

District title hopefuls Nease, St. Augustine rumble in Week 7

THE ST. AUGUSTINE

SPORTS, 1B

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2021

STAUGUSTINE.COM | PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Judge orders Texas to suspend new abortion law

H(I)

Paul J. Weber ASSOCIATED PRESS

AUSTIN, Texas – A federal judge ordered Texas to suspend the most restrictive abortion law in the U.S., calling it an "offensive deprivation" of a constitutional right by banning most abortions in the nation's second-most populous state since September.

The order Wednesday by U.S. District Judge Robert Pitman is the first legal blow to the Texas law known as Senate Bill 8, which until now had withstood a wave of early challenges. In the weeks since the restrictions took effect, Texas abortion providers say the impact has been "exactly what we feared."

But abortion services in Texas might not instantly resume even with the law on hold because doctors still fear they could be sued without a more permanent legal decision. Texas officials swiftly told the court of their intention to seek a reversal from the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, which previously allowed the restrictions to take effect.

Planned Parenthood said it was hopeful the order would allow clinics to resume abortion services as soon as possible.

In a 113-page opinion, Pitman took Texas to task over the law, saying Republican lawmakers had "contrived an unprecedented and transparent

See ABORTION, Page 6A

A decade in the works



COMING SUNDAY

Hurricane Matthew 5 years later We look at how St. Johns County has changed since the Category 5 hurricane ripped through the area.



10 things you might know about Ripley's Believe It or Not!

Colleen Michele Jones St. Augustine Record USA TODAY NETWORK

Supporters of the tag! Children's Museum participate in a groundbreaking ceremony at the property, located near the city's Shipyards district, on Thursday. PROVIDED BY BONNIE HAYFLICK

St. Augustine finally breaks ground on tag! museum

Colleen Michele Jones

St. Augustine Record USA TODAY NETWORK

After several false starts over more than a decade, organizers behind the tag! Children's Museum announced Thursday they are officially breaking ground on the project planned for a 4acre parcel near St. Augustine's Shipyards.

A children's museum for the city has been in the works since at least 2010, but the venture has been marred by delays in fundraising, as well as changes in leadership and property sites over the years.

Thursday, museum administrators,

donors and community leaders gathered to mark the beginning of the construction of Phase I, which will include indoor and outdoor spaces and is expected to open by winter 2022, according to tag! Executive Director, Kim MacEwan.

Many of the facility's galleries and amenities are named after benefactors such as the Lastinger Big Backyard, the Florida Blue Healthy Gardens, The Cofrin Family Tree Story Garden and The PLAYERS Championship STEM programming.

The "Discovery" center, as all of Phase I is called, carries the namesake of the Newman Family Foundation led by St. Johns County residents Chuck and Diane Newman.

The Newmans recently provided a large monetary gift which allowed the museum to reignite momentum and get the project back on track, Janice Dusseau Jones, the museum's board of directors chair, told The Record.

Jones said that while the museum's nonprofit foundation was still \$2 million shy of its \$7 million goal, construction will begin now even as the fundraising campaign moves toward closing the gap.

Chuck Newman said he believed investing in a strong cultural resource in St. Augustine would pay off.

See MUSEUM, Page 4A

"The strange, the bizarre, the unexpected. ..."

Those were the words that opened every episode of the "Ripley's Believe It or Not!" television series which premiered on NBC in 1949, founded by American entrepreneur Robert Ripley.

The phenomenon — introducing viewers to things as equally grotesque as they were wondrous — stuck, and the Ripley brand has continued to evolve into a global enterprise more than 70 years later.

The first Ripley's Believe It of Not! museum was established in St. Augustine shortly after Ripley's death in 1949, and opened in 1950. It continues to welcomes guests to this day.

The castle

The castle itself, a former hotel located at 19 San Marco Ave., was the first museum Ripley opened to showcase some of the amazing artifacts he had collected in his extensive travels around the world. It served as the exterior for many segments of the TV series, including the opening credits.

See RIPLEY'S, Page 4A



🔵 USA TODAY

Pfizer eyes youth: Seeks approval for reduced dose of COVID-19 vaccine for children ages 5 to 11. **5A**

Calendar of events

Top 5 things to do in St. Augustine this week. **Compass, 3C**

Weather

High 83° | Low 71° Forecast, **6B** Volume 128 | No. 280 Home delivery pricing inside Subscribe 888-424-8742 ©2021 \$2.00



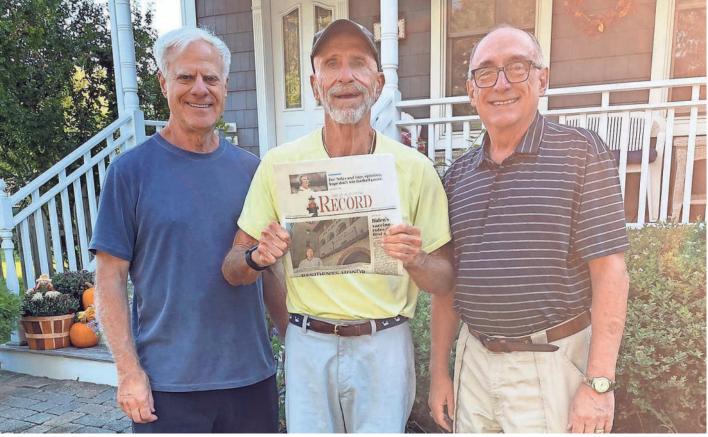
LIFE IN StA

TAKE ME HOME



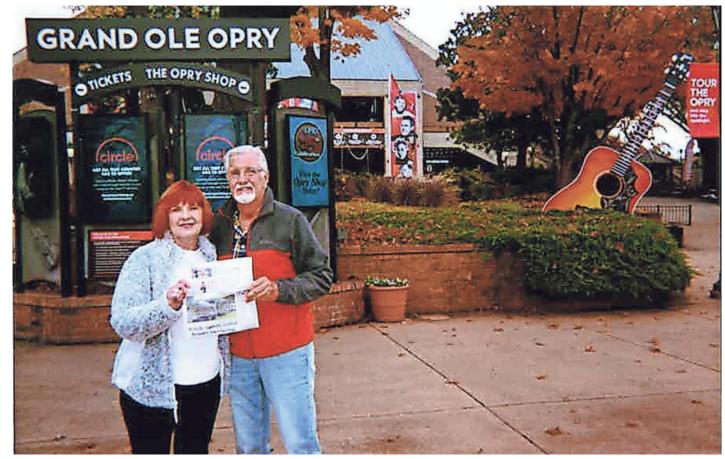
Sheila, a young female Siberian husky and Labrador Retriever mix, is available for adoption from SAFE Pet **Rescue of Northeast Florida. Dog** adoption fees are \$300 for puppies and pure breeds, \$250 for small breed adults, \$200 for mix breeds 6 months to 7 years and \$75 for mix breeds 8 years and older. Vaccinations and heartworm tests are up to date. Call 904-325-0196. SAFE is at 6101 A1A South in St. Augustine. SAFE PET RESCUE/PROVIDED





Three best buddies. who graduated high school together 53 years ago, met in Greenport on the North Fork of Long Island, NY, for its annual Maritime Festival. Pictured, from left, are John Solomita, Lake Jovita, Florida, Bob Zimardo, Greenport, NY, and Ed Albanesi, St. Augustine. ED ALBANESI/PROVIDED

TAKE THE RECORD ALONG: NASHVILLE



Florida Lottery

FLORIDA LOTTO

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6.... ..8-25-31-37-50-53 **DOUBLE PLAY**

Results are for tickets sold only in Florida

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6. .2-8-29-31-36-43 To see payouts on games above, visit flalottery.com.

POWERBALL

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6 ..1-17-52-58-64 PB: 1 (x10) 5+PB: \$20 million (0). Next jackpot \$31M 5 of 5: \$1 million (0). 4+PB: \$50,000 (1). 4 of 5: \$100 (9). 3+PB: \$100 (44). 3 of 5: \$7 (1,098)

MEGA MILLIONS

5+MB: \$45 million (0). Next jackpot \$60M. 5 of 5: \$1 million (1). 4+MB: \$10,000 (0). 4 of 5: \$500 (48). 3+MB: \$200 (87). 3 of 5: \$10 (1 813), 2+MB: \$10 (1 557) 1+MB: \$4 (9,912). MB: \$2 (21,429).

JACKPOT TRIPLE PLAY

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 5. . 13-29-31-38-39-45 6 of 6: \$2 million (0). 5 of 6: \$1,490 (23). 4 of 6: \$62 (1,343). 3 of 6: \$2 (23,337). Combo10+: \$10,000 (0). Combo9: \$500 (12). Combo8: \$50 (92). Combo7: \$20 (605). Combo6: \$10 (2,983) Combo5: \$5 (11,441). Combo4: Free ticket (31,044).

FANTASY 5

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6. ·10-11-13-17 5 of 5: \$94,004 (2). 4 of 5: \$71 (426). 3 of 5: \$7.50 (11,220) 2 of 5: Free ticket (92,903).

PICK 2, 3, 4, 5

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, MIDDAY ...4-7-18-8-7-5.. 8-0

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 6, EVENING 8-9......8-5-1......5-7-4-6......6-0-3-7-1 Fireball: 9

CASH4LIFE

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 62-10-14-28-31 CB: 3 No winners of \$1,000 a day for life. One or more winners of \$1,000 a week for life 4 of 5+CB: \$2,500 (2), 4 of 5: \$500 (6) 3 of 5+CB: \$100 (91). 3 of 5: \$25 (253) 2 of 5+CB: \$10 (1,420). 2 of 5: \$4 (3,946)

Ronald Rich and Susan Steward took The Record to Nashville to visit junior high school friends. RONALD RICH/PROVIDED

SUBMIT YOUR PHOTO

For a chance to see your photographs of our area in The Record, submit images with brief descriptions, including where they were taken, to photos@ staugustine.com. Photos must be a minimum of 1 megabyte.

Planning a vacation outside St. Johns County? Take The Record with you and feature it in the photograph. Send your photo to photos@staugustine.com, or mail to P.O. Box 1630, St. Augustine, FL 32085-1630.

You also can drop it off at the front desk, One News Place.

Horizontal photos are preferred. Provide first and last names of all people in the photo and include a phone number.



Subscribe Today!

Home Delivery or Digital Access www.staugustine.com (904) 819-3430

RECORD

CORI

Ashley Varese

e@gannett.com,	386-681-246
----------------	-------------

Main phone	
Sports	
Fax	
Opinion	904-819-3487
Advertising	
Circulation	
Circulation	circserv@staugustine.com
Letters to the editor	letters@staugustine.com
Sports	sports@staugustine.com
Photos	photos@staugustine.com
Compass	events@staugustine.com

Periodicals Postage paid at St. Augustine, Fla. Postmaster: Send address changes to The St. Augustine Record, P.O. Box 1630, St. Augustine, FL 32085-1630. The St. Augustine Record is published daily by Gannett, P.O. Box 1630, St. Augustine, FL 32085-1630. USPS 513-460

DELIVERY

Manage your account online anytime at staugustine.com/myaccount. An independent contractor delivers your newspaper. We strive to have your newspaper delivered by 6:30 a.m. Monday

through Friday and by 7:30 a.m. Saturday and Sunday. Please note unforeseen circumstances could cause delay in these times.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Home Delivery Rates (Prices include transportation cost and sales tax.)

*EZ Pay	7-Day	Friday-Sunday
(1 month)	\$53**	\$41**
	Sunday Only	Digital Only
\$25**	\$7.99 a month	
		(or \$39 for first year)

*EZ Pay Program is a monthly auto-debit from your credit card, debit card or checking account. Florida residents, your subscriptions may include applicable sales tax and transportation costs for the convenience of having the paper delivered. Prices may vary. To arrange pick-up, call customer service at 904-819-3430.

**plus tax and one-time activation fee

News stand rates*

N

S

1 onday-Friday	\$2.00
aturday	\$2.00
unday	\$3.00
plus sales tax	

Reader Services: Print delivery available within the newspaper distribution area only. By submitting your address and/or email, you understand that you may

receive promotional offers from Gannett and its related companies. You may unsubscribe from receiving any such offers at any time at http://myprofile.staugustine.com. The advertised price does not include the charges for any premium editions. Premium editions are published to provide additional information and value to our readers. You agree that you will be charged up to an additional \$9.00 for each premium edition published and delivered to you during your subscription period, in addition to the cost of your subscription. The length of your subscription will be shortened by the publication of premium editions if those premium editions are delivered to you during your subscription. You may elect to be billed separately for premium editions by contacting Customer Service at 904-819-3430. Thus, unless you elect to be billed separately up to an additional \$9.00 for each premium edition, you agree that the length of your subscription will be shortened in proportion to the value of the number of premium editions published and delivered to you during your subscription period. As an illustrative example, if you select a subscription of up to 12 weeks at a cost of \$48.00, and two premium editions at \$2.00 each are published and delivered to you during that subscription period, your subscription will be shortened by 1 week because the weekly cost of the subscription is \$4.00 per week and the premium edition charges total \$4.00. Depending

upon the length of your subscription and the timing of the publication and delivery of premium editions, you will not be charged for any premium editions if none are published and delivered to you during your subscription. As such, in that case only, the length of your subscription will not be shortened. The timing of the publication and delivery of premium editions is variable. There will be no more than two (2) premium editions published each month during the subscription term. For more information or to cancel your subscription please call 904-819-3430. Print subscribers may suspend print delivery during vacation periods. For vacation periods less than 14 consecutive days billing continues and the subscriber maintains access to the digital portion of subscription. Credit days will be issued for any days in excess of the first 14. Subscribers also have the option to have print copies held as Vacation Pack or may donate the newspaper value to our Newspaper in Education (NIE) program. Please review Terms and Conditions of Offer for further details about premium edition charges and your payment options by visiting www.staugustine.com or by contacting Customer Service at 904-819-3430. Subscribers may cancel at anytime by calling subscriber services at 904-819-3430.

LOCAL&STATE



A blank COVID-19 vaccination card is pictured. A Sarasota craft store's challenge to a state order banning the use of so-called "vaccine passports" is scheduled for a Thursday hearing. EJ HERSOM/NYT

'Vaccine passport' case heads to hearing

whatever

Jim Saunders News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE – A Leon County circuit judge is scheduled Thursday to hold a hearing in a Sarasota hobby and craft store's challenge to a state law that bans so-called "vaccine passports."

Circuit Judge Layne Smith is considering the case two months after a federal judge in South Florida sided with Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings in a challenge to the law, which seeks to prevent businesses from requiring customers to show proof of vaccination against COVID-19 and threatens fines for violations.

The Sarasota business, Bead Abode Inc., argues that the law violates the First Amendment and is seeking an injunction to block it. The First Amendment arguments echo the reasoning of U.S. District Judge Kathleen Williams, who issued a preliminary injunction in August in the Norwegian case. Bead Abode said in the lawsuit, filed Sept. 10, that many of its customers are retirees and some have health issues. It said it closed its doors in March 2020 because of the pandemic, offering only online sales and classes, but developed a plan to reopen this year as vaccinations became available and as the number of cases appeared to be waning. "Absent the relief being sought to enjoin defendant (the state) from enforcement of this clearly unconstitutional content-based restriction on protected speech, Bead Abode would be forced to choose between its commitment to the safety of its customers and crushing penalties from enforcement of this law," the business's lawyer, Andrew Boyer, wrote in the lawsuit. But the state, which has appealed the federalcourt decision, argues that Smith should reject the request for an injunction. It disputes that the law, which the Legislature passed in April, violates First Amendment rights. In a court document filed last week, lawyers from Attorney General Ashley Moody's office wrote that the law "restricts only conduct, not speech, and therefore does not implicate the First Amendment." "In other words, the provision leaves owners and patrons free to have

they choose but ultimately requires owners to serve patrons no matter their vaccination documentation," the state's lawyers wrote. "An owner who asks a patron whether he or she is vaccinated (and even asks if the patron can provide proof) acts consistent with the law; a violation occurs only when the patron responds in the negative and the owner, in turn, refuses to provide services. In that way, the law regulates only conduct - the provision of services by a business not speech."

Gov. Ron DeSantis has made a priority of banning vaccine passports, issuing an executive order in April that was followed by the Legislature putting a ban into state law.

Williams' August ruling applied only to Norwegian. In it, she wrote that the law is a "contentbased restriction" on speech, as it targets documentation but allows businesses to request other information from customers about issues such as vaccinations. "While companies cannot require customers to verify their vaccination status with 'documentation.' the statute does not prohibit businesses from verifying vaccination status in other ways (e.g., orally)," Williams wrote. "Accordingly, under (the law), businesses could still 'discriminate' against unvaccinated individuals by adopting a vaccination

discussions requirement, which they could enforce by requiring oral verification of vaccination status before entry or by deterring unvaccinated patrons from entering by putting up signs that read 'vaccinated cuseven asks if consistent vac

But in a brief filed Monday at the 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in the Norwegian case, attorneys for the De-Santis administration said the law is an "economic regulation that does not implicate" the First Amendment.

"The law simply prohibits businesses from conditioning service on customers providing documentation certifying COVID-19 vaccination," the brief said. "Norwegian may still request that documentation from its customers, its customers may voluntarily provide it, and both parties are free to discuss the topic. What Norwegian may not do



The Creekside Festival at Princess Place Preserve is scheduled for 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday. NEWS-TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Creekside Festival returns to Palm Coast this weekend

Laurie Hahn

Daytona Beach News-Journal USA TODAY NETWORK

Palm Coast's popular Creekside Festival returns this weekend following a year's absence due to the pandemic, and organizers are hoping for a healthy turnout.

"This year our whole goal is to make it bigger, better, take it to the next level," said David Ayres, vice president and general manager of Flagler Broadcasting. The festival will run from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

The Flagler County Chamber of Commerce started the festival 15 years ago, he said, and Flagler Broadcasting took over when the Chamber closed.

Ayres also said they hope to raise \$100,000 for the Grace Community Food Pantry in Bunnell. The money will come from the entry fee of \$10 per person. "The gate is what we're hoping for," Flagler County Health Department, which will offer vaccines and booster shots, Ayres said.

The live music is also a draw at the festival, with bluegrass, rock and classic rock offered Saturday, while Sunday's focus will be mostly on country bands. Pryor & Lee, who appeared on "The Voice," will take the stage at 1:30 p.m. Lee was a semifinalist on the show and previously lived in Ormond Beach.

"We're excited to have him back again," Ayres said.

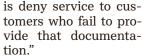
Because the festival is all outdoors, attendees

are not required to wear masks, though they may do so if they wish, he said, but they are asking people to observe social distancing.

The Creekside Festival takes place in Princess Place Preserve, named after Angela Mills Cutting who was married to an exiled Russian prince. The 2,200-acre preserve on Pellicer Creek is now a site for camping, horseback riding and hiking, and the princess's lodge and stables have been preserved, as has her inground swimming pool, the state's first.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER ADOPTION OF A PROPOSED SMALL SCALE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT TO THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP OF THE ST. JOHNS COUNTY 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the <u>Planning and Zoning Agency on</u> <u>Thursday, 11/4/2021 at 1:30.</u>, and the <u>St. Johns County Board of County</u> <u>Commissioners on Tuesday, 12/7/2021 at 9:00 a.m.</u>, will each hold public hearings, as follows: The Planning and Zoning Agency to consider and issue a recommendation on the approval of a proposed Small Scale Comprehensive Plan amendment to the St. Johns County Future Land Use Map of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan and the Board of County Commissioners will consider whether or not to approve the same proposed Small Scale Comprehensive Plan amendment to the St. Johns County Future Land Use Map of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan, with the following styled ordinance:



he said. At least 40 vendors will have booths at the

festival, including the

Steve Chapman's ALL AMERICAN Noted Best of St. Augustine Every year, 23 years in a rows 904-461-0070 1010 State Road 312 • www.allamericanac.com



AN ORDINANCE OF THE COUNTY OF ST. JOHNS, STATE OF FLORIDA, AMENDING THE 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, ORDINANCE NO. 2010-38, AS AMENDED, TO CHANGE THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP DESIGNATION FROM RURAL SILVICULTURE TO MIXED USE FOR APPROXIMATELY 19.17 ACRES OF LAND LOCATED OFF OF SAN PABLO ROAD SOUTH; PROVIDING FOR FINDINGS OF FACT; FINDINGS OF CONSISTENCY; SEVERABILITY; AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Said hearings will be held in the County Auditorium, County Administration Building, 500 San Sebastian View, St. Augustine, Florida. All interested parties may appear at the public hearings to be heard regarding any or all of the proposed amendment. Board of County Commissioner items not heard by 6 pm shall automatically be continued until 9 am the following day, unless otherwise directed by the Board.

The subject property includes 19.17 acres and is located on San Pablo Road South, within St. Johns County, Florida. See attached map generally depicting the location (Exhibit A). A complete description is available in the St. Johns County Planning and Zoning Office.

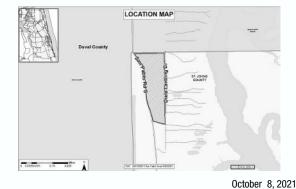
The proposed change is known as File Number CPA(SS)-2021000011, and is available for review in the Planning and Zoning Division of the Growth Management Department, at the Permit Center, 4040 Lewis Speedway, St. Augustine, Florida and may be examined by interested parties prior to said public hearings.

Interested parties may appear at the public hearings to be heard regarding the proposed amendment.

If a person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at the meetings or hearings, he/she will need a record of the proceedings and for such purpose may need to ensure that verbatim records of the proceedings are made, which records include the testimony and evidence upon which appeal is to be based.

NOTICE TO PERSONS NEEDING SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS AND TO ALL HEARING IMPAIRED PERSONS: In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, persons needing special accommodations or an interpreter to participate in this proceeding should contact the County's ADA Coordinator at (904) 209-0650 or at the County Administration Building, 500 Sebastian View, St. Augustine, Florida, 32084. Hearing impaired persons, call Florida Relay Service (1-800-955-8770), no later than 5 days prior to the meeting.

PLANNING AND ZONING AGENCY ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA GREG MATOVINA, CHAIR FILE NUMBER: CPA(SS)-2021-11 PROJECT NAME: San Pablo Road BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ST. JOHNS COUNTY, FLORIDA JEREMIAH R. BLOCKER, CHAIR





The exterior to St. Augustine's Ripley's Believe It or Not! was featured on the television series of the same name. RIPLEY'S BELIEVE IT OR NOT!/PROVIDED

Ripley's

Continued from Page 1A

Massacre Anchor

Outside, on the museum grounds, there are several interesting historical artifacts, including what's known as the "Massacre Anchor," pulled from the Matanzas Bay where in 1565 hundreds were slaughtered by the Spanish for their beliefs.

Not your average treehouse

On the property is also a section of a tree, that when cut down in 1938 was 1900 years old, 267 feet high and 14 feet in diameter. This section was carved out into a small apartment, in which someone actually lived for a while. Visitors can check out the log house without admission to the museum.

Michelangelo's 'David'

An exact replica of Michelangelo's "David," an 18foot tall hand-carved marble statue weighing 20,000 pounds, was imported from Italy to the St. Augustine grounds of Ripley's in 2007. Word has it, the statue caused so much of a show-stopping reaction that museum operators soon surrounded it with a privacy bush.

The world's tallest man once lived in town

Just one of the items in Ripley's "Odditorium" is a wax replica of the world's tallest man, Robert Wadlow, who lived in St. Augustine at one time. Born with a pituitary gland disfunction which caused his giantism, Wadlow was forced to wear leg braces and use a cane by 20. He weighed over 450 pounds when he died.

Mummified cat is known around the world

Ripley's is also home to an ancient Egyptian mummified cat which has drawn the attention (and some otherworldly "readings") from ghost hunters across the world.

A close-up look at a shrunken head

Evidence of shrunken heads date back to prehistoric times and, yes, Ripley's also has one on display. Shrunken heads, also known to natives as tsantsas, are a traditional ritual rooted in superstition and mystery. The gruesome specters were used as trophies, threats to enemies or in religious ceremonies.

Space Oddities

Ripley's new Space Oddities gallery includes a giant replica of the International Space Station made entirely from matchsticks, crayons carved into characters from the Star Wars movies and interactive displays that show how the human body changes during space travel.

A haunted castle?

The site of Ripley's itself, the former Castle Warden which was turned into a hotel, is rumored to be haunted. Employees of Ripley's have reported sightings of two women who apparently died in a fire at the castle in April 1944.

Ripley's museum in St. Augustine also serves as the stepping-off point to the Red Train Tour which gives visitors a 90-minute overview of the history and sites of the oldest city in the U.S.

Florida sees little change in number of new jobless claims filed

Jim Turner

News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — As the hotel industry pushes for more federal assistance to cover the costs of workers, Florida continues to see little change in the number of new unemployment claims being filed.

The U.S. Department of Labor on Thursday estimated 6,509 first-time unemployment claims were filed in Florida during the week that ended Oct. 2, down from a revised count of 7,713 for the week ending Sept. 25.

The agency initially had estimated Florida's count for the week ending Sept. 25 at 6,502 claims.

Since mid-May, the state has averaged 7,935 new claims a week. Over the past four weeks, the weekly average stands at 7,825. Those numbers are dramatically lower than the number of claims that poured into the state Department of Economic Opportunity after the COVID-19 pandemic began battering the economy in March 2020 and April 2020.

Nationally, 326,000 initial unemployment claims were filed last week, down 38,000 from the prior week, according to the Department of Labor. Over the past four weeks, the national weekly average stands at 344,000.

Florida Department of Economic Opportunity Secretary Dane Eagle told Enterprise Florida board members last week that efforts to get Floridians back into the workforce should soon start to pay off.

In June, the state withdrew early from two federal assistance programs — the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation and Mixed Earners Unemployment Compensation programs — and reimplemented a "work search" requirement for people seeking unemployment benefits.

Other federal unemployment programs that were part of pandemic recovery efforts ended Sept. 6.

On Tuesday, Lisa Lombardo, chief people and culture officer for Ocala-based HDG Hotels, joined U.S. Rep. Charlie Crist, D-Fla., in calling for more federal assistance for the hotel industry. Along with facing problems in hiring workers, the industry has suffered from a drop in business travelers during the pandemic. Hoteliers had hoped business travelers would help take the place of leisure travelers after the new school year began.

"The labor crunch has made affording talent a goal," Lombardo said in a conference call. "It might seem as though hotels are packed in some markets. And it's hard to find rooms in some markets. But we know of friends in the industry who are closing down entire floors of their hotels because there aren't team members to clean the entire hotel, to prepare that hotel for what we hope will be the return of business."

The American Hotel & Lodging Association projected Florida hotels will lose \$5.34 billion in business travel revenue this year, with it down 60.7 percent from the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

Crist, who is running for governor in 2022, was promoting his "Save Hotel Jobs Act" legislation that would provide grants to hotel owners and operators



An artist's rendering of what the tag! Children's Museum in St. Augustine will look like once completed. PROVIDED

Museum

Continued from Page 1A

"tag! will become a critical part of arts and sciences enrichment and allow children, students and adults to recapture the pure joy of discovery. It also makes good business sense. tag! will become another destination drawing more people into Northeast Florida and boosting our economy," Newman said.

The museum is anticipated to have an estimated \$2 million annual impact on the economy and around 300,000 area students, 76 school districts and 85,000 patrons could be expected to visit the center each year, according to museum organizers.

Phase 2 will add more buildings to the complex with additional indoor exhibits, learning labs and outdoor learning opportunities. MacEwan said she did not know when that phase of construction would begin.

The idea for a large-scale children's museum was first introduced by a group of five local moms, all of whom still serve on the advisory board. But changes in location, feasibility studies, permitting and fundraising all have delayed the start of the project.

"These are the things that take time and money, but we have been plugging away all along," Jones told The Record.

Jones said it is not unusual for a cultural center like this one to take 10 to 15 years to come to fruition.

"And this is one passionate group [of organizers]," Jones added.

Just some of the museum's corporate partners and stakeholders include Dr. Jimmy and Karen Glenos; the Platt Family; Danielle and Gene Fraser; The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida; and Bozard Ford Lincoln.

The project has also received the ongoing support of the St. Johns County School District and community and youth organizations such as the West Augustine Community Redevelopment Agency.

As plans have moved slowly behind the scenes, leaders like MacEwan have worked to get the tag! name out in the community through offerings such as children's camps and STEAM programming. to cover employee payroll and benefits.

Business owners in a wide range of industries have complained about shortages of workers shortages that also are plaguing Florida's prison system. The state Department of Corrections continued recruitment efforts this week by saying it was providing \$1,000 bonuses for newly certified correctional officers at many prisons across the state.

Florida had a 5.0 percent unemployment rate in August, representing 529,000 people qualifying as being unemployed from a workforce of 10.54 million.

September unemployment figures will be released Oct. 22.

Obituaries

Jeffery Guy Crisp



Jeffery Guy Crisp passed away September 22 2021 at Doctor's Hospital in Coral Gables, Fl from complications due to Covid 19. He was born July 4, 1977 in Catoosa County, Georgia. Jeff graduated from St. Augustine High School where is played football. His chosen profession was long distance truck driving.

truck driving. He is survived by his wife, Tanya; children, Savannah, Teddi, Daisey and Jeff, Jr.; sis-

ter, Anna Crisp; brothers, Troy and Jackson Crisp. He will be greatly missed and always in our thoughts. He touched so many lives within the short time we were blessed to know him and love him. Rest peacefully and out of pain. You are our Angel and guidance from above until we meet again.

