasure Coast, and the reason is simple. March is the month that includes **Jazz Week!** What? You don't know what **Jazz Week** is, my friend? Well, grab a chair, and I'll try to give you a quick definition of a week that completely defies adequate description — unless of course, you have the sound turned up and something cold and refreshing to drink in one hand while you wave at old friends with the other.

Jazz Week is a magical week of music, merriment, and friendship that is produced and hosted every single year (except during that dreadful year of the pandemic when we all stayed home and missed music, merriment, and much more). Members of the **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society**, along with other talented musicians from throughout the country, put together a week of musical concerts, activities, and entertainment

as their way of thanking the community for supporting live music all year long. The week includes concerts and jams to suit everyone's taste, and most of the events are absolutely free.

The week kicks off on Sunday afternoon, March 17th with **Waterside Blues**, a free afternoon of live music held right on Melody Lane in beautiful and historic downtown Fort Pierce, where the fountains will spray and keep you almost as cool as the breeze from the Indian River which serves as the backdrop, and the music is sweet and spicy all at the same time. The fun will start at 12:30 p.m. and continue through the afternoon. You can bring a lawn chair or blanket, and there will be chairs set up in case you forget, too. Refreshments will be available all afternoon long, and this year is extra special because **Waterside Blues** just happens to fall on St. Patrick's Day, which means there is even more reason to celebrate — and what better way than with a free concert by the water?



But that's just the start of **Jazz Week '24**, so buckle up and get ready for even more. We'll give you Monday off to get over your Sunday hangover from the combination of St. Patrick's Day celebrating and all the dancing you'll be doing at **Waterside Blues**, but we'll be back at it on Tuesday, in the same spot right by the water on Melody Lane, with a free lunchtime concert from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. You can bring your lunch or visit any one of the amazing eateries in downtown Fort Pierce, and of course you'll enjoy the sunshine, briny breeze, and smooth music on a Tuesday as **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society's** gift to you.

On Wednesday evening, the fun shifts to **Port St. Lucie Botanical Gardens** for **Jam in the Gardens**, where you're welcome to sit in with the band and belt out a tune or blow your own horn for a bit. And there's lots of other stuff planned



for **Jazz Week '24**, but if we tell you all about it now, you might forget before the festival begins. Why not just mark your calendar now and plan to be part of the fun starting Sunday, March 17th with **Waterside Blues**?

In case you didn't know, **Fort Pierce Jazz and Blues Society** is all about keeping our ticket prices very low to ensure it's not a

hardship for you and to give everyone a chance to enjoy great music, and we work hard all year long to raise funds to provide scholarships for up-and-coming young musicians to keep live music alive. It's our commitment to you, and it's our in-the-flesh expression of our love for the music and the community which helps to feed that love and keep it alive and thriving. If you'd like to show your love, please consider becoming a member, stopping by a **Jazz Jam** any Tuesday evening, or visiting us at www.jazzsociety.org, or call (772) 460-JAZZ today. ❖

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VERO BEACH - FORT PIERCE

The Peacock House Art Foundation Begins Artist in Residence Program

by Dale van der Lugt

Founded in 2022, *The Peacock House Art Foundation* is located in a 1920s era home adorned with mosaic tiled columns, murals and stained glass, enhanced by lush gardens introducing a botanical paradise of plants, fountains, sculptures, and statuary. As a non-profit organization, *The Peacock House Art Foundation*, TPHAF, offers an *Artist in Residence Program* where artists are given a space to reside while providing them with the resources and tools to create. Multi-cultural and international artists from Miami, New York, Stockholm, Orebro, and other locations are invited to come and be inspired while they create art utilizing different mediums such as paints, clay, iron and other metals and many other mediums of their choice.



Artist Maria Larsson of Sweden is currently residing and creating at, what she fondly calls, *The Peacock House*. Maria is from Orebro, Sweden where she lives with her cat Tigerella and was discovered by two of TPHAF board members while visiting her exhibition at the local Orebro council's gallery. Maria studied at the Cardiff School of Art & Design in the UK and has her Bachelor of Arts Degree in Ceramics. She chose Cardiff for its long tradition of ceramics in its art program and became a ceramicist and what she calls a "maker" using clay as her medium and finding ways to express herself with it, "seeing where it will take her." Maria also enjoys drawing, painting, and creating with paper mâché.

Maria's specialty is figurative sculpture of the human condition where she attempts to convey feeling and emotion in her work that evolves from first a doodle on paper that soon morphs into a sketch that later becomes the inspiration for a new piece. She finds that much of her work comes from her subconscious

in dreams and has been developing an identity with her art as a maker while searching for her niche. That niche has recently developed into a real curiosity with kinetic art and she feels "this may be it" as her fascination has been in animation for quite some time and would like to explore more while here. Maria says staying at *The Peacock House* has been very inspiring and she keeps pinching herself every day, asking herself, "Am I really here?" "Am I dreaming? I'm on a different continent while having a wonderful time."

Meanwhile, Maria plans on being as productive as possible while attending the *Artist in Residence Program* here with *The Peacock House Art Foundation*, sketching for many hours in her mornings while sitting on the back porch of

The Peacock House, being visited by her muses, the peacocks, and drawing whatever comes to her. She has in mind a large piece to adorn one of the gardens at the center and while here will produce mostly works in porcelain and other types of clay. She looks forward to a show at the end of her stay, so be on the lookout for future announcements regarding this and other art related events in collaboration with *The Peacock House Art Foundation*. Open studios for the community will be available soon.

Recently, *The Peacock House Art Foundation* partnered with the *City of Fort Pierce* to install multiple murals on local walls in *The Peacock Arts District* whose locations can be found by searching #PaintThePAD on social media.

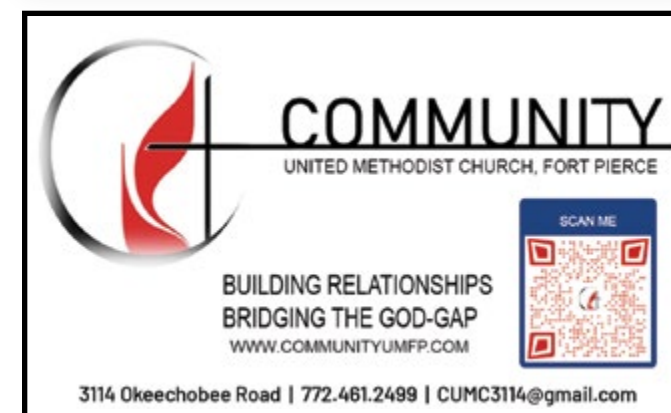
Maria's works can be found on Instagram @marialarsson-artist and her website @marialarssonart.com. To learn more about *The Peacock House Art Foundation* visit their website @thepeacockhouseartfoundation.com. ❖

The Zora Experience Festival Set to Ignite Fort Pierce, March 29–30

Get ready for an unforgettable celebration as the *Zora Experience Festival* takes center stage on March 29–30, at 809 N. 9th Street in Fort Pierce.

This two-day extravaganza promises an immersive cultural experience, bringing together the vibrant spirit of the community and the legacy of Zora Neale Hurston. Attendees can anticipate a diverse array of activities, including live performances, art installations, culinary delights, local bands, a prayer walk for the *City of Fort Pierce*, a children's literacy corner, lively panel discussions, book talks, poetry, tours, and much more.

The festival aims to showcase the rich tapestry of Fort Pierce's cultural heritage and create a space where individuals of all backgrounds can come together to celebrate diversity and unity. Don't miss The *Zora Experience Festival 2024*! It is sure to be an amazing time this Easter weekend. Come and enjoy something for the whole family.



Save the date and join us at the *Zora Experience Festival* for a weekend of excitement, creativity, and community bonding. Be part of an event that transcends boundaries and leaves a lasting impact on the heart of Fort Pierce.


For more information and updates, visit: <https://zorafoundationmuseum.com/the-foundation>. ❖



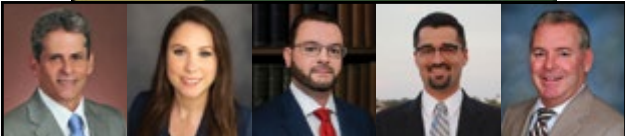


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Fort Pierce Yacht Club March Happenings

by Robynn Holland, FPYC Community Liaison

The Fort Pierce Yacht Club held their *Annual Directors Reception* at the FPYC on Sunday, January 21 to introduce the newly elected Board of Directors. The 2024 FPYC Directors are: Commodore – Linda Sampson; Vice Commodore/House – Susie Boardman; Vice Commodore/Fleet – Victoria Westphal; Vice Commodore / Building and Grounds – Bob Harbison; Treasurers – Pete Jackson and Vic Batista; Secretary and Membership – Steve Jaroski, Purser, Lou Tomasovic, and Robynn Holland, Community Liaison.

At the annual joint meeting of the *FPYC Board of Directors* and the *FPYC Foundation Board of Trustees*, the following were elected to the *FPYC Foundation Board of Trustees*: Robynn Holland, Suzi Boardman, Victoria Westphal and Christa Stone for a one-year term, and Kris Muus and Bob Harbison for a two year term. Robynn Holland was elected to continue as chair, and Kris Muus was elected to serve as vice chair.

The *FPYC Foundation*, a 501(c)3, is the charitable arm of the **Fort Pierce Yacht Club**, and raises money to support the mission of the FPYC. The mission of the FPYC, organized in 1980 as an all-volunteer yacht club, includes promoting safe boating and clean water, and a commitment to be involved in the Fort Pierce community. The *FPYC Foundation* dovetails



L to R: Lou Tomasovic, Victoria Westphal, Bob Harbison, Linda Sampson, Steve Jaroski, Suzi Boardman, Vic Batista, Pete Jackson (not pictured, Robynn Holland).

its mission with the FPYC by raising money to support: stewardship of the Indian River Lagoon; activities and programs which support safe boating; and programs which support the FPYC community mission. The majority of donations given through the *FPYC Foundation* are aimed at supporting activities focused on the “water.”

The *FPYC Foundation* has three major events planned for

2024: *Chart Your Course*, a maritime and marine career expo/work readiness event for middle and high school students; the *Charitable Poker Run on the Water*, the major fund raiser for the *FPYC Foundation* (April 27); and the fund raiser in November to support *Chart Your Course*.

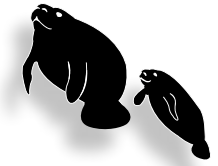
Please mark your calendars for Saturday, April 27, 2024, for the **Fort Pierce Yacht Club Foundation Charitable Poker Run on the Water**. Co-chairs for this year are Bob Harbison, Suzi Boardman, and Victoria Westphal. The **2023 Charitable Poker Run on the Water** benefited an Indian River State College student by awarding a scholarship for her summer internship at *FAU Harbor Branch*, as well as providing funding to the *Treasure Coast Youth Sailing Foundation*, the *Fort Pierce Police Department Courageous Kids* program, *Wesley Island Eco Camp* and the **Manatee Observation and Education Center**. ❖

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Ecology 101: Invasive Species

by Manatee Center Volunteer John D. Pinsof, Ph.D.



As you know, ecosystems are very diverse and contain a wide variety of unique living organisms. For example, the *Florida Everglades* represents a wetland ecosystem filled with thousands of different species, many of them microscopic, each interacting with other organisms and carrying out their ecologic roles in balance with one other. When a new species enters an established ecosystem, oftentimes the delicate natural balance that had been in place for hundreds or thousands of years can be drastically altered, sometimes leading to irreparable damage.

Let's start with some basic terms. An introduced species — also called a nonnative or exotic species — is an organism that has been transported (either intentionally or unintentionally) to regions outside of their native range. It is common for large oceanic ships to pump ballast water in and out of their tanks, thereby transporting small organisms and/or their eggs from ocean to ocean. Insects can bore into wooden shipping boxes and be transported to a new country. For some introduced species, there are two general fates: the introduced species may successfully blend into the new ecosystem without upsetting the balance or it will quickly die out because there are not enough resources for it to survive.

On the other hand, an invasive species is an introduced species that takes domination of an ecosystem by, 1) breeding in excessive numbers, 2) preying upon or killing native species, and/or, 3) depleting its natural resources. The success of an invasive species can be due to several factors, the most important being the lack of native predators in the new ecosystem. Invasive species can also cause damage to domesticated plants and animals, inflict human disease, and even lead to the extinction of native species.

Florida is an exceptionally welcoming location for invasive species to colonize and thrive. Most people are familiar with the Burmese python, lionfish, and cane toads. Unfortunately, the list of our state's invasive species goes on and on — there are over five hundred more. According to a recent study by the University of Florida, there is potential in the near future for at least 40 more species to invade Florida's ecosystems. This new round of invaders includes alewives (a type of herring), zebra mussels, and crab-eating macaque monkeys.

Florida is not the only place suffering damage to its ecosystems and bearing the associated economic costs. A recent report from the United Nations estimates the annual worldwide losses due to invasive species is more than \$423 billion dollars, that number having been quadrupled in every decade since 1970. Efforts aimed at eradicating invasive species from an area have had mixed results, for example the removal of red swamp crayfish from Clay County, Minnesota in 2022.

As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Thus, we should be concentrating on preventing invasive species from getting established in the first place as opposed to spending millions of dollars trying to remove them once they arrive. One needs to look no further for an optimistic outcome than when “murder hornets” from Asia first appeared in the Pacific Northwest and the efforts taken to protect native honeybee hives.

Learn more about the ecology of the *Indian River Lagoon* and its inhabitants at the **Manatee Observation and Education Center** located at 480 Indian River Drive in downtown Fort Pierce or find us online at www.ManateeEducationCenter.org. ❖

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Blue, Gold, and Green of March

by Captain Bo Samuel



It's time to try your luck at fishing with some tips and insights about what we catch in March. We're already lucky to live on the Treasure Coast because the waters here are an absolute angler's dream! Inshore and offshore fishing in March produces great catches like kingfish, redfish, cobia, snapper, grouper, snook, and sheepshead. Just keep an eye on the weather and take full advantage of those days when the winds are low.



Snook fishing is the main focus for many anglers with pilchards, pinfish, and croakers being top bait choices. Look for them around bridges, docks, jetties, and mangroves with fast moving currents. The key is to keep the drag tight and be ready to set back on the rod when a snook is hooked. If you're lucky enough to land one in the slot, between 28 inches and 32 inches, you'll have a great fish story and a great fish dinner! Sheepshead have been plentiful on the inshore reefs. I recommend light tackle with 30-pound fluorocarbon leader, a quarter ounce jig, and live shrimp. Spanish mackerel are also being

caught on the inshore reefs and are great for smoking and making smoked fish dip.

The snapper have been chewing offshore on the 60-90 foot reefs so bottom fishing is a great strategy. Use live bait or cut-bait with enough weight to keep your bait on bottom. Although the warmer waters of April produce more mahi, March can also be a good time to troll for these beautiful, intense-fighting fish. Mahi are known for their distinctive turquoise, green, and yellow colors plus their amazing ac-

robatics when hooked. Some call them the prettiest fish in the sea.

Our *Fishy Photo* is Fabricio holding a stellar snook!

So, if you're looking for that famous pot o' gold, get out on the blue and make your own luck! Our Treasure Coast has amazing fishing and the best bait and tackle shops around like **DeBrooks Fishing Corner** and my home base of **Little Jim Bait & Tackle**. Wishing you a St. Patrick's Day that includes a bit of luck *Pullin Drag!* ❖

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The Total Solar Eclipse on April 8th 2024 is a Once-in-a-Lifetime Event

by Kim Freetly, owner of Palm Sport and Wellness

There happens to be a total solar eclipse about every 18 months somewhere across the planet earth. The "Path of Totality" shifts, bends, crosses oceans, and traverses continents. It is in this path that broad daylight suddenly turns dark. The bright skies of the day are replaced by twinkling stars against a twilight backdrop. The temperature drops 10 degrees. Crickets sing, flowers turn away and close their petals, nocturnal creatures emerge from hiding. During this eclipse Mercury, Saturn, and Venus will be visible in the dark skies. A total solar eclipse happens when the Sun, Earth, and moon are precisely aligned. The moon passes in front of the sun and casts a shadow onto earth. The last North American eclipse was in 2017. The eclipse in April will be exceptional in that the moon is closer to earth than usual and will appear to be larger. The path will be wider, between 80 and 115 miles, and travel a great distance between Mexico and the Canadian sea. Complete darkness will last approximately 4



minutes and 20 seconds. This is the longest time recorded on American soil. Millions of people are expected to travel from about 50 countries to witness this stunning event. From Central Florida we will see about 60% of the shadow, so the darkness will be subtle. The next total solar eclipse in the Americas will be in 2044. It will begin in Greenland and sweep through Canada, Montana, and the Dakotas. When viewing this event be sure to wear special protective eyewear designed to view eclipses. ❖

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