share her experience, so Make-A-Wish arranged with WPTV-Channel 5 for her to interview the mermaids for a new book, asking them about their favorite food and music and if they can dance. During their visit, the kids visited Gumbo Limbo Nature Center and the Palm Beach Zoo. And one other plus: The trip marked the first vacation for the entire family.

So much for rust. When Gulf Stream Bath & Tennis pro Roger Ashcroft hired David McNamara as his coach last March, he took note of his new assistant’s people skills and teaching ability but noted he wasn’t fully fit. Thanks to Ashcroft’s intense fitness regimen and at age 57, McNamara decided to enter his first high-level tournament in more than five years, the USTA National Men’s 40 Grass Court Championships in Atlanta.

“I thought the hell I’d said McNamara, whose highest international ranking had been 431. “But because of who I am I didn’t want to just go play. I still have enough of a competitive ego that I thought I could win. I wanted to make sure I was ready.”

McNamara dispatched the Nos. 5, 3, 1 and 2 seeds for the championship. But he wasn’t finished. In late August he traveled to Philadelphia for the USTA National 40 Grass Court Championships. After a first-round bye, he beat the top three seeds to win again.

The national hand court championships began Nov. 27 in La Jolla, Calif. McNamara is pumped.

The new national rankings came out today,” he wrote on Aug. 28, “and I am now No. 2 in the nation. Closing in on No. 1.”

“It needed to be done,” Luke Therien said, so a couple of months ago the Boynton Beach restaurateur shut down the Banana Boat for renovations. “When you’re open 365 days a year, there’s a lot of wear and tear.”

Therien opened Banana Boat in 1978 with a New England nautical look that was retained in do-overs in 1990 and 2000. Not this time, however. “We tried to sharpen our brand with a Florida Caribbean look,” he said. “We want to make sure we’re capturing all the people coming to South Florida.”

He added sliding glass doors that bring in a lot more light and open up the place and a new boat-shaped bar. The expanded docks can handle eight boats. Florida and Caribbean artwork from local artists cover the walls, and live music continues every Friday through Sunday.

Palm Beach County is among the most prosperous regions in the nation, yet almost 200,000 residents live in poverty. Every month the Palm Beach County Food Bank serves more than 100,000 individuals through food pantries, soup kitchens and other services. But that food doesn’t come for free and the money to buy it comes from a wide variety of activities and programs. One is Empty Bowls Delray Beach.

From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Dec. 3 at Old School Square, patrons will pay $25 for a specially decorated bowl they can fill with food or soup from at least 16 local restaurants and artisan bread from Old School Bakery. Soup providers, including Abe & Louie’s, Artsy Artichoke, Atlantis Golf Club, Bedner’s, Burt & Max’s, Cabana Delray Beach, Colony Hotel, Deck 84, The Elks Club, Henry’s, Lucille’s BBQ, Purgreen’s, Salt 7, Sweetwater, and The Regional Kitchen will serve up a variety of chicken vegetable and potato bacon to red seafood chowder and split pea and coconut curry.

Barb Lentz, owner of the ArtSea Living Studio in Boynton Beach, has hosted a series of “play and paint” events where guests have designed and painted bowls. For tickets or more information, visit www.oldschoolsquare.com/events/empty-bowls.

Hard to believe they’ve been performing for almost 50 years, but the Pointer Sisters are still jumperin’ for our love and they’ll no doubt be steppin’ out at the Nov. 4 gala for the Chris Evert/Raymond James Pro-Celebrity Tennis Classic at Boca Raton Resort & Club. Playing celebs at the 28th event include musician David Cook, Dr. Phil McGraw, Robin Givens and race driver Helio Castroneves. (www.chrisevert.org)

Alex Dreyfoos and George Elmore have been making their marks in business and culture for half a century. Dreyfoos is the former owner of WPEC-Channel 12, entrepreneur, inventor and the force behind the Kravis Center. Elmore, founder and president of Hardrives, served as chairman of the Palm Beach County Cultural Council.

Together they have moved and shaken the county into a cultural destination, and they’ll share behind-the-scenes stories and anecdotes from 5 to 7 p.m. Nov. 6 at “Putting It Together” for the council’s first “Culture & Cocktails” event of the season at The Colony Pavilion in Palm Beach.

The Jan. 8 event will take a slightly different heading with “Heavy Perspectives: From Metallica to Modern Art” with former Metallica bassist and Rock and Roll Hall of Famer-turned-artist Jason Newsted. His paintings will be on display at the Cultural Council’s HRQ in Lake Worth from Dec. 1 to Feb. 3. For reservations and ticket pricing, call 472-3330.

Jethro Tull ... almost. The classic rock band’s best-known member, Ian Anderson, plays Mizner Park Amphitheater Nov. 10. Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra sets up at the Kravis Center on Dec. 5. At the podium: a promising young trumpeter out of New Orleans — Winton Marsalis. Ambrosia and Fly Amero (Orleans) perform at Boston’s Nov. 9.

The Skinny:

A stack of blueberry delights at John G’s

Blueberry pancakes

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