

The Beaches CURRENTS



the **recorder's** second section

Friday, July 31, 2009



Solstice stylin'

Celebrity Solstice is one of cruise travel's most innovative and elegant vessels — it even has a real grass lawn. This 2,850-passenger ship is a real treat for the senses.

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Delicious Destinations

The St. Vincents HealthCare Foundation has named the celebrity chef for Delicious Destinations 2009 and Modern Southern cuisine is on the menu at this event that combines good food with a good cause.

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Seamark Ranch

This Clay County children's home was born in the Beaches and is a beacon of hope for kids everywhere

By Jackie Gilovoy

"They come from instability. They're abandoned," said Seamark Ranch Executive Director Fred Meiners in an introduction video about the children who come to Seamark Ranch.

The ranch is a home for abused, neglected and abandoned children. The idea began in 2001 with Keith Denton, who, as a child, attended Big Oak Ranch in Alabama. He felt Jacksonville needed a similar place for children who grew up like him.

In 2003, Chester Stokes, owner of Marsh Landing Country Club, and Hawley Smith donated 468 acres in Clay County to the cause. The ranch has been up and running since 2007.

The ranch is not just a shelter and food, with staff on shifts, said Dale Pirkle, Seamark's development director.

"It all begins with a nurturing, loving family," said Meiners.

That's what Seamark is — a surrogate family for the children and everyone involved.

"When kids come here, it's not just because they need a family. They usually have all these other issues and problems. If a person's broken, they're kind of broken not just in one way; they're broken in every dimen-



PHOTOS BY MELINA VASTOLA

Seamark Ranch is a children's home in Clay County that was born from a Beaches man's generosity.

sion of life. They're academically behind, emotionally challenged in many areas. They probably have no sense of purpose. We want to have programs that address every area of brokenness," said Meiners.

"It's unconditional acceptance. You're acting wrong, but we still care about you. We're going to work with you," he continued.

More than a home

In June 2007, a school began in the boys' home. In December of that year, the school moved into the education building. Children in kindergarten through eighth grade are taught there. The older children at-

tend Clay High School.

"We realized these kids are so far behind academically that they need a school," said Meiners.

Director of Education Robin Garvey, who has a master's in special education, has been with the ranch since June 2007, after receiving an e-mail that Seamark Ranch was looking for a director of education. She clicked on Seamark's Web site and never looked back.

"I just felt like this is where I needed to be," Garvey said.

"She's able to create an atmosphere in the classroom where they

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Snapshot! Meninak Club Ocean Marathon

By Shane Griffis

The Meninak Club, one of Jacksonville's oldest civic clubs, held its 76th Annual Ocean Marathon Swim July 25 to show the club's support and appreciation for the American Red Cross Volunteer Life Saving Corps.

Only members of the Volunteer Life Savings Corps were eligible to swim in the 3.5 mile race, which began at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club and ended at the Jacksonville Beach Lifeguard Station.

Lifeguard Cleve Cooney took first in this year's event with a swim time of 1:15:49.



Bill Horn, Jarrod Burteszek, Bunky Johnson and Cleve Cooney

PHOTOS BY SHANE GRIFFIS

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What's Cooking?

Summertime cocktails!

By Chef Andrea Rosenblatt

Crisp and refreshing — summertime cocktails help beat the heat and elevate the simplest salad into an elegant dinner.

These next few weeks are the hottest of our year. Ice cold salads will be a mainstay in my diet until this weather breaks. But, to keep it interesting, I will add a cold cocktail to my evening! Here are some of my summertime favorites:

Shirley Temple

I am NOT kidding! If you have not made one of these for yourself since you were a child, now is the time. They are as good as you remember:

Combine 6 oz. ginger ale with 1 oz. grenadine — serve over lots of ice with a maraschino cherry. (If you want to make this a grown-up version, add 1 oz. gin to the mix.)

White Wine Sangria

I give full credit for this recipe to a fellow chef, Mary. She was kind enough to serve me this Sangria at her home with lunch one afternoon about five years ago and I fell in love with the flavor. She sent me the recipe and I bet I've made this 25 times since!

In a large glass pitcher, combine 1 bottle white wine (I like an

inexpensive sauv. blanc or pinot grigio) with ½ cup triple sec and 10 oz. club soda. Add 3 tablespoons Splenda sweetener (it dissolves more easily than sugar) and one orange cut into slices. Garnish with fresh mint and chill well. Serve very cold.

Chef Chan's Thai-Garita

Chef Dennis Chan's new book "Hip Asian Comfort Food" has a whole chapter devoted to great cocktails and they are some of my favorites. They are refreshing and unusual. You and your guests will love them!

Combine ½ oz. fresh squeezed lemon juice, 1 oz. fresh squeezed lime juice, ½ oz triple sec, 1 ½ oz tequila and 1 oz. Sake in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake well and pour into a cold martini glass. Garnish with a slice of fresh lime.

(Chef Chan is the owner of Blue Bamboo in Jacksonville. His book is for sale at his restaurant, at Barnes and Noble and at A. Chef's Cooking Studio)

Sparkling Tea

I serve this at backyard cookouts and when we get home from a day at the beach. It's so refreshing!

In a glass pitcher, combine 2 cups brewed ice tea, 1 cup pomegranate juice, 1 cup club soda and 3 tablespoons Splenda. Stir well and serve over ice garnished with fresh mint sprigs. (I use Pom brand pomegranate juice which you can find in the produce section of most grocery stores.)

For free recipes for lots of cocktails check out the Internet — you can type in the name of a recipe you are looking for, or just browse at various sites. My favorite food site is www.saveur.com and their collection of drink recipes is the best on the net as far as I am concerned — check them out! (You can buy copies of current Saveur magazines at the A. Chef Studio.)

Recipe:

My Husband's Favorite Spinach Salad with Raspberries and Gorgonzola

Serves 4

1 large bag prewashed baby spinach

1 cup gorgonzola, crumbled
1 pt. fresh raspberries
½ cup good olive oil
¼ cup raspberry vinegar
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon ground black pepper
½ cup pine nuts, toasted

In a small bowl whisk olive oil, raspberry vinegar, salt and pepper. Place spinach in each serving bowl, drizzle with dressing, top with pine nuts, cheese and berries. Serve with a refreshing cocktail for a perfect summertime dinner. You can add left over grilled fish, chicken or steak to this salad to really make it a meal. *Enjoy!*



Chef Andrea Rosenblatt of A. Chef's Studio

Seamark

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can begin to learn; where they feel safe and secure and that people aren't going to laugh at them and tell them that they're stupid and stuff. It's the same thing there as in the homes. It's a safe, academic atmosphere where they can grow," said Meiners.

"Each child is assessed when they come in ... so that we can identify where their learning gaps may be," said Garvey.

"Our initial task is to identify those gaps and then design a program to fill them in so that then they can begin to build and grow from an academic stand point," said Garvey.

Garvey's favorite thing about Seamark is the flexibility to meet children where their needs are. She loves

developing a plan, doing it and seeing its effects.

No more fear

Another way Seamark helps children is through play therapy.

"These children are governed by fears," said Pirkle.

In play therapy the child must find figurines to represent people in his or her life, said Pirkle. The therapy area is filled with hundreds of different figurines for children to choose from.

As the children learn to open up and stop being afraid, figurines and actions in therapy change.

"The transformation of a child is amazing," said Pirkle.

Also on the ranch are horses, which are known to be therapeutic — especially for young girls, said Meiners, adding that caring for horses and other animals helps children open up. Seamark's barn is filled with donkeys and chickens, and bluebird houses can be found all over the ranch. The children also tend to a garden.

Near the barn is a clay mound — a meditation area for the children and the staff that Pirkle calls the perfect place to reflect.

The next steps

Seamark accepts children six through 16 years old. They come to the ranch from many different sources, including private placement, churches, school counselors, grandparents unable to care for a grandchild, state agencies and through word of mouth.



Sign at the entrance to the Seamark Ranch.

Since August 2007, 26 have passed through Seamark Ranch. Currently there are 15 children living there.

"Some have gone and been reunited with their parents, some have been adopted," said Pirkle.

Some have also been taken out of the ranch and placed elsewhere.

"As long as they're not prone to violence and ... not trying to act out sexually some of the abuse they've experienced, that's the kind of child that we're equipped for," said Pirkle.

The ranch currently has one girls' home and one boys' home, but plans to have six each, with eight children per home.

For more information visit www.seamarkranch.com or call 288-8885.