

Ponte Vedra

Beach Neighbors

February 2024

*An exclusive magazine serving
the residents of Marsh Harbor,
Marsh Landing, Old Ponte Vedra,
Palm Valley, The Plantation,
Ponte Vedra Blvd, Roscoe Blvd*



Meet
Adam and Dana Merrill

Every Third Saturday

Nocatee Farmer's Market

@Nocatee Station Field

This family-friendly event has more than 70 local vendors selling produce, crafts, jewelry, herbs, unique foods, etc. In addition, free face painting and bounce houses are available for youth.

Time: 10am-1pm | Cost: Free

Sat., February 3

Guided Exploration Hike

@Guana Trailhead

Learn about the Guana Peninsula's natural biodiversity, extensive cultural history, vital estuarine resources, and current efforts to protect these resources. Wear comfortable closed-toe shoes.

Time: 9am-11pm | Cost: Free (\$3 parking)

Fri., February 9

Nocatee Food Truck Fest

@Nocatee Station Field

Morelli & The Groove will be on the main stage! Eat some good food and dance to some seriously groovy tunes!!

Time: 5:30-8pm | Cost: Free

Wed., February 7

Musicmakers Club

@Ponte Vedra Beach Library

Make your own musical instrument! Join Ms. Jane on the first Wednesday of every month to make a different musical instrument. This is recommended for children ages five and up.

Time: 3-3:45pm

Cost: Free

Fri., February 9

Sound Journey & Acupuncture

@Local Wellness – Ponte Vedra

Experience the healing benefits of sound therapy while receiving a custom mini-acupuncture session.

Time: 6-7pm | Cost: Free

Sat., February 10

Family Seining

@Guana Dam

Time: 9-11am

Cost: \$3 per vehicle parking fee

For more information, please visit:

gtmnerr.org

Sun., February 11

Totally Awesome 80s 5K & 10K

@Nocatee Field Station

Break out your cool 80s gear, lace up your Reeboks, get ready to boogie, and run to the awesome 1980s 5k and 10k race. Races are chip-timed and include a t-shirt and finisher's medal.

Time: 7:45am | Cost: \$30-\$35

Tues., February 13

Friends of Library Music Series

@Crosswater Hall - Nocatee

Meet "Swing 456", the only authentic Gypsy Swing Band in the greater Jacksonville area. The group, consisting of violin, lead guitar, rhythm guitar, and upright bass, comprises four respected Jacksonville musicians with worldwide experience. Come and clap your hands, tap your feet, and celebrate with us. Reservations are required. Email to lekleiman@gmail.com two weeks prior. Please state your name and the number of tickets.

Time: Doors -6 pm-Concert 6:30pm

Cost: Free (make a reservation)

Tues., February 16

Movie Matinee for Adults - Casablanca

@Ponte Vedra Library

Academy Award winners Humphrey Bogart and Ingrid Bergman light up the screen in one of the most enduring romances in movie history—Casablanca. Snacks are provided.

Time: 11am | Cost: Free

Sat., February 17

Beach Exploration

@GTM Reserve

Learn about the animals that call the beach their home, plus discover seashells and other interesting facts. This is a "Beaches 101" experience the entire family will enjoy.

Time: 9-11am | Cost: Free

Sat., February 17

Vilano Beach Artisan Market Walk

@Vilano Beach Town Center

Check out the crafts, goods, and services offered by local entrepreneurs. Tables and booths will be set up along the sidewalks on Vilano Road. You'll find eclectic arts, crafts, and other goods not found elsewhere. Vendors vary monthly and can include everything from local honey to macrame, jewelry, and high-tech lights for private docks.

Time: 4-8pm | Cost: Free

March 12-17

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MAGAZINE DEADLINES:

Content Due	Edition Date:
December 10	January
January 10	February
February 10	.....	March
March 10	.....	April
April 10	.....	May
May 10	.....	June
June 10	.....	July
July 10	.....	August
August 10	September
September 10	October
October 10	November
November 10	December

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Dear Residents,

It's February, the month of love and promise. Valentine's Day, a symbol of love and chocolate, offers endless possibilities. From romantic dinners to beach picnics, it's a day reserved for celebrating love. Encourage your family to disconnect from devices and engage in the sweet aroma of chocolate-covered strawberries or a family chocolate fondue extravaganza.

Speaking of Valentine's Day, we shared a chocolate fondue recipe that will surely be a winner. If you're thinking about spreading the love a little further this year, invite your neighbors over for a dessert and cocktail bar (which could include that fondue, by the way).

If anyone is thinking about building a custom home this year, be sure to read the feature about the Merrill family, who build spectacular homes that always impress.

As the year progresses with the promise of new acquaintances and celebrations, we extend our heartfelt thanks to our readers, sponsors, and contributors. Your engagement and support brighten our community. We always welcome your stories and suggestions, so please continue to share them.



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Real Estate Stats

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552	PONTE VEDRA		Boulevard	3432.00	3	4.00	4650000.00
141	SEA HAMMOCK	141	Way	1753.00	3	2.00	1725000.00
55	NINE		Drive	1652.00	3	2.00	700000.00
645	PONTE VEDRA	645B	Boulevard	1910.00	3	3.00	2000000.00
647	PONTE VEDRA	647C	Boulevard	1910.00	3	3.00	2000000.00
21	SEA WINDS		Lane	1510.00	2	2.00	689000.00
2428	NORMANDY		Court	1180.00	2	2.00	450000.00
746	TIDEWATER		Court	1113.00	2	2.00	305500.00
832	SPINNAKERS REACH	832	Drive	2945.00	3	4.00	1700000.00
103	WILLOW POND		Lane	1350.00	2	2.00	438000.00

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Meet

Adam and Dana Merrill

BY MEEKA COOK
PHOTOS BY JENNIFER
GRISSOM PHOTOGRAPHY

The story of Adam and Dana Merrill unfolds like a well-crafted blueprint, with each detail meticulously planned and as beautifully executed as one of their custom homes. Dana reminisces, “We met while working together for a commercial contractor downtown.” Their shared professional and personal interests quickly sparked a romance that led to a beautiful beachside wedding at Casa Marina in Jax in 2004.

The couple’s real estate and construction journey began long before they met. Adam graduated from the UF Building Construction Program in 2002, while Dana earned a BA in Communications from UNF in 2000 and, soon after, a real estate license in 2003. “Each career step was a stepping-stone toward our dream,” Adam reflects. “In 2016, we turned that dream into reality by launching John Merrill Homes.”

Today, you’ll find the family enjoying their custom home in Preserve Pointe with their three children, Grayson (16), Ashton (14), and Joy (9), along with their three rescued chihuahua mixed pooches.

All three children pursue their individual interests at school and in the neighborhood. Dana says, “Grayson plays football, track-and-field sprinting, and jumping and participates in the dramatic arts program at PVHS. Ashton also attends PVHS and enjoys riding his e-bike around the local area with friends, playing basketball, and gaming. Joy attends Ocean Palms Elementary, participates in Girls on The Run, and has been



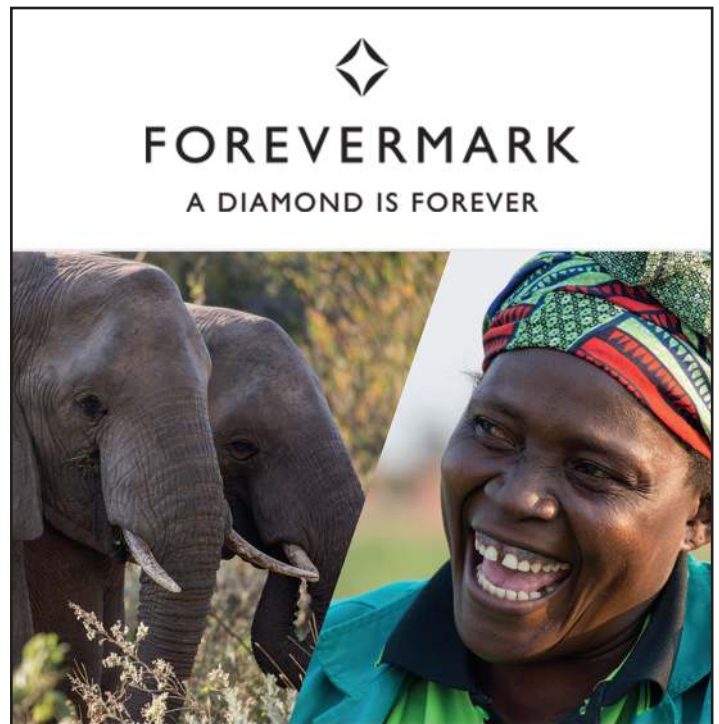
attending Ponte Vedra Brazilian Jujitsu since she was six - currently a gray and white belt.

It's always essential for parents to carve out some time of their own to pursue interests and hobbies. Adam is an avid golfer and Marsh Landing Country Club member, while Dana enjoys her yoga practice and gardening.



Adding to the family dynamic are their three rescue dogs, who each came to them with a unique story. They shared, "We have three rescue chihuahua mixes. Annie is 12ish. When she was younger, she was tireless, trained in agility to help burn some energy. Benny is also 12ish and was saved from living in a den in the wild, where most of his fur was missing. Moira Rose is our COVID puppy, adopted while at home during virtual learning in 2020. An acquaintance found her in a parking lot. Joy and I walk together with Moira Rose to Ocean Palms in the mornings."

In their neighborhood in Preserve Pointe, Adam and Dana stand out for their commitment to community building,



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literally and metaphorically. “Our company built four out of the ten homes on the street, and we were the first residents,” shares Adam. “We have lived in two of the four homes we built. Living among the families we’ve built homes for has been incredibly fulfilling. We have been in our current home for four years, and since we moved in, we have added a pool and complete outdoor living area with a cabana and fire pit.” The couple enjoys hosting gatherings, from pool parties to watching sports, fostering a strong sense of community.

The convenient location of their home is a big plus for the family. “It’s fantastic to be within walking distance to the YMCA, Ocean Palms, and Landrum,” says Dana. Additionally, watching our kids play outside in the cul-de-sac is another highlight of our location.

The Merrills are adventurers at heart, cherishing family trips that blend relaxation and excitement. “This summer, our culinary journey through Philadelphia’s Chinatown and the Reading Terminal Market was unforgettable. Blending fun and culture, we enjoyed ziplining and the Philadelphia Museum of Art,” Dana recalls with a smile. “And our first visit to the 30A area was filled with beachside relaxation, fishing, and exploring local markets.”

At the end of each day, the Merrill family has the opportunity to reflect on their journey from nurturing their family to creating the homes surrounding them in their neighborhood. Much like the homes they build, their story is a testament to their commitment to quality, community, and family.





BUILDING DREAMS: THE STORY OF JOHN MERRILL HOMES

A Legacy of Excellence

John Merrill Homes, a name synonymous with trust and quality in homebuilding, has its roots deeply embedded in a family legacy. Founded on the principles of professionalism, honesty, and integrity, the company continues the tradition started by Adam's grandfather, John Merrill, who began his real estate career in 1954 in Gainesville, Florida.

Adam Merrill: The Foundation of Success

Adam Merrill, inheriting his grandfather's passion and business acumen, grew up amidst the world of real estate and construction. His early experiences in his grandfather's office and assisting in the family's property management business laid the foundation for his future. While pursuing a degree in construction management, Adam discovered his enduring love for residential construction. After honing his skills at one of Florida's premier custom builders, Adam established John Merrill Homes, embodying the family values of integrity and excellence.

Dana Merrill: The Creative Vision

Complementing Adam's expertise is his wife, Dana Merrill, the VP of Sales, Marketing, and Principal Designer at John Merrill Homes. Dana's multifaceted role encompasses guiding clients through the design process, branding, and advertising campaigns. Her extensive experience in advertising, marketing, graphic design, and real estate, combined with her role as an Allied member of the American Society of Interior Designers (ASID), renders her an invaluable asset. Dana is also a Real Estate Advisor with Envision Group FL at Compass.

Resilience and Adaptation: Navigating Challenges

The journey of John Merrill Homes hasn't been without its challenges, especially during the pandemic. When confronted with work halts, material shortages, and cash flow difficulties, the company demonstrated resilience. Adam's insightful leadership ensured no layoffs, and strategic adaptations to product choices and customer communications kept the business thriving.

The Future: Optimism and Growth

Today, John Merrill Homes is a testament to a commitment to quality. From building custom homes in Jacksonville's most coveted areas to embracing the latest industry trends, the company continues to adapt and grow. Adam and Dana's partnership ensures each project is a creation that reflects their client's aspirations and the Merrill family's enduring legacy. Together, Adam and Dana create homes that are not just structures but embodiments of their clients' dreams.



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Valentine's Day Beyond the Roses: Unconventional Ways to Celebrate Love



BY MARGOT FINLEY

Do you ever feel like Valentine's Day has gotten stale? The restaurants are overbooked, and the traditional roses and heart-shaped chocolate boxes seem like something from your grandparents' era.

This year, take your celebration of love and romance to another level. Be creative – think outside of the box. I have some suggestions for unique yet meaningful ways to take your Valentine's Day to another level.

PLAN A MYSTERY ADVENTURE

Surprise your partner with a day filled with unexpected activities. Whether it's a hidden picnic spot, a quirky museum, a favorite vintage movie, or a spontaneous road trip, the element of surprise can reignite the excitement in your relationship.

VOLUNTEER TOGETHER

Bond over a shared cause. Volunteering for a community project or local charity can be a profound bonding experience,

showcasing your commitment to each other and the world around you.

A NIGHT OF NOSTALGIA

Revisit the magic of your early days. Recreate your first date, watch the movie you saw together for the first time, or cook the meal you shared on a special occasion. Reminiscing can rekindle those initial sparks of love.

CRAFT A LOVE LETTER TIME CAPSULE

Write love letters to each other and seal them in a time capsule. Decide on a future date to open them. This becomes a testament to your current feelings and a cherished memory to look forward to. Share your feelings, recount memories, and express hopes for the future.

LEARN SOMETHING NEW TOGETHER

Enroll in a class that interests both of you. Learning something new together can strengthen your bond and add a fun element to your relationship, be it dance lessons, a cooking class, or an art workshop.

COOK A THEMED DINNER TOGETHER

Pick a theme – it could be a cuisine from a country you dream of visiting or dishes from your favorite movie. Cooking together is not just fun, but it's also a great way to collaborate and create something deliciously meaningful.

CREATE A PLAYLIST OF 'OUR SONGS'

Compile a playlist of songs that have significance in your relationship. Have a dance night at home, reliving memories and creating new ones as you sway to 'your' tunes.

HOST A GAME NIGHT FOR TWO:

Choose games you both enjoy – board games, video games, or even card games. A little friendly competition can be a playful way to connect and share laughs.

Love is about the moments you create together, the smiles, the laughter, and the shared dreams. This Valentine's Day, step beyond the roses and chocolates and celebrate your love in ways that are as unique as your relationship. Happy Valentine's Day.

Margot Finley, relationship expert and owner of Margot Finley Introductions, is always available to help you find and nurture meaningful connections.



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A Dip into Decadence: The Ultimate Sweet Gathering

BY MEEKA COOK



When my daughter was little, she wanted to celebrate every special occasion at The Melting Pot. She loved the warm, gooey pot of cheese to dip bread and vegetables in. But she got particularly excited about the chocolate fondue.

Valentine's Day is the perfect opportunity to indulge in the velvety goodness of this chocolate treat – a treat that will transform an ordinary evening into an extraordinary gathering. It's the perfect centerpiece.

Gather your family and friends around the table and dip into a shared pot of happiness, creating memories that will forever ignite olfactory nerves every time the aroma of chocolate wafts through the air.

THE ULTIMATE CHOCOLATE FONDUE

Ingredients:

- 8 ounces of high-quality semi-sweet chocolate, chopped (or chocolate chips)
- 2/3 cup heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract
- A pinch of salt
- Optional: 2 tablespoons of liqueur (like Grand Marnier or Amaretto)

Instructions:

1. In a medium saucepan, gently heat the heavy cream over low heat until warm.
2. Add the chopped chocolate and stir continuously until completely melted and smooth.

3. Stir in the vanilla extract, salt, and optional liqueur.
4. Once everything is combined into a silky consistency, transfer the mixture to a fondue pot set over a low flame to keep it warm.

Dipping Delights:

- Fresh fruits like strawberries, banana slices, apple wedges, and pineapple chunks.
- Sweet treats such as marshmallows, brownie bites, and graham crackers.
- Savory options like pretzels and potato chips for a delightful sweet and salty contrast.
- Other fun choices include pound cake cubes, rice crispy treats, and biscotti

It's not just a treat – it's an experience. Sit back and enjoy the magic of chocolate as everyone chooses their favorite dippers and savors the moment as each bite sinks into their taste buds. Happy Valentine's Day!

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DIY Craft: Paper Heart Flower Bouquet

BY MEEKA COOK

MATERIALS:

- Colorful construction paper or cardstock
- Green pipe cleaners (for stems)
- Scissors
- Glue
- Optional: Buttons, glitter, or sequins for decoration

INSTRUCTIONS:

- 1. Heart Petals:** Cut out heart shapes from the construction paper. These will be the petals of your flowers. You'll need 4-6 hearts per flower.
- 2. Assemble Flowers:** Arrange the hearts in a circular pattern and point inward to create a flower shape. Glue the hearts together at their points.
- 3. Add Stems:** Attach a green pipe cleaner to the back of each flower for the stem. You can twist additional pipe cleaners around the main one to create leaves.
- 4. Decorate:** Embellish the center of each flower with a button, some glitter, or sequins to add a bit of sparkle.
- 5. Create a Bouquet:** Once you have a bunch of flowers, gather them into a bouquet. You can wrap the bottom with a ribbon or put them in a vase.

This craft is a lovely way for kids to create something beautiful and heartfelt, perfect for gifting to family, friends, or teachers on Valentine's Day.



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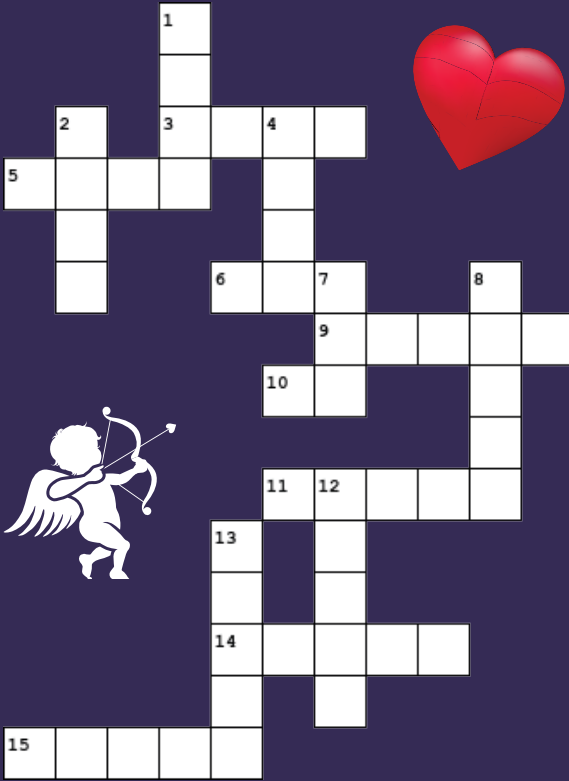
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Be My Valentine Crossword Puzzle

BY MEEKA COOK



Across

3. Something mailed on Valentine's Day.
5. A popular Valentine's Day color
6. A color often associated with love.
9. Cupid is often depicted as this.
10. "Be ___ Valentine."
11. A sweet treat
14. A word meaning love in French
15. Candy is ___

Down

1. A small, sweet kiss.
2. A hug and a ___
4. A flower often given on Valentine's Day.
7. February 14th is known as Valentine's ___.
8. A type of bear
12. Cupid's tool to spread love.
13. A symbol of love and Valentine's Day.



Across
 3. Card
 5. Pink
 6. Red
 9. Angel
 10. My
 11. Candy
 14. Amour
 15. Sweet

Down
 1. Peck
 2. Kiss
 4. Rose
 7. Day
 8. Teddy
 12. Arrow
 13. Heart



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