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HEARD ON THE BEAT

A daily compendium of news topics from our community — Today's topic: Religion, **D3**



LOCAL NEWS ALERTS

Get caught up with a livestream of WVVG Radio news online at thevillagesdailysun.com



HOW TO REACH US

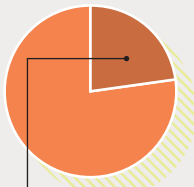
Have a news tip or an idea for a story? Contact Holly Lawler at **352-753-1119, ext. 5303**

FAITH IN ACTION

Caring Hands Is Seeking Helping Hands

Caring Hands Food and Clothing Ministry distributes nearly 60,000 pounds of food annually and supports over 190 families. The basic food package for families includes soup, canned fruits and peanut butter. Caring Hands accepts food donations from 9 a.m. to noon every Tuesday. For more information, call 352-748-2553.

DATAWATCH



46.5%

According to the Pew Research Center, 46.5% of Americans identify as protestant, which is a drop from a study in 2007. Now, protestants no longer make up a majority of U.S. adults.

30,000

Fairway Christian Church's "God Always Provides" event to pack 30,000 meals is from 9 a.m. to noon and 5 to 8 p.m. Oct. 24, and 9 a.m. to noon Oct. 25.

\$20

First Baptist Church's "Christmas with Selah" concert is at 7 p.m. Dec. 8 and 9. Tickets are \$20 and can be purchased at fbcvillages.org.

FREE SEMINAR ON FINISHING LIFE FAITHFULLY

St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church is hosting "Finishing Life Faithfully" from 1 to 3 p.m. Nov. 17. The free seminar will discuss advance care directives, choosing a health care decision-maker, hospice and palliative care. For information, call Mike Lepore at 515-306-0380.



Jesus has proven His love for me at the cross and loves me with an everlasting love. He knows me better than I know myself."

Keith Johnson, Chapel of Christian Faith Pastor

Religion News

A SATURDAY SPOTLIGHT ON OUR COMMUNITIES OF FAITH



Daily Sun file photo

Meryl Simon, left, of the Village of Pine Ridge and president of the Temple Shalom Sisterhood, and Susan Feinberg, of the Village of Pennecamp and marketing director for Temple Shalom, stand with mahjong cards Oct. 9 at Temple Shalom of Central Florida.

Temple Shalom Leads in Mah-Jongg Card Sales

The Temple Shalom Sisterhood's annual card sales in The Villages support hospice and outreach programs.

By CHASITY BOATMAN
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Meryl Simon still remembers sitting beside her mother in Brooklyn watching her play mah-jongg on warm summer evenings. "She would let me sit next to her and watch," said Simon, Village of Pine Ridge. "I couldn't wait until I was old enough to

play. She bought me my own set when I was 10."

Now, decades later, the Temple Shalom Sisterhood president helps lead mah-jongg card sales, which has turned a lifelong game into a major charitable effort.

"In 1937, several hundred Jewish women in New York City formed the National Mah-Jongg League," Simon said. "They created an annual card with winning hands to add consistency

and excitement to the game."

This year, the Sisterhood sold over 5,500 National Mah-Jongg League cards, raising thousands of dollars for Hospice of Marion County, Cornerstone Hospice and Palliative Care and Haven of Lake & Sumter Counties.

The card sales are coordinated through the National Mah-Jongg League, which returns a portion

Please See **MAH-JONGG, D3**

THIS & THAT

CHASITY BOATMAN

Enjoy a Full Moon Campfire at Northside Christian Church

Northside Christian Church will host its November Full Moon Campfire at 7 p.m. Nov. 4. People are encouraged to bring their own meat and a side dish to share. The event will take place on the church's lakefront. Limited seating is available, so guests should bring their own chairs. To access the lakefront, follow the yellow arrows posted on trees at the end of the paved parking lot, through the wooded area. For additional information, call 352-326-8400.

ST. TIMOTHY TO HOST ANNUAL CRAFT FAIR

St. Timothy Catholic Church's annual craft fair, hosted by the Women's Guild, is from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nov. 15 at 1351 Paige Place, Lady Lake. The free event is open to the public. Seventy vendors will be on-site to sell holiday items. All vendor space is sold out. For more, call 352-753-0989.

NEW COVENANT UMC BLOOD DRIVE IS OCT. 27

New Covenant United Methodist Church's upcoming blood drive with OneBlood is from noon to 6 p.m. Oct. 27 in the west parking lot at 3470 Woodridge Drive. Donors receive a \$20 e-gift card and a Halloween T-shirt. Donors will have their blood pressure, pulse, temperature, iron count and cholesterol checked.

FAITH IN THE COMMUNITY

The sun breaks over the horizon at St. Timothy Catholic Church. The church's annual craft fair, hosted by the Women's Guild, is from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. Nov 15.

Daily Sun file photo



Daily Topics

Sun: Education

Mon: Nearby

Tue: Environment

Wed: Veterans

Thu: Giving

Fri: Amenities

Sat: Religion



Heard on
The Beat

NEWS FROM
KEY COVERAGE
AREAS IN OUR
COMMUNITY



TODAY'S TOPIC

RELIGION

Lady Lake United Methodist Church is having a boutique pre-sale from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Oct. 29 at 109 W. McClendon St. Items to be sold include clothing, shoes and housewares.

The church's next rummage sale will be from Nov. 6 to Nov. 8. For more information, call the church at 352-753-1136.

OKTOBERFEST CELEBRATION IN WILDWOOD

Rock of Ages Lutheran Church is celebrating Oktoberfest from 1 to 4 p.m. Oct. 18 with German-inspired food, music and games. Tickets are \$20 each, with beer sold separately. People can buy tickets before or after the 9:30 a.m. worship service each Sunday or at the door the day of the event. Proceeds benefit Luther Springs camp scholarships. The summer camp has activities including crafting, canoeing, zip-lining and horseback riding. Rock of Ages Lutheran Church is at 4957 E. County Road 462, Wildwood.

MEN'S BREAKFAST TO
FEATURE GUEST SPEAKER
T.C. STALLINGS

Men from the community are invited to a breakfast and time of fellowship from 8 to 10 a.m. Nov. 1 at First Baptist Church of Leesburg. Tickets are \$10. The guest speaker will be T.C. Stallings, a former professional football player and now an actor and Christian speaker. Stallings will share his powerful testimony, which is also the subject of the recently released documentary "24 Counter: The Story Behind the Run." The film, available for streaming on his website, chronicles his early struggles, his pursuit of a football scholarship, and his journey to faith in Jesus Christ. All men are encouraged to attend this special morning event. For more information, call 352-787-1005.

HEAD OUT TO HERITAGE COMMUNITY CHURCH FOR ITS ANNUAL FALL FESTIVAL

Heritage Community Church is hosting its annual fall festival from 3 to 6 p.m. Oct. 26 at 240 Ball Park Road, Leesburg. There will be musical chairs for ages 16 and older, inflatables, pumpkin activities, candy corn ring toss, water balloon toss and Wiffle Ball. For additional information, call 352-431-3935 or email the church at info@heritagecommunity.org. (Chasity Boatman, Daily Sun)

FIRST BAPTIST TO HOLD FALL FESTIVAL AT BOTH CAMPUSES

First Baptist Church is having its annual multi-campus fall festival from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Oct. 26 at 8015 SE 180th St., Oxford and 25900 U.S. 27, Leesburg. Guests are encouraged to not wear scary costumes. The event is free to the public and all are welcome. For more information, visit firstleesburg.org. (Chasity Boatman, Daily Sun)



T.C. Stallings, a former professional football player and now an actor and Christian speaker, will be the guest speaker at a men's breakfast at First Baptist Church of Leesburg. Stallings will share his testimony, which was recently the subject of a documentary.

IMDb

improvement and replacement of the ELC playground equipment. For more, call 352-748-1201.

LAKE DEATON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OFFERS GRIEF SHARE

Lake Deaton United Methodist Church's Grief Share meets at 1 p.m. Thursdays in Classroom 1 at 6500 Wesleyan Way, Wildwood. The support group meets every Thursday, except for Thanksgiving Day, until Dec. 11. Anyone who has lost a loved one is welcome to join. Each week, the group begins with a 30-minute video featuring experts discussing grief-related topics and people who have experienced loss sharing their stories. Then, attendees share their personal stories. For more information, call 352-571-4665.

ST. TIMOTHY HOSTING INAUGURAL PARISH MINISTRY FAIR AND ALL SAINTS FESTIVAL

St. Timothy is hosting its first Parish Ministry Fair from 3 to 5 p.m. Nov. 1, and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Nov. 2. There will be over 40 ministries present. The church's All Saints Festival is from noon to 5 p.m. Nov. 2 and includes a hot dog lunch, Biblical costume contest, live music, inflatables, face painting and a photo booth. St. Timothy Catholic Church is at 1351 Paige Place, Lady Lake. For more information, call 352-753-0989.

TLC OFFERING NEW SUPPORT GROUP

A free, seven-week TLC Support Group for Parents Coping with the Loss of a Child by Suicide begins Nov. 3 and meets from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. on Mondays. This group offers a safe and compassionate space where parents can connect, share and find comfort with others who understand the complex emotions of this loss. This group is facilitated by Melinda Billig, Licensed Clinical Social Worker. To register, go to tlc-services.

org, select "Events" and click "Join a Group." For more, call 352-322-0576.

AMAZING GRACE HOSTS THIRD ANNUAL ELC WINE TASTING CLASS

The third annual ELC Wine Tasting Class is at 6 p.m. Nov. 14 at Amazing Grace Fellowship Hall, 4886 County Road 472, Oxford. Doug Siebert will teach guests about specially selected and served wines. A donation of \$10 per person is requested. Proceeds will support the

POSTCARD MINISTRY SPREADS FAITH TO THE INCARCERATED

Coleman United Methodist Church's Postcard Ministry sends uplifting, faith-based messages to those incarcerated at the Sumter County Detention Center. The ministry aims to spread love, encouragement and the message of faith, reaching individuals who may be seeking spiritual connection or facing challenges. For more, visit colemanumcfl.org/post_card_ministry. — Chasity Boatman, Daily Sun

MAH-JONGG

Continued from D1



It's not just a game, it's part of our culture and history in America. So many women and men have made close friendships through mah-jongg."

SUSAN FEINBERG

marketing coordinator,
Temple Shalom of
Central Florida

of each sale to the Temple Shalom Sisterhood. The cards are sold at the same price as the League, but proceeds stay local.

"The number of cards sold has been staggering," said Susan Feinberg, Temple Shalom of Central Florida marketing coordinator.

"We are selling more cards every year because more people want to support the causes we donate to, and they love the game," she said. "It's the best of both worlds. You get your card, and you know the money is staying in the community."

Feinberg said the growth has been fueled not just by interest in mah-jongg, but by the personal connections made through it.

"It's not just a game," said Feinberg, of the Village of Pennecamp.

"It's part of our culture and history in America," she said. "So many women and men have made close friendships through mah-jongg."

Behind the scenes, the effort is powered by a tight-knit team of volunteers with a nod of gratitude to Carolyn Cass, who developed a custom computer program to manage the card orders.

"Carolyn's a computer genius," Simon said. "She created the program that lets us enter all the orders and submit them to the League. It makes it easy for someone like me."

Villagers can order a single card or dozens at a time for friends. Volunteers then painstakingly enter the data line by line into Excel spreadsheets.

"It's a labor of love," Simon said. "We have a wonderful committee. Everyone pitches in."

Mah-jongg's roots are deeply personal for Simon,

who inherited her mother-in-law's set.

"A lot of women I know have their mothers' mah-jongg sets," she said. "It's very nostalgic. This is a game our families played."

Mah-jongg enjoys widespread appeal across generations and backgrounds.

"When I moved to The Villages, I was surprised at how many people played," Simon said. "I used to think it was a Jewish women's game. But it turns out people



Daily Sun file photo

A 2025 mah-jongg card stands beside tiles waiting to be played with at Temple Shalom of Central Florida. This year, the Temple Shalom Sisterhood sold over 5,500 National Mah-Jongg League cards, raising thousands of dollars for Hospice of Marion County, Cornerstone Hospice and Palliative Care and Haven of Lake & Sumter Counties.

everywhere are discovering how much joy it brings."

The Temple Shalom Sisterhood also hosts four mah-jongg tournaments each year, which regularly sell out with

144 players filling the room.

"They're really a lot of fun and run like a well-oiled machine," Simon said.

"People come from all over Florida and even Georgia to

play," she said. "You get to meet new people and play a game you love."

Temple Shalom of Central Florida's next mah-jongg tournament is from 8:45 a.m.

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to 2:25 p.m. Nov. 5 at 13563 County Road 101, Oxford. Entry is a \$55 donation.

"There are people who say, 'I'm afraid to play, I don't know enough,' but everyone is welcome," Simon said. "It's a warm and inviting space. We even have people in our group who teach others."

Simon herself has taught several friends to play since moving to The Villages.

"I wanted to play so badly when I moved here," she said. "So I taught my friends in the neighborhood and now they're hooked too."

What began as a family tradition has evolved into a thriving community of players and a meaningful way to give back.

"It's grown every year," Simon said. "More and more people in The Villages are playing. Some have never even played before moving here. It's amazing to see."

To purchase mah-jongg cards, visit templeshalomcentralfl.org. For more tournament information, email mj@tscl.org.

Staff writer Chasity Boatman can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5408, or chasity.boatman@thevillagesmedia.com.

