

# First Coast Highlanders Newsletter

November 2025

## A full-body photograph of a man in traditional Scottish attire. He is wearing a black beret with a feather, a white long-sleeved shirt, a black sash, and a dark kilt with a red and white plaid pattern. He is also wearing white knee-high socks with red ties and black shoes. He is playing a snare drum with two mallets, one in each hand. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with green grass and a yellow building.



# Why is the Unicorn Scotland's National Animal?

Unicorns have been linked to Scotland for centuries.

In Celtic mythology, the unicorn was a symbol of purity and innocence, as well as masculinity and power. Tales of dominance and chivalry associated with the unicorn may be why it was chosen as Scotland's national animal. While the animal is mythological, the ideals it represents are what make it a perfect fit as the national animal for Scotland, because like this proud beast, the Scots fought to remain unconquered.

Did you know that Scotland has a National Unicorn Day? It's on the 9th of April every year!

The unicorn was first used on the Scottish royal coat of arms by William I in the 12th century. In the 15th century, when King James III was in power, gold coins even appeared with the unicorn on them. When Scotland and England unified under the reign of James VI of Scotland in 1603, the Scottish Royal Arms had two unicorns supporting a shield. When James VI became James I of England and Ireland, he replaced the unicorn on the left of the shield with the national animal of England, the lion, to show that the countries were indeed united.



*Article excerpted and adapted from VisitScotland.com*

## Upcoming Events 2025 - 2026

Nov 8th	Military 5K Run (8:00 AM) Oakleaf High School Parking Lot, Orange Park
Nov 11th	Veterans Day Memorial Service (11:00 AM) Magnolia Cemetery, Orange Park
Dec 12th	Cocoa & Carols (7:00 PM) Best Bet, 455 Park Ave., Orange Park
Dec 14th	First Presbyterian Church of Starke 140th Anniversary (11:00 AM) 921 E Call St., Starke
Jan 12th	Ron Parker Memorial Service, (time TBA) Ron Parker Park, St. Augustine Beach
Jan 25th	Kirkin of the Tartans (8:30 and 10:30 AM) St. Simons Presbyterian Church, St. Simons, GA
Feb 22nd	Kirkin of the Tartan (10:30 AM) St. Giles Presbyterian Church, Orange Park
Feb 28th	NE Florida Scottish Games (All Day) Clay County Fairgrounds, Green Cove Springs



### First Coast Highlanders Elected Officers for 2025

**President:** Scott Young  
**Vice President:** Scotland Boland  
**Acting Secretary:** Matthew McGahee  
**Treasurer:** Evan Brown  
**Member at Large:** Will Wheeler  
**Member at Large:** Nikki Herbst  
**Quartermaster:** Natasha Durrance  
**Business Manager:** Arthur Tenney



## Member Spotlight: Blanca Rios



Blanca Rios is our tenor drummer, and when you see the joy with which she plays, you may want to take up the tenor drums, too! [Innocent plug inserted on purpose—please consider joining us!]

Blanca says she has loved the bagpipes since the age of 8 and feels very lucky to belong to First Coast Highlanders.

She says that the best parts about being a member of the band are that she gets to socialize, share with people, and relax and enjoy life. This helps with stress management, and the best part, she says, “is that we are having fun!”

Asked if she had advice for anyone considering playing with a Highland band, Blanca provided a clear roadmap: “Just come, watch, hang around, try it, sign up for free lessons, and if you like it, practice, show up for lessons, and as time goes by those lessons turn into rehearsals . . . be present, and the rest will happen eventually.”



Blanca was born and raised in a small town in Puerto Rico, Quebradillas, a town known for its beautiful beaches that are perfect for surfing. She says that she is from the countryside, Lake Guajataca. Based on Blanca’s descriptions, the band has talked about going to Puerto Rico, perhaps in 2027, to see Blanca’s home territory and perform around the island.

Blanca obtained an Associate degree and worked as a business and office administrator, then went back to school after she became a mother and earned her Bachelor’s degree in nursing. She has been a nurse for 11 years and currently works full-time as a palliative care nurse and part-time administering home infusions.

Some of us have noted and/or shared Blanca’s appreciation for fine cars and Harley-Davidson motorcycles! Blanca says she occasionally buys a Harley, rides it for a while, then sells it and lets her enthusiasm sit for a bit. “In Puerto Rico,” she tells us, “I used to ride with Storm Riders MC,” prompting this writer to look up that well-known club.

Blanca began learning to play the tenor drum after many years of being associated with the band as the parent of a piper, Blanca’s child Rios. We’re glad Blanca joined the band!

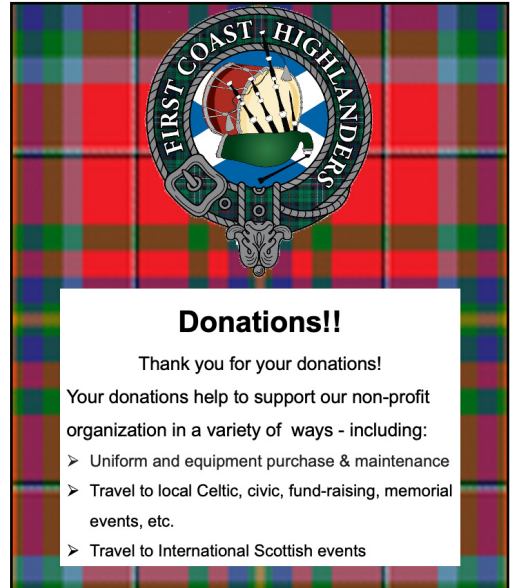




# Fundraising for Our Scotland 2026 Trip



FCH members have played at Culver's **Donate While You Dine** events in Middleburg and Jacksonville ~~ we appreciate Culver's support!



Bill has a smile for everyone



Jill shows off an FCH hat and shirt while delivering dinner



Matt makes sure the customer got the right order



Rios goes the extra distance



Vince brings energy to serving Culver's diners



# First Coast Highlanders Recent Appearances



Recovery & Remembrance event, Green Cove Springs



EMT & Firefighters Graduation at Florida Gateway College



Florida Gateway College Graduation



Clay County Fire Rescue Promotion Ceremony



# SPONSORS – THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

## DIAMOND

[St. Andrews Society of Jacksonville](#)  
[Orange Park Presbyterian Church](#)  
[Northeast Florida Scottish Highland Games](#) • Arthur and Susanne Tenney

## PLATINUM

[Romanza St. Augustine](#) • Will Wheeler • Gayward Hendry  
 Matthew Harrell • Greg and Dora McClelland • St Kilda, USA • Vince and Ellen Hare  
 Steve Dean and Jill Swanson-Dean • Jane Romeo in memory of Stephen Romeo

## GOLD

Blanca Rios • Bert and Lynn Shipley • Blane and Diane Wilson  
 Clay Chamber Finally Friday Networking Council • Brenda Parker

## SILVER

Albert and Pat Syeles • Carolyn Smith • Robert J. Phillips

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SILVER (\$100 - \$249)	GOLD (\$250 - \$499)	PLATINUM (\$500 - \$999)	DIAMOND (\$1,000 & UP)
<i>Listing in our newsletter and on our website with a link to your site.</i>	<i>Listing in our newsletter, listing on our website with a link to your site and a band shirt.</i>	<i>Listing in our newsletter, listing on our website with a link to your site and a band shirt and a band hat.</i>	<i>Listing in our newsletter &amp; our website with a link to your site, a band shirt/hat, signed band photo &amp; a performance.</i>

FOR \$25 YOU CAN BECOME A MEMBER OF OUR BOOSTER CLUB, and receive the newsletter by email.

*For more information about hiring a piper or the band, or becoming a sponsor, call Art Tenney at (904) 368-8177.*

## FIRST COAST HIGHLANDERS

SPONSORSHIP LEVEL:

☐ BOOSTER CLUB ☐ SILVER ☐ GOLD ☐ PLATINUM ☐ DIAMOND

THANK YOU!

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Mail with your check to First Coast Highlanders, 9703 NW 219th Street,  
 Starke, FL 32091.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DONATIONS!



Bass drummer and piping student Murph Borno is moving to Indiana. We wish him well and will miss him.