



THE ISLANDER



The Lighting of the Palms event exceeded expectations — thanks to many volunteers and groups.
Photo by Joanna McCall.

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Upcoming ISLAND EVENTS

New Year's Eve Bon Fire & Music

On the Beach by the SGI Lighthouse
O'Dark Thirty

Franklin County Board of County Commissioners

Commission Meeting Room, Apalachicola
Regular Meetings - 1/7, 1/21
9:00 a.m. in the Commission Meeting Room
34 Forbes Street, Apalachicola, Florida.

SGI Lighthouse

Full Moon Climb – Wolf Moon
1/10 at 5:45-7:30 pm
Full Moon Climb - Snow Moon
2/8 at 5:45-7:30 pm
www.stgeorgelight.org or 850-927-7745

ANERR

Bay Friendly Landscaping Workshop
1/29 at 1-3:30 pm – FREE
Oyster Ecology 101
2/12 at 9 am - 1 pm
(850) 670-7708 or anita.grove@dep.state.fl.us

SGI Civic Club Meetings (3rd Thursday)

1/16 at 6:30 pm, SGI Firehouse
Speaker will be Rhonda Skipper, Franklin County
Property Appraiser, with information about Florida's
complicated tax law

SGI Civic Club 2nd Annual Golf Tournament & Charity Fundraiser

Friday, 3/20 at 10 am, Pre-register by 3/13
James Donald at jdonal278@gmail.com
404-405-7262

Friends of Franklin County Public Libraries Putt Putt Masters

4/25 – Red Pirate in Eastpoint

FOR A COMPLETE LISTING OF FRANKLIN COUNTY AREA EVENTS
CLICK www.ApalachicolaBay.org

SGI Civic Club Charitable Giving Recipients



From left to right: Mason Bean and Valentina Webb accept a donation for Bring Me a Book, Franklin. Valentina also accepted a donation on behalf of the Elder Care Community Council (ECCC). Jim Morris made the presentations as Chair of Charitable Giving for the SGI Civic Club and incoming SGI Civic Club President.



Corey Bard, Director of Franklin County Libraries, shown on left, and Pam Tullous, President of Friends of Franklin County Libraries accept a donation for Friends.



Rev. Kory Gordon, shown in the middle, and his wife, Kasey Gordon, accept a donation on behalf of local food pantries.



Susan Bassett, shown on the left, and Joe Taylor accept the award for Franklin's Promise Coalition.

Spirit of Giving Informs Island Holiday Party

The St George Island Civic Club celebrated its annual Christmas Party on December 19 by hosting nearly a hundred people in the meeting room above the SGI Volunteer Fire Department. Special guests included Sheriff A.J. Smith and the recipients of over \$7,000 in charitable contributions. Generally, the Civic Club focuses its charitable giving on projects that most affect the island. The club's 2019 fundraising, with the addition of the Annual SGI Civic Club Golf Event in March, Winter Bingo, and membership growth of nearly two hundred members over the last two years, permitted the club to accomplish goals for the island as well as focus on the county's most needy individuals. Each of the recipients spoke briefly of their accomplishments and goals for the coming year and thanked the many volunteers who make their work possible.

Jim Morris, Incoming 2020 president and chair of the charitable giving committee, presented donations to Mason Bean and Valentina Webb, representing Bring Me a Book, Franklin. This organization provides free books to all the children in Franklin County during the Christmas Season and materials for all new mothers to read aloud to their infants. Pam Tullous, president of the Friends of the Franklin County Libraries and new library director Corey Bard accepted a donation on behalf of the Friends.

The Civic Club focused on three food pantries to provide supplemental food to the county's most vulnerable citizens: Franklin's Promise Coalition, represented by Susan Bassett and Joe Taylor; the Eastpoint Baptist Church, represented by Reverend Kory and Kasey Gordon; and the Forgotten Coast Church Food Bank, represented by Pastor Cheryl and Tony Middleton.

Valentina Webb, along with staff and volunteers, accepted a check for Elder Care Community Council (ECCC) which

> *Spirit of Giving - Cont.*

delivers food to over 60 homebound seniors and provides lunch meals and other services at the former Holy Family Senior Center in Apalachicola.

Bill Mills, representing Fresh Start Vision, a prison and after care ministry, also received a contribution.

Finally, the club provided funds to the Franklin County Education Foundation for the program known as Kid's Tag Art, to promote creative arts in the schools. Rick Watson, whose Tax Collector's Office sponsors the competition, accepted the donation.

Concluding the occasion, President Michael O'Connell presented the Citizen Volunteer of the Year Award to John Cadriel and Mike Cannon, owners of The Beach Pit. After Hurricane Michael in 2018, the Beach Pit hauled its grill and tables outside the damaged restaurant and served hot foods to the folks on the island every day. In 2019, John, president of the SGI Business Association, led the effort to clean up Franklin Boulevard in preparation for the "Lighting of the Palms" Christmas event.

President Michael O'Connell thanked all the members and guests for making the First Annual Golf Tournament so successful, supporting Winter Bingo, and helping the club's activities through their dues and charitable giving so that the club can nurture the community spirit of St George Island.



Winter Bingo Begins Jan 7

This popular activity continues to be the major fundraising effort of the Civic Club and is great fun for everyone. Contact Ben Mathewson at benz256@mac.com to volunteer. Join us every Tuesday night at the Firehouse at 7 pm. Snacks and cold drinks available. No one under 18 may attend, under Florida Law.

Charitable Giving Recipients — cont.



Bill Mills, shown on the left, receives award for Fresh Start Vision.



Rick Watson, shown on right, accepts award for Franklin County Education program known as Kid's Tag Art



From left to right: Mike Cannon and John Cadriel win the Volunteer of the Year award presented by Mike O'Connell.

JAN
16

Mark your calendars for the first Civic Club meeting of the new year: Speaker for the evening will be Rhonda Skipper, Franklin County Property Appraiser, with information about Florida's complicated Tax Law.



Holiday “Lighting of the Palms” Brings Santa and Community Spirit to the Island

A first-time coalition of SGI Business Association, SGI Civic Club, Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce/Island Visitors Center, SGI Lighthouse Association, and the Tourist Development Council created the highly successful “Lighting of the Palms.” The combined



efforts included more than a hundred volunteers leading up to and participating in the Thursday night event. Santa’s Lighted Golf Cart Parade impressed everyone with its success with 23 uniquely decorated golf carts participating in the route around Franklin Blvd. The Sheriff’s Office, SGI Volunteer Fire Department, and SGI Volunteer Posse escorted the parade and provided traffic control.

The crowd was twice as large as anticipated. Santa’s helpers (the Business Association) created 100 bags of toys but nearly two hundred children attended. The helpers scrambled to ensure that every child received toys and candies. Dinner Divas unexpectedly used up their supply of books in certain age groups. But every child was able to participate in the Bring Me a Book Franklin tradition. The children’s tent provided face painting, letters to Santa, oyster shell painting, and other guided creative activities to keep children entertained while awaiting their visit with Santa. John Solomon served more than 300 hot dog dinners; the Beach Pit ran out of hot chocolate but managed to keep the hot coffee and fresh-baked cookies coming.

Santa Elves, spread throughout the area, accomplished the simultaneous lighting of the more than 35,000 lights on the palms, the Lighthouse, and children’s wonderland, by lots of practice and cell-phone coordination. Caelyn Constantine, an ABC School eighth grader, led the entire effort after Santa selected her name to flip the switch.

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> *Lighting of the Palms - cont.*

The planned Super Santa Sale Weekend was rained out and did not entice many new shoppers to the island to the disappointment of the merchants who had planned weekend sales events.

The weekend's final surprise occurred when the Trash Patrol volunteers showed up on Friday morning to pick up litter after the event. The trashers were surprised to find the area to be litter free. The recent campaign by islanders to improve the appearance of the island and reduce litter appears to be working. The steering committee is already beginning to plan for the 2020 Lighting of the Palms event.



Why the Census matters to everyone in Franklin County.

Everyone counts.



The census counts every person living in the U.S. once.

It means funding.



The Census data determines how thousands of dollars will be spent to support state, county, and community's vital programs for education, roads, medical and emergency services, and natural disasters like hurricanes.



Taking part is your civic duty.

Completing the census is required and is in the U.S. Constitution. It's a way to participate in our democracy and say **"I COUNT."**



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Charitable Giving: Valuable Tax Planning Tool for Islanders

Aside from holiday cards and credit card bills, the mail that most fills our boxes this time of year is the multitude of charitable solicitations from organizations around the world. The 2018 Tax Cuts & Jobs Act (TCJA) made changes in some aspects of calculating deductions but thoughtful cash gifts to recognized charities still bless both the recipient and the donor—helping with a great cause and providing a tax benefit. As of this year the St George Island Civic Club is a federally qualified charitable organization. Donations to the Civic Club now provide support for island improvements and local community efforts as well as provide a tax planning tool.

Generally, everyone is familiar with the concepts and processes associated with the cash gift or noncash contributions of tangible property, such as artwork, vehicles or boats. Many people, however, are not aware that taxpayers age 70 ½ or older can make direct contributions from their traditional IRA to qualified charitable organizations, up to \$100,000 per year. The amounts given are not deemed taxable income and can be used to satisfy an IRA owner's required minimum distribution. Giving in this manner can help your community directly while saving on your income tax bill.

Talk to your financial advisor about the best way to contribute to your favorite recognized charities. Information is based on a Tallahassee Democrat article by Sareeta Kamath, CPA, Carr, Riggs, & Ingram, CPAs and Consultants.

District One County Commissioner Addresses Civic Club



Civic Club meetings address information important to life here on the island. The November meeting was no exception. District 1 County Commissioner Ricky Jones spoke about a variety of important island-specific and county-wide topics. Commissioner Jones, in-line to be Chairman of the Commission in 2021, represents St George Island and Eastpoint, most of the unincorporated land in the county. Jones touched on perennial hot button issues such as storm water drainage, Weems Memorial Hospital, and parking in the island business district.

Commissioner Jones listed the projects he has under way on behalf of the island. Most of his priorities began with the adoption of the Business District Overlay Corridor Ordinance in early 2018 and emerged from the Civic Club's SGI 2025 Vision that identified consensus priorities for

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> *County Commissioner - cont.*

improvements to the Business District. A major goal is a planning grant for addressing storm water drainage issues that result in flooded streets after minor rain. The grant from RESTORE BP funds is expected to be approved for BP by the US Treasury in February 2020. Also, February will bring the nearly \$100,000 grant from Florida Department of Transportation for beautification of the entrance causeway to the island. A major accomplishment for the Commissioner this year is securing the funding for building a new restroom facility at Lighthouse Park, to be paid from bed taxes collected from the tourists who visit the island and mainland. Also, in the list of requests from the island, the county will resurface the basketball court in Lighthouse Park in February. The court will become dual purpose with the addition of lines for the popular sport Pickle Ball. The county has also addressed a constant complaint about trash on the bridge by adding funds to enable more frequent cleanup in the 2019-2020 FY.

When it was discovered that most of the electrical outlets for landscaping on Franklin Blvd were destroyed by the Hurricane and never replaced, Commissioner Jones was able to get the county to quickly replace all the wiring, enabling the first annual "Lighting of the Palms" event to take place.

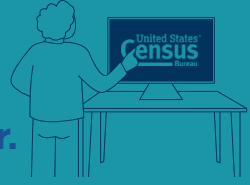
A leader of the effort to restore SGI dunes and beaches, Jones spoke about efforts currently underway to revitalize areas damaged by Hurricane Michael. He is concerned that with the current level of dune erosion, the next big storm will take homes. Several of the boardwalks damaged by Hurricane Michael will be rebuilt with a better configuration, after the initial immediate repair required by FEMA. As a member of the Apalachee Regional Planning Council, Commissioner Jones talked about efforts to have an I-10 interchange for the Highway 65 corridor approved by the state. This would make access to I-10 from Highway 65 much more convenient and enhance residents' ability to evacuate.

Other items he discussed included building a restroom on the SGI fishing pier, to be financed by BP funds, and restriping the crosswalks within the business district with durable thermoplastic road marking paint. After taking questions from the audience, the commissioner expressed his appreciation for the SGI Civic Club and credited the example of civic advocacy the organization has set as beneficial to Eastpoint's new Civic Association.

On the issue of the future of health care in the county, Commission Jones said that he does not state his position on an issue before the Commission before he has heard all the information coming to the commission and done all the research that he feels adequate to prepare himself for a decision. Currently, he continues to have discussions with informed individuals and to gather research. "We will soon be at the opportune moment to move the healthcare decision forward," he stated. We know this, he concluded, "We need better healthcare in Franklin County."

Census info — cont.

**It's never
been easier.**



You can take it online, on your phone or by mailing back the mailer that will come to your home. It's also in Spanish so everyone can be counted.



**Your data are
confidential.**



Federal law protects your Census responses. Your answers can only be used to produce statistics.

By law, we cannot share your information with immigration enforcement agencies, law enforcement agencies, or allow it to be used to determine your eligibility for government benefits.

**Earn extra income
while helping your
community.**

The U.S. Census Bureau is recruiting to fill positions in Franklin county to assist with the 2020 Census count. Job pay starts around \$15 per hour and schedules are flexible. Apply online at www.2020census.gov/jobs

For more information visit www.2020census.gov

Shape
your future
START HERE >

United States
Census
2020



Adopt today.

There is great need and plenty of pets available for adoption at the Franklin County Humain Society (FCHS).
850-670-8417



2018 Volunteer of the Year

The editors of The Islander learned from Pleas and Diane Howe that the 2018 Volunteer of the Year was never featured in our newsletter. Martha Hodges

was unable to attend a Civic Club meeting to receive the well-deserved award, but she is pictured here holding her crystal trophy. Thanks, Martha, and apologies for the belated announcement.

Earn extra income while helping your community.



The U.S. Census Bureau is recruiting to fill positions in Franklin county to assist with the 2020 Census count. Job pay starts around \$15 per hour and schedules are flexible. We are hiring for a variety of temporary jobs, including census takers, recruiting assistants, office staff, and supervisory staff.

Candidates must complete an online job application. The application includes assessment questions about your education, work, and other experience.

For more information visit www.2020census.gov/jobs

Shape
your future
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United States[®]
Census
2020

New Board Assumes Office: Unexpected Vacancy Occurs

Members have spoken and the votes are in for issues facing the SGI Civic Club in 2020. Voters were overwhelmingly in support of the Nominating Committee's list of 2020 officers. The new officers are:

President: Jim Morris

Vice President: Bill Mills

Past President: Mike O'Connell

Treasurer: Carol McCormick

At Large: Erin Griffith and Phyllis Lewis

Unfortunately, Loula Fuller Myers will be unable to serve in 2020 because of family medical issues, creating a vacancy in the position of Secretary. President-Elect Jim Morris has asked Stacy Pierce to accept the role in 2020 and she has agreed. The membership will have the opportunity to nominate someone at the January meeting. Voting on the position of Secretary will take place in February.

The voting itself, which included selection of Volunteer of the Year, went off without a hitch. A limited number of ballots were submitted at the meeting and even fewer mailed in. Members utilized the online voting portal in force. The online resource enabled voters to enter their name, email address, and make their selections. The results were routed to a secure server where the Communications Team were able to tally the votes. Be sure to vote next year and make your voice heard.



Meet Stacy Pierce

Stacy Pierce moved to SGI with her husband, Rob, in October 2018. She retired from a career at Stanley Steemer, International where she worked as an Accounts Payable administrator. Much

of her free time is spent wandering island beaches with her labradoodle in search of the perfect shell. Stacy is active with various volunteer groups, including the SGI Quilters and the SGI United Methodist Thrift Store.

We Salute You

**Special Thanks to Board Members
who are stepping down.**

**The many volunteer hours have made
a difference on the island community:**

James Donald, Ben Mathewson,

Pleas Howe, and Loula Myers.

We know you will all stay involved.



SGI CIVIC CLUB 2020 BOARD MEMBERS

President: Jim Morris
jim.morr98@yahoo.com

Vice-President: Bill Mills
jim.morr98@yahoo.com

Secretary: TBD

Treasurer: Carol McCormick
carolflys@gmail.com

Past Pres: Michael O'Connell
MikeOconnell@sgicivicclub.com

At-Large: Erin Griffith
erinhalegriffith@yahoo.com

At-Large: Phyllis Lewis
pj_hideaway@fairpoint.net

2020 COMMITTEES

Communications: Buena Brown
buena.brown@sgicivicclub.com

Winter Bingo: Ben Mathewson
benz256@mac.com

Gov't Relations: Pat O'Connell
poconnell1414@gmail.com

Fundraising & Charitable Giving:
Jim Morris
jim.morr98@yahoo.com