

SEMINOLE HAPPENINGS

A LOOK AT EVENTS AROUND SEMINOLE COUNTY

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Central Florida Soap Box Derby's Holiday Derby Rally

Saturday & Sunday, December 28 & 29, 8:30 a.m., Mike Kirby Park, Sanford. Rev up your excitement for the Central Florida Soap Box Derby Holiday Rally. Ride out 2024 with one double and one single elimination race each day. Gear up now and register for an unforgettable weekend.

Winter Break Eco Camp

Dec. 30 to 31 & Jan. 2 to 3 (No camp on Jan. 1. holiday), 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., Ed & Imogene Yarborough Nature Center in Geneva. Campers will have fun hiking, setting live traps, fishing, handling animals in the Nature Center, arts & crafts and many other fun activities! Ages 7-12. Scholarships available. \$132. (extended day available 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. for \$15/ wk). Pre-registration required: www.recreation.seminole-countyfl.gov or for questions call 407-665-2211.

First Fridays with Florida First Detector

Friday, Jan. 3, 12 to 2 p.m., Online. Cost: free. Jan. topic is "Invasive Caterpillars on Vegetables." In this monthly lunch and learn Zoom webinar workshop, on a topic related to invasive species in Florida. An invasive species is a non-native species causing harm like economic losses, environmental damage, or human/animal health hazards. The webinars are open to everyone and applicable to professionals and residents alike! Pre-Registration Required: https://www.facebook.com/UFIFASeminoleCo or http://seminolextension.eventbrite.comation.seminolecountyfl.gov. Questions? Call 407-665-2211.

GriefShare Support Group Meeting

Monday, Jan. 6, 10 a.m., The Church at Heathrow, 6815 Markham Rd. Sanford. GriefShare is for everyone who is grieving the death of a loved one—whether you've experienced the loss of a spouse, parent, child (infant, young child, teen, adult, unborn), friend, sibling, coworker, or other relative. GriefShare (a ministry outreach of The Church at Heathrow) is a support group that is a safe, welcoming place where people understand the difficult emotions of grief. Through this 13-week group, you'll discover what to expect in the days ahead and what's "normal" in grief. Since there are no neat, orderly stages of grief, you'll learn helpful ways of coping with grief, in all its unpredictability—and gain solid support each step of the way. Sign up call/text Dave at 407-314-0561 or email Griefshare.Sanford@gmail.com.

Living a Life of Gratitude

Monday, January 6, 6 to 7 p.m., North Branch Library, 150 N. Palmetto Ave., Sanford. Having a mindset of gratitude is associated with a multitude of mental & physical health benefits. Learn how you can experience a lifestyle of gratitude & see change not only in yourself but those around you for the better. Free. For adults. Call 407-665-1620.

Novels at Night Book Club

Wednesday, January 8, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m., North Branch Library, 150 N. Palmetto Ave., Sanford. Lively, in-depth discussion of None of This Is True. Copies of the book are available at the circulation desk for check out. Free. For adults. Call 407-665-1620 for more info.

Museum of Geneva History

Sundays, Jan. 12 & 26, 2 to 4 p.m., 165 1st St., Geneva. Free, but donations appreciated. The Museum of Geneva History offers it's

newest display, "Challenging Times Are Nothing New" which tells about the freeze of 1894-95, the Spanish Flu, the Polio Epidemic & the present Covid Pandemic. Two large rooms of local archaeological finds, pioneer crafts, family records, Civil War info & a violano that plays. Learn about the story of Geneva & the Lincoln Conspiracy. Listen to an Edison Phonograph. Buy T-shirts, caps, prints & history books.

Flying Needles

Wednesdays, 5 to 7:30 p.m., North Branch Library, 150 N. Palmetto Ave., Sanford. Free. For adults & Teens 15+. A place to knit, crochet, or do other needlework. Bring your own project, share tips & techniques, & learn from each other. Call 407-665-1620.

ESOL

Thursdays, 6 p.m., North Branch Library, 150 N. Palmetto Ave., Sanford. Come practice your English conversational speaking skills. Call the Adult Literacy League at 407-422-1540 for more info. Free. For adults.

Fishing Tournament & Seafood Festival

Saturday, Jan. 18, 12 to 7 p.m., West End Trading Company, Sanford Avenue. Public fishing will be at Lake Carola in Ft. Mellon Park, for a fishing rodeo for children. Fishing instruction and prizes will be awarded.

Central Florida Scottish Highland Games

Saturday & Sunday, Jan 18 & 19, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Central Winds Park, Winter Springs. Join the games, enjoy Scottish food, heritage, dancing and athletics. For more information visit www.flascot.com

Guitar Club

Wednesday, Jan. 22, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m., North Branch Library, 150 N. Palmetto Ave., Sanford. Jam with fellow guitar players of all skill levels & try your hand at musical improvising. Open to other stringed instruments such as ukulele, mandolin, etc. Free. Call 407-665-1620 for more info.

Meditation for a Happier You

Saturday, Jan. 25, 2 to 3 p.m., North Branch Library, 150 N. Palmetto Ave., Sanford. Can meditation make you happier, healthier & smarter? Research supports meditation's effects on our physical, emotional, mental & spiritual well-being. Learn a simple meditation technique presented by long-time meditator and research, Dr. Mark Young, Professor of Counseling Education at the University of Central Florida. Free. For adults. Call 407-665-1620.

Genealogy Club

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2 p.m., North Branch Library, 150 N. Palmetto Avenue, Sanford. Come learn about genealogy, from our experts and each other, in collaboration with the Sanford Genealogy Club. All experience levels welcome. Registration is only required if attending through Microsoft Teams. Virtual link provided at registration and emailed one day before event. Library card required to register. Free. For adults & teens ages 15+. In-person & Microsoft Teams. Call 407-665-1620.

26th Annual Father Daughter Dance

Friday & Saturday, February 7 & 8, 6 to 8 p.m., Winter Springs Senior Center. Registration opens Monday, Jan. 13 at 8 a.m. Join the annual Father Daughter Dance. Enjoy a fun-filled night of dancing, music, a live DJ, a free photo, refreshments and prizes. Register at https://www.winterspringsfl.org/community/page/26th-annual-father-daughter-dance

The Arbor School of Central Florida serves Special Needs Children

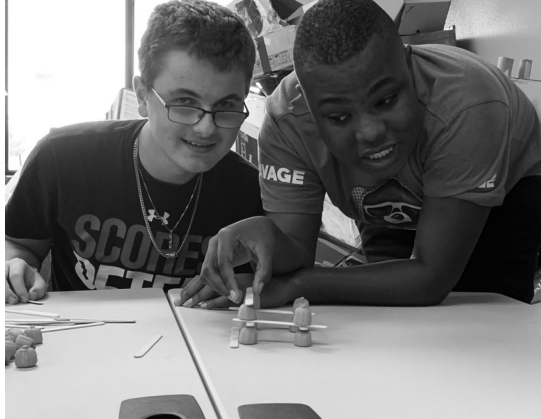


Photo credits - Executive Director Wendy Blair

By Bryanna Valderrama
Herald Intern

No child left behind. The Arbor School of Central Florida, located at 1010 Spring Villas Point in Winter Springs, is not only a school that serves children with special needs but is also a creative space that therapeutically guides students towards transition to independence, relationship building and social development.

Originally started in 2002, The Arbor School is a nonprofit that helps K-12 students with special needs such as: high-functioning autism, dyslexia, Down Syndrome, ADHD, SLD and any sensory processing disorders. According to The Arbor website, the Greenspan Floor time and Sensory Processing are two approaches prevalently used in the classroom. Executive Director Wendy Blair, who has been with The Arbor School since 2005, explains what each of these approaches mean.

"Greenspan is all about relationships," said Blair "It's all about developing that relationship with the student and then helping them to expand socially."

Blair explained that for younger students, floor time is a great way to do a lot more with play therapy. Speech and occupational therapists can get down on the floor with the students and play and allow them to direct the game. This allows the student to develop the relationship, the interaction and the language. Blair emphasized that these components are important for socialization.

In terms of sensory processing, there are multiple factors that come into play. The student could be focused on how hungry they are, how loud or quiet certain sounds are, how bright the room is and multiple sensory overloads that distract them from their learning.

"We help to mitigate some of those sensory issues by creating a classroom that is sensory friendly," explained Blair. "We help them to recognize that I can see your body needs a break so let's go take a break."

Whether it's needing to get up and walk, fidgeting or playing with something, students at Arbor can work with those additional sensory needs to develop their learning.

The Arbor School also offers many learning experiences and integrates programs like job training, transition to work/college and STEAM into the primary through high school curriculums. Blaire explained that the programs aren't necessarily set up a certain way as the student advances to high school rather its more so catered to the individual student and their family's preference.

"We sit down with parents every year and ask them what their five goals are for their child, their five goals become our five goals," said Blair.

Blaire finds that it's important to understand this trajectory so that when they start entering middle school and high school, they can get a taste of different classes that could spark interest in future career paths. An example that Blair shared was that a student could take a CNA course and exam to be a certified nursing assistant if that's what they wanted.

The programs are set up to give students the time to figure out what works for them and give them the resources to expand on those interests.

Since The Arbor School is parent driven, feedback is crucial when forging the learning path for their children. For mothers, Brittany Jones, Kayla Epifanio, Meriah Theisens and Mackenzie Anderson whose children have attended The Arbor School for more than a couple years the mothers share that it's not about what their children must do to be in Arbor but what Arbor can do for their children.

The mothers feel like their feedback is heard and they notice each child thriving in the classroom and community that Arbor provides that they weren't seeing in a public-school setting. Anderson, whose daughter has been at the school for four years shares her family's commitment to the school.

"All of us live farther away from here or at least half an hour away and we are committed to take the drive to help our children," said Anderson. "We would drive hours if we had to."

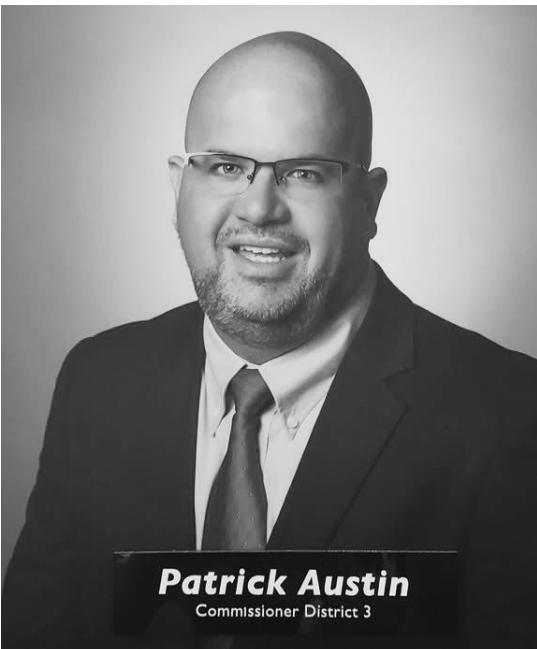
The Arbor School not only serves its students and families but also its staff as well. Blair emphasized the importance of creativity and development for students and how that coincides with letting the teacher have creative liberty over their classroom.

Elizabeth Douglas, a speech therapist assistant and teacher, who's worked in public schools in both Seminole and Orange County, explains that what makes The Arbor School so unique is freedom and access.

"I would have times at other schools, where kids are just a number and they are lost in the crowd. Even staff feel alone sometimes. I would walk around and not know who to ask for help," said Douglas. "However, at Arbor we are so open with each other and so on the same page because all hands are on deck."

Whether it's students, their families or staff, everyone has a place, a home, at The Arbor School of Central Florida. At this school community and creativity mean a great deal and laughter can be heard around every corner.

Appointment of Commissioner Patrick Austin as New Vice-Mayor



The City of Sanford is pleased to announce the appointment of Commissioner Patrick Austin, representing District 3, as the new Vice-Mayor of Sanford for the upcoming year, 2025. This decision was made during the City Commission meeting on December 9, 2024. As Vice-Mayor, Commissioner Austin will assume the role of acting Mayor in the absence of Mayor Art Woodruff. Commissioner Austin's leadership, commitment to public service, and deep connection with the Sanford community make him an excellent choice for this important position. Commissioner Austin has served consecutively as District 3's representative on the City Commission since 2016 and was recently re-elected in November 2024 for another 4-year term. He brings a wealth of experience and a deep understanding of Sanford's needs, having worked on numerous initiatives aimed at fostering growth, enhancing public safety, and improving city infrastructure. "I am honored to be selected as the Vice-Mayor of Sanford," said Commissioner Austin. "I look forward to continuing to serve the people of Sanford, working alongside my colleagues to make our city even stronger. I am committed to ensuring our community thrives, and I'm excited about the opportunities ahead." Please join us in congratulating Commissioner Patrick Austin on his appointment as Vice-Mayor.

Photo contributed

Hey Readers!



We are always looking for interesting **STORY IDEAS**

Send me your events, stories, People and Happening leads We'll get them in!



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