

local news

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Family: Village of Dunedin residents, Jack and Beth Juppe's grandson plays ice hockey in New York.



Friends: Villagers Peggy McLaughlin, Renie Morrissey, Bobbi Britt and Alison Young participated in a golf tournament at Baseline Golf Course in Ocala.

Local Writer, Speaker to Take Part in Storytelling Festival

Sue O'Halloran, of the Village El Cortez, was selected as one of the entertainers for the statewide event.

By ANNE MOSER
Daily Sun Staff Writer

With over 50 years of experience in storytelling, Sue O'Halloran finds speaking in front of an audience is not only easy but exciting.

Public speaking is a skill, and whether she is speaking to a small crowd or thousands of people, making people laugh is a highlight of the craft. O'Halloran has been featured at the Florida Storytelling Festival the last few years. The 41st annual Florida Storytelling Festival will take place in Mount Dora Jan. 23 through Jan. 26. Hosted by the Florida Storytelling Association, it's a combination of workshops, performances and contests. This year, O'Halloran will be one of the emcees and she will help others develop their storytelling skills by hosting a workshop.

"People can learn a lot from storytelling," said O'Halloran, of the Village El Cortez. "You can influence people in entertaining ways."

The festival draws hundreds of people, from storytellers to writers to students along with professional storytellers and those who are learning the art, who share their stories at various presentations, also known as concerts.

"It celebrates the oral tradition of storytelling as an experience to increase connection and to encourage listening, learning and telling," Florida Storytelling Association president Debra Weller said.



Rachel Govola | Daily Sun

Sue O'Halloran, of the Village El Cortez, will teach at the 41st annual Florida Storytelling Festival Jan. 23 through Jan. 26 in Mount Dora.

As a former dancer, O'Halloran has always enjoyed being onstage. She had to stop dancing after an injury, but her love for performing was still strong and she wanted a way to express it. After hearing a performance by a professional storyteller,

she decided to try it out herself. O'Halloran joined a local storytelling guild, where members share their work and get feedback to develop their skills, and eventually landed a spot in the International Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee.

O'Halloran has performed in The Villages since moving here four years ago, selling out shows at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center and

seminar will give pointers on how to tell educational stories without being negative or patronizing to the audience. "You don't have to be a storyteller to learn from it," O'Halloran said. "It's something that can also benefit writers or anyone who wants to inspire their audience to support a cause." While she is not a featured speaker at this year's, anyone who wants to hear her in action can do so when O'Halloran tells stories on the Lakeside Inn porch Jan. 5 and 12. The festival will also feature youth storytellers, improvised storytelling and a liar's contest, where performers will take turns sharing their lighthearted tall tales. O'Halloran has appreciated the variety at each year's festival and the chance to learn from other people with the same passion. She sees storytelling as a way to connect with others as she transports them into a different world. "You watch people become children again," O'Halloran said. "You get to laugh with all different kinds of people who you don't know, and it reminds you that we're all human." The 41st Florida Storytelling Festival will take place Jan. 23-26 at Lakeside Inn, located at 100 Alexander Street in Mount Dora. For more information or to register for the event, visit flstory.com/festival.

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SUE O'HALLORAN
Village El Cortez

The Studio Theater Tierra Del Sol. Along with storytelling, she is a published author and keynote speaker with an interest in social justice issues. "I was happy to bring storytelling to The Villages when I moved here," O'Halloran said. "A few people told me they didn't know they could just sit and enjoy someone telling stories for two hours."

O'Halloran has participated in the Florida Storytelling Festival since 2020, entertaining audiences with folktales, fables and anecdotes from her life. This year, she will take on a new role and open the festival with a workshop called "Teaching Without Preaching: The Art of Edutainment." The all-day

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