

RIVERSIDE • AVONDALE • ORTEGA • MURRAY HILL



Kate Radon, Julia Pheas and Lauren Haines enjoy a confidence building swing appropriately named "The Screamer"

One last swing

St. Mark's 6th graders attended Southwind YoungLife Camp in the Ocala National Forest. The retreat, themed "Me to We to They", focused on learning to lead through service, individually, and as a group. Sixth graders take on lots of responsibility as leaders of the school and they use this retreat as a way to come together as a group to start the school year focused on becoming great leaders.....page 36

Resident

C O M M U N I T Y N E W S



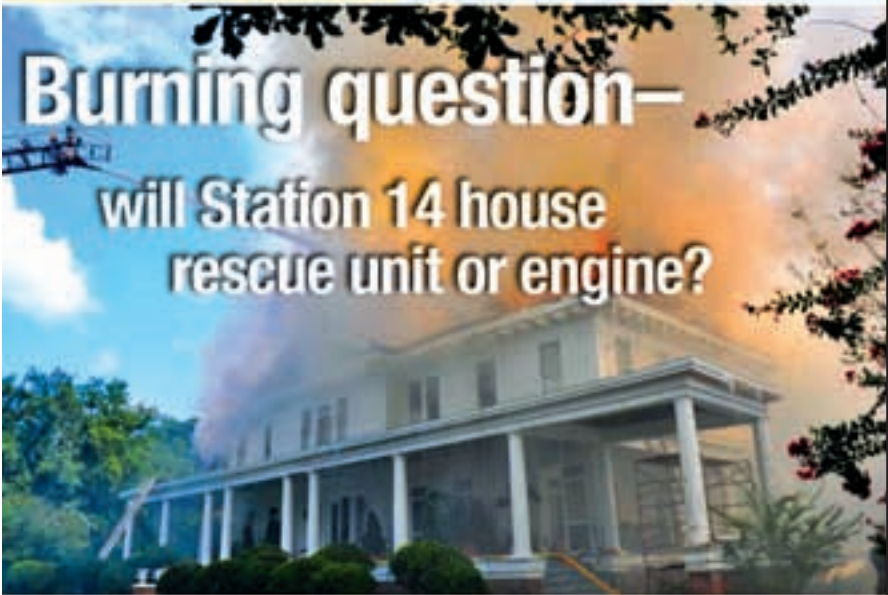
Neighborhood real estate

Experts say slow, steady wins race
.....See page 14



Deadline looms

Numbers don't add up for extended fee moratorium.....See page 10



Burning question—

will Station 14 house rescue unit or engine?

Concerned residents fear station will be unequipped to deal with dangerous fires
.....page 6



Eagle Scouts soar

.....Story begins on page 38

Ortega Forest's Kent Zeigler recently achieved Eagle Scout status — joining the Northeast Florida scouts celebrating 100 years of the Boy Scout's highest honor this year. Zeigler and other neighborhood scouts talk about what the honor means to them and their families.

Business owners worry about long term effects of Love's ordinance

Riverside/Avondale
Overlay modification may
limit development

BY STEVE DiMATTIA
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

District 14 Councilman Jim Love's ordinance modifying the Riverside/Avondale Overlay, which the city council unanimously passed June 24, has quietly gone into effect with little fanfare or public opposition and no community meetings.

Ordinance 2012-339 requires all new bars and nightclubs, and new restaurants with more than 100 seats and/or 2,500 square feet, to provide 50 percent of the

city's regular parking provision. "Everybody says it's been a long time coming," Love said. "Just because it's a rule doesn't mean you can't ask for a deviation. It just gives the council and citizens a chance to look at proposed development that may be bigger [then the ordinance allows] and see if it fits the scale of the neighborhood." But some business owners feel that the ordinance will limit the number and nature of businesses that seek to open in the historic district. "Those that argue that you can still apply for a deviation are missing the point: It only adds another burden for the small businessman, another hoop to

See **OVERLAY** on page 4

Shoppes of Avondale parking study in neutral

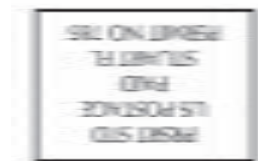
RAP wants scope to
include larger area in
Historic District

BY STEVE DiMATTIA
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

The meter is still running on a parking study for the historic districts. As reported last month, a Scope of Services for Parking Analysis for the Shoppes of Avondale was prepared by Ghyabi & Associates on May 24 and delivered to the Planning and Development Department more than

two months ago but still has not been vetted or approved — nor has a time-line yet been established for doing so, said department head Calvin Burney in an email. The full scope would cost \$60,000 to implement. But now there is at least one additional scope on the horizon, according to Jim Love, District 14 Councilman. The scope has yet to be submitted to the planning department, Burney said, but he and Love have "discussed the study concept." "Riverside Avondale Preservation and others from the community are

See **STUDY** on page 12



In homes by SEPTEMBER 5, 2012

Avondale Merchants Association to present fun run

It's "Residents" on the run. The annual Avondale 5K is set for Saturday, September 22. The 5K course runs around Boone Park and along St. Johns Avenue through the historic Avondale district. Runners can also participate in a one-mile fun run.

After the race, participants can enjoy the post-race block party, which will include a live band, free beer and drawings for prizes! Proceeds from the event will benefit the Sanctuary on 8th Street.

To sign up or find more information, visit www.shoppesofavondale.com.



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Wounded Warrior Project run takes off in September

The Wounded Warrior Project 8K Run will be Saturday, September 8, in Jacksonville. Event organizers invite participants to run or walk to honor and empower the country's Wounded Warriors. The organization also is hosting runs in Franklin, TN, and San Antonio, TX, this fall in addition to the Jacksonville event. The Jacksonville run starts and finishes at The Jacksonville Landing. Registration is underway at www.woundedwarrior-project.org. Registration fees are \$35 through September 9. Packet pick-up will be at all 1st Place Sports locations on September 6 and 7. Day-of registration is available and live entertainment is planned. The opening program begins at 8:30 a.m., and the race begins at 9 a.m. Military and 1K Fun Run Registration is \$15. There is a \$99 mandatory fundraising goal for each participant.

Festival of Flight at Memorial Park

Angels for Allison, and presenting sponsor Fidelity Information Services, will host the 2nd Annual Festival of Flight at Memorial Park in Riverside from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Sep. 30. Admission to the music and art festival is free. Bay Street Band will perform during the festival along with a lineup of other musical talent. Vendors and food also will be unhand. Organizers also are hosting a prize-packed raffle — raffle tickets are \$10 each or five tickets for \$45. 100 percent of the proceeds from the Festival of Flight benefit Angels for Allison, a nonprofit organization providing financial assistance for expenses associated with the loss of a child to Northeast Florida families in need. For more information, visit www.angelsforallison.org.

Sulzbacher to celebrate success stories

The 14th annual presentation of Transformations will be held Tuesday, September 18, from 5:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront. The event spotlights the journeys of several current and former clients of the Sulzbacher Center as well as others whose lives are changed daily by the organization.

Michael Boylan, President of WJCT Broadcasting, will serve as Emcee for the evening

Grace Church hosting 'Captivate' conference

Christian Healing Ministries presents Captivate, a conference for women, at Grace Church of Avondale Sep. 13-15. Keynote speaker is St. Nicholas resident and full-time missionary, Courtenay Bowser. Other speakers include Judith MacNutt, author and president of Christian Healing Ministries and Nancy Stafford, author and actress from television's "Matlock." Captivate conference information, including online registration, is available on the CHM website at christianhealingmin.org. Call CHM at (904) 765-3332 with general questions.

SHINDIG! To benefit Sanctuary

A Starry SHINDIG!, the Sanctuary on 8th Street's annual fundraiser, will be Friday, September 21, from 6 to 9 p.m., at the Garden Club of Jacksonville. This year's event celebrates 20 years of service to the community and features a special performance by National Public Radio's State of the REunion host and Sanctuary Poet Emeritus, Al Letson; live music by local band Grandpa's Cough Medicine, an upscale barbecue feast from Biscottis, b the bakery and Bono's Catering; plus a fabulous silent auction. Tickets are \$40 per person. Casual attire. For reservations and information, visit sanctuaryon8th.org or call (904) 356-3588.

Artist holding annual opening at Crosby Designs

This year, local artist, Megan Cosby is holding her annual opening at Crosby Designs, Hugo's Interiors' newest Avondale showroom from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. on Thursday, September 27. Cosby's figurative paintings have been influenced mainly by the intersection of fashion design and art. In her newer abstract series, she explores the subject of contemporary lifestyles and design. Cosby is partnering with designer Jennie Hugo to incorporate art with interior design. For the opening, artist and designer will work to showcase the creativity of placement within interior settings. The new 5,000 square foot showroom will be harmoniously set with multiple interior arrangements staged to exhibit Cosby's 25 newest paintings. Wine, refreshments and music by Canary in the Coalmine will be available for guests.

Murray Hill Library friends to host annual book sale

The Friends of the Murray Hill Library's annual Book Sale will be Thursday, September 27, starting at 4 p.m. at the Murray Hill Baptist Church. The book sale is being held in conjunction with the Murray Hill Preservation Association's Spaghetti Dinner, which starts at 5:30 p.m., at the same location. This year's event will be bigger and better than ever. There will also be a silent auction and tables from various community organizations. The Friends of the Murray Hill Library and the Murray Hill Preservation Association are both nonprofit organizations working to enhance the quality of life for residents living in the Murray Hill and surrounding areas. For more information, contact Judy Klein at (904) 384-1523.

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Proposed budget cuts cliffhanger for local libraries

BY SUSANNA P. BARTON
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Next month, the Jacksonville City Council will vote on Mayor Alvin Brown's proposed \$4.6 million budget cut — an event that could mean big changes for neighborhood libraries like Willowbranch, Murray Hill and San Marco.

Council members will vote on the budget Sep. 29. Kathy Lussier, assistant director for community relations and marketing for the Jacksonville Public Library said specific schedules and hours for all neighborhood libraries would be known after the late-September council vote.

According to Jacksonville Public Library officials, many critical library changes are at stake including: library closures on

Sundays with reduced hours during the week; books, DVD and downloadables budget slashed by \$500,000; the elimination of 71 full-time positions; and reduced hours at the Main Library to 48 hours a week.

Every library in the city's system — including neighborhood facilities like Willowbranch, Murray Hill and San Marco — faces critical closures. Branch libraries are expected to be open for 40 hours each week and most will be closed on Mondays and Sundays, according to library officials.

Library Friends groups across the city are taking action. Harry Regan, president of the Friends of the Jacksonville Public Library, said library supporters are looking at long-range solutions.

He and other library supporters participated in a JCCI Study funded by the

Friends of the Library to find more suitable funding. That study, he said, recommended a special tax district.

"The first step is securing enough petition signatures for a straw vote on the question, and we are working on getting those signatures," Regan said in an email responding to questions.

Another group, Save Our Public Libraries Inc. was formed recently to "promote active and continuous educational and multi community use of Jacksonville libraries and to ensure that all appropriate elected officials and decision-makers have the information necessary to understand the importance and positive impact of the public libraries to the citizens and stakeholders of Jacksonville," according to its website at www.savejaxlibraries.com.

Library officials shared other ways con-

cerned residents could step up to support the future of local libraries. Residents can contact city council representatives Lori Boyer (District 5) or Jim love (District 14) at (904) 630-1377 to share opinions or contact Mayor Alvin Brown at mayor-brown@coj.net or (904) 630-1776. The Friends of the Jacksonville Public Library can be reached via email at harry.regan@comcast.net. The Jacksonville Public Library also is accepting donations. For more information call (904) 630-4637 or email jpldev@coj.net.

"My advice to those who are concerned about the library is to contact their city council members," Regan shared. "I was a member of the City Council for five years and I know contacting them can help. And I always remind people that they are represented by six council members — a district member and five at-large council members."

OVERLAY from page 1

jump through. It's just disappointing," said Ben Davis, owner of Riverside's Intuition Ale on King Street. "I don't know that we would have been able to open if this ordinance had been on the books because we would have had to provide parking that isn't available."

One local restaurateur is currently facing that dilemma. Scott Schwartz, an Avondale resident and chef/owner of 29 South in Fernandina Beach, is seeking to open a new 150-seat restaurant called 29 South Jax in the area. He sees the ordinance as a major barrier to moving into the historic district.

"My clientele, the people who will follow 29 South, are in the Riverside/Avondale/San Marco areas,"

Schwartz said. "I would probably take an already existing space and convert it to a restaurant. But now, unless I can find a building that was already a restaurant, my options are very limited. I wouldn't say that I absolutely don't see myself moving into the area, but the low chances of finding the perfect piece to fit the perfect puzzle makes it unlikely."

Davis pointed to lost job opportunities because of such decisions and he also took issue with the fact that the ordinance passed without community meetings.

"When we were working on zoning exceptions for our brewery, we had a community meeting; Kickbacks and Mellow Mushroom both had community meetings. Not having one for this

ordinance seems like a double standard," said Davis, who wrote emails to Love opposing the ordinance. "There is an extreme vocal minority that drove this."

Love feels that he provided plenty of opportunity to gather feedback from all sides and sights strong support from residents and some business owners, such as Karin Tucker of Biscotti's and Ian Chase of The Fox, as proof that he has done the right thing for the district.

"When you see 20 or 30 speak for it and one against, it sends a pretty strong message to the council that you're on the right track," said Love, noting the position of those who spoke during four city council public hearings.

(Davis contends that a lot of the opposition is "out there working and unable

to attend council meetings.")

The one dissenting voice was Allan DeVault's of Black Sheep Restaurant Group, whose major issue was with the 100-seat, 2,500 square feet stipulation.

"You just can't easily fit a 100-seat restaurant into 2,500 square feet. It needs to be at least 4,000 square feet," said DeVault. "The ordinance also takes away the incentive to rehabilitate contributing structures. It just sets a tough precedence."

It is a precedence that greatly concerns Davis. "Who represents small business in this neighborhood? The answer is, unfortunately, no one."

To read Ordinance 2012-339: <http://library.municode.com/index.aspx?clientId=12174>



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Let's get it started: 220 Riverside ready to sprout

BY SUSANNA P. BARTON
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Local developer Hallmark Partners plans to begin construction on the 294-unit 220 Riverside in early October. The development will be one of the biggest mixed-use projects to be built in the neighborhood in recent years — and one of the first in a post-recession climate.

Firm principal Alex Coley said he is confident the firm is coming into the market "with divine timing" and is also looking for other multifamily residential projects to develop in the Brooklyn, Riverside and Avondale area.

"I'm actually really grateful to be right here right now — it's been quite a journey," Coley said. "We like the Brooklyn, Riverside, Avondale area, we think that the market is right for multifamily and are looking at everything from a duplex opportunity to building another 300 units and beyond."

He said Hallmark would like to "participate in the neighborhood multifamily market there in a variety of ways."

The first major project will be getting the \$38 million 220 Riverside into a vertical development position following a long regulatory process that culminated this summer. In late-July, Mayor Alvin Brown signed legislation to assist with the 220 Riverside project. The legislation was an agreement between the city and Hallmark for up to

\$4.9 million in Recapture Enhanced Value Grant reimbursements over a 20-year period. Hallmark agree to invest \$38 million into the vacant property at Riverside Avenue and Jackson Street by building the 294 units ranging in size from 600 to 1,200 square feet.

The project also includes 16,500 square feet of retail space and a new park.

The football field-sized public park can accommodate about 1,000 people, according to city officials.

"I'm excited about the Hallmark project's potential to stimulate even more private investment Downtown as we see young professionals and families look for new opportunity in the city center," Brown said in a release. "We must continue to work closely with the



private sector to make Downtown a more competitive center of commerce and entertainment to increase our standard of living, grow revenue streams and make Jacksonville a destination."

The planned enhancements to the property are estimated to generate \$6.9 million in additional property tax revenues for the city and Duval County Public Schools throughout the next 20 years. The project has the potential to increase residency in Jacksonville's Downtown

area by 15 percent.

Coley said the firm has not finalized an agreement with a construction builder yet, but expected to make an announcement in the next several weeks. Studio 9 principals Craig Davisson and Jason Faulkner are project architects. Coley said the building design will be a "great addition to the area."



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Fire Station 14: JFRD considers removal of engine crew

BY SUSANNA P. BARTON
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

More than 150 concerned residents, business owners and firefighters crowded the auditorium at FSCJ Kent Campus for a town hall meeting last month hosted by District 14 City Councilman Jim Love and Fire Chief Martin Senterfitt. At issue is a potential asset re-allocation at Avondale's Fire Station 14 — more plainly, whether the station will house a rescue unit or a fire engine crew.

The discussion has local property owners and firefighters on alert.

"The guys on rescue can't help you when you house is on fire," said Randy Wyse, president of the Jacksonville Association of Firefighters. Wyse, along with many former and current firefighters, attended the mid-August meeting. Many balked at the chief's assessment of there only being four fires Station 14 put out in 2011.

"Avondale is really saturated with people, there are a lot of people back in there. When the chief is talking about working fires, he's talking about the ones that were out of control before crews got there. But what about the other fires Station 14 went to that were just kitchen fires — the ones they were able to stop? That could be a large number if 14 wasn't there."

Residents voiced similar concerns. Cathy Harris, a nearby resident, addressed the growing neighborhood population and that a greater percentage of homes and buildings were wood

framed. Downing Nightingale, an Ortega resident and owner of Lamb's Yacht Center on Lakeshore Boulevard, urged the fire chief to also consider the protection more than 500 boats in slips along the neighborhood's "Marina Mile."

"If there is a fire on one of those boats, time is of the essence — and Station 14 is our closest responder," Nightingale said. "If there is a boat fire at a marina, you don't have time to waste. In the equation, please consider what we have along the riverfront here."

Senterfitt underscored no final decisions have been made on what kind of response apparatus would best be housed at the station.

"We're facing challenging economic times right now," Senterfitt said. "We're just thinking of ideas — Fire Station 14 is not closing, the question becomes what type of apparatus will be in the station."

He said the situation boils down to how the department can best utilize its assets across the county with a limited budget and provide both rescue and fire engine services to all areas without wasting resources. Fire Station 14 is being considered for asset relocation because of its proximity to and potential service overlap with nearby fire stations 10, 22, 23 and 25.

Senterfitt said his department responded to 120,000 911 calls last year and 80 percent of them were for medical emergencies. Less than 20 percent were for fires. A shortage of



Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department Chief Marty Senterfitt speaks to the crowd

ambulances across the city compromises his department's ability to respond to emergencies, he said, so he is looking for ways he can better balance available resources.

"It's a crisis we're facing — we don't have enough ambulances in Jacksonville," Senterfitt said. "We run out of 911 ambulances on a regular basis."

Matt, a firefighter from Fire Station 14, stood to share his perspective of the potential changes. He said crews from Fire Station 14 and the other nearby facilities are making 10 to 15 runs a day. And most of the emergency calls are not coming from Avondale.

He used the example of taking a rescue victim to the St. Vincent's Riverside emergency room and the long paperwork and wait times involved for rescue crews.

"In the meantime, there's no service for Avondale," he said.

John Bracey, community affairs officer for JFRD, said there are no addi-



tional public meeting scheduled regarding Station 14. But he said Senterfitt will continue to analyze emergency response data "before making any recommendations or decisions that would affect Station 14." In order to change the use of a fire station, JFRD officials are required to hold a public hearing and give a 14-day notice, Wyse said.

"The data he's compiled does support that having an advanced life support rescue unit based at Station 14 would expedite the response time of the rescue units within Fire Station 14 by an average of three minutes," Bracey said. "That is relevant because approximately 80 percent of JFRD's calls for emergency service are medical in nature."

Wyse said the issue of changing or closing Fire Station 14 has come up before — "many times."

"Then the citizens of Avondale say no, and it goes away," Wyse said. "I don't know why they bang their head against this political wall. Why should the citizens of Avondale lose while others gain? I think the citizens of Avondale made it very clear at the meeting."

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Meet Amy Powell

Amy Powell and her husband of 15 years Rick and children Ansley, Jake and Sarah live in the heart of Avondale. You may find them strolling through the neighborhood, eating at one of the restaurants on St. Johns Ave. or enjoying a day at the Riverside Arts market.

After living in Houston, Atlanta and New York, they decided to settle in Jacksonville to be close to family and live in a city where they can go boating or to the beach year round.

Amy began her real estate career 15 years ago working for National builders selling new construction homes. Upon moving to Jacksonville,

Amy transitioned into general real estate selling homes in historic neighborhoods. Amy is a Graduate of Realtor Institute, a Certified Distressed Property Expert and a Shortsale Specialist. She has helped many families avoid foreclosure by guiding them through the shortsale process. "I truly love what I do and I appreciate the trust my customers place in me. Over time, many of them have become dear friends."

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Mellow Mushroom agrees to new site plan

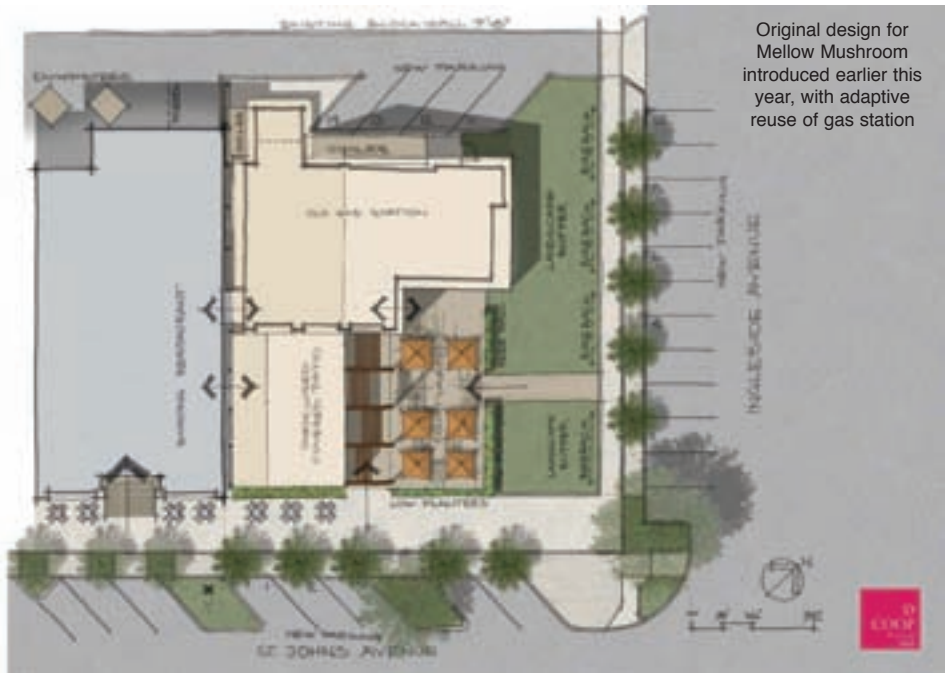
We Love Avondale group says plans still 'too big'

BY SUSANNA P. BARTON
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Continued summer talks between Mellow Mushroom owners and ruffled neighborhood partnership, We Love Avondale LLC, have yielded a compromise for the Shoppes of Avondale restaurant. But not everyone is satisfied.

Mellow Mushroom's new plans include a monumental concession — razing the existing vacant gas station building on the site. Mellow Mushroom intended to use the building in an adaptive reuse scenario with streetside green space and outdoor seating designed by San Marco-based, Design Cooperative. But new plans take the gas station out of the equation completely, instead showing a new building closer to St. Johns Avenue with parking spaces behind it.

Mellow Mushroom's latest plans were proposed at the Jacksonville City Council's Land Use and Zoning committee meeting in late August and were deferred until September 5. Mellow Mushroom also presented plans to the Jacksonville Historic



Preservation Commission for a Certificate of Appropriateness in late August. That board also deferred the hearing until September, scheduling a new hearing for the revised plans on Sep. 19. The planning commission hearing has been deferred until Sep. 27. Mellow Mushroom seeks to withdraw its PUD request and instead file an administrative deviation and exception for the 210-seat restaurant, planned in the old gas station building and adjacent shop space at St. Johns and Ingleside avenues. We Love Avondale leaders

are not altogether pleased with the downsized plans. Group leaders have been adamant that the restaurant's original plans were too intense for the already parking- and safety-stressed neighborhood. The new plans are an improvement, they say, but not enough of one. The number of seats and the amount of parking continue to be sticking points. "Our position is we're not sure whether it's a good thing or not yet," said We Love Avondale founder, Tommy Donahoo. "There is still debate going on — they have scaled back their size, but 235+ seats is still intense. That still has to get an exception under the code. We're not going to give in on that." As the Historic District's commercial corridors begin to reach a "tipping point" with parking and related issues, Donahoo said city ordinances must be respected. "We are continuing to work with the applicant — our position still

remains that the size and scale needs to be a fit and the community feels strongly that [Mellow Mushroom] needs to follow local ordinance and code — in this environment, meeting code is extremely important." Mellow Mushroom spokesperson, Simon Keymer of Keymer Inc., said restaurant owner John Valentino and the development team continue to meet with We Love Avondale and Riverside Avondale Preservation. "As you can see, we have gone a long way to being responsive to the neighborhood," Keymer explained. "We hope that this is recognized by all of those involved and we can continue to work together, as neighbors, to resolve any outstanding issues." Mellow Mushroom shared details of the proposed restaurant changes on its website, igetmellow.com, in late August. Keymer explained the design changes in an email:

- We will not pursue our original plan for adaptive reuse of the gas station, and, at this stage, have agreed to demolish it and build a new building on the street with a brand new parking lot behind it;
- The new building will significantly reduce our originally proposed outdoor dining and large landscaped open space, in order to accommodate on-site parking;
- After agreeing to the above changes, Mellow proposed outdoor dining on the second floor of the new building to compensate for lost outdoor dining; Mellow recently agreed to abandon plans for a second story outside dining area, after additional discussions;
- We have reduced seats from an originally conceived 250 to 210;
- Mellow originally proposed to maximize parking by removing a

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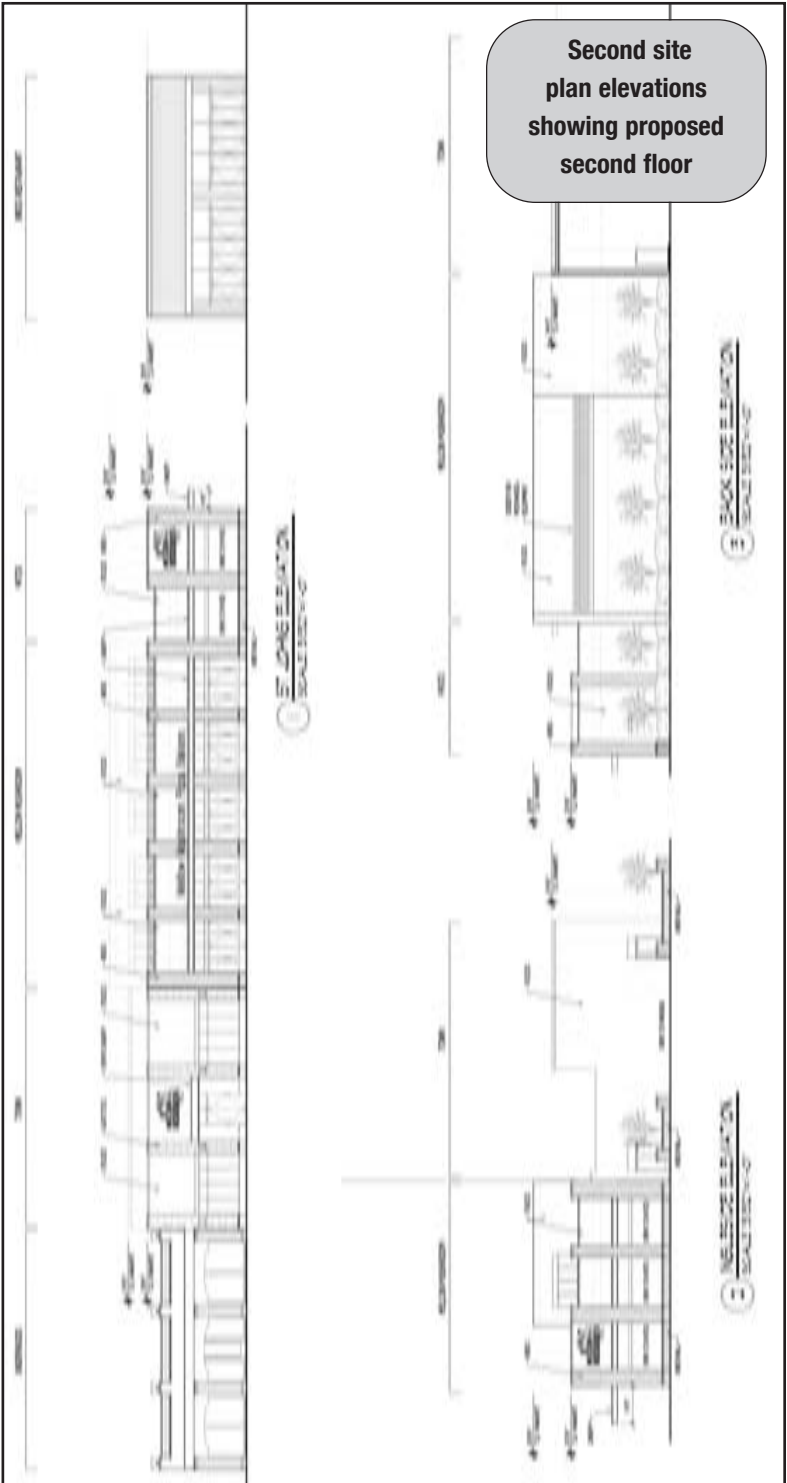
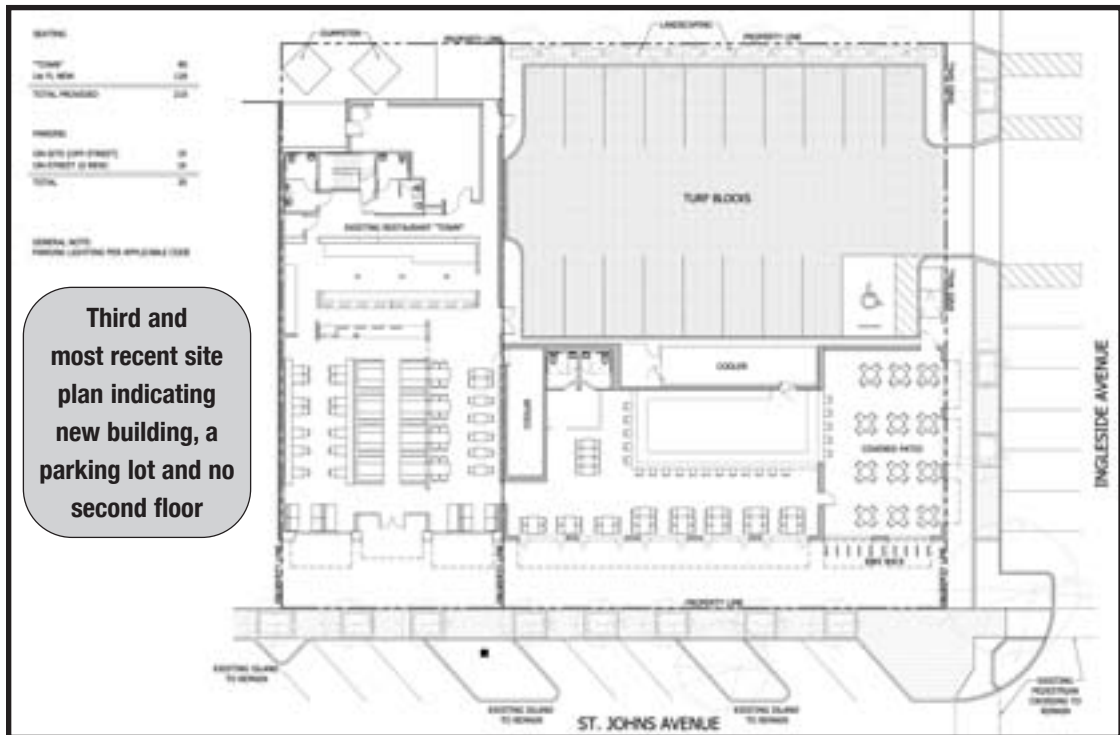
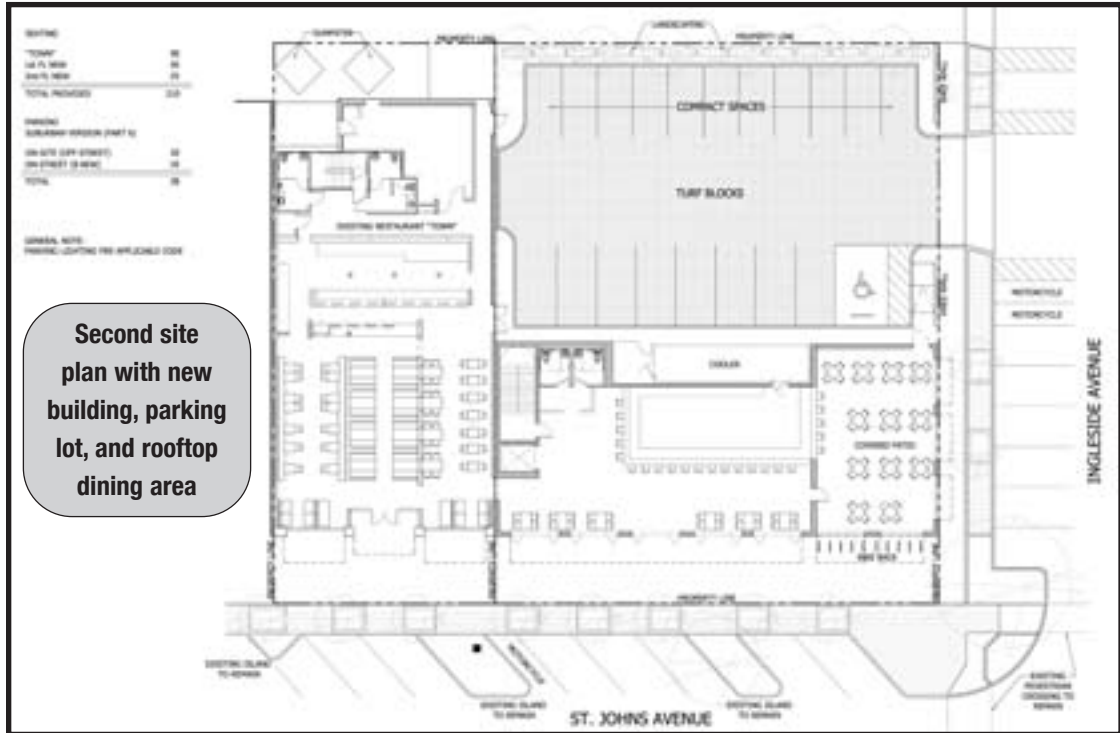
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► landscape island on St. Johns Avenue and relocating a tree; Mellow has agreed to restore the parking island, despite loss of parking, at neighbors' request;

• Mellow originally proposed "soft" covered outdoor dining at the corner of St. Johns and Ingleside; Mellow has agreed to constrict "hard" covered outdoor dining at the corner at neighbors' request.

Keymer also addressed community requests for certain operational changes. He said some of the restrictions suggested by We Love Avondale and RAP include : no music or television sound played in the outside area, including the patio, after 9 p.m.; closing at midnight; no outside live music; no uses allowed in the parking lot area except parking

and deliveries between the hours of 9 a.m. and

5 p.m.; and security should be provided to prevent nuisance behavior on Friday and Saturday evenings.

"We are concerned about 'fairness' here — Artificially restricting Mellow's ability to compete for customers with other local restaurants, sets a dangerous precedent for the neighborhood," Keymer said. He added Mellow Mushroom also agreed to provide full food service during all times when alcohol is served and would not have live amplified music after midnight. "Restaurants should compete on an equal footing based around food quality, value-for-money and service. Most people understand that."



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Mobility fee numbers don't add up for moratorium extension

Deadline one month away

BY STEVE DiMATTIA
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

The deadline for the year long moratorium on the 2030 Mobility Plan fee is October 10, 2012 and to date the figures would not justify an extension, according to many – but not all – involved on both sides of the issue.

“We don’t have any intent at this time to lobby for an extension of the waiver,” said Curtis Hart, Government Affairs Chairman for the Northeast Florida Builders Association and a member of the Mobility Plan Task Force. “The question is: Did the fee waiver work to stimulate development? And the answer seems to be, ‘no,’ based on the data we have so far. We may get a big push of applicants in September and change our minds. But right now, it doesn’t look like it.”

However, not all builders agree: At press time, Tony Sleiman, CEO/President of Sleiman builders, indicated that he does intend to push for an extension of the moratorium.

“I will lobby for an extension. It’s important that we get it done. People need to get their heads out of the sand and let’s figure out a way to create jobs and income for the city. Would you build, say for example, a \$6 million building that created both construction and permanent jobs that would bring in \$100,000 a year in real estate taxes plus sales and revenue tax for 50 years. Or would you want to charge an \$180,000

fair share and it not get built. Which is the better option?”

Sleiman cited L.A. Fitness on Atlantic and Kernan boulevards, one of about 19 developments approved for a waiver that moved ahead for development, as one example.

Many groups advocating for an end to the moratorium feel that, regardless of some specific examples, the overall numbers do not warrant an extension. Representing one such group are Doug Skiles from Envision Design Engineering in San Marco, Ennis Davis from Metro Jacksonville and a Mobility Plan Task Force member, mortgage banker and Fairfax resident Mike Field, and Janet Stanko and Linda Bremer, both local Sierra Club committee members.

“The numbers do not seem to support the claim that the moratorium stimulated growth. But there’s still time left and we want to make sure that we get word out to the public about what is at stake,” said Skiles.

What is at stake, according to the group, is a way to pay for new capital improvements that is fair to developers, does not burden taxpayers and provides incentives for redevelopment in the city core, where the infrastructure already exists to support growth. The Mobility Plan integrates land development with transportation planning and has a tiered fee system that funnels a percentage of money from the developments in a particular zone of the city back into the same zone.

“This is not a tax, it is an impact fee that affects the developers who are impacting an area,” noted Davis during a recent appearance on WJCT’s First Coast Connect that he shared with Field. “We [general taxpayers] are paying the tax right now.” He and Field also noted that developers helped to create the Mobility Plan and supported the fee at the time.

It was enacted in 2011 to replace the concurrency or “fair share” system, but the moratorium (Ordinance 2011-617)

was placed on its fees soon after in order to help stimulate growth.

Under the moratorium, all mobility fees are waived, but the developer still must submit an application to the planning department and sign the waiver. The mobility fee is calculated and then the developer determines whether to proceed with a permit.

Laurie Kattreh, a transportation specialist in the planning department who oversees the Mobility Plan, and Mike Field provided data that indicates the moratorium has not had the desired effect.

Of 104 mobility fee applications equaling just over \$14 million, developers chose to move forward on only 19 waivers (18 percent) as of August for a total of just over \$2 million. Zone 7, which includes Riverside/Avondale/Ortega/Murray Hill, comprised just over \$2 million of the total, waiving \$396,472 for construction of a 7-Eleven, CarMax, Blanding Blvd. Medical Office and Waffle House on Roosevelt. Zone 8, which includes San Marco and much of the Southside, comprised just over \$1 million of the total, waiving \$229,567 for a CenterState Bank and Medtronic Surgical Facility Expansion. [Note: Mike Herzberg, Director of Development for Sleiman, pointed out that the L.A. Fitness project, and perhaps others, are not on the city’s mobility fee list for reasons unknown at press time.]

In comparison, \$3.7 million was collected under concurrency last year on 11 projects, according to Field.

Curtis Hart speculated developments were not moving forward because funding was not available. “That’s one of the things we need to track. But it certainly wasn’t because the mobility fee wasn’t saving them enough; there’s a lot of money involved.” Normally between 2 to 3 percent, said Field.

“Had I seen 50 percent of projects move forward then I would conclude the moratorium worked. If lowering the fee to zero didn’t get them to build, then

there are deeper funding issues,” Hart said.

Field, the mortgage banker, agreed: “If you are scrounging in your couch cushions to fund that final 2 to 3 percent of your project, then you didn’t have a financially viable project to begin with.”

Hart also pointed out that the city has not granted waivers for single-family subdivisions and estimated that “destroyed about 50 percent of probable waivers. You have to build the lots first so they are ready for homes, which do get the waiver. If you can build now, then when the market does turn, the subdivisions will be ready.”

Moving forward, Hart plans to look into having the subdivision stipulation reversed and each side will keep a close eye on the data. Those in favor of ending the moratorium are encouraging people to contact the city council.

Davis also plans a series of articles on Metro Jacksonville describing how different zones will benefit from mobility fees, and Riverside resident Linda Bremer said the group has joined forces with the health community, bicyclist and others who have a vested interest in seeing the moratorium ended.

“The question is: Do we want smart growth that is paid for by smart development and leads to smart business; development that is paid for by the developer and not the taxpayer?” said Bremer.

Read the Mobility Plan:
<http://www.coj.net/departments/planning-and-development/community-planning-division/transportation-planning/mobility-plan.aspx>



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Labor Day: Neighborhood a historic job center

BY SUSANNA P. BARTON
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

September is time to celebrate fall and get back into summer mode with the long Labor Day weekend. On the first Monday of September, residents show their appreciation for their jobs and life's daily grind by stepping away from them — perhaps with a getaway to the beach or an excursion on the St. Johns River.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor, Labor Day "constitutes a yearly national tribute to the contributions workers have made to the strength, prosperity and well being of our country." And in the Historic District, we applaud employers and workers who have been making the neighborhoods strong, prosperous and in good standing since the early 1900s.

Some of the biggest job centers over the years have been the neighborhood hospitals and medical offices. St. Vincent's HealthCare, founded in 1916 when the Daughters of Charity took over DeSoto Sanatorium on 5th and Boulevard streets, was one of the first hospitals in Jacksonville and established a School of Nursing in 1919. The 42-bed St. Vincent's Hospital later moved to Riverside in 1928 — launching the hospital system's presence in the neighborhood with its \$1 million, 200-bed hospital on the St. Johns River.

Thousands of nurses, medical specialists, doctors and hospital administrators have been employed by St. Vincent's since its early-1900s founding. Today, St. Vincent's operates two area hospitals — St. Vincent's Riverside and St. Vincent's Southside (the former St. Luke's hospital) and employs about 750 full-time equivalents with a \$325 million payroll, according to marketing director, David Meyers. The hospital also is creating more than 700 construction jobs with the development of

St. Vincent's first Clay County hospital. The economic impact to the Clay County community is roughly \$50 million to \$70 million, he said. The Clay County hospital is scheduled to open in October 2013.

Other big job creators in the Riverside Avondale community over the years include finance and insurance companies like Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, Independent Life Insurance and Fidelity, as well as many of the state's prominent banks. In particular First Guaranty Bank, which reopened earlier this year as CenterBank, has a rich neighborhood history providing capital local businesses needed to expand — creating additional job opportunities for local residents.

A celebration of the nation and neighborhood's laborers would not be complete without a shout out to those who employ them. And at the heart of this group are the local shop, restaurant and business owners who have job creators for decades.

A look at early photos from these neighborhood commercial corridors shows healthy, thriving businesses that provided many people with opportunities for employment. That trend continues today. Over the summer, Black Sheep restaurant group announced plans to hire more than 60 people for its new 5 Points restaurant. The new restaurant openings in the Park & King street area — including Lola's, Pele's Wood Fire and the planned Goozlepipe & GutterWorks, also are providing important new job options for local residents.

For most people, Labor Day is a time to relax and enjoy the fruits of labor. But the holiday also is a time to remember all the business owners, professionals and companies in the neighborhood who are committed to providing neighborhood goods and services. And there's no better way to say thanks than by buying local.

STUDY from page 1



putting their heads together to develop a scope that covers a wider area than just the Shoppes of Avondale," Love said. "We want to get a product that covers more people and neighborhoods. They are ultimately going to look at traffic flow, parking and the degree of mixed-use development."

RAP's transportation committee, chaired by Kay Ehas, is preparing the scope. They have had only one meeting, two weeks ago, according to Ehas.

"At this point, we are looking only at Avondale and Park and King streets to get started," Ehas said. "There's a long term and a short term approach to addressing the area's issues. In the initial meeting, we decided to focus on parking, but ultimately we want to look longer term at zoning and mobility. We'd like to begin by looking at parking supply and demand, current and future. Based on that information, we'll decide where to go from there."

The committee is composed, in part, of local residents, at least two business owners — Allan DeVault of Black Sheep Restaurant Group and Andy Zarka of European Street — and at least one person with a transportation planning background, Bill Shad. Not all were present at the first meeting, but the group did invite Susan Fraser, a trans-

portation/transit planning consultant and former Clay County planning director, to offer suggestions about how to proceed with a scope and ultimate study.

"The RAP committee has ideas, but they are not professional transportation planners," said Fraser, a 27-year Avondale resident and RAP member. "My role was to help them establish how to professionally measure a good mixed-use parking environment... The best solutions come from matching your true long and short-term revenue streams with what you want. There's no one-size-fits-all magic bullet."

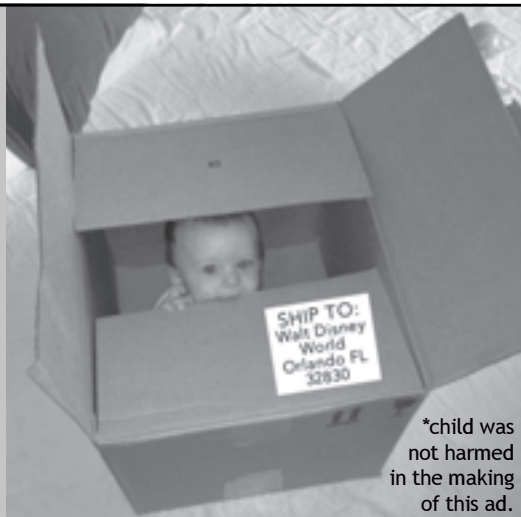
Ehas said that the committee wanted to get the scope to Burney so that he can make a decision within this fiscal year, which ends September 30. She anticipates having at least one more committee meeting before then.

How the Ghyabi Shoppes of Avondale scope and the RAP scope will impact one another is still unclear, but Ehas pointed out that since Ghyabi has an open-ended consulting contract with the city, they would likely conduct any study.

"There are solutions out there, but it's hard to just implement them without a formal study," Ehas said.

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Month's Supply of Inventory

The inventory of homes for sale at the end of a given month, divided by the average monthly pending sales from the last 12 months.

*Source: Northeast FL Association of Realtors

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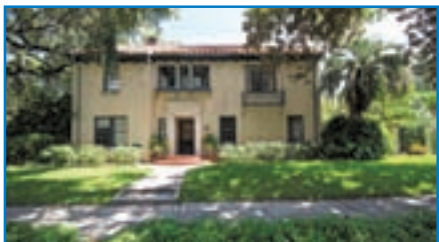
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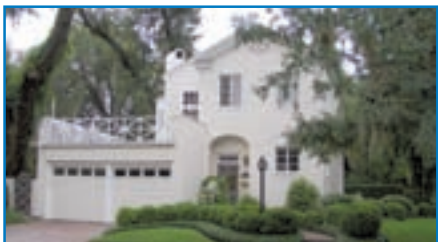
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Running Uphill

Local Real Estate market exhibits slow but steady improvements

BY LAURA JANE PITTMAN
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

July statistics released by the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors (NEFAR) showed some encouraging numbers. Pending sales across the First Coast were up more than 32 percent from this time last year, and the inventory of homes for sale has dropped 30 percent in a year-to-year comparison.

The median sales prices in Regions 1 and 3, which encompass our historic neighborhoods, leveled out at the 2008 price mark about a year ago and have continued to slowly increase. Lender-owned properties currently account for 39 percent of the market, but that is a drastic improvement from the 60 percent it was at one time. And it's a welcome relief, say area professionals, to see the inventory of homes for sale dropping below a six-month supply. Six months is considered a balanced market.

"Prices have been going up consistently, and we have been seeing positive growth across the board. Slow and steady is a good thing – we don't want drastic spikes because that is what got us into trouble in the first place," explained Melanie Green, communication director for NEFAR. "It's a supply and demand issue – if there are fewer homes, people want them more."

Realtors from both sides of the St. Johns report that offices are busy. They have also noticed an increase in multiple offers on homes, which is a different scenario from what buyers have come to expect in recent years. Taft Alexander of the Avondale-Ortega office of Watson Realty had one recent listing that received four offers after having 16 showings in two days – something that was unheard of this time last year.

"It's as if the floodgates opened, and after years of doom and gloom,

we are seeing publications like the Wall Street Journal putting out positive stories," said Alexander, who had 11 homes under contract this spring.

"People who have been on the fence for a while are more motivated to buy because interest rates are phenomenally low and the market has likely bottomed out," said Wade Griffin, a realtor with the historic district office of Coldwell Banker Vanguard Realty. Griffin has sold three homes this year that received multiple offers.

The multi-family market is also experiencing positive growth. Ortega Landing just closed on the sale of a penthouse unit and expects to have more sales before the end of the year.

"We have a good response of serious inquiries lately," said Warren Hickernell, general manager of the Marina & Homes at Ortega Landing. "For example, we are seeing people of retirement age who are thinking about downsizing and finally think

they have a chance of selling their existing homes."

Barbara Swindell, broker-owner of San Marco-based RiverPoint Real Estate, has also seen a traffic increase and noted that her firm has seen an uptick in the number of sales more than significant changes in prices.

"I have been in the business for 32 years, and our general area usually recovers quicker than other areas," she said. "When I started, interest rates were 6.5 percent. I can't imagine that they will be any less than they are right now."

They may not get much lower, but area lenders are predicting that favorable rates are here to stay, at least for a while.

"All indicators, including 10-year treasury notes, point to an extended period of low rates, which will be friendly toward buying or refinancing," said Gil Pomar, market president at CenterState Bank of Florida.

"All indicators, including 10-year treasury notes, point to an extended period of low rates, which will be friendly toward buying or refinancing. It is encouraging that the market is changing. We are seeing more second mortgages, a bit more leniency toward credit scores, and there are good products available with lesser down payment..."

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Market president, CenterState Bank of Florida

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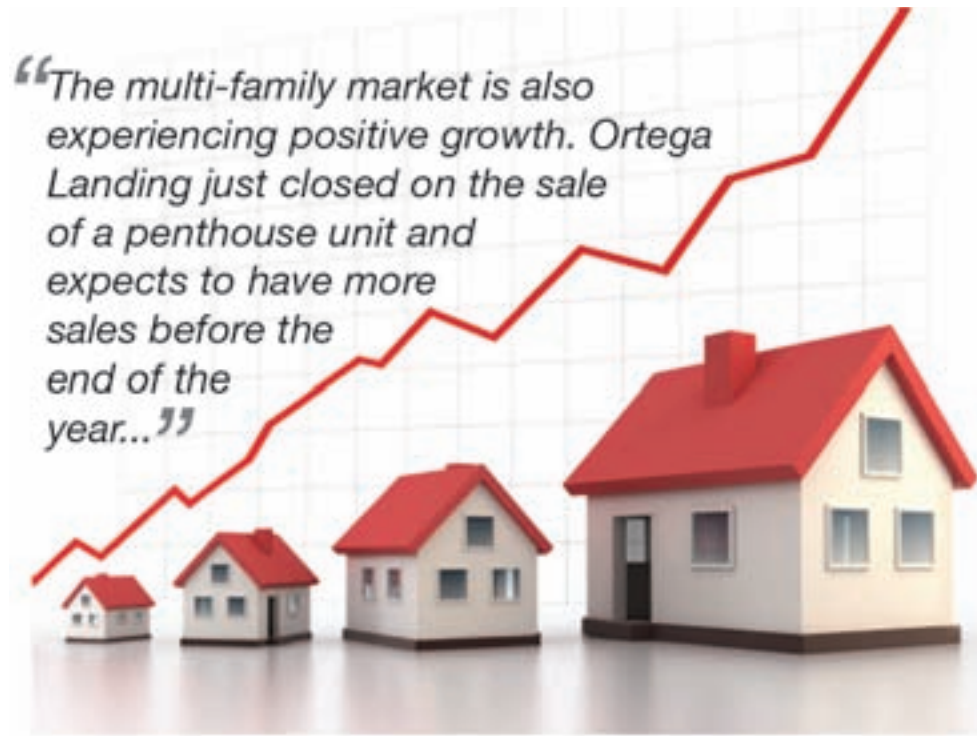
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► “It is encouraging that the market is changing. We are seeing more second mortgages, a bit more leniency toward credit scores, and there are good products available with lesser down payment.”

According to the numbers, our historic neighborhoods seem to have fared better overall and may be recovering more quickly than many other places in Northeast Florida. Area professionals’ opinions on this vary. Some speculate that more homeowners may have been able to wait out the market, thus avoiding more foreclosures and dramatically lowered selling prices. Others point to the character and general appeal of the city’s more historic areas and their proximity to downtown and other business hubs.

“The variety of our neighborhoods draws people in, as our demographics are broader than in many of the newer suburbs,” said Selby Kaiser, one of the owners of Legends of Real Estate. “Older people like to hear children playing, and vice versa. Also, rising gas prices are encouraging people to look for homes closer in.”

As for what is selling best, the market is strongest at the moment in sell-

er-owned property, said Janie Boyd of Avondale-based Janie Boyd & Associates, versus short sales and foreclosures, which typically involve a more complicated and longer buying process.

“People are snapping up seller-owned property right and left because the process of buying these is easier,” said Boyd. “Houses under \$300,000 are selling very quickly.”

Kaiser has seen homes under \$200,000 doing well, while Griffin notes that two to three-bedroom homes are in short supply and the high-end market of \$500,000 to more than \$1 million is beginning to take off. Investors are also beginning to re-emerge as the market stabilizes, and Alexander predicts that the near future will see an increase in property flipping.

Anita Vining, longtime local realtor and sales leader with Prudential Network Realty, said riverfront homes are going quickly in the historic markets flanking Downtown Jacksonville.

“The choices have narrowed as the properties have been sold,” Vining said. “Avondale’s historic Richmond Street now offers only one waterfront

home for sale, with a second currently under contract.”

Despite positive news, professionals in the industry are still cautious and not allowing themselves to get too excited. Appraisals are still coming in low, said Pomar, which will continue to hinder sales. Recent increases in sales could simply be an indication that sellers are more accepting of lower prices, said Boyd. And the upcoming election is making people nervous, said Kaiser.

“People are often hesitant to make a decision when they do not know what will happen in the future,” said Kaiser. “We are hopeful that after the election, November and December will be bang-up months

for the real estate industry.”

As for the occasional doom and gloom story, such as the rumor of a “shadow inventory” of lender-mediated properties (inventory that has been held back purposely and not put on the market), Green is not overly concerned.

“We have been hearing about shadow inventory for three years, and so far, we have seen no evidence of it,” she said. “It’s an idea that people have latched on to that will probably not be significant even if there are some properties still out there. The market is now to a point that it should be able to absorb them.”

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LABOR of Love

Residents share ideas for
September holiday travel

BY BETH MIXSON
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

For many of us, Labor Day offers one more marvelous chance to squeeze in another summer trip filled with fun and adventure.

The Mosley / Scherer family enjoys exploring Florida on weekend get-aways. This San Marco family has explored Florida from coast to coast. "Being a native of Florida, I realized how beautiful Florida is," explained Stacy Moseley, "When we moved back here, my hope was to do a Florida trip each year."

A favorite trip when their children, Cole now age 15, and 12-year-old Tai Tai, were in elementary and preschool, was to visit the Wakulla Springs Lodge in the Edward Ball Wakulla Springs State Park near Tallahassee.

(www.WakullaSpringsLodge.com.)

"A great activity is to ride bikes with your kids to St. Marks and back on the rails to trails pathway. Then too, we saw all kinds of wildlife on the little hiking trails, and in the narrated glass bottom boat tour," exclaimed Moseley.

For families with preteens and teens, Moseley recommends visiting the Everglades or Ybor City in Tampa. In the Everglades, they stayed at the Rod and Gun Club and took a private tour of the backwaters. (www.evergladesrodandgun.com.) "It was fascinating – you learn about biology, earth science and the social history of the Everglades," she said. In Ybor City, the family explored the area with a tour guide, Lonnie Herman.

(lonnie@YborWalkingTours.com.)

"His tour had something for everyone," she said. "For the adults, it was about

the dream of building a utopian community and for the kids, it was the tales of gambling and the Mafia."

Ortega Forest residents Lisa and David Williams also enjoyed the beauty of Wakulla, timing their visit to see the monarch butterfly migration. "It wasn't the peak weekend but we saw plenty!" Williams said. This nature loving couple have kayaked and hiked in Merritt Island National Wildlife Refuge, camped at Big Cypress National Preserve, and went on a sea turtle walk in Sebastian Inlet State Park. "We find a cheap hotel and use the wonderful park services," she explains. High on their to-do list is to kayak in the bioluminescence waters found at the waters near Merritt Island.

Avondale resident Vicky Watkins visits state parks in Florida and Georgia to recharge. "Some of my happiest childhood memories include cross county camping trips. I raised my children backpacking, canoeing, hiking, and camping, with favorite destinations being Cohutta and Pisgah Wilderness areas in northeast Georgia and North Carolina. My favorites are Mistletoe State Park in Georgia, Oconee State Park in South Carolina and Cashiers, Black Rock Mountain State Park in northeast Georgia," Watkins said. "There are many other beautiful parks in the southeast, but my favorites are those with fewer visitors. I returned from Oconee State Park where we put in eight hours on various trails and never encountered a single person!"

Robin and Tom Virtue and their two children, Grant age 17 and Kara age 15 found Hammock Beach Resort in Palm Coast offers something for everyone.

"It was an oasis. The beach was pristine and not crowded," said Virtue, an Ortega Forest resident. The resort has several award-winning golf courses, an adult pool and a family pool that is similar to a water park, a spa, a fitness center, a putting course, bikes and several restaurants "We also ate at some of the local restaurants. JT's Seafood Shack was great," added Virtue. It was



an easy drive to St. Augustine where the family chartered a deep sea fishing boat with great success.

Avondale couple Jaime and Sonya Hoener love heading up the road to Charleston. Sonya Hoener said, "Charleston is filled with lots of fun, little places to stay. Both the Francis Marion and Mill House are wonderful; even the Hampton Inn is historic. It's easy to walk around to visit the shops, art galleries and historic sites. We love looking at the great old homes on the Battery. The food is phenomenal!" Favorite restaurants include Slightly North of Broad, Hominy Grill and Fleet Landing, a great outdoor seafood restaurant.

Avondale resident Cheryl Sapora recommends Winter Park "where shopping is an Olympic sport". She suggests taking the train to Winter Park as a fun, stress-free way to travel. Another fun and relaxing activity is the one-hour boat tour of the lakes offered by Scenic Boat Tour. (www.scenicboat-tours.com.) Afterwards, enjoy lunch at Cheryl's favorite restaurant, the Briarpatch.

Above: Vicky Watkins enjoyed hiking the Foothills Trail in Oconee State Park, SC
Below: Kara and Grant Virtue are pleased with the result of their fishing charter off of St. Augustine



Joe, Tai Tai and Cole Scherer and Stacy Moseley pause during their hike through Corkscrew Swamp Sanctuary.

Whether you love nature, shopping or history, there's plenty to do just a short drive away. Pack your bags and get ready to recharge your batteries with one more summer fling this Labor Day!

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Kuder takes helm of Ray Ware



Jason W. Kuder has been promoted to president of Ray Ware Hardware, a local retail institution that has been operating on Herchel Avenue since 1939. Kenneth Kuder, the former president was the third-generation owner and operator of the business who developed the business and showroom.

Jason Kuder has been working with Ray Ware for five years. A Furman University graduate, Kuder carries on his family legacy now as the fourth-generation president of the neighborhood business.

Ray Ware specializes in residential decorative hardware, plumbing products and other commercial construction items. For more information about the store, visit www.rayware.com.

Busey joins Riverkeeper

Resident Jennie Busey has been named education director of the St. Johns Riverkeeper organization. In her new role, Busey is responsible for developing river-related educational materials, resources and activities for educators, schools and youth organizations.

Busey began working for the Riverkeeper in late June. She is currently pursuing partnerships with schools and organizations within the watershed — an important mission for the river's future.

"We teach children that their behavior can have positive and negative effects on the people around them," Busey said. "Whether their connection to the river is fishing or enjoying the local parks, they

need to know that their everyday behavior also can have positive and negative effects on their river. I have found that children are excited to be advocates for their river and are eager to adopt river-friendly lifestyle practices to keep the St. Johns healthy for local wildlife and themselves."

Most recently, Busey helped establish programing for Ortega-based St. Mark's Episcopal Day School called "Water, Water Everywhere, or Is It? A Global Collaboration."

Busey's goal is to get the St. Johns River into every classroom.

"Our river presents such a unique and accessible learning environment, and I want to help families and youth of all ages take advantage of this opportunity to experience and learn about the St. Johns."



Suslak attends real estate conference

As part of her three-year appointed leadership as Director of Florida Realtors, Jacksonville real estate professional Sally Suslak attended the Florida Realtors 96th Annual Convention & Trade Expo in Orlando last month.

Suslak is broker and owner of Traditions Realty in Riverside. She is in her second year of her three-



year commitment to the Realtors organization.

Participants discussed key issues and attended educational seminars and chose from more than 30 education sessions. Novelist and television producer, Barbara Corcoran spoke during a general session and attendees browsed more than 175 industry-related booths.

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New path for Open Road

Holt Tucker is the new owner of Open Road Bicycles of Avondale. Tucker said he has known the Open Road family since he was 13 — joining the store's mountain bike racing team and later joining the company as a bicycle mechanic.

Tucker said he is grateful to have learned the ropes from Scott Summey, owner of Open Road's San Marco shop.

"Ever since that first day, Scott Summey trained me, molded me, and taught me to be best I can be," Tucker explained. "It has been a goal of mine to have my very own Open Road to call my own." On June 1, Tucker acquired the Avondale Open Road Bicycles shop.

"Before taking ownership, I needed to learn the ins and outs of actually running a



business. I was so fortunate to have Scott Summey and Scott Gross teach me how to be a successful businessman and how to run a business, I will never be able to thank them enough for what they have done and taught me. I am so excited to be a part of the Avondale community and look forward to being here for many years to come."

New education director for Cummer

The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens hires Lynn Norris as the museum's new director of education. Norris has more than 20 years of museum professional experience in education and programs.

In her new role, Norris is responsible for developing, implementing, managing and lead-

ing a comprehensive education program that advances the museum's mission, while taking a holistic and multi-disciplinary approach to engaging a diverse audience. One of her goals is to integrate The Gardens and St. Johns River into the education program and wants to explore and get to know new audiences.

Merchant reaches a milestone

Hooshang Oriental Rug Gallery, which imports fine, handmade oriental rugs from every weaving center of the world, has been a part of the Avondale business community for 35 years, the longest running business in the Shoppes.

Hooshang Harvesf, Ph.D. continues to live and work in his favorite community, one that welcomed his presence 35 years ago. When asked about the milestone and celebration of an anniversary Harvesf said, "I love it, it's like the first day. I truly love the neighborhood and I love the people."

Hooshang Oriental Rug Gallery is located at 3571 St. Johns Ave. in the historic Shoppes of Avondale.



Jazzercise moves into 25th year

Jazzercise owner Donette Snyder is celebrating 25 years of group fitness at the company's Blanding Boulevard location with special events and fundraisers.

A Grand Finale event is planned toward the end of the year and a special fundraising event for The Donna Foundation is upcoming.

The Blanding Boulevard Jazzercise, the largest Jazzercise franchise in the city with more than 275 members, started out on the right foot with original owners, Kathy Para and a few years later with Leslie Danson. The studio now features 14 instructors. Snyder has been teaching classes for more than 20 years and has owned the Blanding Jazzercise location for the past seven years.

"I had great role models in Kathy and Leslie — when you have these women ahead of you, you want to continue the legacy," Snyder said. "We feel very committed."

As part of the anniversary celebration, Snyder



also has been renovating the facility and is the final steps of construction. The 5,000-square-foot building features a renovated 3,000-square-foot dance area.

The Blanding Jazzercise offers 60-minute total body workouts every day of the week. Jazzercise — a fusion of jazz dance, resistance training, Pilates, yoga and kickboxing — combines dance-based cardio with strength training and stretching. The classes are choreographed to current music.

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ART & WINEFEST A SUCCESSFUL PAIRING

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, Local Union 177, hosted a fundraiser last month for Wolfson Children's Hospital. The event, Art & Winefest 2012, was held at the Hyatt Regency Riverfront Ballroom in late-July. Culinary representatives from many local restaurants were on hand to share their creations. Guests sampled wines from around the world and wandered through an art exhibition by 25 local artists.

THE WOMEN'S CENTER CELEBRATES MILESTONES

Patrons and proud supporters of the Women's Center of Jacksonville celebrated 17 years of improving the lives of women. The evening was dedicated to the organization and also to the 92nd anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, giving women the right to vote. The Women's Center is the only community-based resource center of its kind in Jacksonville. Its mission is to support and empower women and to nurture mind, body, and spirit.



JCCI – the Jacksonville Community Council Inc. Summer Stewards reception on Thursday, August 9, gathered for cocktail receptions twice a year, for thought-provoking presentations by distinguished guest speakers, and this evening's passion for the Jaguars and Jacksonville on the eve of the season's start. The event, hosted by JCCI President IV and Lee & Clanzenetta "Mickee" Brown, was highlighted by a Q&A with Khan, new team president, Mark Lampin.

SHIRCLIFF SOCIETY REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

The newly formed Shircliff Society, a young professional group, met for cocktail receptions last month at Aloft Hotel on Jacksonville's Southside. The event included networking sessions, drinks and appetizers. The society meets monthly and is named after local resident and St. Vincent's supporter, Robert "Bob" T. Shircliff. The 50+ member group is planning additional events.



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Molly Wahl, Shahid Khan and Michelle Simkulet



Renee Thompson, Bill Mason and John Thompson



Helen Lane, Renee Thompson and Patti O'Brien



Nathaniel Herring, Jennifer Mansfield and Shareen Ismail



Clanzenetta Brown, Shahid Khan and Jacquelyn Lowe

..., welcomed guest speaker Shahid Khan to the at the Florida Yacht Club. JCCI's Stewards ht-provoking, high-level discussions and presen- ent was no different. Khan shared his vision and of the team's preseason opening win, and the oy fellow Stewards and Ortega resident JF Bryan ghlighted by a spirited exchange during the ng, members and guests.

HTS

essionals s and con- Southside. appetiz- ngtime Shircliff. s this fall.



Members Tammy Kerwin, Diane Bailey, Patti Frykberg, Diana Decker, Sister Utsey, Anna Dooley, Jeanie Tepas, Bobbie Giddings, Jamie Rood and Vickie Robinson of the TraumaOne Heroes Council stand with the 2012 GMC Yukon purchased and outfitted for TraumaOne at Shands Jacksonville with funds raised by the 2012 gala.

NIGHT FOR HEROES RAISES BIG DOLLARS FOR TRAUMAONE

More than 500 guests attended A Night for Heroes 2012 at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront earlier this year. Thanks to sponsors, ticket sales, donations and a silent auction, the fifth annual black-tie fundraising gala raised more than \$83,000 for TraumaOne at Shands Jacksonville, the region's only adult and pediatric Level I trauma center. Donations were used to purchase and outfit a new vehicle. This will allow TraumaOne to haul equipment and resources to the more than 30 injury prevention and outreach presentations it makes each year in the Greater Jacksonville community to schools such as Darnell-Cookman Middle/High School, Julington Creek Elementary and John E. Ford K-8 School. Remaining donations were used to purchase a pediatric patient simulator and educational materials for awareness campaigns about kids injury prevention, fall prevention in the elderly, and youth anti-bullying.



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Chabot puts "gardens" in Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens

Ortega Forest resident promotes environmentally sustainable practices

BY STEVE DiMATTIA
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Bob Chabot is not from Jacksonville, but by any measure the Ortega Forest resident has blossomed here. And while he is not a Floridian, he has become quite friendly with the natives – both human and vegetative.

It is Chabot who puts the “Gardens” in Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens. As director of horticulture and facilities since 2005, he oversees the zoo’s varied plant life and has a hand in designing all of the exhibits.

“I had the good fortune of coming to Jacksonville just as the zoo was really making a commitment to gardens and more naturalistic exhibits,” said Chabot, who is originally from Attleboro, Massachusetts, just outside of Boston. “My first few years we were doing more gardens than animal exhibits.”

Chabot’s journey south to head up what would become one of the premier zoo gardens in the country was not necessarily direct. Nor was the position of “zoo horticulturist” a job description that had been well defined.

“There isn’t really much out there to prepare someone for zoo horticulture, but once I got involved with it I couldn’t see myself working in an office,” said Chabot, 50.



The seeds for his career were sown when he took a summer job installing indoor tropical plant landscapes while a student at Boston University. What began as just a way to make some cash grew into a passion after installing a large, indoor rainforest at Boston’s Franklin Park Zoo. He eventually left school without a degree to become their curator of horticulture for 10 years. Providence Rhode Island parks service then recruited him to build a \$15 million botanical garden, which was going great until the Mayor was booted from office on racketeering charges and the project was cancelled.

“I decided that I wanted to get back to zoo horticulture,” Chabot said. “I hadn’t heard of Jacksonville before I took the job but it’s turned out to be amazing. Dennis Patte [the zoo’s former executive director] brought me in to implement this master plan that had been put together with all sorts of funding for just the garden side of the zoo.”

The vision from the start was to

fully integrate the gardens in a way that uniquely compliments and enhances the animal exhibits.

“Bob has done a great job of seamlessly weaving the gardens into the zoo,” said Tony Vecchio, executive director since 2009. “It just looks

and feels so natural, so right, that I think a lot of people don’t recognize that the reason they like the place so much and why it feels so good is because they’re walking around in a botanical garden that has animal exhibits in it. It’s just fantastic.”

While Vecchio pointed to Savannah Blooms – a unique grassland garden that serves as a visual and contextual invitation to Africa’s Giraffes – as his favorite example of how Chabot’s subtle touch can make a subconscious impression upon visitors, Chabot’s heart lies with the tranquilly exotic, \$2 million, 2.5-acre Asian Bamboo Garden.

“This is my favorite garden that I’ve ever been involved with in my whole career,” said Chabot, who is currently working with zoo colleagues and architects from the firm that designed Disney’s Animal Kingdom on an \$8 million expansion to open in 2014 featuring tigers and other Asian species. His choice fits his unassuming yet

focused personality.

“Part of why I’m successful is that I don’t drive myself crazy,” said Chabot, who has a yin-yang feel about him, a sort of Eastern peacefulness and patience balanced with the rock and roll vibe of a young Bruce Springsteen or Bob Dylan. “I just stay a little bit detached. Work hard to make it happen, watch it all and be aware, but stand back and appreciate it, too.”

There is much to appreciate. In addition to taking care of the gardens, Chabot and his creatively diverse team of 30 also design a new exhibit each spring. Last year’s \$500,000 “DinoAlive!” featured 20 life-like animatronics dinosaurs lurking amongst primitive plants along a misty 1,200-foot path (they are scheduled to return in 2013).

Currently, “Butterfly Hollow” exhibits more delicate creatures and reflects two things that are critical for Chabot: Environmentally sustainable practices and community partnerships. The \$65,000 exhibit makes extensive use of recycled and repurposed material, its ticket booth has a “green roof” made of plants and Chabot turned to students from Douglas Anderson School of the Arts for a soundtrack featuring ethereal music and “fairies” laughing playfully as they cavort with butterflies.

“Giving back to the community and developing partnerships is really important to me and to the zoo,” Chabot said. “Promoting environmentally

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► sustainable practices is a further extension of that.”

In that vein, Chabot began a “Green Team” at the zoo to promote such practices and is the president of Greenscape, a local non-profit committed to improving Jacksonville’s landscape by planting trees throughout the city. He is currently collaborating with St. Johns Riverkeeper to build a “living shoreline” along the Trout River and the Zoo, Greenscape, Riverkeeper, the city and citizens recently worked together to create the Lasalle Bioswale near San Marco’s library – Jacksonville’s first.

Chabot also makes extensive use of native and “Florida friendly” plants throughout the zoo and strongly advocates against the use of invasive species. He is vice president of the Association of Zoological Horticulture and even has a band called The Greens.

“I feel fortunate to have found this zoo and this city, which my family and I have come to love,” Chabot said. “It gives me pleasure to give back.”



By VICTORIA REGISTER-FREEMAN
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Maybe I’ve spent too much time in the Cummer gardens, but for over a decade, I have longed for a small pond.

I have never translated this longing into action for two reasons. First, pond acquisition felt aquatically greedy. After all, I have the St. Johns River 300 feet from my back door. Second, the project seemed an unnecessary expense. I live in a 100-year-old house, an architectural phenomenon that inhales discretionary money. There is almost always a sheet rock hemorrhage, a plumbing stoppage or a termite alert. No pond dollars ever seem to appear in the budget. Once I inquired about a small pond at a local garden store and the proprietor told me that labor and a liner would be \$260. And that did not include the pump, the plants or any fish.

Now, for a total outlay of \$26, I have the garden pond of my dreams. It is stocked with petite glittering goldfish and two tiny pots of something called hair fern.

How did this happen? It began at a Historic District garage sale. Riding home from a friend’s house I saw on the lawn, by the Gator hats and the stuffed Elmos, a jet black pond liner filled with 8 pumps and miles of plastic tubing. The total cost was \$10. The garage sale proprietor

(Water) Garden of Eden

guaranteed nothing.” It might leak,” he said unassuringly.

Once I got my bargain home, enthusiasm flagged. It occurred to me that if I had a pond, I would obviously have to create a large hole. With the ambient temperature in the 90’s, the idea of digging a hole was not appealing. In addition, the 8 pumps sat like fat Japanese beetles in the pond liner. I had no idea which ones, if any, worked.

Now fast-forward 48 hours from my initial purchase. Standing in my kitchen, a friend was telling me about buying a new house and about her significant other telling her she should put in a pond. After all, he had a pond. The idea light blub blinked on. The man she was speaking of was sitting on my porch. As Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung might say, “Amazing synchronicity.”

When I approached the pond veteran with my best damsel in distress mannerism, he agreed to be of knightly service. In a matter of moments, he figured out which of the eight pumps worked (only one) and he instructed me on how to ring my pond with stones in QuikCrete to give it the look of a natural ecosystem. Then he and my friend waved goodbye.

So now I had a pump that worked, but there was still the non-existent hole and the 90-degree weather. Like breathing silk a Canadian



friend once called the weather when she spent her first summer in Florida. That evening a test dig revealed a cosmic boon. The dirt in the middle of the herb garden—the preferred pond site — was pure beach sand. No real surprise since the entire yard is river bottom sand dredged from the channel deepening in the 1930s.

Two hours later the pond was in place. An old copper statue was lowered into it and the pump was turned on. It worked for two minutes. Desperation led me to the use of an older pump and, because of my husband’s suggestion, reuse of the statue as a fountain.

Of course, I did not level the bottom of the pond hole, so the pond liner tilts. One good rainfall will wash the sparkling gold fish on to dry land. Who knows, maybe that will encourage them to recapitulate evolution— on a much reduced scale of course.



St. Vincent's green team sprouts

Words like reduce, reuse and recycle are some of the new non-medical buzzwords coming out of St. Vincent’s Riverside.

The hospital launched a new recycling program in the cafeterias of St. Catherine Laboure Manor, St. Vincent’s Riverside and St. Vincent’s Southside. The program sprouted in partnership with Stericycle, according to hospital officials.

Stericycle role is to provide educational sessions with each department to discuss the program, waste streams and container placement.

St. Vincent’s officials asked employees to participate and contribute to a healthier environment by sorting recyclables and placing them in the appropriate containers in the clinical units and cafeterias.

Members of the hospital’s new green team are: Edward Bateh, Charles Berberette, Eileen Davis, Julie Desser, Joan Drega, Jason Edgar, Greg George, Betty Gerard, Shawn Jeror, Leann John, Dusko Klipa, Dee McKrow, Tony Newman, Rich Norris, David Pritchett, Wanda Pink and Amy Svensson.

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Artists 'all strung out' for musical fundraiser

Local symphony supporters and artists are gearing up for the Jacksonville Symphony Guild's annual fundraiser, "All Strung Out." The Sep. 21 event will be held at the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts and will feature the painted violins from the guild's popular "Music for Your Eyes" project.

For the first time ever, a cello joins the lineup as an artist's canvas.

The artistically inspiring event has been one of the guild's most successful fundraising initiatives and this year promises to be no different. The Music for Your Eyes project invites artists from across Northeast Florida donate their

artistic expression to the cause, decorating or painting violins that are later purchased by symphony supporters. This year, Fleming Island artist Beth Haizlip will add new dimension to the offerings with a cello design.

Neighborhood violin artists include William Schmidt of Ortega, John Bunker of Ortega, Susan Britt Macon of Avondale, Mary Doppel of Avondale, Eileen Corse of Herschel Street's Corse Gallery, Ellen Diamond of Avondale and Myra Schick of San Marco.

The patron's unveiling for the event is 10 a.m. on Sep. 21. Money raised from the event supports the guild's Harmony Grants, which provide financial support for local teachers incorporating music into their classroom.

BUSINESS OF ART

Cultural council, Creative Capital Foundation offer artists workshops

The Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville in partnership with the Creative Capital Foundation will present two professional development workshops for artists in late September.

Applications to attend, however, are due Sep. 4 — so the groups encourage would-be attendees to consider the free public educational opportunities now.

A workshop called “Real Community Engagement” will be held at the Florida Times-Union Conference Room, 1 Riverside Avenue, on Sep. 29 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. This workshop is designed to help artists clarify their objectives and gain management skills needed to produce successful community engagement projects. Case studies from a range of disciplines are used to discuss grassroots fundraising, budgeting, negotiation, contracts, communicating

about work, working with non-arts partners, and more.

Organizers are planning a second workshop entitled "Funding Your Work," from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m. on Sep. 30. The class combines nuts-and-bolts strategies with a broad-based approach towards how to integrate fundraising into creative practice. Topics include developing fundraising materials; working with venues, donors and funders; building an individual donor base; and real cost budgeting.

Interested artists should complete the application located on the Cultural Council website: www.culturalcouncil.org by Sep. 4. Artists are eligible to apply for either one, or both. The Cultural Council is pleased to offer this workshop free of charge with support from the City of Jacksonville.

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BUSINESS PROFILE



Framing Establishment/Fairfax Gallery Spotlights Regional Abstract Art

Framing Establishment/Fairfax Gallery has served Riverside – Avondale – Ortega area for over 30 years. Jack Slaughter, owner is excited to introduce collections of emerging contemporary artists, highly collectable at reasonable prices. “The neighborhoods are full of young professionals, they live in traditional homes, but want contemporary clean design,” said Jack. “Our more seasoned buyers want a contemporary piece to give their traditional décor a pop. Art provides that contemporary twist.”

The Jacksonville art community has been making a name for itself lately. After being selected to procure art for several top local corporations and healthcare facilities, Framing Establishment/Fairfax Gallery has searched the area and discovered fantastic abstract artists in the region. “We have found artists in

Gainesville, Fernandina Beach, The Panhandle and, of course, the greater Jacksonville area,” said Jack. We encourage the community – especially those interested in contemporary art – to stop by the gallery to familiarize themselves with these emerging artists. Some of the names to look for include Casey Matthews, Susan Dennis Gordon, Ande Lister and Ellen Diamond. Many are familiar with Ellen's work, but will be surprised to see her contemporary abstracts.

The pieces displayed in the gallery incorporate a variety of mediums – oil, acrylic, watercolor and giclee. The prices run the gamut, with a range from \$300 to \$5,000. The gallery can also arrange commissioned pieces for clients who wish to customize a space, color, or subject.

In addition to an amazing art collection, the Framing Establishment/Fairfax Gallery has the

largest framing selection in Jacksonville. “We buy in bulk, our prices can not be beat!” said Jack. We do a huge business in custom mirrors for our clients, builders and designers. Our installers are professional and free within the neighborhood.

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Can two left feet make a right?

Find out when I put my (questionable) dance skills to the test to raise money for Special Olympics

BY KERRY SPECKMAN

I have to admit: When I was asked to participate in Jacksonville’s Dancing With the Stars, hosted by A Social Affair Dance Studio, back in March, I was more than a little confused. For starters, I’m not a star. Not even in my own mind. Then, there’s the fact that the closest I’ve ever come to ballroom dancing is watching it on TV (my childhood best friend, Shelly Brownhill, and I did log countless hours practicing the hustle and alley cat in our family basement about 35 years ago, however).

Despite my lack of experience, not to mention absence of grace and coordination, I decided to risk life, limb and public humiliation to perform on stage to raise money and awareness for Special Olympics of Duval

County, the beneficiary of the event. Plus, anyone who knows me, knows I’ll try just about anything once.

Even before I set foot on the dance floor for the first time back in May, I was a nervous wreck. The mere fact that I, the queen of flip-flops and sneakers, would have to walk in two and one-half inch heels, was frightening enough, never mind spin, slide, turn and kick, while standing uncomfortably close to a complete stranger.

Fortunately, my partner, Zeljko “Jake” Lukic, an award-winning professional ballroom dancer and owner of Z Ballroom Dance Studio, couldn’t have been more gracious and encouraging. After chatting on the phone, he already knew I had no professional dance experience and was slightly left of center (case in point: I chose “WOP,” a hip-hop song by local singer/rapper J. Dash, for us to dance to), so he knew what he was getting into.

Our first lesson, he gave me a run-down of the routine he choreographed: a combo of cha-cha, smooth

fox trot and WOP (yes, I will be performing hip-hop in a long, flowy gown as part of a ballroom dance competition). Let’s just say A Social Affair could not have picked a more perfect partner for me.

Over the next four months, Jake and I practiced nearly every week, squeezing in an hour here and there between his classes at UNF and childcare duties, and my jobs and laziness. I could lie and say it’s been the most fun I’ve ever had and I’m going to continue dancing long after the event, but truth be told, it hasn’t been easy—for either of us. I don’t pick up dance steps quickly, plus I’m a perfectionist. My posture stinks. I look at the ground instead of the audience. And apparently, I make “ugly faces (um, it’s called “concentration,” Jake). The good news is both of us appreciate a good challenge. Jake is extremely patient and



an excellent teacher (he does need to work on his jokes, though), and I am obsessed with winning the mirror ball trophy, so there his hope for us.

But not without your help! You can support me, Jake and most important, Special Olympics, by voting online or by attending the event, September 8, 7 PM, at the Times-Union Center. General admission tickets are \$40, VIP are \$100. Visitjaxdwts.com for more information.

Oh, and if you see me before the event, please don’t tell me to “break a leg,” I just might.



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Neighborhood's musical gem launches 2012-2013 season

Riverside Fine Arts, a neighborhood concert presenter that has attracted some of the world's top musical performers to Jacksonville in recent years, has released news of its 2012-2013 season. This year's concert series is an eclectic mix of performers including the New Directions Veterans Choir and Elisabeth Von Trapp — of "Sound of Music" fame.

The first performance of the series is an Oct. 12 show by jazz great, Julian Lage. The California native has been described by jazz experts as "a giant in the making" and was the subject of an Academy Award-nominated documentary, Jules at Eight. He was the protégé of vibraphonist, Gary Burton. Lage's concert, which begins at 8 p.m., will be held at Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd at 1100 Stockton Street in Riverside.

All Riverside Fine Arts concerts will be held at the historic Riverside church. Ticket prices for each performance are \$25.

The Bohemian Quartet will perform Nov. 16 at 8 p.m. The Rhode Island-based ensembles includes virtuoso violinist and arranger, Stan Renard, violist Nancy Richardson, cellist Christine Harrington and John DeBossu on the base. The group performs music in the "gypsy" or "Romany" tradition.

On Nov. 29, Empire Brass and Elisabeth von Trapp make their way to Riverside for a brass musical concert

sharing sounds ranging from Bach to Broadway. Von Trapp is the granddaughter of Maria and Baron von Trapp, whose story inspired The Sound of Music. The concert begins at 7:30 p.m.

In a post-holiday concert Feb. 8, New Directions Veterans Choir is the fourth group to perform in the Riverside Fine Arts series. The performance — an a cappella group singing doo-wop, soul and traditional gospel — begins at 8 p.m. The choir group received national acclaim during a recent performance on NBC's America's Got Talent. They also have been featured on NBC Nightly News and other entertainment outlets.

Grammy nominated group, The Tierney Sutton Band, will play in Riverside at 7:30 p.m. on March 14. The show is the fifth concert in the Riverside Fine Arts series. The Tierney Sutton Band received its fourth consecutive Grammy Nomination recently for "Best Vocal Jazz Album." The band is comprised of vocalist Tierney Sutton and instrumental virtuosos Christian Jacob, Trey Henry, Kevin Axt and Ray Brinker.

The final show in the series is a performance by Zakir Hussain & Shivkumar Sharma at 7:30 p.m. on April 11. Hussain is a percussionist described as an international phenomenon and a classical tabla virtuoso of the highest order. Sharma is one of India's most popular classical musicians and India's greatest living santoor player.



Riverside Fine Arts is one of the Historic District's most musical gems. Its board of directors includes many neighborhood residents and its executive leadership team is: Stephen Wickersham, president; Jeff Weitzner, vice president; David Brinson, treasurer; and William Colledge, secretary.

According to Executive Director Stacy Aubrey, The Riverside Fine Arts Association (RFAA) was created in 1993 as an outreach ministry of The Church of the Good Shepherd in Riverside. Its founding was coincident with the church's restoration of their E.M. Skinner organ. The Good Shepherd Concert Series, as it was first called, offered a unique opportunity for cultural enrichment to the Riverside community and beyond.

Since its inception, RFAA has grown from a small, neighborhood concert series to a non-sectarian organization that serves the area encompassed by Northeast Florida. Each year thousands of attendees have benefited from its concerts and outreach programs.

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People don't normally come to hospitals for the food, but one family will never forget the fine dining experience St. Vincent's HealthCare provided to their loved one. After a period of long illness, the patient decided it was time to begin end-of-life care. Registered nurse Scott Moody offered comfort and support to the man through this difficult process. One evening the patient made a simple request for a shrimp cocktail. When Scott learned the hospital did not have any, he went above and beyond by driving to a downtown bistro after his shift to pick up the patient's favorite meal. Scott may not be an actual saint, but to one grateful patient, he came pretty close.

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St. Vincent's expects first transcatheter aortic valve replacement this fall

St. Vincent's Medical Center Riverside has been selected by Edwards Lifesciences to be the first hospital in the region to offer patients transcatheter aortic valve replacement (TAVR) therapy. There are only 13 other hospitals in the state of Florida offering this life-saving technology.

The neighborhood hospital anticipates performing its first

TAVR procedure in September, according to hospital officials.

"St. Vincent's has always been considered a leader in the field of cardiology. Edwards Lifesciences has carefully hand selected cardiovascular programs across the country that have a highly skilled multidisciplinary team and a history of providing high quality and innovative

care to patients. We are excited to bring this technology to the citizens of Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia," said Moody Chisholm, CEO of St. Vincent's HealthCare.

TAVR was approved by the Food and Drug Administration in 2011 for patients with severe aortic valve stenosis or severe narrowing of aortic valves.

"These patients were previously deemed inoperable by

cardiac surgeons so this procedure is offering some of our sickest patients a second lease on life," said Avondale resident Samer Garas, MD, of Diagnostic Cardiology Associates.

The TAVR procedure requires a multidisciplinary approach in a special operating room called a Hybrid O-R. St. Vincent's Riverside just finished construction on its new 860-square-foot Hybrid operating room. An average

operating room is 400 square feet but this one is more than double the size to accommodate the larger team and equipment needed for the procedure.

The team will deploy the Edwards SAPIEN valve through the femoral artery in the thigh. Previously patients needed open heart surgery to replace these diseased valves. The surgeon and his team are there to take immediate action if necessary.

Eat. Critique. Repeat.

Get your blue on at The Blue Fish in Avondale

Contrary to popular diet beliefs, food and the color blue do mix, especially at The Blue Fish Restaurant and Oyster Bar at 3551 Saint Johns Avenue in Avondale. A quartet of diners put it to the test on a Sunday evening and gave high marks to the staff from start to finish. The waiter was good natured, attentive and provided ample clarification on the extensive menu, and she accommodated our request to turn the overhead fan down to less than a gale-force wind.

We began with a bottle of Rodney Strong Chardonnay

(Sonoma Valley, \$22) which was crisp and clean. Our designated driver ordered black coffee and was "in for a treat" according to the waiter. Yes, indeed, the coffee was fresh, bold and superb, and replenished often.

Two of us opted for the Light Plate (3-4 ounces of protein), while another chose the Entrée portion of 8 ounces, plus the vegetable (fresh broccoli) and starch (mashed potatoes) of the day. Average price of an entrée is \$26 (\$19-32) and prices are a few bucks more for the Menu of the Day selections. The standard menu also includes non-seafood items for meat lovers.

Our party was given seven fresh fish selections, including grouper, salmon, halibut and red



snapper, and then could choose to have the meal prepared in a variety of ways from either the standard menu or specials. The pecan crusted salmon was sautéed and topped with a crawfish and crab relish and was every bit as delicious as the grouper prepared the same way. "Yum! Yum!" The rich, spicy

gravy on the "extraordinarily good" Crescent City Snapper entrée (bronzed, with crawfish, crabmeat and jumbo gulf shrimp) was declared "to die for" and the deep fried grouper was served with ample fries done well and coleslaw. The only odd culinary note was the "Pepto-Bismol" pink color of the salmon, perhaps due to an aggressive marinade.

Having left room for dessert, the two small plate diners shared the Dark Chocolate Torte, a fine choice from among pies, cakes, crème brûlée and an ice cream parfait. The torte was wonderfully dark and dense, served with two could-have-been-larger dollops of a vanilla and a chocolate mousse on a bed of raspberry sauce. I paired my portion of the tort with a pot of Earl Gray and was

thrilled to get both a pot and a filled cup of hot water.

Our share of the tab for two entrees, the bottle of wine, one coffee and one hot tea was just under \$60 pre-tip. The other couple picked up the dessert and a glass of Merlot with their dinners for the same total tab. Both couples left feeling that The Blue Fish deserves its "#1 Best Fish Place in Jacksonville" vote. The restaurant has a lot of interesting art; the ambience was serene and conducive to conversation. Shaded sidewalk dining is available on most days, weather permitting.

The Blue Fish serves lunch and dinner, Sunday brunch, and has a Happy Hour and an after-hours lounge for night owls. Check out the menus and hours of operation at www.bluefishjax.com.

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The Way we Were

Thelma Brown

BY VICTORIA
REGISTER-FREEMAN
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

In her almost 50 years working in the Historic District, Thelma Brown drove school carpool even though she didn't own a car. She used her employers' cars. When she began working in the District in 1968, she herself took four buses a day to get to and from her Southside home to her workplace in various Ortega households.

In addition to occasional carpooling, Brown cooked, cleaned, ironed, and babysat. Her starting salary was \$4.50 per day. She knew how to perform her varied tasks because she had accompanied her mother Edith Napoleon Brown to her mother's places of employment.

"My parents had 13 children. It was their hearts' desire that we each become independent and we did. Benjamin Brown, my father, used to say, 'Every tub sits on its own bottom.' I had to live a little life before I really understood that quote."

One person who really encouraged

me was my Douglas Anderson teacher, Larrine Phelps. D.A. was the school that most of the Southside African-Americans attended. Mrs. Phelps was my heroine. She convinced me that I could communicate well. I will always be thankful to her. I often think if a number of folks put their hands through a curtain, I could even now identify her hands.

"Although I was a maid, I did not wear a uniform. This upset one employer who loved my excellent ironing, but wanted me in a uniform and in closed-toe shoes. When I told Claudette Barker, another of my employers, about this problem, Claudette called the woman and fired her. Not me, her. Claudette is one of my favorite people in the world.

Yes, things changed over the decades. While one early employer insisted that I say, 'Yes, Ma'm and No Ma'm' another told me to call her by her first name. 'Mrs. Charbonett is my former mother-in-law,' said Caroline Charbonett, 'I'm Caroline, Thelma.'

I worked for lots of different folks over the years. Indeed, one of the best things was that it became possible to disagree with folks politically and remain friends. My work usually required that I work during the holi-



days although I could ask for them off if I agreed to take a pay cut. Sometimes I met famous folks like Bob Hayes, the track star, and Robert F. Kennedy, the Attorney General. In 2004, I worked 365 days — no days off.

I've always considered it a blessing that I could work hard. My life changed in 2011 when I broke my hip. I've since had a replacement that had to be reversed and I am waiting for another surgery. Some of my former employers — Karen Bryant, John

Shields and some anonymous others — went together and paid off my mortgage, so I would not lose my house. That is a huge worry off my mind.

While I am waiting for surgery I'm doing a little ironing on a low ironing board. I'm also repotting dish gardens because I hate to see the plants trapped together in an environment that does not suit them all. I believe in doing what I can do. God has blessed me and I want pass it on."

Senior day at MOSH

MOSH will host a special program for members of the senior citizen community on Wednesday, September 5. Senior Days will include a coffee and donut reception, an educational presentation and free time to explore the museum. The program starts at 9:45 a.m. and the charge is \$6 per senior citizen. Reservations are required and are based on availability. Call (904) 396-MOSH (6674), extension 226 for details.

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GOGIVERS

Stephanie Welchans

BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Stephanie Welchans cheerfully recalls her mother Susan Sumner “volunteering” she and her two younger brothers from a very early age to help out at the local hospital when the women’s auxiliary would hold raffles or sell baked goods. “The idea my mother tried to instill in us was to help others,” Welchans said. “...and I believe my brothers and I learned that from her. My parents now live part of the year in Vero Beach, where my father, Warren, at age 72, has begun to volunteer at the local hospital, Indian River Medical Center. I am so proud of him and I truly believe that when he visited and followed me around as I helped out at The Cummer Museum he saw how great volunteering can

be, and how fulfilling. My mother, 71, is still volunteering, now with hospice in Massachusetts.” Welchans, who holds a Graphic Design Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, considers herself to be a creative person. Although she expected to use that degree and her B.A. in English in an advertising, art and education career, she ended up in sales which she found challenging and fun. That artistic streak led her to volunteer for The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens where she is serving her second year as Docent Corps President, and her fourth year as a docent. She especially enjoys leading school, specialty and highlights tours of the collections. “Because I can be more flexible with my time, it allows me to regularly donate several hours to volunteering. There are purely selfish reasons -



it takes me away from the day to day grind, but I do believe that where we each choose to spend our time is what matters...not the stuff we have or the houses we live in, but the commitments we support are what matter most,” she said. Welchans also volunteers for the Riverside Arts Market (RAM) and for Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) Home Tours. “Tom and I like to support the universities we attended and stay involved with local community non-profit organizations,” she said. Welchans and her husband Tom own a business and marketing research consulting firm based in Avondale, where they have lived almost seven years. They chose to move to Jacksonville and specifically Avondale Riverside because they loved the neighborhoods, “had no fear of old houses” and had both lived in urban areas of Chicago and

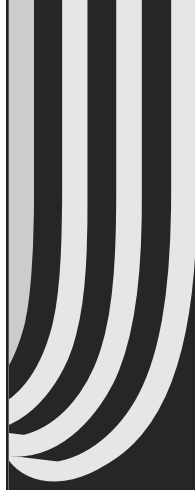
New Jersey. Their 1926 Mediterranean only needed some updating. Daughter Sidney, 11, enjoys having so many friends living nearby. She likes cooking dinner with her parents, is a ballerina, loves horses and plans to become a veterinarian someday. Sidney will attend the sixth grade at James Weldon Johnson in the Fall. The fourth family member is a chocolate lab named Brutus after The Ohio State University mascot Brutus Buckeye. Brutus walks and jogs in the neighborhood with Stephanie every morning at 5:15 a.m. sharp. “We are very active in our neighborhood and I enjoy doing our lawn and flowers. It’s my passion and I do the ‘whole shootin’ match’,” Stephanie said. “Tom works alot of



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the time, but when he is off we like to ride his Harley 2010, Sunset Red Wide Glide Motorcycle. We also are into Big Ten Basketball games and tournaments and NCAA football, being from Ohio and Michigan.”

Every September Stephanie travels to Brimfield, Massachusetts where she meets her mother and a group of friends who attend the Brimfield Antique Show together. This summer the Welchans traveled to a family reunion in Michigan.

Welchans said that when she first moved to Jacksonville she explored a variety of volunteer opportunities, including Downtown Vision’s Downtown Ambassador Program.

“We can each affect change in our community and there are so many city organizations that need help, including the schools, zoo, RAP, RAM and many others. We always need more volunteer docents at the Cummer - visit their website for information. We just can’t complain or criticize if we are not part of the effort to make Jacksonville a better place...every bit of work and every person matters, whether it’s a light task or the bigger, more demanding volunteer jobs, they are all equally important to that organization,” she said. “Explore what you love or are interested in, whether it’s just once a year like for the RAP Home Tours, for a few hours a month, or every week. At a time like this, when many more of us do not have fulltime jobs, volunteering is also the perfect way to check out a potential new career.”

FORWARD

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has resettled refugees from war-torn countries as diverse as Bhutan, Bosnia Burma, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, and Sudan. WRJ, one of 25 World Relief domestic offices, has 24 staff members and hundreds of volunteers, many of whom are former refugees. With a unique and multicultural staff, representing a dozen different cultures and languages, WRJ provides resettlement services for refugees during the first 90 days of their arrival in Jacksonville. These services include airport reception; housing and basic furnishings; post-arrival orientation; English classes; and appointments for

health screenings.

Opportunities to help: Volunteers are needed to help with welcoming new refugee arrivals and orienting them to their new home and Jacksonville culture. Transportation to appointments is also a great need in the first few weeks of arrival.

How to raise your hand: Contact our office at 1-904-448-0733 or visit website:www.worldreliefjacksonville.org for department contacts.

Fostering community: Performers Academy cultivates FSS talent



Kahari Simmons, McKyle Rosepiller, Kathryn McAvoy, Jose Zelen and Q'Darius Young

The Performers Academy, based in St. Nicholas, hosted 15 foster children from neighbor organization, Family Support Services, for a three-week Cultural Arts Camp.

The program included individualized programs for the teenage students —

and helped the 16- and 17-year-olds express their own experiences through dance and music.

Each camper worked with a professional artist, dancer, actor or recording artist to develop an original piece. The performance was an artistic rendering of

their life story, and the students were able to share their work in a live venue at the end of camp. Campers performed their work — including, song, dance and acting — Aug. 2 at The Museum on Art Museum Drive.

"It was amazing to see the transformation of these kids in just 3 weeks. Their attitude, self esteem and openness transformed. It was as if they had all this talent bottled up inside and we uncorked it. It's a testament to the benefits of the performing arts" said Executive director of the performance Academy, Kathryn D. McAvoy.

It was the first time most of the children had been exposed to art instruction, according to Performers Academy officials. The one-hour show of original material included choreographed ballet, poems, acting scenes, rap singing and digital presentations.

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'Tis the season for college football

BY WILLIAM MILNE

Welcome back to the most wonderful time of the year! As we embrace the much-anticipated 2012 football season, there is no argument that college football is advancing through a significant transition! The competition to be the #1 team has never been more intense; athletes are now being recruited as early as middle school; the stakes of the regular season of play are at an all-time high; and the bowl system is about to progress through its own season of evolution.

In just one off-season, a traditional power-house program fell victim to the iniquities of a long-time assistant coach; the NCAA granted the wishes to a fan base demanding a college football playoff; a nationally regarded coach retook the reigns after one season in “retirement”; and multiple teams exited their conferences to join others in an effort to improve their programs.

Quite a season! However... From all of the changes and events surrounding the college football landscape, by far the most important element to college football is...the people who love it and who make it happen. Yes, certain current events that exist in the college football world are devastating. Thankfully, there is room for justice and for people who will do their best to administer justice. Time cannot be erased, nor can past events be changed...but what we can do is move forward together in honor of what we love!

Once upon a time, a young boy discovered a life-changing passion in the hills of Clemson, South Carolina. On a crisp autumn Saturday in late September, he spent the day with his family in celebration of a Clemson football game (his brother was in school there at the time). While most family vacations are fun in their own way, this one in particular set a new precedent for a life-long passion. What

made this personal discovery a life-changer were the smiles of everyone he encountered; the gatherings of fans in celebration of a common interest; the

to victory and suffer the “character-building” losses. The time has come to embrace the tradition that we love so very much, and the time has never been more appropriate to capture the essence of what makes it so terrific...

PEOPLE!

Perhaps the most important lesson that we can learn from the past two years is that NO program is above the well being of the people in it. I am referring, of course, to the players who passionately play the game to represent their schools and the fans that enjoy times with each other and support their teams. While a select few of us remember the scores of games long ago, we will never forget the memories that we shared with each other. As our country continues to come out of economic hardships, we will always have the ability to build new memories through football season.

Whether one is a Rebel, Gator, Tiger, Seminole, Husky, Gamecock, Hokie, among countless others, the dawn of a new season is upon us. It is time for the new era...the new season! I believe that the time is better than ever for the friendships, traditions, passions and honor of college football to win. The game and its technicalities will continue to evolve, but the strongest element will only continue to grow...US!

May you have a wonderful college football season – one filled with friendships, traditions, memories and team wins!

William Milne is a longtime Jacksonville resident born and raised in Avondale and Ortega. He works for EverBank as residential mortgage loan officer and volunteers on the TaxSlayer.Com Gator Bowl Association and Episcopal School of Jacksonville Alumni Board. He and wife Leigh Anne have a two-month-old son, Caleb.

William, Leigh Anne and Caleb Milne showing their loyalties to Ole Miss, Auburn and Florida



passion for winning and disappointment for losing; the time honored traditions at the school; the friendships that were set and formed for life; the music from the marching band; the competition on the field and, mostly, the enjoyment of everyone around him.

That was one day of one season to one person.

Twenty-five years later, that same youngster is still passionate about the most wonderful time of the year...FOOTBALL SEASON! He joins the millions of fellow traditionalists who welcome this cherished time of year and the new season. The time has come to rekindle and form new friendships, honor the traditions of the teams that we all love, cheer our teams

BIG FIRST GAMES:

- Tennessee vs. North Carolina State – Atlanta, GA - August 29th
- Florida State vs. Murray State – Tallahassee, FL - August 30th
- Florida vs. Bowling Green – Gainesville, FL - August 30th
- Auburn vs. Clemson – Atlanta, GA - August 30th
- Georgia vs. Buffalo – Atlanta, GA - August 30th

BIG GAMES DURING THE SEASON:

- Florida at Texas A&M – September 8th (Texas A&M's first SEC game as a new member of the conference)
- Florida State at Miami – October 10th (Traditional slugfest)
- Florida vs. Georgia – October 27th - (Annual showdown in Jacksonville)
- Alabama at LSU – November 3rd – (New match of last year's National Championship Teams)
- Georgia at Auburn- November 10th – (“Oldest Rivalry in the South”)

IN-STATE RIVALRIES

- Florida at FSU – November 24th
- Georgia vs. Georgia Tech – November 24th
- Auburn at Alabama – November 24th
- Mississippi State at Ole Miss – November 24th
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BY NATHAN & TED MILLER

With the summer months coming to an end, September is the beginning of a much-needed break from the summer heat. Fall is just around the corner and our focus shifts from planning summer vacations to making sure our kids are outfitted with the newest fad in backpack design.

Football season is also around the corner, and many will find themselves planning outdoor activities early on Saturday to ensure they are back in time for tailgating and kickoff.

For some people, football schedules are readily viewable (taped to the wall) at work...alongside the lunar calendar and tide charts.

We are talking flood tides. And that only means one thing: tailing redfish.

Our First Coast offers hundreds of miles of saltwater marsh and spartina grass flats along our Intracoastal Waterway. These marshes will flood at certain times of the year, and late summer and early fall marks the beginning of the best flood tide season.

For the next several months when conditions are right, redfish will stage during the incoming tide until the water grants access to the higher-elevated marsh that is usually inaccessible to them. Once the tide reaches the higher-than-usual mark, the fish will enter these areas and feed on crabs and other crustaceans not available during more

typical conditions.

However, not every high tide is a flood tide during this time of year. The tides are the highest during the lunar cycles of a full and new moon. And the tide charts will help you determine the best time to go.

We find the Mayport tide gage is a good barometer when the water may be right. A tide of 5.4 – 5.5+ feet is important, provided the wind cooperates.

A strong Northeast to East wind will assist by pushing saltwater toward our First Coast flooding our marshes. This will also flood the marshes for a longer period of time, giving you higher water to work with, and longer fishing time.

On the contrary, a strong West wind will have the opposite effect by pushing water out of the marshes and into the ocean.

Some prefer the dry environment of push-polling a shallow-draft boat over the marsh. A pole platform can assist in seeing tailing fish, but is not necessary. Mostly it is watching and listening.

Others prefer securing the boat along the edges of these flooded marshes and wading in. The depth can vary between ankle and waist deep, so be prepared to get wet. Boots or tennis shoes with long pants will do fine. Some prefer waders. But be careful walking. There are holes and small creeks out there, so go slow.

The flood tide may only last an hour or so until the water starts to recede. If you poll in, it is important to watch the flow of water. When it begins to fall out, poll off the flat. The bite is probably over anyway. Many boats have been stranded on the marsh for many hours until another flood tide allows you to get back out.

If you wade, it can be a good idea to take extra supplies with you. Extra hooks rigged weedless with artificial baits like Gulp or Fish Bites will eliminate the lengthy walk back to the boat losing valuable fishing time. If you prefer fly-fishing, extra leader and flies

will also help ensure you spend your time fishing. It can also be a good idea to take a measure stick (measure between 18 to 27" – legal 'slot' for redfish) and a stringer so you can secure your catch. The new bag limit on reds is 2 per person, and a stinger will help you fish for your second fish before heading back to the boat.

Some anglers prefer light conventional or spinning tackle. Others prefer fly rods. Either way, choose a rod, reel and line you can comfortably and accurately cast to a feeding and leery fish.

When the conditions are right, fishing for tailing reds is a lot like hunting.

When you reach your destination, preferably an hour before high tide, survey the landscape quietly for any movement. Fish moving in the shallows will move grass or produce a wake giving away their location. Fish feeding along the bottom will use their tails as propulsion, exposing them above the surface. This is what you came here for...let the stalking begin.

Quietly move within casting distance and pitch your bait near, preferably in



front of and / or past your target and carefully retrieve towards the feeding fish. Twitch slowly and wait to see if the fish sees or smells your bait. Twitch again. If nothing happens, quietly retrieve and recast. It takes stealth and patience to avoid spooking the fish. If you spook your fish, game over. If you

are successful in your presentation and your offering is consumed, the water erupts and game on!

Redfish numbers in Florida have drastically improved since the net ban back in 1994. A recent statewide change in limit from one fish to two per person is proof that the numbers are up. But if you are simply content with the experience and enjoyment of our native saltwater marshes, and one red is enough to feed you and your family, take a picture of your second fish and release.

Mother Nature will remember this gesture, and grant you good fortune another day.

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Sailors Exchange

Marine Store

New Ownership Adds Unbeatable Prices to Great Inventory Selection

When St. Augustine Sailors Exchange marine supply storeowners Clay and Mike Hansen wanted to open a similar store in Jacksonville, Ortega-based Pier 17 Marine at Sadler Point Marina caught the brothers' attention. Pier 17 Marine and its owners, the late Grace Rogers and her daughter Cynthia, were well known in the community for their great rapport with customers and distinctive selection of merchandise.

The Hansen brothers sensed a winning combination — their company's ability to offer competitive pricing and Pier 17's strong community ties and reputation.

And a successful pairing it has been. The Jacksonville site of Sailors Exchange, formerly Pier 17 Marine, opened in August under the Hansen's leadership. Customers already are sharing plenty of positive feedback with the brothers and their knowledgeable staff.

"I have been working with the marine services industry for more than 25 years and my brother and I are very familiar with the North Florida boating community's needs," said Clay Hansen. "One of our strengths is that we are careful with our buying. Our philosophy is if we can't buy it for the right price, to enable us to pass a discount to the customer, we don't buy it."

Careful buying results in better pricing for customers, explained Hansen. Sailors Exchange has positioned itself to be able to provide the lowest prices on the widest selection of marine products. Lower than other marine supply stores in the area. The store is offering customers a 20% to 50% discount on existing inventory in order to make room for new products that will be coming in.

The Jacksonville site of Sailors Exchange alone has a whopping 10,000 square feet of inventory, stocking everything from ropes to props, to dock and trailer equipment. There is a wonderful selection of canoes and kayaks and a full array of complementing equipment for the outdoor enthusiast. The store also buys gently used boating equipment. "Between our two locations we have a great selection of new and gently used marine supplies — anything you can think of for your personal boating needs," said Hansen. "If you are looking for a hard-to-find item, we can help you find it in one of our stores or direct you to where you can get it."

Sailors Exchange is located at 4619 Roosevelt Boulevard, below the bridge, adjacent to Chamblin's Book Mine. For more information or to inquire about a product, call (904) 387-4669. We are open Tuesday – Friday 9am- 5pm and Saturdays 9am-2pm. Closed Sunday and Mondays. Also visit our website www.sailors-exchange.com



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From CABINS and third-world countries back to the CLASSROOM

Local children enjoy summer camp, missionary work

Whether they were living out of trunks in rustic cabins for a month or doing hard labor in impoverished lands, many local kids experienced new adventures this summer. New hardships were faced and new friendships were made, and now families are sharing memories of their students' unplugged summer vacation in the great outdoors.

Cuban teens wear Ortega River Run shirts provided by the community during a recent mission trip to Cuba.



Hits off to the young ladies from St. Mark's Episcopal Church who participated in the recent church junior high mission trip to New Orleans.



It was a summer of hard work for two mission trip youth from St. Mark's Episcopal Church in New Orleans.



Cooking up fun on the senior high St. Mark's mission trip to Toronto this summer.



Vacation Bible School at St. Mark's Episcopal Church was colorful fun.



A group shot of the St. Mark's Episcopal Church senior high mission trip to Toronto.



Southside United Methodist Church attracted a big youth mission trip group on a trip to Guatemala this summer. Youth leader, Amy Fierke, has her hair played by local children.



A group shot of the St. Mark's Episcopal Church junior high mission trip to New Orleans.





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MORE THAN AN OLYMPIC FAD:



Classes at Gyminators Gymnastics Promote Healthy Lifestyle

All across the country, gymnastic studios are feeling the effects of the “Olympic boom.” Inspired by the amazing performances of Olympic gymnasts, especially members of the U.S. team, kids are dying to try their hands – and legs – on the parallel bars, the vault, or the pommel horse.

This comes as no surprise to Paula Falls, the owner of Gyminators Gymnastics. Falls grew up in competitive gymnastics, and she knows personally the excitement and appeal of the sport. But medals and winning aside, she has also seen the difference a basic foundation in gymnastics has made in the lives of thousands of families.

“It really doesn’t matter whether your child plans to participate in competitive gymnastics or not, the skills taught in gymnastics lead beautifully into almost any other sport or discipline,” said Falls, who opened Gyminators about 10 years ago. “The flexibility and strength gained in gymnastics, along with increased abilities to jump and run, provide a great addition to

a healthy lifestyle for both boys and girls.”

To celebrate the sport and introduce it to as many families as possible, Gyminators is hosting a National Gymnastics Day celebration from 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday, Sep. 22. The event is open to the public, and children have the opportunity to rotate through different stations offering gymnastics, tumbling, cheerleading, and dance.

“This is a great chance for families to see all our different classes demonstrated,” said Falls. “We will also have bounce houses and displays from local artists, in addition to free giveaways, such as food, drinks, and coupons for family-friendly places around town.”

Gyminators currently has about 700 students. The studio doubled in size about two years ago and houses classes for all ages in an ample 14,000 square foot space.

The tiniest gymnasts, who have just begun walking, attend Parent/Tot classes that explore movement and dance using fun activities. The studio’s Playtime Fun & Fitness Center also hosts parent/child time on a drop-in basis.

Preschool aged children are taught basic gymnastic skills in fun classes that engage them with different themes, such as super heroes, Dora the Explorer, or Winnie the Pooh. It’s also not unusual to see the

instructors dressed in costume to match, said Falls with a laugh.

“We are known as Jacksonville’s premier preschool program for gymnastics, and this is a great age to engage children in the sport and really see them strengthen their bodies and master basic skills,” said Falls.

Older students can choose from recreational gymnastics, cheerleading, or hip-hop classes. And for the very dedicated, Gyminators offers team training for different ages and a strong competitive gymnastics program.

Aspiring gymnasts who register this month will have the opportunity to compete in a “Mini-Meet,” which will be held in December. With an Elf on the Shelf theme, the meet will consist of competitive events on the vault, bars, beam and floor.

In addition to weekly classes, Gyminators offers special programs, such as conditioning classes for athletes of seasonal sports, like football, soccer or swimming, who are between seasons. And the studio is the perfect place to host birthday parties and special events, which can include one hour of gymnastics, games, obstacle courses and dance, with an additional half hour of time for snacks, pizza, or gift-opening.

Gyminators is located at 4603 Shirley Avenue, at the corner of Blanding Boulevard and Shirley Avenue. For more information about National Gymnastics Day or to sign up for classes, visit gyminators.com, call (904) 388-5533 or e-mail gyminatorsgym@aol.com.



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A century of Eagle Scouts: Scouting leaders have strong legacy in Historic District

BY STEVE DiMATTIA
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Eagle Scout Riley Sapora was standing on a mountain summit in Costa Rica with a group of fellow students when suddenly one member fell over a ledge, slipping 10 feet into a crevice where his leg got stuck.

Everyone froze. Except Sapora. He climbed down and the others, following his lead, lifted the injured man to safety and began a grueling seven-hour journey down the mountain.

Sapora, 23, who earned his Eagle five years ago, has no doubt that his training to achieve the highest award in Boy Scouting is the reason he responded without hesitation.

“It prepares you to handle any situation,” said Sapora, from Troop 2, St. John’s Presbyterian Church in Riverside.

Coincidentally, the injured student was also an Eagle Scout.

“Knowing he was an Eagle made helping him even more satisfying. There’s a special bond there with all

Eagles.” That bond began 100 years ago on August 1, 1912 when the first badge was awarded.

More than 2 million badges have since been earned, the second by a Jacksonville Scout, Earl George Marx. It is a bond that Eagles throughout Jacksonville’s historic district often share with family members. In Sapora’s case, two brothers: Joey, 20, and Ben, 18.

“There was no choice that I was going to get Eagle,” said Ben Sapora, who earned his in December 2011. “You just don’t want your brothers to get Eagle in front of you and you not get it.”

The Sapora brothers said that there was no real competition between them. “It actually made it a lot easier that my brothers were helping,” Ben Sapora said.

He credits not only his brothers, but also his scoutmaster, Alan Wilson, for his achievement.

Wilson became Troop 2 scoutmaster in 2005 and has helped 34 scouts earn their Eagle. For him it is a family



Henry Wilson, Scoutmaster Troop 2 Alan Wilson, Rear Admiral William Sizemore and Eagle Scout Ben Wilson

tradition going back three generations beginning with his father.

“Knowing dad was an Eagle drove me to do it because I wanted to follow in his footsteps,” said, son, Ben Wilson, 19. “Having someone in the family to encourage me and who I could go to with scouting problems pushed me even when it wasn’t fun.”

Alan Wilson proudly states that his son is a better scout than he ever was.

“Being there while he, and now, my younger son, Henry, go through the process is a special thing,” Wilson

said. “I overheard one of the kids say: ‘It’s not so cool to be a Boy Scout; but it’s really cool to be an Eagle Scout,’ and I think that is as true today as it was in my time.”

Most Eagles cite the Service Project as being one of the strongest character and leadership building experiences. The project and a minimum of 21 merit badges must be completed prior to the scout’s 18th birthday.

“The program leading up to Eagle has really formed him, but I saw Kent come alive during his Eagle Project,” said Ortega Forest resident Mark Zeigler, whose son, Kent, was awarded his badge recently at age 15 from Troop 522, Ortega United Methodist Church. “It really helped him ‘find his voice.’”

The scout must independently plan and execute a project that benefits an organization other than the Boy Scouts. Kent Zeigler repaired a roof at Iglesia Presbyterian Church.

“They needed to regain use of two Sunday school classrooms where a tree had landed,” said Kent Zeigler, whose Eagle legacy includes his great-grandfather, father, uncle and three cousins. “It was a mess, leaking and mildewed. We fixed walls and used a propane torch to repair places on the roof where it was damaged.”





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► The project took 120 hours and extensive coordination with the church’s pastor, building professionals and fellow scouts.

“It was really hard but really rewarding and I learned a lot,” Kent Zeigler said.

The project measures the scout’s ability to take ownership and see a large task through to its end, said Mark Zeigler, who co-chairs the Eagle Advisory Board.

“Their interview with us prepares these young men for real job interviews; it teaches them to be comfortable with themselves and to convey that to a leader. It often happens that, as they are telling us everything that went wrong, that is when the real lessons seem to click in for them. It is a very powerful and emotional experience.”

Equally powerful and emotional is the Eagle Court of Honor and badge presentation.

Sometimes the guest speaker distinguishes the ceremony. Ben Wilson, Ben Sapora and four fellow scouts had the unique honor of receiving their badges in the presence of Rear Admiral William Sizemore, Chief of Naval Air Training. He also happens

to be a Troop 2 Eagle Scout. Other times, it is a display of the very character traits for which they are being honored that marks the ceremony. That was the case on August 12 when Ortega residents, Stephen and Christopher Barton from Troop 26, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, received their badges.

Stephen, 20, waited nearly three years while Christopher, 18, earned his badge so that the two could receive them together.

“I thought it would be something unique that really defines us as brothers, just one more thing that Chris and I can share,” said Stephen Barton. “I had confidence that he would earn his badge and I related to what he was going through, so I was able to encourage and nudge him along.”

These are sentiments to which Riley Sapora would relate.

“My brothers and I shared a special part of our childhood; there are few other things that will bond us like that. Getting the Eagle Scout is a rite of passage that has prepared us for a lot more learning experiences.”

That rite of passage seems to lead to success: Riley Sapora is a recent pre-med graduate, Ben Sapora a busi-



ness major, Ben Riley a computer science major and Stephen Barton studies creative writing while Christopher Barton majors in criminology.

North Florida Council Boy Scouts of America CEO Jack Sears presents a gift to the oldest Eagle Scout in the room, Bert Saunders



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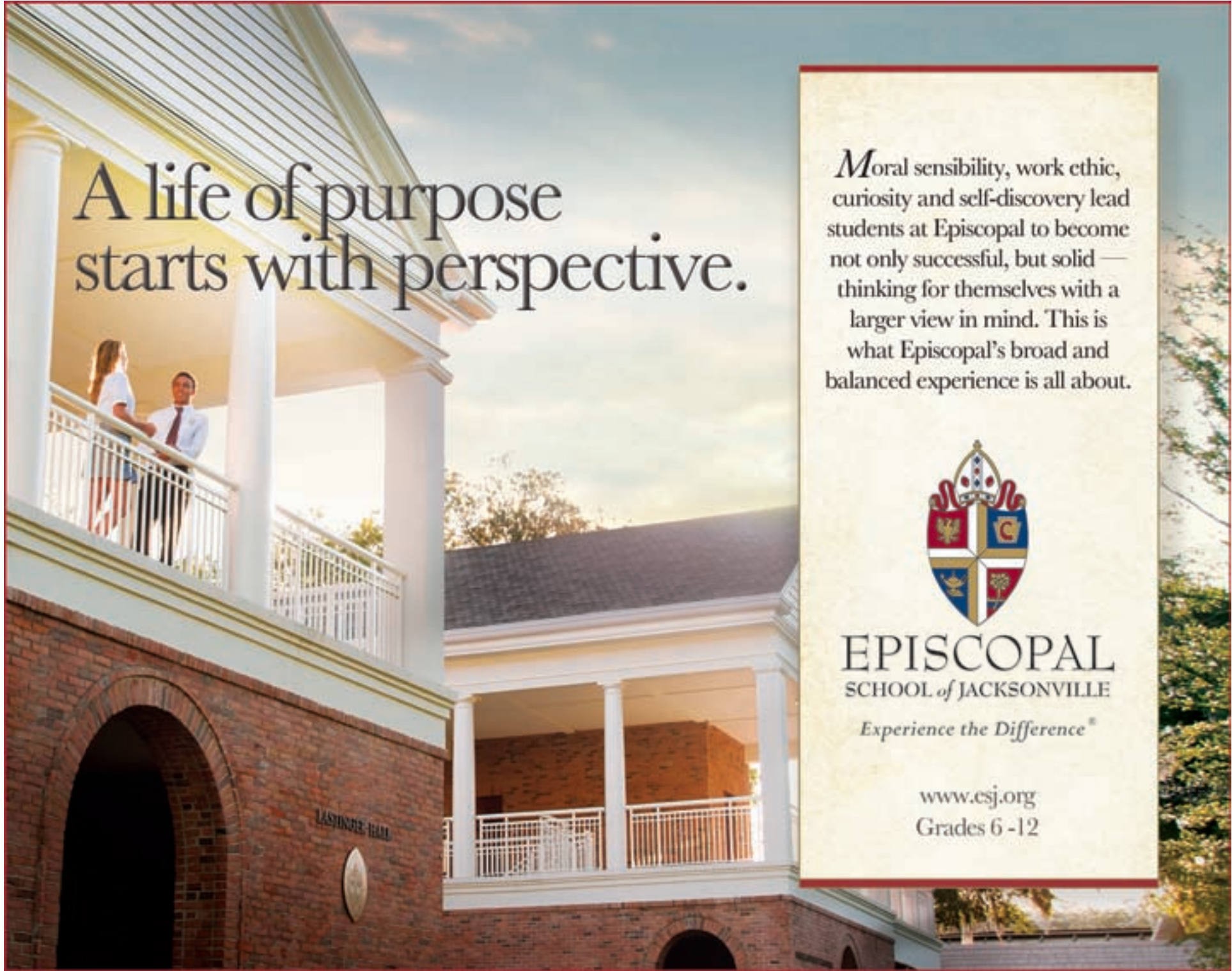
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