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Bullock builds local company Victory Casino Cruises into economic driver

By Ken Datzman

PORT CANAVERAL — Positioned in the huge tourism and entertainment industry, cruise ship casinos are becoming increasingly popular attractions because of their social atmosphere, accessibility, and range of itineraries.

They offer all the excitement of a full–service casino — slots, table games, and high–stakes action — plus a cruise. And these cruise ships are gaining patronage from millennials and "Gen–Zers" who are booking packages that highlight music and dining alongside rooftop views.

There has also been a significant shift toward digital technology on casino ships, with more advanced digital games, enhanced graphics, and interactive features becoming standard.

Victory Casino Cruises is benefitting from all of these and has stayed on the cutting edge of the evolving gaming industry. It has tailored packages with special incentives for groups of 10 or more people, and has a wide range of other offerings as part of its marketing program.

Some companies are finding cruises to be an interesting way to foster team spirit. Cruises offer a novel environment away from the daily grind, where employees can bond over meals, entertainment, and excursions. Also, employees may view a cruise as a generous reward, boosting morale and potentially enhancing loyalty and appreciation.

Businessman Lester Bullock, a gaming industry veteran who met some of the top entertainers during his career working at the Golden Nugget in Atlantic City and other well–known venues in Vas Legas, started Victory Casino Cruises in 2010 with the first cruises in 2011.

He has seen his venture flourish, even during the challenging COVID–19 pandemic.

"We were shut down for about two–and–half months during the pandemic," said Bullock, the president and chief executive officer of Victory Casino Cruises, a local independent company that offers five–hour ocean cruises. "We started sailing again at the end of May 2020. The regular cruise lines didn't open for business for another 18 months. We were the only cruise operation paying the Port."

He added, "Today, we are not the biggest vendor to the Port, but I believe we are an important piece of the puzzle."

The cruise industry was brought to a standstill during the pandemic, with companies suffering financial losses and significant job cuts, following the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's "no sail" order in March 2020.

From around 2005 to 2008, several gaming ships at Port Canaveral went out of business because of financial difficulties and competition.

Along came Bullock, out of retirement, who saw a business opportunity in his field.

"I traveled a lot in retirement. I woke up one day and didn't know where else to travel to. I was bored. I decided to put my brain back to work. Running Victory Casino Cruises is retirement to me now. I enjoy it. I like what I do. The employees are like family."

Bullock made a deal with the Port Canaveral commissioners and soon he was back in the gaming industry.

"The Port wanted another gaming ship. The market indicated that it was valuable to have one, but not two competing ships. So we were able to get an exclusive agreement with the Port. Our initial 10–year lease started in 2010 and went to 2020. It's been extended to 2030. We celebrated our 14th anniversary in July. We're having a good year," he said.



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Lester Bullock is president and CEO of Victory Casino Cruises headquartered at Port Canaveral. He launched the company in 2010 with the first cruises in 2011. The business employs about 350 people. These are Brevard residents. Victory Casino Cruises adds tens of millions of dollars to the local economy in terms of employment and operational spending across multiple area businesses. Bullock, an Arizona State University business graduate, has held executive positions in the gaming industry including with Bally's Corp., Golden Nugget in Atlantic City, and The Tropicana. He also was the CEO of a public company that had gaming ships.

If you are still searching for a holiday gift for someone on your list, consider giving a gift certificate for a Victory Casino Cruise. It's an all–inclusive gift that can be tailored to the recipient's preferences. Versatile and flexible, this type of gift is an alternative to a standard gift.

For more information, visit VictoryCasinoCruises.com or call Heather Lay, Brevard group representative, at (321) 591–4627.

The cruise ship industry in general is one of the most dynamic and resilient sectors in tourism. And casino cruises are a significant part of that industry. They generate revenue and play an important role in the overall profitability of cruise ports.

The keys to success for an independent casino cruise ship include having a strong marketing strategy, creating a desirable brand experience, building a loyal customer base through rewards programs, and providing top–notch service.

And Victory Casino Cruises has been able to achieve these important benchmarks.

Please see Victory Casino Cruises, page 23

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Howard Community College, MedStar Health to launch Cardiovascular Technician Apprenticeship Program

By Jarrett Carter
prmarketing@howardcc.edu
Howard Community College

COLUMBIA, Md. (Dec. 1, 2025) — Howard Community College (HCC) and MedStar Health have announced a new Cardiovascular Technician (CV Tech) Registered Apprenticeship Program, launching in January 2026. Through this innovative partnership, 15 apprentices will be employed full–time by MedStar Health while completing HCC's Cardiovascular Technology certificate program.

"This program is a powerful example of what happens when higher education and industry come together to meet workforce needs," said Daria Willis, president of Howard Community College. "Our continued partnership with MedStar Health not only strengthens the region's healthcare system but also provides life–changing opportunities for students to build rewarding, high–demand careers."

The apprenticeship was developed in response to a growing need for skilled cardiovascular technicians across MedStar hospitals. This initiative positions HCC as a national leader in registered apprenticeship. The college will be the first community college in the United States — and the first institution in Maryland — to sponsor a cardiovascular technician apprenticeship. Building on an already strong partnership, most notably through the successful Surgical Technician Registered Apprenticeship Program, MedStar approached HCC to help create a pipeline of qualified CV Tech professionals through the earn–while–you–learn model.

"The Maryland Department of Labor congratulates Howard Community College and MedStar Health on launching this groundbreaking cardiovascular technician registered apprenticeship" said Maryland Secretary of Labor Portia Wu. "This program opens new doors for Marylanders to build meaningful careers in healthcare while helping our communities access the critical care they need. With this newest occupation approved, HCC now offers the most nontraditional registered apprenticeship programs of any sponsor in the state — demonstrating its leadership and commitment to creating real opportunities for people and addressing urgent workforce shortages."

Apprentices will receive full tuition, fees, and books paid by MedStar Health and earn a salary as full–time employees while pursuing their studies at HCC. The 18–24 month program combines classroom instruction with on–the–job training. Upon completion, apprentices will earn an Invasive Cardiovascular Technology Certification, positioning them for long–term career success in the healthcare field.

The new CV Tech apprenticeship reflects HCC's commitment to developing innovative pathways that connect students with sustainable, well–paying careers while meeting the workforce demands of the region's employers.

Since 1970, Howard Community College (HCC) has been a preferred college choice for students and families in Howard County, Maryland. A public community college, HCC offers associate degree and certificate programs, as well as workforce development training and continuing education classes, to nearly 22,000 credit and noncredit students each year. HCC received the 2019 Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, the nation's only presidential–level honor for performance excellence in organizations.



Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Center to host celebration honoring civil rights pioneers; trailblazers fought bravely for racial equality

By Bethany Prasad
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Marketing Specialist
Brevard County Parks and Recreation

MIMS (Dec. 3, 2025) — The West Volusia Branch of the NAACP, in partnership with Membership Chair Rakeem Ford and the Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Cultural Center, will host a powerful day of remembrance, honor, and celebration recognizing the legacy of two of Florida's most courageous civil rights pioneers.

The ceremony will take place from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. Monday, Dec. 15, at the Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Cultural Center and Museum., on the grounds where the Moores dedicated their lives to advancing equality, justice, and voting rights for African Americans.

The Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore Cultural Center is at 2180 Freedom Ave.

As part of this momentous occasion, the West Volusia NAACP will present the museum with the official State of Florida Proclamation designating Dec. 15th as Harry Tyson Moore & Harriette Vyda Simms Moore Day.

This recognition was established during the 2018 Florida Legislative Session through the leadership of Rep. Patrick Henry (D–Daytona Beach) and Sen. Dorothy Hukill (R–Port Orange). Their bipartisan bill ensured that the Moores' legacy, service, and sacrifice would be formally honored across the state for generations to come.

Harry T. & Harriette V. Moore were trailblazers, fearless civil rights leaders who fought relentlessly for racial equality, fair wages, equal education, and the right to vote. Their advocacy for justice came at a time when speaking truth to power carried tremendous risks.

The proclamation presentation will not only honor the Moores' enduring contributions, but will also celebrate the community leaders, organizers, and advocates who fought to make this commemorative day a permanent part of Florida's historical and cultural fabric. They include Michael Williams, Leroy Smith, Alberta Wilson and James Minus.

Residents, civic organizations, clergy, educators, families, and students across Florida are encouraged to attend this historic event. For more information, contact The Moore Cultural Center at (321) 264–6595.

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Performance reviews: Road map for employers and employees; keys to success

By John Tschohl
john@servicequality.com
President
Service Quality Institute

MINNEAPOLIS (Dec. 1, 2025) — As a manager — or an employee — performance reviews are critical to your success. Essentially, they are road maps, letting you know where you are today and what yo need to do to move forward. Performance reviews not only help employees by identifying their strengths and weaknesses, they help managers build winning teams.

There are several steps involved in conducting a performance review that will help you assess and critique employees and develop a plan to move forward. The first is to set aside a specific amount of time for that process. It's important that you let employees know what you will be discussing and that you give them enough time to prepare in advance of the meeting. That preparation will include asking them to assess their own performances.

Then have those employees deliver their self–assessments to you in advance of the meeting so you have time to learn where they see themselves now — and in the future. Ask them to examine their interactions with customers, coworkers, and other team members and to identify where they think they excel and where they can improve. Also, ask them if there are any roadblocks they are facing and how they would like your help in dealing with — or removing — them.

You, too, need to prepare by completing a performance assessment that will lead you to grade employees' actions and their levels of improvement in the past. This process involves reviewing employees' files and referring to notes you took during previous performance reviews that document previous performances, expectations met, and specific achievements or incidents — positive and negative. Some of the standards you should address include the employee's reliability, work habits, initiative, skills, job commitment, and attitude toward coworkers and customers.

Use that documentation to gauge the success of past goals while creating a plan for improved or continued performance. Provide your assessments to employees before the meeting so they will be familiar with the process and the questions you will be asking them. Follow up with employees in advance of the meeting by reminding them of its specific time and date.

Avoid distractions during the performance review. That includes turning off your cell phone and letting other employees and colleagues know that you are not to be interrupted for the next hour. This is important because it lets employees know that, during that time, they will be your focus and have your full attention

Work with employees to create a plan and to get their buy–ins for implementing it. This step requires that you have an open dialogue by asking employees for their input and on ways they can improve their performance. This includes asking employees to assess your performance and identify what you can do to improve your interaction and communication to help them improve and perform at their best.

Performance reviews are important and should be conducted on a regular basis. They let your employees know that you value them and want to do whatever you can to help them succeed. When your employees succeed, you will, too.

For more information on the Service Quality Institute, visit www.customer–service.com.

● About the Author

John Tschohl is the founder and president of the Service Quality Institute, a global leader in customer service with operations in more than 40 countries. He is considered one of the world's foremost authorities on all aspects of customer service and has developed 20 customer service training programs and written eight books on customer service and success — including his bestseller, "Achieving Excellence Through Customer Service" — that are used by companies throughout the world. His monthly strategic newsletter is available at no charge at www.customer–service.com. He can also be reached on Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

Innovative Warehouse Solutions inks deal with Amazon Shipping, New York fulfillment company partners with its biggest competitor

By Media team, info@invwhs.com
Innovative Warehouse Solutions

NEW YORK (Nov. 21, 2025) — Innovative Warehouse Solutions (IWS), a leading New York–based eCommerce fulfillment company, has officially signed a partnership deal with Amazon Shipping, Amazon's small parcel delivery network.

Historically focused solely on supporting Amazon's own eCommerce operations, Amazon Shipping now reaches 90 percent of the U.S. population with transit speeds that compete with UPS Ground and USPS Ground Advantage. In 2024 alone, the service delivered 5.7 billion packages, securing its position as the largest small parcel carrier in the U.S. by volume.

Addressing questions about the unusual nature of a fulfillment company partnering with its biggest competitor, Brian Gibbons, CEO of IWS, emphasized that Amazon is a net positive for the entire eCommerce ecosystem. Now in his early 40s, Gibbons recalled a time when online shopping felt risky, noting that Amazon transformed the industry by introducing safety, trust, and standards. This foundation enabled a generation of entrepreneurs to launch businesses — from Shopify stores to multi–channel operations — with Gibbons adding, "We're all kind of standing on Amazon's shoulders."

Gibbons confirmed that most brands supported by IWS also sell on Amazon, framing the platform as a core channel akin to Sears or Macy's in the 1990s, but not the sole revenue stream. "Smart brands diversify," he said, noting that IWS clients typically sell across Shopify, Amazon, Faire, Bloomingdale's, and other platforms. IWS's strength lies in its omni–channel fulfillment solution, which aggregates orders from all channels, leverages a centralized inventory pool, and tailors fulfillment to each channel's unique requirements — resulting in lower holding costs and greater efficiency for brands.

When asked what IWS offers that Amazon cannot, Gibbons acknowledged Amazon's exceptional operational efficiency but highlighted customization as a key differentiator. Services like retail EDI, kitting, and channel–specific packaging are areas where third–party fulfillment providers like IWS deliver more value, as Amazon likely does not see sufficient ROI to prioritize these tailored offerings.

Gibbons cited multiple factors driving the partnership with Amazon Shipping, starting with the stagnation of the small parcel 3PL industry over the past 20 years. While USPS's Ground Advantage represented progress, legacy carriers continue to impose outdated surcharges — including residential delivery fees and fuel surcharges — even as residential deliveries have become standard. Amazon Shipping is disrupting this model by eliminating residential surcharges and offering deep discounts on fuel charges unless prices spike significantly, a change that Gibbons described as "huge for eCommerce brands."

Beyond cost, performance was a critical consideration. Gibbons noted that smaller carriers may offer attractive rates but often lack reach and speed, whereas Amazon Shipping provides 7–day–a–week delivery, faster windows for long–distance shipments, and employs uniformed drivers in branded trucks instead of gig workers. Additionally, the service includes delivery photo confirmation — a feature rarely offered at scale by other carriers.

The partnership aligns with IWS's mission to operate as an extension of its clients' businesses: while clients manage product, marketing, and conversion, IWS handles logistics. This requires staying ahead of industry trends and identifying opportunities to enhance cost–effectiveness, speed, and reliability — all areas where Amazon Shipping excels. "In many cases, we're giving our brands faster delivery at a lower cost," Gibbons said. "That's a no–brainer."

With this new partnership, IWS continues its commitment to providing flexible, tech–forward fulfillment solutions that empower growing eCommerce brands to thrive in an increasingly competitive market.

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2019 FLORIDA NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT

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FEI Number: 59-3048626

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MICHAUD, TIMOTHY
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The above named entity submits this

SIGNATURE: TIMOTHY
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Officer/Director Detail :

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2023 FLORIDA NOT FOR PROFIT CORPORATION ANNUAL REPORT

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Entity Name: BREVARD COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE CHARITY, INC.

Current Principal Place of Business:
440 SOUTH BABCOCK STREET
MELBOURNE, FL 32901

Current Mailing Address:
440 SOUTH BABCOCK STREET
MELBOURNE, FL 32901 US

FEI Number: 59-3441257

Certificate of Status Desired: No

Name and Address of Current Registered Agent:
NASH, CHARLES IAN ESQ.
NASH & KROMASH, LLP
440 SOUTH BABCOCK STREET
MELBOURNE, FL 32901 US

The above named entity submits this statement for the purpose of changing its registered office or registered agent, or both, in the State of Florida.

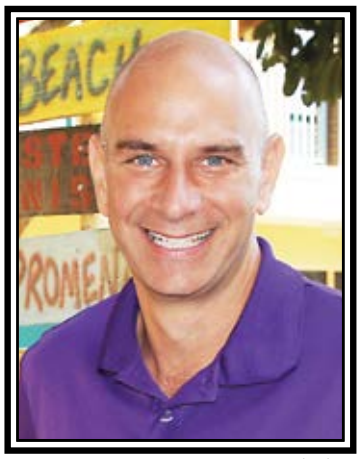
SIGNATURE: CHARLES IAN NASH 02/24/2023
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Title	GENERAL COUNSEL	Title	VP, DIRECTOR
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Address	440 S. BABCOCK ST.	Address	440 SOUTH BABCOCK STREET
City-State-Zip:	MELBOURNE FL 32901	City-State-Zip:	MELBOURNE FL 32901
Title	SECRETARY, DIRECTOR	Title	TREASURER, DIRECTOR
Name	PEARSON, JEFF	Name	NEIDERT, TOM
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Name	DEATON, LINDSEY		
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I hereby certify that the information indicated on this report or supplemental report is true and accurate and that my electronic signature shall have the same legal effect as if made under oath; that I am an officer or director of the corporation or the receiver or trustee empowered to execute this report as required by Chapter 617, Florida Statutes; and that my name appears above, or on an attachment with all other like empowered.

SIGNATURE: CHARLES I NASH GENERAL COUNSEL 02/24/2023
Electronic Signature of Signing Officer/Director Detail Date



File photo
Timothy Michaud

'Based upon my investigation as a criminal investigator with the Craven County Sheriff's Department there is probable cause to arrest Timothy Michaud for sexual assault on R(xxxx) Michaud.'
John Whitfield
May 7, 2010



Brevard County Sheriff's Office photo

'I need to report suspected abuse.'
Dana Delaney Loyd
aka Theresa Smith
to Florida Abuse Hotline
at 11:12 a.m., April 29, 2015



Brevard County Sheriff's Office photo

'Loyalty is everything to me!!!'
Sheriff Robert Wayne Ivey
to Dana Delaney Loyd
at 5:19 p.m., April 29, 2015

IS THE EIGHTEENTH CIRCUIT AN ONGOING HUMAN TRAFFICKER?

BBN NOTE: John M. Stewart — a partner at Rossway Swan — is a past president of the 107,000 member The Florida Bar.

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To Be Continued ...

City of Palm Bay concludes its leadership development program, is designed to cultivate leaders at every level

By Christina Born
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Public Information Officer
The City of Palm Bay

PALM BAY (Nov.21, 2025) — The City of Palm Bay has announced the successful completion of the first cohort of the Leaders in Training Excellence (LITE) program, an internal leadership development initiative launched under City Manager Matthew Morton.

Designed to cultivate leadership at every level of the organization, the program empowers employees to discover their personal leadership style, develop solution–driven approaches, and strengthen their capacity to lead within their teams and departments, and see through a lens of logic frame models that lead to better decisions that create value for the public we serve.

The LITE program is open to employees across all departments and job classifications — from field staff to managers — and is built on the belief that leadership is not defined by title but by action. Over a 20–week period, participants engaged in group learning sessions, a collaborative team project, and individual reflection designed to enhance communication, problem–solving, and strategic thinking.

"The goal of LITE is to develop strong, proactive leaders who are ready to meet challenges head–on and make a lasting impact," said Morton. "We're building a culture where leadership is shared, not confined to hierarchy. The success of this first cohort reflects the incredible talent and dedication within our organization."

Cohort 1 began July 1, 2025, with a small group of eight employees representing a range of departments and roles. Each participant was nominated by their department head and committed to 14 weeks of weekly sessions, followed by a six–week group project and a two–week implementation phase.

The city recognized the employees who completed the inaugural cohort at the Nov. 20 regular council meeting.

The Cohort 1 participants are: Andy Dimmig, Debbie Flynn, Dennis Bunt, Erik Sherman, Jacob Soto, Jonathan Vera, Karen Hallowell and Virginia Kilmer.

"LITE shifted how I lead — I now focus more on creating an environment where people feel empowered and valued," said Flynn of Growth Management. "Tools like the Power Wheel helped me better understand how to share and shift power thoughtfully within my team."

"I have a better idea of who I want to be and how I want to approach things to gain results," added Bunt of Public Works. "This makes me a better employee, learner, teacher, and coach."

"Being able to see inside the processes that Matthew Morton utilizes in his day–to–day and to be able to understand the why behind them has changed the way I approach my team and our projects. It has been extremely helpful in cutting through the processes that typically take the most amount of time and really identifying what's really important and how to sart the process to get to an outcome," said Vera of Information Technology.

When asked if the participants could share a moment or activity that challenged them or pushed them out of their comfort zone, Dimmig from Recreation said, "The Rejection Therapy Project was definitely the experience that most pushed me out of my comfort zone. The goal was to intentionally seek out situations where I might be told 'no,' in order to build confidence and reduce anxiety around rejection."

Building on the success of this inaugural cohort, the city will launch its winter class (Cohort 2) Dec. 1, 2025, following a second application and nomination period. The program will continue to focus on developing leaders who embody the city's values of "commitment, integrity, service before self, transparency, and trust."

"The LITE program is more than professional development — it's an investment in our people," said Morton. "I look forward to seeing how our graduates continue to make a difference across the organization."



'Christmas Carol' set for Melbourne Civic Theatre

MELBOURNE (Dec. 1, 2025) — Melbourne Civic Theatre will present Jacob Marley's "Christmas Carol" by Tom Mula Dec. 18 through Dec. 21. There will be five performances over those dates. This is a fundraiser for Melbourne Civic Theatre. The cast includes Terrence Girard, Adrian Cahill, Alan Selby and Kevin McCaughlin. Christmas Carol is an "irreverent, funny and deeply moving story." To purchase tickets, visit mymct.org or call the box office at (321) 723–6935. Tickets are $40.

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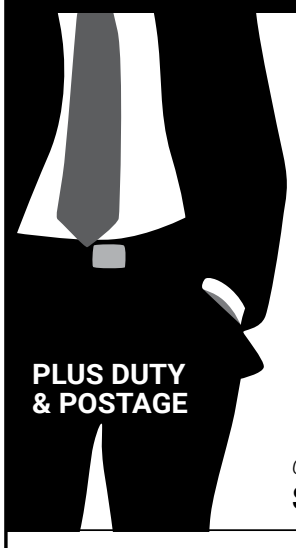
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ORLANDO **DECEMBER 11** *Marriott Courtyard*	**TAMPA** **DECEMBER 12,13** *Marriott Westshore*	**NAPLES** **DECEMBER 14** *Marriott Courtyard*	**P.B. GARDENS** **DECEMBER 15-16** *Marriott PB Gardens*
BOCA RATON **DECEMBER 17** *Renaissance*	**PLANTATION** **DECEMBER 18-19** *Renaissance*	**AVENTURA** **DECEMBER 20** *Marriott Courtyard*	**DADELAND** **DECEMBER 21-22** *Dadeland Marriott*

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Can invasive plants increase tick exposure risk? UF scientists reveal surprising link to human health

By Lourdes Mederos
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GAINESVILLE (Nov. 12, 2025) — An invasive grass found on almost every continent and considered a pest in 73 countries isn't just weeding out native plants, it is creating a haven for disease–carrying ticks and raising public health risk concerns.

A new University of Florida study, published recently in "Ecology," demonstrates how cogongrass, an invasive grass common across the Southeast United States is enhancing tick survival. Researchers at UF's Invasion Science Institute (ISI) found that lone star ticks, a species common in the Southeast and known to bite humans, survive more than 50 percent longer in areas dominated by invasive cogongrass than in native plant communities.

"The direct effects of invasive plants are well known, but these finds show that invasions can also indirectly impact human health by prolonging tick survival" said Luke Flory, professor and associate chair of the agronomy department at UF's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (UF/IFAS) and director of the UF Invasion Science Institute (ISI).

Longer tick survival means more opportunities to feed on hosts like deer, and more opportunities to spread disease to people and wildlife.

"In this study we used one of the most widely distributed and problematic invasive grass species in the Southeast, as well as the most common tick species of the region," said Drew Hiatt, lead author of the study and a graduate student at UF/IFAS. "Our results suggest that Floridians would be at an increased risk of tick–borne disease while recreating in invaded plant communities."

The research team compared invaded and native plant areas and found similar levels of deer activity, meaning the number of hosts wasn't what drove the difference. Instead, the densely growing invasive grass altered the local environment, making it cooler and more humid, which provided conditions that help ticks avoid drying out and dying.

"Adult ticks survived over 100 days longer in invaded plant communities compared to native plant–dominated areas, due to changes in the microclimate caused by the invasion," said Hiatt. "We also found similar host activity of white–tailed deer in both plant communities, suggesting that longer survival of ticks is the dominant driver of tick abundance in invaded areas."

Cogongrass, native to Southeast Asia, was introduced to the U.S. nearly a century ago and has since spread across millions of acres in the Southeast. Known for its ability to form dense stands that outcompete native vegetation and increase wildfire risk, cogongrass now appears to have public health implications as well according to the research outcomes.

"Invasive plants are often managed for their ecological and economic impacts," said Hiatt. "This research highlights that they should also be managed to minimize their impact on public health."

Researchers added this study is just one example of how invasive plants can quietly change ecosystems in ways that affect humans.

"Previous studies have found a similar link between the aquatic invasive plant water lettuce and malaria outbreaks via mosquitoes," said Hiatt.

He hopes the findings encourage land managers, policymakers and the public to think differently about the stakes of invasive species management.

"It would be great to see more research on the indirect effects of plant invasions and vector–borne disease risk," Hiatt said. "An increased allocation of resources for invasive plant removal could help reduce tick–borne disease risk in invaded areas."

● About UF/IFAS

The mission of the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (ifas.ufl.edu, @UF_IFAS) is to develop knowledge relevant to agricultural, human and natural resources and to make that knowledge available to sustain and enhance the quality of human life. With more than a dozen research facilities, 67 county Extension offices, and award–winning students and faculty in the UF College of Agricultural and Life Sciences, UF/IFAS brings science–based solutions to the state's agricultural and natural resources industries, and all Florida residents.

● About ISI

The mission of the University of Florida Invasion Science Institute (invasionscience.ufl.edu, @invasionscienceuf) is to facilitate interdisciplinary research that advances our understanding of the causes and consequences of invasive species; generates innovative approaches to reduce invasions and their impacts on natural, agricultural, and urban systems; and train the next generation of invasion scientists. UF/ISRI has over 190 affiliates and collaborators with a variety of backgrounds and expertise.



EPA delivers an additional 100 top environmental accomplishments, including in Southeast Region 4, since President Trump took office

By EPA Region 4 Press Office
region4press@epa.gov
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

ATLANTA (Nov. 20, 2025) — On Monday, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin shared 100 additional environmental accomplishments EPA has achieved in the last 100 days, including 10 in the Southeast Region, recognizing 300 days of fulfilling the agency's statutory obligations, and delivering clean air, land and water for all Americans under President Donald Trump's leadership.

"We are thrilled to announce another 100 top accomplishments from the last 100 days in our mission to meet our statutory duties and defend human health and environmental quality," said Zeldin.

"The Trump EPA is showing that we can be exceptional environmental stewards while Powering the Great American Comeback. 300 days, 300 major environmental wins — this is the energy that propels us forward and the pace that motivates us. We will keep working tirelessly to secure success after success for America's environment and families nationwide."

"From superfund site cleanups to emergency response, we have worked alongside our state and local partners to make sure the people of Region 4 have the clean air, water and land they deserve," said Regional Administrator Kevin McOmber. "I am proud of all these environmental wins and excited for how many more wins we intend to deliver in 2026."

Region 4's highlighted accomplishments include:

1. Distributed $86.2 million in supplemental Hurricane Helene recovery funds to support debris removal, management and property reuse evaluation

2. Removed 1,815 pounds of contamination at Southern Solvents Superfund Site in Tampa, Florida, and achieved the Remedial Action goal

3. Sampled 515 residential properties, remediated 161 properties and disposed of more than 30,000 tons of contaminated material to safeguard residents from lead exposure at the Southside Chattanooga Lead Superfund Site in Tennessee

4. Completed a $1.98 million cleanup at Continental Cleaners Superfund Site in Miami, which protects the Biscayne aquifer, Miami–Dade's sole source of drinking water

5. Provided Risk Assessment training to 40 state project managers in Columbia, South Carolina

6. Enhanced EPA's partnership with Citrus County, Florida, to advance $1.2 million for the Septic–to–Sewer Program

7. Distributed $685 million for recovery in partnership with FEMA and local officials, resulting in 122 pre–application projects in 59 communities for flood risk reduction and resiliency enhancemet, as EPA recently marked the first anniversary since the devastation of Hurricane Helene

8. Worked to collect more than 630,000 gallons of oil–water mix, stabilize nearby waterways and drinking water sources, and prevent further contamination as part of the UPS Flight 2976 response in Louisville, Kentucky

9. Collaborated with Department of Energy on the first land lease in the nation under the Hall Amendment for beneficial site redevelopment with lease of 100–acre parcel of Paducah Gaseous Diffusion Plant Superfund Site

10. Completed two–year residential cleanup project addressing PCB–contaminated soil at 56 properties on the Ten Mile Drain Superfund site in Kentucky

These 100 actions build on Zeldin's list of 100 pro–environmental actions taken by the agency during President Trump's First 100 Days in office and another 100 pro–environmental actions highlighted at the 200–day milestone to total 300 featured accomplishments.

This progress includes announcing a proposed rule today that establishes a clear, durable, common–sense definition of "waters of the United States," completing 100 days of "pressure testing" Tijuana–San Diego wastewater projects from the July 2025 U.S.–Mexico memorandum of understanding and accelerating timelines by nine months, secured our border from dangerous illegal pesticides through enforcement action, led emergency response efforts and cleanup efforts in communities across the nation and so much more.

This snapshot represents the work done by the agency daily, as EPA continues to fulfill its core mission of protecting human health and the environment, while committing to commonsense policies that drive down prices, unleash American energy, advance permitting reform and cooperative federalism, make America the artificial intelligence capital of the world and revitalize the auto industry.

Brevard's 2026 Sea Oats Sale for beachfront property owners underway

By Rachel Horst
rachel.horst@brevardfl.gov
Public Information Officer
Brevard County Communications Department

VIERA (Dec. 1, 2025) — Brevard County's Natural Resources Management Department, in partnership with Stella Maris Environmental Research Inc., is now accepting pre–orders for the 2026 annual Sea Oats Sale for beachfront property owners and municipalities.

Liner–size sea oats are available in trays of 96 for $86.60, while supplies last. Quantities are limited and early ordering is encouraged.

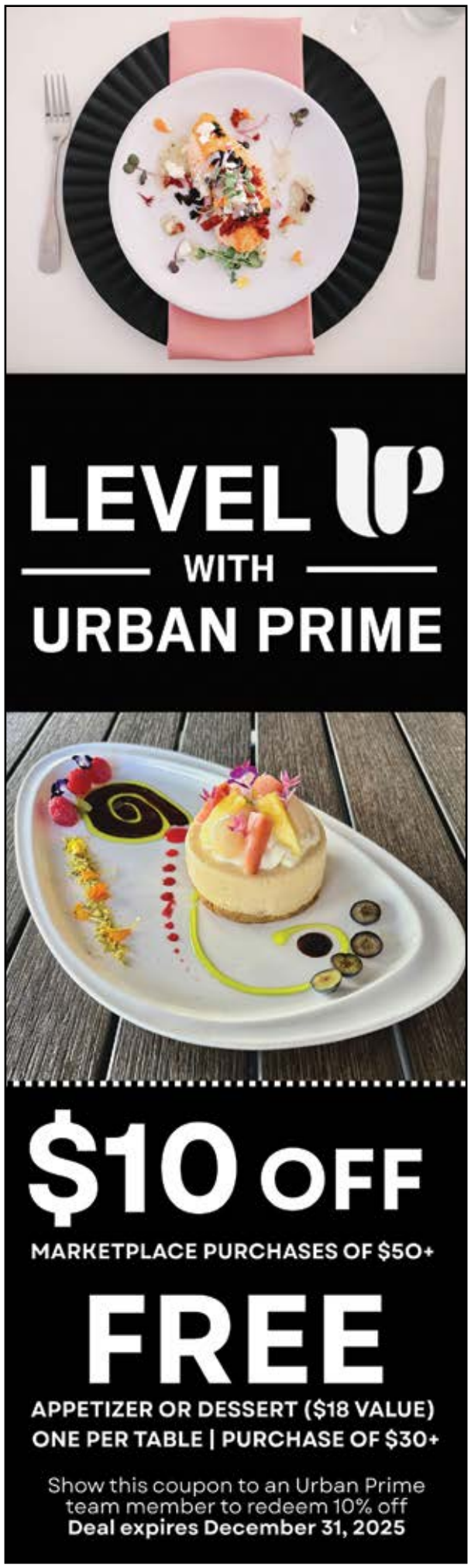
Orders must be placed and paid for by Thursday, Feb. 5, 2026. Pickup will take place from 8–11 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 14, 2026, at the Town of Melbourne Beach Meeting Hall.

Sea oats are native to Brevard's coastal communities and stabilize sand quickly by developing an extensive root and rhizome system that holds onto sand and slows erosion.

Sea oats have the ability to build dunes, as the grassy foliage and tall seed plumes trap windblown sand, which builds up at the plant base and stimulates the plants to grow taller.

The dunes that are formed are an important feature of our coastal ecosystem, as they provide habitat for wildlife and protect upland property during wind and storm events.

For more information or to place an order, email leslie.snyder@brevardfl.gov or visit the Stella Maris Sea Oat Sale website.







TEDxOrlando is set for 2026, a recognized platform for ideas, innovation, regional business community can help as sponsors, vendors and partners

By TEDxOrlando
www.tedxorlando.live

ORLANDO (Nov. 12, 2025) — TEDx is returning to Orlando. For the first time since 2018, the world's most recognized platform for ideas and innovation is once again part of Central Florida's cultural landscape, with its launch event set for fall 2026.

TEDxOrlando will gather visionaries, thought–leaders, and change–makers for a series of events throughout the year, exploring the 2026 theme "The Space Between."

This revival marks the beginning of TEDxOrlando's next chapter, with the aim of becoming a cornerstone of the city's cultural calendar, annual programming of events where ideas, creativity, and community converge to inspire the future of Orlando.

The effort is led by Liam Rogers and Nick Rogers, who bring nearly a decade of experience producing TEDxKingstonUponThames — a celebrated event series in London, United Kingdom, that has welcomed more than 3,000 attendees and produced over 70 TEDx Talks since 2016.

Liam Rogers, license holder and managing director of TEDxOrlando, has assembled a local volunteer committee of experts in event production, marketing, speaker coaching, strategic partnerships and community engagement to reimagine what TEDx can mean for a larger, more diverse region.

"Orlando is a city full of people brimming with energy and new ideas — and that's exactly what makes this so exciting," said Liam Rogers. "TEDx is about creating a space where those ideas collide, connect, and inspire action. Orlando is ready for that kind of spark and our new team brings a fresh perspective."

TEDxOrlando 2026 will feature both a full–day flagship event and a series of smaller salon events, giving the community multiple opportunities to engage with new ideas. As with all TEDx events, the programs will be anchored by a curated lineup of speakers delivering original talks designed to inspire action — voices that reflect the unique creativity and diversity of Central Florida and the Space Coast.

TEDx events are 100 percent volunteer–driven and funded by community support. That means TEDxOrlando will only be possible if local businesses, organizations, and leaders step in as sponsors, vendors, and partners to help bring it to life.

"We believe that when you bring the right voices into the spotlight, a community grows stronger." said Angela Robbins, director of public relations and marketing for TEDxOrlando and founder of Moxie Brands. "Central Florida is no longer just a tourism destination. We've emerged as a center for technology, space exploration, and innovation. As our reputation has shifted, TEDxOrlando channels that momentum and gives our arts and business communities a rare opportunity to put our stamp on the city's next chapter."

● The 2026 Space Between

The theme is a nod to Central Florida's history with space exploration. The theme invites multiple interpretations, bridging disciplines, connecting communities, exploring the unknown, and amplifying the power of what happens in life's intersections. The Space Between is the moment between a question and its answer, between stepping onto the stage and beginning to speak.

● Speaker Applications Under Review

The call for speakers for TEDxOrlando generated an extraordinary response — over 600 individuals submitted applications, reflecting the city's vibrant enthusiasm for the event its theme. With such a strong pool of ideas, the speaker–curation team is now carefully reviewing each submission to ensure the final roster embodies bold, original thinking and a diversity of perspectives.

● Call for Sponsors and Partners

To bring this ambitious event to life, TEDxOrlando depends on sponsors and partners and is currently identifying companies and groups who care to invest in the region's cultural and intellectual future. Those interested in being a sponsor are invited to connect by emailing partnerships@tedxorlando.live.

● About TEDxOrlando

TEDxOrlando is an independently organized TEDx event licensed by TED.

TEDxOrlando exists to transform the way the city sees itself, and how the world sees Orlando. For more information, visit www.tedxorlando.live.

Florida Lottery spotlights $76 million in support at Florida Classic, thousands of fans attend the FAMU and Bethune–Cookman game

By Florida Lottery Communications
communications@flalottery.com

ORLANDO (Nov. 24, 2025) — Florida Lottery representatives attended the 2025 Florida Classic this weekend, joining thousands of fans as Florida A&M University (FAMU) and Bethune–Cookman University (B–CU) faced off in one of the nation's largest and longest–running HBCU football rivalries.

The Classic, known for its electric atmosphere and deep cultural significance, continues to unite alumni, students, and communities from across Florida.

"We are honored to stand alongside institutions like FAMU and B–CU, and we remain proud to contribute to education across the entire state of Florida," said Florida Lottery Secretary John F. Davis. "The Florida Classic is more than a game, it's a celebration of community, culture, and opportunity."

During halftime, representatives from the Florida Lottery participated in an on–field check presentation, highlighting the Lottery's ongoing dedication to strengthening education in every corner of the state. This moment celebrated the collaborative efforts that help make Florida's educational system stronger each year.

To date, the Lottery has contributed more than $76 million to FAMU and B–CU through educational funding supporting students enrolled through the Bright Futures Scholarship Program. This longstanding support reflects the shared commitment between the Lottery and Florida's higher education institutions to empower students and strengthen pathways to success.

This year's Florida Classic once again showcased the pride, tradition, and excellence of both universities on and off the field. The Lottery's presence at this historic matchup underscores its commitment not only to celebrating community but also to investing in the students who will shape Florida's future.

The Florida Lottery looks forward to continued partnerships with organizations statewide as it works to further its mission: creating more opportunities, elevating futures, and investing in Florida's students.

For more information, visit www.floridalottery.com and be sure to follow the Florida Lottery on Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and X (formerly known as Twitter) to stay informed.

Tourism in Florida delivers $133.6 billion in economic impact, nearly $2,000 per household in tax savings

By Governor's Press Office
media@eog.myflorida.com

TALLAHASSEE (Nov. 25, 2025) — Visit Florida's "2024 Economic Impact of Tourism" study revealed record–breaking economic contributions to Floridians from the state's tourism industry. New data confirms that travel and tourism generated $133.6 billion in economic impact in 2024 and saved Florida's 9+ million households nearly $2,000 each in taxes.

Out–of–state visitors to Florida spent $134.9 billion last year, a 3.0 percent increase over 2023. Americans accounted for $120.1 billion of that total, and international visitors contributed $14.8 billion. For every dollar spent by a visitor, 99 cents remained in Florida.

Tourism continued to support Florida's workforce and tax base in monumental ways. The industry backed 1.8 million jobs in 2024 and generated $79.9 billion in wages. Tourism–related activity produced $33.6 billion in federal, state, and local taxes.

"Our tourism industry is critical to Florida's strong economic position," said Gov. Ron DeSantis. "Florida remains the top destination for travelers from across the country and the world because we prioritize freedom and safety. Tourism fuels jobs and keeps Florida's economy strong."

"Tourism drives Florida's economy," said Bryan Griffin, president and CEO of Visit Florida.

"This new data from Visit Florida's economic impact study demonstrates the value of Florida's investment in tourism and tourism marketing. Florida's 9.1 million households are saving nearly $2,000 a year because of the tax revenues generated by Florida tourism. We will continue to responsibly steward this valuable investment for Florida's residents."

Highlights from the report by Rockport Analytics include:

- Tourism in 2024 broke records at 143 million visitors.
- Visitor spending by out–of–state travelers increased by 3.0 percent in 2024, reaching $134.9 billion.
- The Travel and Tourism sector accounted for 7.8 percent of Florida's nominal gross state product, contributing $133.6 billion to the state's economy in 2024.
- For every $1 spent by a visitor, 99 cents stayed in Florida's economy, with 59 cents supporting worker salaries. This is up from 97 cents of every dollar being retained in the Florida economy in 2023.
- Taxes generated by travel and tourism in Florida grew 3.3 percent in 2024, reaching $33.6 billion.

Without tourism, Florida households would pay $1,730 more annually in state and local taxes alone to sustain current levels of revenue.

Tourism–supported employment in Florida grew by 1.8 percent in 2024, reaching 1.8 million jobs.

Tourism–supported wages totaled $79.9 billion, including $44 billion in direct wages. This represents a 4.6 percent year–over–year growth from 2023.

Port Canaveral officially world's busiest cruise port, more than 8.6 million passenger movements in fiscal year 2025

By Vance Gulliksen
vgulliksen@portcanaveral.com
Senior Manager, Public Relations
Canaveral Port Authority

PORT CANAVERAL (Dec. 2, 2025) — Port Canaveral has earned the distinction as the busiest cruise port in the world with over 8.6 million revenue passenger movements in fiscal year 2025.

The confirmed tally is the highest number of cruise passengers in the Port's history and amounts to a 13 percent increase over fiscal year 2024.

"Earning this distinction is a direct reflection of our ongoing commitment and focused efforts to be the best port possible, providing a high–quality experience for all cruise guests sailing from our Port," said John Murray, Port Canaveral CEO. "With thanks to our hard–working teams and the confidence we've earned from the cruise lines, this milestone underscores our commitment to supporting our cruise partners' business growth."

Port Canaveral has invested in right–sizing its six cruise terminals and parking facilities to meet an increasing demand for cruise sailings from Central Florida. The Port is currently homeport for 18 ships across seven leading cruise brands with over 1,000 sailings annually.

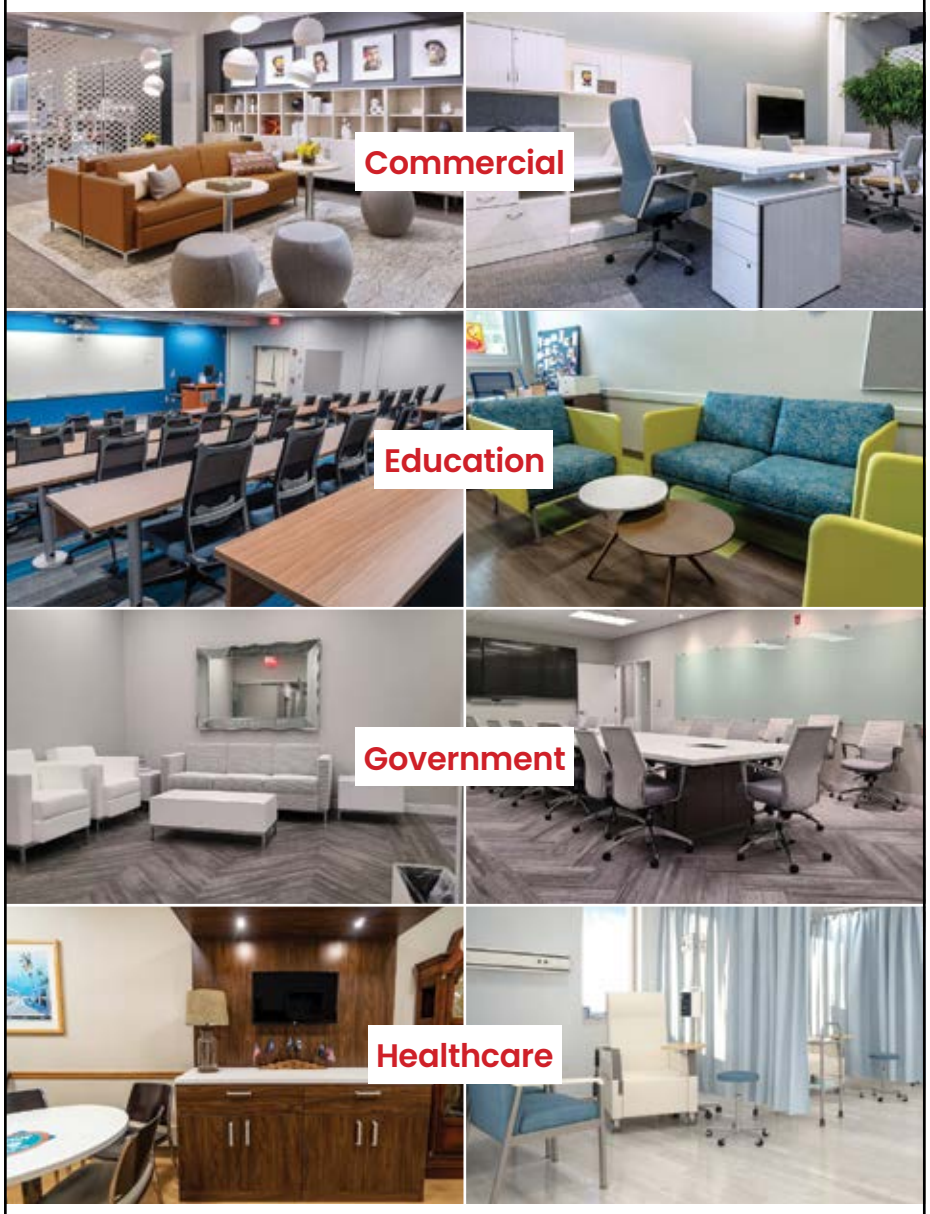
With the "Port Canaveral Advantage," a $912 million five–year capital improvement initiative, the Port is expanding two existing terminals, will develop a seventh new cruise terminal campus, add parking facilities, and deploy new technology to make sailing from the Central Florida region even more accessible and convenient.

A five–time recipient of "Best U.S. Cruise Homeport" award from Cruise Hive, Port Canaveral is one of the cruise industry's most popular drive–to markets with easy access to and from modern terminals, ample adjacent parking, and convenient, centralized location. Home to some of the largest and most technically advanced ships in the world, Port Canaveral is a popular drive–to market with approximately 75 percent of passengers driving to the Port.

The Port continues to build upon its leadership position as a gateway for global commerce. For more information, visit www.PortCanaveral.com.

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Wild Ocean Seafood Market prides itself on selling healthy, wild–caught fish — variety of popular holiday gifts, ships nationwide; now is best time to buy mullet

By Ken Datzman

TITUSVILLE — The heart–health benefits of eating fish have long been known.

But in recent years, research has also found that eating fish at least twice a week could protect blood vessels in the brain from damage that may contribute to cognitive impairment, Alzheimer's disease, and other types of dementia, as well as stroke.

Because of its omega–3 fatty acids, fish consumption helps the brain in multiple ways.

And "wild–caught" seafood is increasingly being embraced by consumers. Wild caught refers to fish and other seafood that is harvested directly from their natural environments, such as oceans, rivers, and lakes.

Wild–caught seafood has been shown to have higher levels of omega–3 fatty acids (healthy fats), and less fat overall.

"We specialize in local wild–caught seafood and we pride ourselves on doing that," said industry veteran Cinthia Sandoval, marketing manager at Wild Ocean Seafood Market, a retailer, wholesaler, and distributor known for its selection of fresh, sustainable seafood.

"We have a dock in Port Canaveral where we unload a lot of seafood, particularly shrimp. We also deal with local fish houses throughout Florida. There are not a lot of fish houses on coastal properties. It is rare to find a fish house on the East Coast of Florida."

Wild Ocean Seafood Market has two retail locations. The flagship operation is at 688 S. Park Ave. in Titusville. The Port Canaveral market is at 710 Bluewater Drive.

From her years of experience in this business, Sandoval said "there seems to be a lot more emphasis on people buying wild–caught seafood."

Diets with higher intake of seafood, whole grains, nuts, legumes, fruits, and vegetables "were associated favorably with health outcomes, such as lower risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, age–related cognitive decline, and colorectal and breast cancer."

The White House's "Make Our Children Healthy Again" report released in May 2025 highlighted seafood and omega–3s as part of the solution that the commission will consider in its "Health Policy Strategy."

If you haven't cooked much seafood in the past, people say it can be challenging, but it doesn't need to be. "I think it may be intimidating for some people to cook fresh fish because of its delicate nature. But fish is quick and easy to cook; just pay attention to detail," said Sandoval.

She added there are plenty of methods that make it simple to cook seafood. Try popping your fish in the oven or sauteing your fillets on the stovetop. In the oven, seafood can be cooked on a baking sheet. Fish fillets and shrimp, for instance, sauté well on the "stove in a nonstick skillet with a little olive oil and spices," said Sandoval.

Wild–caught seafood from Florida is a popular choice for holiday gifts, offering a taste of the state's natural bounty. It's a healthy gift. Wild Ocean Seafood Market ships nationwide. The site is https://wildoceandirect.com. There is free shipping on orders of $150 and over. The store's website is wildoceanmarket.com



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

University of Florida graduate Cinthia Sandoval is the marketing manager at Titusville–based Wild Ocean Seafood Market. Her company, which has two retail sites, ships seafood nationwide. The many selections include such favorites as rock shrimp and mullet. In addition to seafood, Wild Ocean Seafood Market sells accessories and products to prepare seafood, and it has a large lineup of craft beers. The Titusville facility has a restaurant which offers daily luncheon specials. A growing part of the business is deli–prepared foods to go.

Shrimp, grouper, red snapper, snow crabs, and smoked mullet are among the many choices.

"Rock shrimp is our top seller. We are shipping rock shrimp across the nation. People love Florida rock shrimp. We hand process our rock shrimp, split it down the belly and keep the shell on. By doing this, it can be broiled. Most rock shrimp is shelled completely before being sold, so it is just meat," said Sandoval, a University of Florida advertising and sociology graduate who is in her 17th year with Wild Ocean Seafood Market.

Rock shrimp is highly sought after for its sweet and succulent meat, she added. It has a unique appearance, with a hard, spiny "exoskeleton" that is typically reddish–brown in color.

"Rock shrimp is nostalgic and true to Central Florida, particularly Brevard County," said Sandoval.

Brevard County, especially Titusville, is known for rock shrimp, which is a significant part of the local seafood culture and economy. Titusville is home to the Dixie Crossroads Seafood Restaurant & More, renowned for its rock shrimp dishes.

Rock shrimp is a deep–water cousin of wild pink, brown, and white shrimp, which Wild Ocean Seafood Market also sells.

Another strong seller for Wild Ocean Seafood Market, both in–store and online, is mullet.

"This is the best time of year to buy mullet because it's inexpensive," said Sandoval. "They are big and fat. They go out to the ocean to breed."

Mullet is one of the signature flavors of old Florida,

Please see Wild Ocean Seafood Market, page 19

Michael's Men's Store & Tailoring in Indialantic set for the holiday season with a healthy inventory of premium brands; nearly 45 years as family owned business

By Ken Datzman

INDIALANTIC — One of the oldest family owned and operated men's retail clothing stores in the region has used a successful business model that prioritizes quality products and personalized customer service, while serving a specific niche.

Michael's Men's Store & Tailoring, run by the Jablaoui family, has been in business for nearly 45 years at its current location on 5th Avenue. The store's customers include generations of families.

Many successful independent retailers have thrived by offering merchandise that is not readily found in national stores, and by fostering customer relationships.

"We are a relationship–driven business," said Michael Jablaoui, who runs Michael's Men's Store & Tailoring with his father of the same name. "We take the time to get to know the customer's style, and work to build long–term relationships."

"Over the decades we have built a loyal, repeat customer base," he added. "That's why we are here today. Longtime customers are incredibly supportive of our business, and we're thrilled with that. And with the county growing, new residents are discovering our store. They are coming back, too."

Achieving this mark demonstrates remarkable longevity, resilience, and a deep understating of customer needs.

A boutique shop, Michael's Men's Store & Tailoring sells clothing from reputable manufacturers, focusing on superior fabrics and timeless design.

Jablaoui "grew up in the store" and has worked alongside his father for the last 15 years.

"We are a team," said the father. "We love our work. We enjoy meeting the customers, many of whom I have known for years. If you are passionate about your work, like we are, it doesn't feel like work in the traditional sense. This store has always been a very fulfilling part of my life."

The younger Jablaoui is a computer science graduate of Florida Institute of Technology. After working in the field in the Midwest for several years, he decided to join the family business.

"I have always had an interest in the fashion world," he said. "And being able to work with my father in this business is something special."

A relationship of this type can strengthen a business by combining the father's experience with the son's new perspectives. The younger Jablaoui, the store's buyer, has brought new brands into the mix, including Au Noir and Peter Millar.

"Sales of Au Noir shirts at our store have been good," said the son. "We took on that brand a couple of years ago and customers have responded favorably. These are knit–cotton shirts, stretchy and soft. They show off a sophisticated style."

Au Noir is a Montreal–based designer shirt brand known for its fine details and stretchy fabrics. The shirts feature a decorative lining inside the cuff and inside the collar.

North Carolina–based Peter Millar has a niche in upscale golf attire and sportswear in general.

"We sell a lot of Peter Millar polos," said the younger Jablaoui. "They are very comfortable for the Florida climate. Peter Millar clothing is known for its quality fabrics and performance features."



BBN photo — Adrienne B. Roth

Businessman Michael Jablaoui and his son Michael operate Michael's Men's Store & Tailoring on 5th Avenue in Indialantic. The Jablaoui family has been in business for nearly 45 years at this location. The store is known for its premium brands and in–house tailor shop. Michael's is a full–service store selling clothing, accessories, and fragrances. The store generally sees a surge in sales in early to mid–December driven by holiday shoppers. In addition to merchandise, Michael's also has a branded gift card, which is a popular holiday item.

Peter Millar uses luxurious fabrics, including cashmere and merino wool, and works with top yarn spinners to create its garments.

Au Noir and Peter Millar are just two of the store's many premium brands. Michael's Men's Store & Tailoring is filled with inventory, including suits, sport coats, Italian–made dress trousers, causal pants, shirts, three–quarter zip sweaters, ties, belts, socks, and high–end jeans, among other selections.

The brands include Jack Victor, Robert Talbott, Robert Graham, 34 Heritage, Zanella, Tori Richard, Hart Schaffner Marx, and Wilkes & Riley.

"We are fully stocked for the holiday season," said the younger Jablaoui. "As it gets closer to mid–December, we typically see a surge in sales. Business has been steady throughout the year."

One of the store's top–selling brands is 34 Heritage, a denim jean. The brand is known for its quality fabrics and attention to detail, he said. "34 Heritage jeans have a lot of stretch to them. They are lightweight, stretchy, and super–comfortable. They are designed to fit people of various shapes and sizes. This is the only jean we carry because they are popular with our customers."

The younger Jablaoui added that "people in the local market like clothing that is soft and stretchy. We pay close attention to that when selecting brands for the store."

Please see Michael's Men's Store & Tailoring, page 21

Supreme Court disciplines nine attorneys, summaries of orders issued from Sept. 18 to Nov. 25, 2025

By Jennifer Krell Davis, J.D.
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Director
Communications Division
The Florida Bar

TALLAHASSEE (Nov. 26, 2025) — The Florida Bar, the state's guardian for the integrity of the legal profession, announces that the Florida Supreme Court in recent court orders disciplined nine attorneys, suspending eight, and reprimanding one.

The Florida Supreme Court, The Florida Bar, and its Division of Lawyer Regulation are charged with administering a statewide disciplinary system to enforce Supreme Court rules of professional conduct for the more than 114,000 members of The Florida Bar. Key discipline case files that are public record are posted to attorneys' individual online Florida Bar profiles. Information on the discipline system and how to file a complaint are available at www.floridabar.org/attorneydiscipline.

Court orders are not final until time expires to file a rehearing motion and, if filed, determined. The filing of such a motion does not alter the effective date of the discipline. Disbarred lawyers may not re–apply for admission for five years. They are required to go through an extensive process that includes a rigorous background check and retaking the Bar exam. Attorneys suspended for periods of 91 days and longer must undergo a rigorous process to regain their law licenses including proving rehabilitation. Disciplinary revocation is tantamount to disbarment.

● David Casals, 110 E. Broward Blvd., Floor 17, Fort Lauderdale, suspended due to a felony conviction effective 30 days following an Oct. 1 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 2000) Casals was charged by information with Trafficking in cocaine, Delivery of cocaine, and Introduction of contraband into a County Detention Facility. On Sept. 5, 2025, Casals was convicted after a jury trial of Possession of Cocaine, a third–degree felony, and Introduction of Contraband into a County Detention Facility, a first–degree misdemeanor. Casals was sentenced to 364 days in the Palm Beach County Jail, followed by a three–year term of supervised probation with other conditions. Casals has filed a notice of appeal. The Supreme Court of Florida has ordered that a referee recommend the appropriate disciplinary sanction for Casal's criminal misconduct. (Case No. SC2025–1538)

● Billy–Joe Hoot Crawford, 748 Jenks Ave., Panama City, felony suspension effective 30 days following a Nov. 3 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 1998) On Jan. 30, 2024, Crawford was convicted of one count of Interference with Custody, a third–degree felony, in violation of F.S. §787.03, and one count of Tampering with a Witness, Victim or Informant, a third–degree felony, in violation of F.S. §914.22. (Case No. SC2025–1715)

● Jeffrey Rice Hussey, 853 Victoria Terrace, Altamonte Springs, suspended effective 30 days following Nov. 12 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 1990) Hussey failed to respond to an official Bar inquiry and the Bar filed a Petition for Contempt and Order to Show Cause with The Florida Supreme Court. The Court issued an Order to Show Cause to which Hussey failed to respond. (Case No. SC2025–1424)

● Larry Elliot Klayman, 7050 W. Palmetto Park Rd., Boca Raton, suspended for two years effective 30 days following a Nov. 5 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 1977) In one matter, Klayman engaged in a conflict of interest when he represented plaintiffs in three separate cases against Judicial Watch, an organization he founded and for which he previously served as general counsel, without seeking conflict waivers. In another matter, he expressed to his client that his personal feelings for her rendered him unable to properly represent her. However, he failed to withdraw from her case even after being terminated, and he publicized the case against her wishes. (Case No. SC2023–1219)

● Joan Marie Powers, 950 S Pine Island Road, Suite 150A, Plantation, suspended for 20 days effective 30 days following a Nov. 13 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 1985) In two separate matters, Powers filed appearances in immigration proceedings while her clients were being held at Krome Detention Center. The appearances specifically indicated that Powers would represent her clients in all proceedings, where Powers claimed her services were only meant for the cases while at Krome. When each client was released from Krome, Powers took no further action on their cases but failed to withdraw. In one matter, after failing to appear for a removal hearing, that client was ordered deported. In the other, a one–year deadline to file a petition for asylum was missed. (Case No. SC2025–0703)

● Marcy S. Resnik, 12 SE 7th St., Suite. 602, Fort Lauderdale, suspended for 10 days and ordered to attend Ethics School effective Nov. 21, 2025. (Admitted to Practice: 1988) Resnik entered a plea of no contest to the misdemeanor charge of Obstruction/Resisting an Officer without Violence. The charge was based upon Resnik's advice to a former client that she should not discuss a certain matter with police because she had previously signed a settlement agreement that contained a confidentiality and non–disparagement clause. (Case No. SC2025–1661)

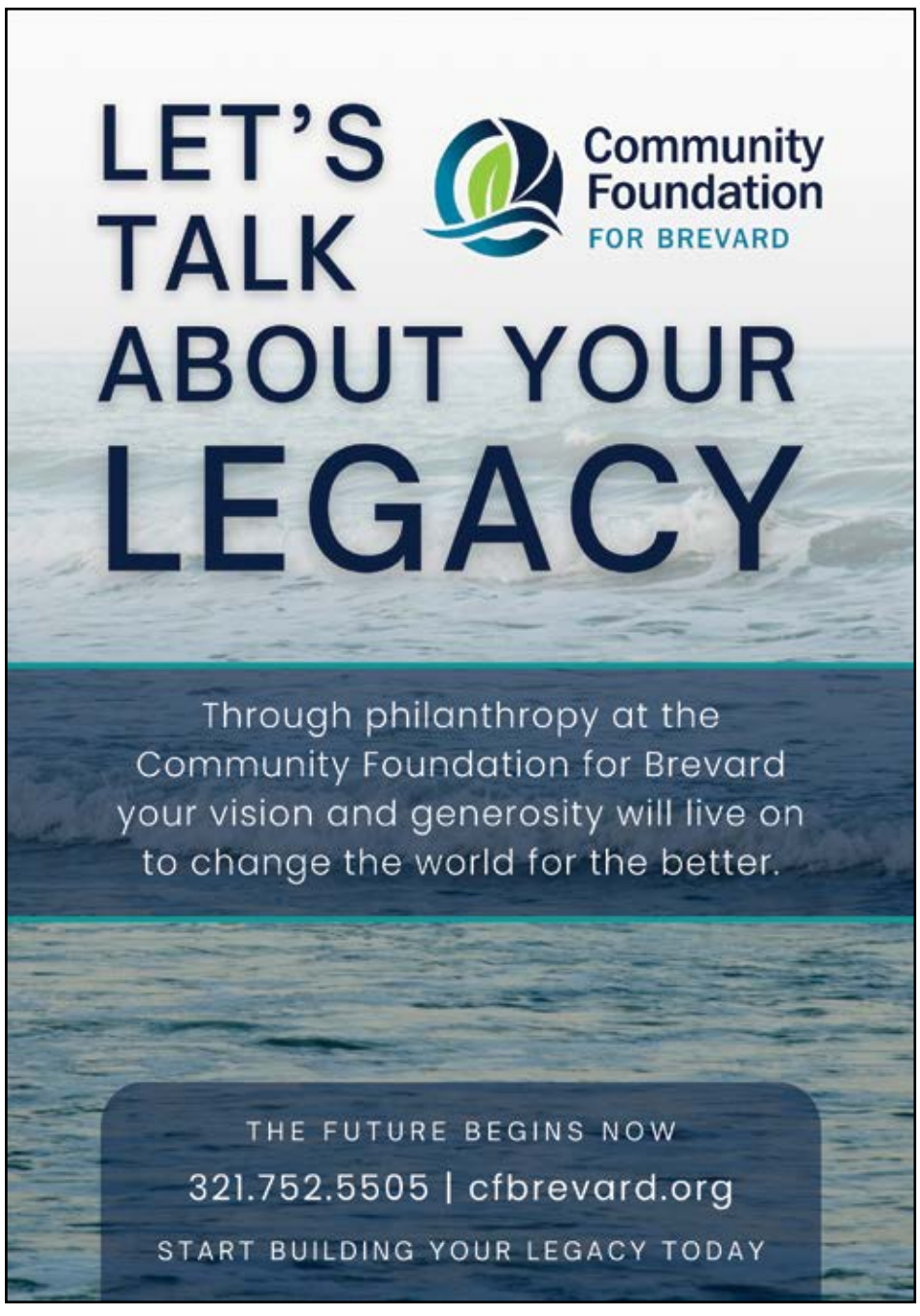
● Eduardo Rodriguez, 1615 Edgewater Drive, Suite. 250, Orlando, public reprimand administered by personal appearance before the Board of Governors of The Florida Bar, completion of Ethics School, completion of Professionalism Workshop, and completion of an additional continuing legal education course, effective immediately following a Nov. 20 court order. (Admitted to Practice: 1999) As the supervising partner of his law firm, Rodriguez at times permitted retainer and contingency fee contracts and other legal documents to be notarized by qualified law firm employees without the notaries having witnessed the execution of the documents, nor were the client/signors present, as required by Florida law regarding notarizations. (Case No. SC2024–1273)

● Jennifer Anne Tanck, 360 Central Ave., Suite 800, St. Petersburg, suspended effective 30 days following an October 8 order. (Admitted to Practice: 2008) Tanck failed to respond to an official Bar inquiry and the Bar filed a Petition for Contempt and Order to Show Cause with The Florida Supreme Court. The Court issued an Order to Show Cause to which Tanck failed to respond. (Case No. SC2025–0790)

● Capp P. Taylor, P.O. Box 1770, Dandridge, Tennessee, suspended for two years, nunc pro tunc to April 29, 2024. (Admitted to Practice: 1979) This is a reciprocal discipline action based on a two–year suspension in Tennessee. Taylor was previously suspended for six months by the Supreme Court of Tennessee in 2017. Following that order, Taylor failed to inform his clients of his suspension, nor did he return any of the clients' property, or notify them that he could only continue representing their interests in Federal Employee Compensation Act (FECA) cases as a non–lawyer. (Case No. SC2025–0664)

● About The Florida Bar

The Florida Bar fosters and upholds a high standard of integrity and competence within Florida's legal profession as an official arm of the Florida Supreme Court. To learn more, visit FloridaBar.org.



FordHarrison recognized by LCLD as a Top Performer and Compass Award winner; a commitment to diversity

By Sarah Adams
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Senior Marketing and Events Manager
and Josh Irvin
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Marketing and Events Coordinator
FordHarrison LLP

ATLANTA (Dec. 3, 2025) — FordHarrison LLP, one of the country's largest management–side labor and employment law firms, has announced that the firm has been named a Top Performer and Compass Award winner by the Leadership Council on Legal Diversity (LCLD), which recognizes law firms and corporations that show a strong commitment to building a more inclusive legal profession.

"Being recognized by LCLD as a Top Performer and Compass Award Winner is a privilege, and it reinforces FordHarrison's ongoing commitment to supporting and advancing continued diversity and inclusion in the legal profession," said Dawn Siler–Nixon, FordHarrison's diversity, equity and inclusion partner.

LCLD is comprised of more than 400 corporate chief legal officers and law firm managing partners — who are committed to creating an environment where all talent can thrive, with the ultimate goal of strengthening and diversifying the legal profession.

The Top Performer award recognizes those organizations in the top 20 percent for participation in LCLD programs and activities.

The Compass Award recognizes those individuals and organizations that fulfill all the following requirements in a single calendar year:

- Member (Managing Partner/ General Counsel) engagement with LCLD
- Nominate an LCLD Fellow
- Nominate an LCLD Pathfinder
- Participate in an LCLD pipeline program (the 1L Scholars Program or the Success in Law School Mentoring Program).
- About LCLD

Leadership Council on Legal Diversity is an organization of more than 400 corporate chief legal officers and law firm managing partners — the leadership of the profession — who have pledged themselves, through our Leaders at the Front initiative and other means, to creating a truly diverse U.S. legal profession.

The organization's action programs are designed to attract, inspire, and nurture the talent in society and within our organizations, thereby helping a new and more diverse generation of attorneys ascend to positions of leadership. For more information, visit www.lcldnet.org.

- About FordHarrison LLP

FordHarrison is a labor and employment firm with attorneys in 27 offices, including two affiliate firms.

The firm has built a legal practice as one of the nation's leading defense firms with an exclusive focus on labor law, employment law, litigation, business immigration, employee benefits and executive compensation.

For more information about the firm, visit fordharrison.com.

Applicants sought for Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee vacancy, to serve a four–year term; deadline set Feb. 2

By Brandee Blake
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Communications Department
The Florida Bar

TALLAHASSEE (Dec. 1, 2025) — The Florida Bar Board of Governors is seeking applicants for the following vacancy on the Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee. The vacancy will be filled during the Board of Governors' March 13, 2026, meeting. Lawyer applicants must be members of The Florida Bar and in good standing.

- Judicial Ethics Advisory Committee: One attorney to fill a four–year term commencing July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2030. This is a 12–member committee that renders 20 to 25 written advisory opinions a year to inquiring judges and judicial candidates regarding application of the Code of Judicial Conduct to specific instances of contemplated judicial and non–judicial conduct.

The committee meets once a year at The Florida Bar's Annual Convention and attendance is encouraged. Most of the committee's work, however, is undertaken via email and phone conferencing. The committee is also responsible for judicial campaign conduct forums scheduled in election years.

Applications will be accepted until close of business on Monday, Feb. 2, 2026. Resumes will not be accepted in lieu of the required application. The Board of Governors will review all applications and may request telephone or personal interviews.

Persons interested in applying for these vacancies may download the Application for Special Appointment or call Bar headquarters at (850) 561–3127. Completed applications must be received by the Executive Director, The Florida Bar, 651 E. Jefferson Street, Tallahassee, Fla., 32399–2300 or emailed.



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Construction firms add 19,000 jobs in September, craft workers' wages rise as companies try to retain workers

By Brian Turmail
brian.turmail@agc.org
Associated General Contractors of America

ARLINGTON, Va. (Nov. 20, 2025) — Construction employment increased by 19,000 positions in September as firms raised wages to bring on board workers more rapidly than other sectors, according to an analysis of new government data the Associated General Contractors of America released today.

Association officials noted that firms continue to add employees to keep pace with demand for public sector projects and data centers, even as other segments of the industry are experiencing slowing demand.

"The employment data are consistent with the August spending numbers that show rising demand for public construction, including a large heavy–civil component," said Macrina Wilkins, the association's senior research analyst. "Those public–sector gains are being partly offset, however, by declining private sector demand for many types of construction projects."

Construction employment in September totaled 8,305,000, seasonally adjusted, an increase of 19,000 from August. Headcount rose by 38,000 jobs or 0.5 percent during the past 12 months, just under the 0.8 percent growth rate in total nonfarm payroll employment. August's figures were also revised downward, with the initially reported 7,000 job loss nearly doubling to 14,000, indicating the labor market was weaker heading into September than earlier estimates suggested

Nonresidential construction firms added 16,300 jobs in September, marking continued growth across much of the sector. Employment increased by 11,100 among nonresidential specialty trade contractors, while nonresidential building construction added 300 jobs and heavy and civil engineering gained 4,900. Meanwhile, residential construction employment rose by 3,100 jobs, driven by a gain of 3,900 in residential building, even as residential specialty trade contractors shed 800 positions.

Average hourly earnings for production and nonsupervisory employees in construction — including most onsite craft workers and many office staff — increased 4.0 percent over the year to $37.64. That gain exceeded the 3.8 percent rise in pay for such workers in the overall private sector. The unemployment rate among workers with recent construction experience inched up to 3.8 percent in September, but still sits below the overall nonfarm rate of 4.3 percent (not seasonally adjusted).

Association officials said the fact firms continued to add construction jobs during a period of uncertainty about whether the government would close and outstanding questions about future tariff rates shows contractors are optimistic demand will remain strong. They continued to urge federal officials to resolve trade disputes, set clear tariff levels and take steps to expand the construction workforce.

"Despite some significant economic uncertainties, construction firms remain optimistic enough to continue adding to their payrolls," said Jeffrey Shoaf, the association's chief executive officer. "The best way to sustain that momentum is by providing clarity about tariff levels, stabilizing materials prices and developing a more robust workforce."

The Harvey & Carol Massey Foundation opens a new community space in Orlando with conference rooms for local nonprofits

By Lilly Carrion
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&Barr

ORLANDO (Nov. 20, 2025) — The Harvey & Carol Massey Foundation has officially opened its headquarters The building at 308 Groveland St. is directly across the street from Massey Services' corporate headquarters. To celebrate the opening, the Foundation hosted an open house Nov. 19, welcoming invited guests from area nonprofit organizations to tour the new facility and learn more about its resources.

Created to support and strengthen local nonprofits, the facility features two reservable spaces available at no cost to 501(c)(3) entities.

The modern conference room comfortably sits up to 12 people and is fully equipped with high–speed Wi–Fi, presentation tools and a bright, professional environment — ideal for team meetings, client presentations or strategic planning sessions. For smaller, more informal gatherings, the collaboration room offers seating for five and four additional soft chairs, providing a comfortable and adaptable space for brainstorming, client conversations or creative teamwork.

"This building represents more than just a new home for the Foundation — it's a place designed to empower the incredible nonprofit organizations doing vital work across Central Florida," said Andrea Massey–Farrell, president and CEO of the Harvey & Carol Massey Foundation. "By offering these meeting spaces at no cost, we hope to make it just a little easier for organizations to focus on what matters most — their mission and the people they serve."

The Harvey and Carol Massey Foundation was established in 2014 by Massey Services founder Harvey L. Massey, and his wife Carol. It was established to further solidify the company's long–term commitment and mission of being a "contributing member to our community and industry." Andrea Massey–Farrell has served as the president and CEO of the Foundation since its inception.

The Foundation's commitment to fostering collaboration and providing resources for nonprofits reflects its ongoing dedication to strengthening the areas of arts and culture, education and human services.

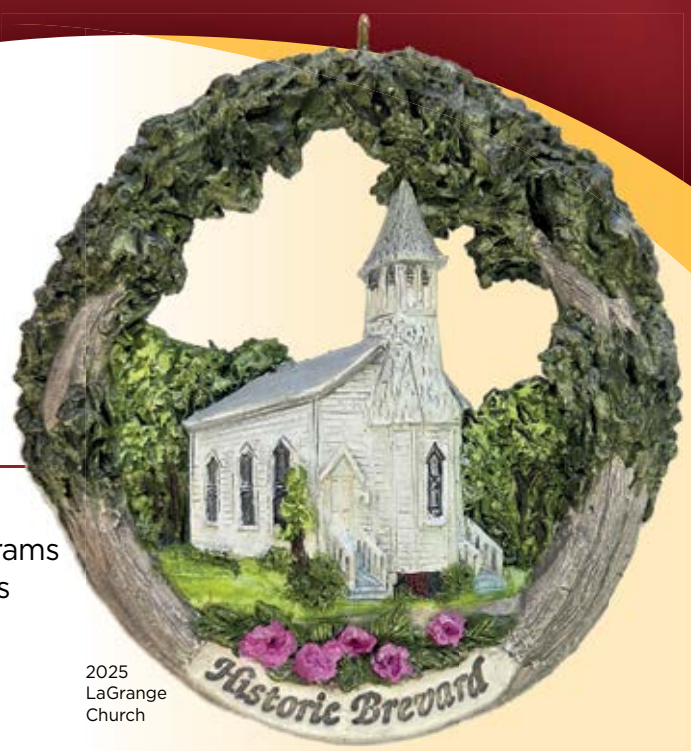
Nonprofits interested in reserving a conference room may contact the Foundation for availability and scheduling at info@harveyandcarolmasseyfoundation.org.

Follow the Foundation on Instagram (@harveyandcarolmasseyfoundation) and Facebook for future updates.

We believe in making the world a better place by empowering women.

SIGNATURE FUNDRAISING EVENTS
- Chocolate Festival (March)
- Big Hats & Bow Ties Kentucky Derby Party (May)
- Historic Brevard Christmas Ornaments (On Sale Year Round)

- Strategic Partnerships
- Scholarships & Support Programs
- Date Rape Drug Test Coasters



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The Community Foundation supports Wheelchairs 4 Kids, helps children with physical disabilities in Brevard

By Lauryn Fox
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Director of Development
Wheelchairs 4 Kids

TARPON SPRINGS (Dec. 3, 2025) — Wheelchairs 4 Kids was honored to receive generous contributions in 2025 from the Community Foundation for Brevard. This year's support of $7,385 helped five children in Brevard County by providing one wheelchair and four therapy tricycles.

These donations enhance mobility and allow children to participate more fully in daily life and play. "We are deeply grateful to the John and Betty Higdon Fund, the Kathryn F. Lazar Fund, and the Lazar Family Charitable Fund for helping us make a difference for these incredible kids," said Lauryn Fox, director of development at Wheelchairs 4 Kids. "Their generosity provides essential equipment that brings independence, comfort, and joy to each child."

Two children received therapy tricycles through the John and Betty Higdon Fund. One mother shared: "The tricycle gave us the opportunity to take walks together in the afternoons. Emotionally and physically, she has improved a lot and her smile has returned… Thank you for returning my daughter's smile and freedom of movement."

Lucas received a therapy tricycle through the combined support from the Lazar Family Charitable Fund and the Kathryn F. Lazar Fund. His family said: "Lucas is thrilled to have a bike that he can ride! It will also help with his leg movement. We are very thankful to Wheelchairs 4 Kids and the donors who have made this possible."

Since its founding in 2011, Wheelchairs 4 Kids has helped over 2,000 children receive life–changing mobility equipment and modifications through its flagship Let's Roll program. Ongoing support from community partners like these funds allows the organization to continue improving the lives of children with physical disabilities and their families.

● About the Community Foundation for Brevard

Since 1981, the Community Foundation for Brevard has served as a leader and resource for philanthropic individuals and organizations to expand, enhance, and sustain Brevard's quality of life. An independent, 501(c)(3) organization, the Foundation provides the expertise, network of partners, and information that empowers philanthropists to maximize their impact in addressing critical needs and building a community where everyone can thrive.

For more information, visit www.cfbrevard.org.

● About Wheelchairs 4 Kids

Wheelchairs 4 Kids is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit based in Tarpon Springs and strives to improve the lives of children with physical disabilities through custom mobility equipment, accessibility modifications, and inclusive social programs.

To learn more about Wheelchairs 4 Kids, visit www.wheelchairs4kids.org.

Secretary Rollins announces $30 million food purchase to back U.S. producers

By Office of Communications
press@usda.gov
U.S. Department of Agriculture

WASHINGTON (Nov. 24, 2025) — U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Brooke L. Rollins today announced the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) intent to purchase up to $30 million in fresh fruit from American farmers and producers to distribute to food banks and nutrition assistance programs across the country.

These purchases are being made through USDA's authority under Section 32 of the Agriculture Act of 1935 and will assist producers and communities in need. With this action, the Trump Administration is bolstering American prosperity by supporting American agriculture, rural communities, and those in need of nutrition assistance.

"President Trump is standing with America's farmers, especially right now while the farm economy recovers from years of neglect under the last administration," said Rollins. "Certain commodities are experiencing a surplus and USDA is ensuring these crops do not go to waste and instead go to Americans in need across the country. These fresh fruits will reach those in need, boosting healthier options for Americans at food banks across the country, all while benefitting American farmers facing unfair actions from foreign competitors."

On an ongoing basis, Agricultural Marketing Service purchases a variety of domestically produced and processed agricultural products as authorized by Section 32 of the Agriculture Act of 1935. These "USDA Foods" are provided to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service nutrition assistance programs, including food banks that operate The Emergency Food Assistance Program, and are a vital component of the nation's food safety net.

USDA AMS will purchase $30 million of the following commodities: fresh oranges, $15 million; grapefruit, $10 million; and mandarins, $5 million.



Treasure Health names Jennifer Creel chief clinical officer, dedicated to delivering patient–centered care

By Maryellen Murphy
mmurphy@treasurehealth.org
Marketing Manager
St. Francis Hospice
Treasure Health

STUART (Dec. 2, 2025) — Treasure Health, parent company of Treasure Coast Hospice and Brevard–based St. Francis Hospice, has announced the promotion of Jennifer Creel, MBA, BSN, RN, CHPN, to chief clinical officer, reflecting the organization's commitment to providing exceptional end–of–life care across its four–county service area.

"Jennifer Creel's promotion to chief clinical officer reflects her years of proven leadership and unwavering commitment to patient care," said Treasure Coast Hospice CEO Jackie Kendrick, CHPCA. "Having served numerous clinical roles with St. Francis Hospice, Jennifer brings a wealth of expertise, strategic insight, and collaborative leadership that will be invaluable in guiding our teams and ensuring we continue to deliver compassionate, high–quality care to the patients and families we serve."

In her new role as chief clinical officer for both Treasure Coast Hospice and St. Francis Hospice, Creel oversees all clinical operations, including patient care teams, inpatient services, admissions, and bereavement. Her responsibilities include leading a large multidisciplinary team of clinicians dedicated to delivering compassionate, patient–centered care while advancing quality outcomes, operational efficiency, and regulatory compliance.

"I am honored to accept this role and look forward to supporting our clinical teams across the organization so they can continue to deliver the highest level of care and meet the growing needs of patients and families facing serious illness," said Creel.

Since joining St. Francis Hospice in 2004, Creel has held progressive leadership roles. Most recently, Creel served as chief clinical officer, where she successfully opened inpatient care centers, led electronic medical record integrations, developed and mentored informatics and information technology teams, and implemented comprehensive education systems that enhanced clinical performance and compliance. Under her direction, St. Francis Hospice achieved a 4–star quality rating Hospice Honors designation and maintained patient satisfaction and regulatory scores above national benchmarks.

● About Treasure Health

Treasure Health is a nonprofit community organization whose mission is to provide access to compassionate, caring, expert and professional hospice and grief support services to patients and families at the end of life. With a legacy rooted in service, Treasure Health compassionately leads and supports community–based hospice providers that embody a shared commitment to provide exceptional, quality end–of–life care.

Treasure Health's flagship hospice program, Treasure Coast Hospice, was founded in 1982 and has grown to serve more than 4,000 patients annually in Martin, St. Lucie, and Okeechobee counties. In 2024, Treasure Health partnered with St. Francis Hospice, Brevard County's longest–serving, and only independent, non–profit hospice and palliative care provider. Combined, Treasure Health serves a population of more than 1.2 million people and cares for more than 1,000 patients daily in five Florida counties.



Wild Ocean Seafood Market

Continued from page 12

usually enjoyed smoked or fried. And mullet is one of the Sunshine State's most moderately priced seafood products. Prices are "especially good in December when the harvest is at its height," according to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs.

Of all the fish harvested in Florida, mullet tops the list in terms of "pounds landed."

"We have mullet roe, which is the egg sack from grey mullet. It's an incredible value just buying it raw and processing it yourself. Mullet roe can be cured with salt and made into bottarga. It's delicious when grated over pasta or other dishes that need a lift," she said.

Bottarga is the salted, lightly cured fish roe pouch of the female grey mullet. It's often referred to as "Mediterranean caviar" or the "truffle of the sea."

"It has a wonderful, deep golden amber color and a delightfully delicate taste," said Sandoval. "Bottarga is incredibly popular. It's a big Asian delicacy."

In general, when purchasing mullet, make sure it's firm, with a fresh, mild "sea–breeze" aroma, she said.

Fresh whole fish should have a shiny surface with tightly adhering scales. The gills should be deep red or pink, and the eyes should be clear, not cloudy.

Wild Ocean Seafood Market has a great selection of spices, seasonings, and other items along with its fresh fish. "We make our own cocktail sauce and tartar sauce from scratch," said Sandoval.

The Wild Ocean Seafood Market pantry also sells an "outstanding selection of craft beers," she said. "We have a close relationship with Progressive Distribution, a craft beer distributor. So, we have beers from around the world."

Based in Longwood, Progressive Distribution is billed as "Florida's smallest statewide craft beer distributor bringing world–class breweries a platform to share their passions with consumers."

Wild Ocean Seafood Market also has a selection of wines, and the facility features a casual–dining restaurant, which offers seafood and soup specials, made fresh daily. On this day, red snapper was the luncheon special.

"The seafood on the menu is seasonal. And we have a cream–based soup and a broth–based soup. Chicken and noodle is a favorite. We roast whole chickens to make that soup," she said.

On Fridays, the restaurant has a fish fry basket. "Fish Fry Friday is our most popular lunch menu," she said. "It's $9.99 for local wild–caught fish. It's a 4– to 6–ounce serving depending on the fish caught and includes a side of fries and tartar sauce. The fish can be grilled or blackened, too. Whether it's snapper, catfish, or other seafood on Fish Fry Friday, it's all local and wild caught. For $9.99, we think Fish Fry Friday is a value."

Sandoval said wild–caught seafood is generally more expensive than farm–raised options because of the labor–intensive methods of catching them and their typically higher quality. Prices can vary based on the type of fish and its availability.

"There is a range of inexpensive to expensive wild–caught seafood. If you want to save money, process it yourself," she said.

Wild Ocean Seafood Market was founded originally as The Cape Canaveral Shrimp Co. by the Rodney Thompson family. Today, the business is owned by Mike and Jeanna Merrifield, who are active in the industry serving as executive committee members of the Southeastern Fisheries Association Inc.

The SFA's mission is to "defend, protect, and enhance the commercial fishing industry in the Southeastern United States."

A growing part of Wild Ocean Seafood Market's business is prepared to–go items, which follows a national trend, according to the Food Industry Association.

Consumers are increasingly choosing deli–prepared foods. Many shoppers are also combining deli–prepared options with items from their own kitchen.

"This shift reflects how shoppers are redefining value in food: They want more meals that deliver on quality and variety but also save time and money," the report says.

Sandoval said Wild Ocean Seafood Market's prepared to–go items are seeing solid growth.

"The to–go items include spaghetti and shrimp, garlic mussels, and garlic rock shrimp, which is really popular. The customer can put them in the oven or even the microwave, because they have already been cooked. Convenience and the quality of the prepared foods we offer are driving sales in that particular part of the business," said Sandoval.

In 2024, Florida fishermen landed 96.5 million pounds of fish worth $240.5 million (wholesale value), a 16.3 percent increase over 2023. Florida ranked fifth in 2024 "dockside value." Alaska ranked first with $1.3 billion, reports the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs.

The top 10 most valuable species landed on Florida's East Coast during 2024 were rock shrimp ($9.7 million), white shrimp ($6.5 million), king mackerel ($5.9 million), blue crab ($5.4 million), spiny lobster ($3.4 million), Spanish mackerel ($2.5 million), swordfish ($2.2 million), golden tilefish ($1.6 million), stone crab ($1.1 million), and vermillion snapper ($1 million).

"One of the best ways to keep the industry thriving is to buy local," said Sandoval. "Wild Ocean Seafood Market has been in business for a long time. We are a trusted source for high–quality seafood. More people are learning the importance of eating seafood and we are helping educate them about the different species. It's an exciting industry."



Melbourne Community Orchestra to play seasonal favorites Dec. 17–18; audience invited to wear pajamas

By Joyce Wilden
joyce@buzzbizpr.com
BUZZ Biz Public Relations

MELBOURNE (Dec. 1, 2025) — Snuggle up and get ready for the coziest winter event yet. Musicians from the 65–member Melbourne Community Orchestra will don their "jammies" for "Tinsel & Tidings: A Symphonic Sleepover," a pair of concerts at 7 p.m. Wednesday and Thursday, Dec. 17–18.

The two evenings at the Melbourne Auditorium, 625 Hibiscus Blvd., will melt cares away like marshmallows in hot chocolate, as the orchestra plays seasonal favorites in the most comfortable fashion.

The audience is invited to wear their pajamas to the concert, too.

Expect to hear Leroy Anderson's famous "Sleigh Ride" and a "Christmas Overture" by Hess. The audience will be treated to "Wassail Dances" and can expect a visit from the "Sugar Plum Fairy." In a cheeky move, the orchestra will perform two Beatles songs in the style of Tchaikovsky's famous Nutcracker.

Two talented members of the orchestra will be spotlighted during the concert: Paul Wubbena will be at the piano when the orchestra performs music from the beloved animated classic, "A Charlie Brown Christmas," and concertmaster Ivonne Vega will be featured during "Excerpts from Fiddler on the Roof," arranged by John Williams for violinist Itzhak Perlman.

Not–to–be–missed is a joyful family sing–along, led by Maestro Mark Nelson himself. A brass quintet will entertain the gathering crowd, beginning at 6:15 p.m.

Admission to Tinsel & Tidings and all Melbourne Community Orchestra concerts is free. The all–volunteer group conducted by Nelson is the orchestra–in–residence for the City of Melbourne.

Call (321) 285–6724 or visit MCOrchestra.org for more information or to sign up for concert alerts.

Nelson said he expects Tinsel & Tidings: A Symphonic Sleepover to be the perfect accompaniment to the season's festivities.

"Slip into your coziest holiday PJs and join us for a night of musical cheer and surprises," said Nelson. "Bring the whole family and celebrate the season with us. Where else can you hear a concert where both the orchestra and the audience are wearing their holiday pajamas?"

● About the Melbourne Community Orchestra

The Melbourne Community Orchestra is comprised of 65 musicians ranging from student players to adult hobbyists and full–time professionals. Clair Cristy is the orchestra's founder and holds the title of conductor emeritus. The orchestra's repertoire includes music from symphonic to pop, including movie soundtracks and show tunes, opera, ballet and patriotic arrangements. The Melbourne Community Orchestra is dedicated to enhancing the appreciation and understanding of orchestral music in Brevard County and strives to provide an intimate audience experience.

● About Conductor Mark Nelson

Mark Nelson has been a conductor, clinician and educator for over 40 years, recognized for his conducting of orchestra ensembles across the United States. Nelson was a cofounder of the Community Band of Brevard, and pioneered the American Musical Theatre Program for the Brevard County Public Schools. He is a two–time recipient of the National Band Association Citation of Excellence. In 2013 he was named a Legion Laureate, one of only 100 nationally, by the John Phillip Sousa Society. Nelson completed his doctoral studies through Boston University.

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Michael's Men's Store & Tailoring

Continued from page 13

One current style in menswear that has experienced strong growth has been casual clothing, especially denim jeans.

The father and son are anticipating another good holiday season for their store.

In addition to clothing, Michael's Men's Store & Tailoring sells classic soaps and colognes by Royall Fragrances Ltd. of Bermuda. The fragrance line includes Vetiver, Lyme, Spyce, Bay Rhum, Musk, and Yacht.

"We have sold Royall Fragrances for decades," said the younger Jabaloui. "It's an iconic brand in the world of men's colognes."

Founded in Bermuda in 1957 by renowned yachtsman Anthony Gaade, the company has a rich history rooted in traditional Caribbean formulas.

Michael's also sells a great selection of ties, belts, socks, and underwear.

The National Retail Federation expects holiday sales this season to top $1 trillion, with many shoppers purchasing clothing.

"American consumers may be cautious in sentiment, yet remain fundamentally strong and continue to drive U.S. economic activity," the report says. "The NFR remains bullish about the holiday shopping season and expects that consumers will continue to seek savings in nonessential categories to be able to spend on gifts for loved ones."

NRF's "2025 Holiday Survey," conducted by Prosper Insights and Analytics, found that consumers plan to spend $890 per person on average this year on holiday gifts, food, and other seasonal items.

The NRF forecast may be on the conservative side. The "BMO Real Financial Progress Index" finds Americans will spend an average at almost $2,800 this year, an increase of more than $1,000 from 2024.

The survey also found significant generational differences in anticipated holiday spending:

- Millennial shoppers say they will spend nearly twice as much as the national average, estimating their holidays will cost more than $4,400
- Gen–X estimates spending nearly $2,500
- Gen–Z estimates spending more than $2,000
- Boomers estimate spending well over $1,600

Independent retailers would like to see some of this spending happen in their stores.

From business attire to sportswear and classic to modern styles, Michael's Men's Store & Tailoring offers an "enjoyable holiday shopping environment. There is nothing that replaces good in–store service, the person–to–person relationship," said the younger Jablaoui.

A fast–growing part of their business is custom tailoring. "Our tailoring business is as strong as ever," said the son. "In fact, we are recruiting another skilled tailor to join the team. If a customer purchases a suit, a shirt or other item from our store and it needs tailoring to make a perfect fit, we provide that service."

He added, "I can do a hem and some basic tailoring, but not the detailed work my father can do." His father was a master tailor in the Midwest before moving to Florida.

When it comes to shopping for men's clothing, there are several advantages to choosing an independent store.

Shopping at an independently owned store, such as Michael's, gives you the opportunity to purchase quality clothing and accessories at competitive prices, while also supporting the local economy.

American Express' "Small Business Economic Study" found that over two–thirds ($0.68) of every dollar spent at a local business stays in the community, compared to 30 to 40 percent at national retailers. Local spending also contributes to public infrastructure and the overall health of a community's economy.

The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), a leading small business advocacy organization, encourages shoppers to support local small businesses throughout the holiday season.

"This holiday season we encourage all shoppers to support their favorite small business," said Bill Herrie, NFIB Florida executive director. "Florida's small businesses are essential to our state's economy and local communities.

"We welcome people to visit and enjoy holiday shopping in our family store environment," said the son. "We thank our customers for their support over more than four decades. It's been quite a run for an independent men's clothing retailer such as Michael's. This is a significant business milestone. We're here because of our customers."



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Let's talk.

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Victory Casino Cruises

Continued from page 1

"Our estimate is that we have a little over 800,000 names in our database," said Bullock, who is a business graduate of Arizona State University. "A lot of these people are frequent customers. We have bus lines from the Orlando area and from the Florida Mall to the Port. And we have customers coming from The Villages, a retirement community, in Central Florida. They really like it here. And we like them. Tourists are another segment of the market we capture."

He said his ship hosts a lot of military veteran organizations and other types of associations, usually on a monthly basis.

Victory Casino Cruises has proven to be an economic winner for Brevard County and Port Canaveral, as well as for many area businesses and residents.

Victory Casino Cruises adds tens of millions of dollars annually to the local economy, in terms of employment and operational spending across multiple area businesses.

"We have carried 3.2 million passengers since opening Victory Casino Cruises," said Bullock, adding, "When we first set sail, our goal was to provide a one–of–a–kind Vegas–style gaming experience at sea. And 14 years later, we are thrilled to say we've done just that."

He credits Victory Casino Cruises' employees for the company's long–term success.

Bullock said Victory Casino Cruises has "about 350 people on its payroll. They are all Brevard County residents, except for about a half–dozen people who commute from Orlando or other areas."

He said about 130 of the 350 employees "have been with the company since day one. I have watched their kids grow up. Some of the kids work on the ship during their summer and winter breaks from college. We're proud of our employees."

Shirley Buchanan, Victory Casino Cruises' promotions and special events marketing manager, has been with the company even before its first sail.

"We are an intricate part of this community," said Buchanan. "As an employee of a private company, I have a lot of different responsibilities. I do outside events, member relations, and public relations. I also work with the state legislators and our lobbyists in Tallahassee. It's a fun industry to work in. Victory Casino Cruises has been a big part of my life."

"We are really supporting the Brevard County economy," said Bullock. "We have a roughly $1 million a month payroll. Our employees are spending their money in Brevard. They are buying groceries, cars, houses, and paying rent."

In addition to Victory Casino Cruises' operations, there is additional local spending generated by passengers when they are landside, both immediately before and after their cruise, as well as overnight hotel spending.

The economic impact includes restaurants, sightseeing and transportation services, auto leasing, and equipment rentals.

Additionally, the Port is a direct beneficiary of Victory Casino Cruises' continuous operation, including parking fees.

Bullock said his company also uses local vendors. "I have ordered all of our department heads to seek out local vendors first. They are more responsive to us because we are important to them. They are important to us, too. Our vendor relationships have worked out well over the years."

He added that "some specialty marine parts we use, we have to go outside Florida to purchase."

Beyond its economic impact, Victory Casino Cruises has been a strong supporter of the community, working closely with charitable organizations, no fewer than 35 of them over the years.

They include: National Kidney Foundation, Crosswinds Youth Services, Family Promise of Brevard, Brevard Humane Society, Brevard Schools Foundation, VFW of Cape Canaveral, VFW of Melbourne, VFW of Cocoa Beach, Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association of the Space Coast, Divine Mercy Catholic Church, Aging Matters of Brevard, and The Historic Cocoa Village Playhouse.

"We are one of the Angel Sponsors of The Historic Cocoa Village Playhouse," said Bullock. "They have a fantastic program for youth who are interested in learning about acting. We have been supporting that organization for years."

The children's program, called "Stars of Tomorrow," offers training in acting, singing and dancing, and emphasizes life management skills.

An Angel Sponsor is a donor who contributes at a specific financial level to support the theater.

The 40,000–square–foot Victory Casino Cruises' ship has four decks, two dining rooms, a Sportsbook lounge, and Big Norm's Club entertainment lounge. The Las Vegas–style gaming ship has five bars in various locations.

The top deck offers panoramic ocean views, chances to see dolphins, and the possibility of seeing spectacular Florida sunsets. The top deck features the Dolphin Bar and is a popular spot to relax and enjoy entertainment.

Bullock said the ship has capacity for 1,300 people, "but our sweet spot is around 800 to 900 customers. We want people to have the ability to enjoy a gaming position. We have about 650 slot machines and more than 20 gaming tables."

Victory Casino Cruises sails twice a day, Tuesdays through Sundays. "We have a 3–mile sail limit and we are a U.S.–flagged vessel. There are no foreign nationals on the ship. Our crew members are all residents of this region. Many people do not know that," said Bullock.

A U.S.–flagged vessel is a ship that is officially registered, or "documented," under U.S. laws and flies the U.S. flag. For a commercial vessel, such as a casino gaming ship, to have U.S. flag status, it must adhere to specific requirements.

In addition to documentation and registration, the company or individual operating the ship must meet specific U.S. citizenship and ownership criteria. The vessel must have a crew comprised of U.S. citizens.

"And the ship must meet and comply with all stringent U.S. Coast Guard safety standards and operational regulations," said Bullock. The standards are often stricter than those of other countries.

Also, vessels operating in domestic trade, between U.S. ports, are generally required by the Jones Act to be built in America. The Jones Act, formally known as the Merchant Marine Act of 1920, is a federal law that regulates maritime commerce in U.S. waters and requires that goods transported between U.S. ports be carried on U.S.–flagged ships.

Bullock said there are three main things that are important to and are driving Victory Casino Cruises' business.

One of them is being a U.S.–flagged vessel. "The second one is we have high ceilings in our ship. Slot machines are getting bigger and bigger. I go to the gaming industry conference in Las Vegas every year and every year it seems like the slot machines increase in size. If a gaming ship does not have high ceilings and an atrium like we have, they really can't install the newest slot machines that make them competitive in this industry."

The third component is having elevators on the ship. A lot of older adults and retirees are our repeat customers. "We have three elevators on the ship."

He added that "the ship is well–maintained. We spend a lot of money every year on maintenance and upgrades."

Bullock began his career in the gaming industry out of college. "I was born and raised in Las Vegas."

Over the years, he worked for some of the biggest brands in the gaming business, including Bally's Corp. in Atlantic City, New Jersey, holding various managerial and administrative positions.

He spent five years with Bally's. Then Bullock worked for Steve Wynn's Golden Nugget in Atlantic City. "I enjoyed working for him."

Wynn developed and opened the original Golden Nugget in Atlantic City in 1980, which was located on the boardwalk at Boston Avenue.

He sold the property for a reported $440 million in 1987, and it was later resold and renamed, eventually becoming the Atlantic Club before closing.

Wynn created other properties, including The Mirage, Bellagio, and Wynn Las Vegas.

Through his positions in the gaming and entertainment business, Bullock met Frank Sinatra when Bullock worked at the Golden Nugget.

"Steve Wynn signed Sinatra away from the Caesars Palace Hotel to perform at the Golden Nugget casinos in Atlantic City and Las Vegas. I was working for one of the marketing guys in Atlantic City and he asked me to run all their junkets, their logistics, from New York. We had private planes we chartered and they were filled with people to see Frank perform at the Golden Nugget."

Bullock coordinated the flights out of LaGuardia Airport in New York to the Golden Nugget in Atlantic City.

"Once, I hopped on the last chartered plane scheduled to leave LaGuardia to see Frank perform. The only seat left was in the cockpit, the jump seat. Back stage that night, I had the opportunity to meet Frank. He told Steve Wynn that he had never been treated better than at the Golden Nugget. To Steve, that was the best thing anyone in this business could say to him. It was a fun time. Frank was a great entertainer and a huge draw."

Bullock said the shuttle service out of LaGuardia Airport was called the "Sinatra Express."

"In the early 1980s, we chartered Dash 7s and Dash 8s into Bader Field (also known as the Atlantic City Municipal Airport)."

Bullock was also the president and CEO of Europa Cruises, a public company, in the early to late 1990s. "We had small gaming ships throughout Florida," said Bullock, who grew the fleet from two, when he took over, to five ships. They were in Fort Myers Beach, Miami Beach, and Key West, among other locations.

More Americans "than ever were engaged in legal gaming in 2025, driving recognition of the industry's commitment to responsibility and economic impact," according to the new "Consumer Survey Results" from the American Gaming Association.

The annual survey highlights "record casino visitation and sustained bipartisan support for sports betting."

Bullock said Victory Casino Cruises is looking to follow up on its strong performance in 2025 with another good year in 2026.

"We will be going to 'dry dock' in September 2026. We do that twice every five years, not to exceed three years apart. That is when the ship is taken out of the water for maintenance, upgrades, and regulatory inspections. We take really good care of our ship. We spend a lot of money on maintenance and upgrades. We're hoping that 2026 will be as good a year as 2025 has been for Victory Casino Cruises."

He added, "We are looking forward to negotiations with the Port to extend our agreement beyond 2030. We're planning to be here for a long time serving Victory Casino Cruises' customers and helping uplift the Brevard economy. We love this business."



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