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Resident

COMMUNITY NEWS



Riverside – Avondale – Ortega – Murray Hill



AND THEY'RE OFF!

Despite the lack of a starting gun, hundreds of young runners sprint out of the gate at the 39th Annual Ortega River Run. Although the gun did not go off at the end of the countdown, it didn't stop the group of mostly St. Mark's Episcopal Day School students, parents and many supporters from taking to the tree-lined streets of Ortega in a 1-Mile Fun Run Feb. 25. [READ MORE, PAGE 49](#)

WHAT'S INSIDE

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- New York artist adds comic relief to Murray Hill [PAGE 41 >>](#)

SYMPHONY HOSTS WORLD-CLASS PIANIST

Glamorous gala attendees Leah Zalupski, Molly Curry, Kristen Surface, Seana McAfee, Jill Davis, Ashley Diebenow and Kathryn Peyton were just a few of the patrons who gathered for Valentines in Verona, Feb. 17. Following the Jacksonville Symphony Gala along the St. Johns River, superstar pianist Lang Lang entertained patrons in Jacoby Symphony Hall.

[READ MORE, PAGE 27](#)



LITTLE LADIES MAKING A BIG DIFFERENCE

A group of neighborhood girls, all of whom attend Riverside Presbyterian Day School, gathered to sell lemonade and turn proceeds into progress. They were looking to make a difference on a sunny afternoon in February, showing some love for those with Leukemia. Representing grade levels 2 through 6, the group set up shop on Edgewood Avenue South to sell lemonade and turn in their proceeds for a school-wide contest to see who can raise the most money for children suffering from blood cancer.

TAKING THE TEMPERATURE OF THE REAL ESTATE MARKET

If you're contemplating whether this is the right time to put your home on the market, there's much to take into consideration. While you can include having the "luck o' the Irish" in your list of reasons to put a "For Sale" sign on the front lawn this month, perhaps it would be a bit more strategic to turn the pages and take an in-depth look at the state of real estate in the historic districts. For the story, News Editor Marcia Hodgson spoke at length with more than a dozen brokers, who talk about the real estate market 10 years after the recession and what it means for buyers and sellers. [READ MORE, PAGE 16](#)

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Q Yesterday at the closing on my new house, the closing agent overheard me talk about having a new fence installed that afternoon. She got very concerned, stopped the closing and asked if the fence company had already filed a notice of commencement at the clerk of court for the project. Thankfully, they hadn't done it yet so we proceeded to close. Why would this have been a problem?

A Once you file a notice of commencement and open a permit, any lien that could potentially get placed on the property, would be in first position ahead of the mortgage. A bank's mortgage MUST be in first position, or they will not close the loan. I respect that you were trying to be organized and be "ahead of the game" but.....in this case, it seems that a disaster was narrowly avoided!

Email your questions to steilberg@comcast.net



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Editor's Note



Welcome, Spring! March is a transitional month with the change from standard time back to daylight saving time on March 12 and the spring equinox on March 20. The annual St. Johns River Celebration and Cleanup on March 25 is as much a spring rite of passage as those earlier events which herald the urge to take a fresh, new look at our environment. Two stories this month, both by contributing writer Lilla Ross, give us insight into our tree canopy and our well-known river.

February was also a busy social month, with many nonprofits thankful for the unseasonably warm weather which made galas, golf tournaments, races and walks easier to organize and fun to attend. Throughout these pages you'll find evidence of philanthropy and volunteerism hard at work in our Historic Districts. There's no place better to live in Jacksonville – in my humble opinion.

Kate A. Hallock
Managing Editor

No news yet about Roosevelt Square Mall

After Belk's Department Store in the Roosevelt Square Mall shut its doors in mid-January, rumors were flying regarding the empty store and the mall in general, especially after CiCi's Pizza and Cato also closed around the same time.

The Resident reached out to Dewberry Capital, the Atlanta-based company who manages the property, but was unable to make much headway.

"At this time, we haven't finalized plans," stated Margaret Rambo, an associate with Dewberry Capital, in an email to The Resident's reporter, Kandace Lankford. "It will most likely be late Summer 2017 before we have our ducks in a row for Roosevelt Square, as we have a few other

projects finishing up. Happy to share upon completion."

Dewberry Capital has owned the 309,360-square-foot property since 1997. The one-story retail shopping center was originally built in 1961. The Belk's Department Store was renovated and a Belk's Home Store opened in 1999, when the Publix Super Market moved to the center of the Square from its original location where a Stein Mart currently operates.

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OLD ORTEGA

3923 BALTIC ST - \$439,000
Old Ortega, corner lot, renovated 3/2.5, 1715sqft



RIVERFRONT

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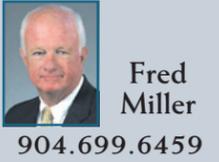
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New crosswalks evoke concerns about safety

Opponents also lament change in scenery

By Kate A. Hallock
Resident Community News

The Florida Department of Transportation probably isn't feeling the love from some Avondale residents right now.

Despite efforts to appease one group of residents long concerned about speeding on St. Johns Avenue, the FDOT's installation of three Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) on what is also known as State Road 211 has created a negative reaction on two fronts.

The beacons, installed in the heart of the Shoppes of Avondale at Van Wert Avenue, Dancy Street and Talbot Avenue, were intended to provide a measure of safety for pedestrians trying to cross St. Johns Avenue. However, according to one camp of complaints, the traffic calming measures don't go far enough.

Kim Clontz, mother of two daughters and instigator of the campaign to bring new playground equipment to Boone Park, said the beacons may not be doing what they were intended to do.

"Unfortunately, since it doesn't specifically say 'Stop' (unlike the crosswalk at St. Vincent's on Riverside Avenue), people just seem to be slowing down unless you are practically in the middle of the intersection," said Clontz. "I've heard quite a bit of negativity, and nothing positive yet."

Stacy McKinney offered the observation that it would have been less expensive to erect "Stop for pedestrians" signs similar



FDOT installed a pedestrian-actualized warning signal at Van Wert Avenue to help Boone Park visitors to safely cross St. Johns Avenue.

to those in San Marco Square, and Mike Kapeghian said he didn't think traffic seemed to notice the beacons.

Weighing in a bit more positively were Judy Moore and Sylvie Galbraith, who both said they found the beacons helpful and felt that cars were stopping. However, Rick Winegar noted that if drivers do respond, they barely slow down.

"If they are meant to give pedestrians in the crosswalk the right-of-way, they are not working and it is not obvious that is the intent," Winegar commented on the NextDoor website. "Based on cities and towns (such as Toronto and Lake Saranac, New York), where this is the intent, tickets are the incentive. What is the intent here?"

Kerri Hatfield shared a reaction while attempting to use the crosswalks. "I've gotten a couple of lovely hand gestures when crossing now...that never happened before!" she said.

Pamela Telis lives across the street from the Boone Park playground and said she understands more than most that safer crosswalks are needed along St. Johns Avenue near Boone Park and the Shoppes of Avondale.

"I have witnessed drag racing along this stretch of road. People are driving faster and faster with no consequences," Telis said in an email. "Unfortunately, without enforcement, little will change. Perhaps we can get the state to put up one of those boards that records speed for a few weeks. I think the data would be surprising."

Others feel the historic neighborhood has been assaulted with unnecessary signage. Alicia Grant said that curving St. Johns Avenue has "gotten along fine for close to a century" without the overabundance of pedestrian signage.

"My opposition to the signage that went up on St. John's at Boone Park is that the signs are unsightly and for the most part ineffective. Once traffic leaves the Shoppes area, mostly at Dancy, vehicles begin to increase their speed," Grant said. "Signs such as these are beginning to pop up all over town. At some point people have to take responsibility for their own safety and drivers need to be respectfully careful of pedestrians and cyclists. There is definitely a need for informational signs such as speed limits, stop, etc. but when signage reaches an overabundance, all signs lose their effectiveness. Drivers are assaulted from all sides and directions."

Instrumental in getting Friends of Boone Park South established and a long-time proponent of nature's scenery, Telis agrees that speeding is an issue, but she is less than pleased with the new beacons, one of which is nearby her home.

"Unfortunately, the signs are hideous eyesores given the 'historic character' of the Shoppes. The City has spent many thousands of dollars for historic light posts, historic walkways, and requires shop owners to have historic building lighting in the Shoppes," said Telis. "Now, the entrance to the Shoppes is simply 'gross.' There must be another option that offers the lights and

Continued on page 5

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signage that is more sensitive in design for the Historic District.”

Telis said during the early February installation she asked the workers if the beacons would include signs that told drivers to “stop when flashing.”

“The guy said there is no requirement for the cars to stop. The flashing lights are only to ‘slow down’ traffic,” she shared. “I told him that it seems that walkers think they can walk and that cars will stop. He admitted that most drivers are just ‘confused’ by these lights and don’t know if they should stop or not. He said walkers need to ‘not get a false sense of safety’ because they are flashing.”

FDOT plans to install signs which advise motorists it is a state law they must stop for pedestrians in the crosswalks, according to Ron Tittle, FDOT public information officer.

The RRFB is intended to let the motorist know that a pedestrian is waiting to use the crosswalk, Tittle wrote. The law requires motorists to yield for a pedestrian when they are in the crosswalk. Ultimately, the

“If they are meant to give pedestrians in the crosswalk the right-of-way, they are not working and it is not obvious that is the intent.”

— Rick Winegar, Avondale resident

failure to yield to pedestrians in the crosswalk is a law enforcement issue.

The installation of the crosswalk signals fits into an overall desire of Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety along SR211, a 3.72-mile FDOT-maintained road which begins at the intersection of San Juan Avenue and Herschel Street, follows St. Johns Avenue north to Riverside Avenue, where it makes a right at King Street and ends at Peninsular Place, just north of the Fuller Warren Bridge.

Following an informal traffic community workshop held by RAP in September 2016, Transportation Chair Kay Ehas reported that the committee is in the process of identifying the top five concerns for each of five activity segments along SR211, then will prepare a

document for discussion with FDOT and the City of Jacksonville. Ehas said there would be another community meeting before meeting with the city and FDOT.

The wish list of changes from the workshop includes the reduction of the speed limit to 15 mph through the Shoppes of Avondale; a blinking crosswalk where Herschel and Woodmere Streets intersect with St. Johns Avenue; roundabouts at Edgewood Avenue and Cherry Street, and a new signal at the Commander Tower Apartments.

In the meantime, the RRFBs are being viewed with skepticism and concern.

“Before lights were installed, no one expected the cars to stop. Now, some may expect cars to stop,” said Telis. “This is even more scary than before, in my opinion.”



Workers for the Florida Department of Transportation install RRFBs (rectangular rapid flashing beacons) on St. Johns Avenue at Van Wert Avenue to facilitate safe crossing to Boone Park, where a new playground has significantly increased usage of the park.

FDOT begins I-10/Fuller Warren Bridge expansion project

It will be business as usual for the Riverside Arts Market during Phase I of the Florida Department of Transportation’s I-10/Fuller Warren Bridge expansion project, scheduled to begin around April 1.

The \$125 million project is in the design-build phase, according to Odette Struys, FDOT public information officer. She said it will begin this spring, with construction of a new lot under the bridge on the west side of Riverside Avenue, north of VyStar Credit Union.

In that first phase, construction will begin under the Fuller Warren Bridge in the area known for accumulation of water after heavy storms. After the ponds are filled, a parking area will be built adjacent to what will be the entrance to the future multi-use pedestrian-bicycle path over the bridge.

The City of Jacksonville will soon be reaching out to the community regarding the plans for the new public area created once the ponds are filled, according to a notice from Riverside Avondale Preservation.

The construction in Phase I is scheduled to be completed by November 1, 2017, but the contractor anticipates being ahead of schedule on that phase of the project, stated the RAP notice.

In Phase II, construction work will move to the east side of Riverside Avenue, and a new vendor entrance to the Riverside Arts Market will be created.

Struys confirmed RAM would not have to move to the new lot across Riverside Avenue during the construction as originally

thought. Instead, contractors will access the riverfront through a temporary easement granted by the American Red Cross.

The new vendor entrance will be located on Riverside Avenue immediately before the pedestrian access. Once the entrance is complete, a construction fence will be erected from Riverside Avenue to the river along the north side of the Red Cross property line.

The entire timeline for the I-10/Fuller Warren Bridge expansion project is at least four years; expected completion is April 2021.

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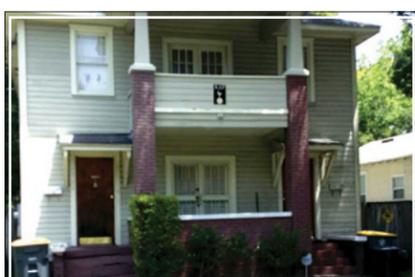
1329 Rensselaer Avenue
3BR/1BA. Kitchen with solid surface countertops and glass backsplash, glass sunroom on front entry, hardwood laminate throughout, tile in newly remodeled bathroom. Fenced rear with storage shed. 1,050 sq. ft. \$175,900



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1333 Silver Street
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2337 Ernest Street
Riverside duplex, both are 2BR/1BA units. Wood floors, high ceilings, and each has its own washer & dryer. 2,520 sq. ft. \$269,000



3232 Gilmore Street
2BR/1BA restored 1928 craftsmen beauty in Murray Hill. The glowing laminate floors stretch from front to back. The fireplace in the living room is beautifully detailed. 735 sq. ft. \$72,500



1636 N. Pearl Street
This 1906, 3BR/3BA, was considered a mansion in its heyday. All of the original architectural details are left intact! Fenced back yard with alley access. 3,024 sq. ft. \$249,500

St. Johns Village razed after serving community 30 years

By Kate A. Hallock
Resident Community News

Demolition of the retail/office center known as St. Johns Village began the morning of February 15 when Chance Partners and LandSouth Construction received the green light from the City of Jacksonville after a pre-demolition inspection of the site the day before.



Judd Bobilin, president/CEO of Chance Partners and Land South Project Manager Woodie Berlin at the start of the demolition of St. Johns Village Feb. 15.



The former home of Hugo's Interiors was the first to go when demolition began at St. Johns Village Feb. 15.

Starting on the northwest portion of the building at 4000 St. Johns Avenue, where Hugo's Interiors was formerly located, Realco Recycling's excavators began pulling down walls and tearing off the roof of the two-story building which was built in 1987.

"This is the part I like to see, and the next part is when it's going vertical," said Chance Partners Founder Judd Bobilin. "This is a good thing for the community. It's been an under-utilized retail building for a long time."

Woodie Berlin, project manager for LandSouth, said it would take about 10 days to complete the demolition of the structure. He said Realco will recycle as much of the structural metal as possible.

Prior to demolition, Berlin toured the building and found quite a bit of office furnishings, including printers and other equipment, left behind.

Eventually, all the surface asphalt will be removed as well, according to Berlin, who said that after the St. Johns Village demolition is complete, it will take about 16 months to complete the two four-story apartment buildings, two carriage houses and two townhouses.

"LandSouth is very experienced at this, they're a very good contractor, and we're glad that they're partnering with us," said Bobilin, who has witnessed between 50 and 100 demolitions in his career. "They are all a thrill, and some are different. You never know what you're going to find until you get there."

LandSouth began the project several months ago with pest control to ensure there were no squealing surprises.

"You never know what's living in or under buildings," said Bobilin, who described demolition of an urban Atlanta building 20 years ago. "We took an old night club down that had been vacant for five years, and hundreds of rodents ran out even after having pest control out there ahead of time. You have them under any building, especially ones along the water."

Meanwhile, interior demolition of the Commander Apartments is ongoing through April. Once that is complete, renovation

will take about 12 months, according to Bobilin. The plans call for a total of 228 units between the new buildings and the Commander Apartments.

"They're making great progress on the Commander," he said. "After all the windows and the framing come off we'll put in a whole new window wall, all glass. The concrete balconies will be removed, cut off. They're probably a couple weeks ahead of schedule."

To limit traffic impact to the residential streets nearby, construction traffic is being routed from Roosevelt Boulevard to San Juan or St. Johns Avenues.

"We wanted something realistic and something the neighbors would be happy with," Bobilin said. "I think it was a good experience for all. We've got a good relationship with the neighbors and with RAP (Riverside Avondale Preservation). We're very excited to get this going, and it will be a good project for the neighborhood."

For up-to-date details, please visit the Florida Eucharistic Congress website at FloridaEucharist.org

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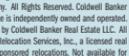
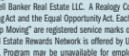
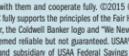
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Settlement reached on riverfront development

TriBridge residential one step closer

By Kate A. Hallock
Resident Community News

Three weeks after nearly 60 residents of Park Plaza and members of the Garden Club of Jacksonville met with a representative of TriBridge Residential to voice concerns about the proposed apartment complex between Lomax Street and Bishopgate Lane, the parties' attorneys pulled together an eleventh-hour compromise to prevent yet another two-week deferral on the Land Use and Zoning Committee's (LUZ) agenda.

At a Jan. 31 meeting held at Park Plaza, Katherine Mosley, TriBridge vice president of development, shared site elevations and attempted to answer questions concerning density, noise and traffic, highest among a list of issues put forth by the Plaza's residents.

The Planned Unit Development (PUD), as revised Nov. 29, 2016, sought a rezoning of the 1.66-acre property from PUD and CRO (Commercial/Residential/Office) to PUD only.

During the late January meeting, Attorney Paul Harden, who was hired to represent Park Plaza, questioned the PUD's intent. "It's not just a re-zoning, it's an amendment to the 2030 Comprehensive Plan," he said.

"What you have is not just a zoning application, it's an application to amend the Future Land Use designation for the piece across Bishopgate Lane from RPI [residential/professional/institutional] which allows 40 units per acre to HDR

[high density residential] to go to 60 units per acre, and then on top of that, to use this suggestion that there is going to be multi-use [applications], to go to 84 units per acre," said Harden. "The multi-use feature, as per the Comp Plan, is required to be on the first floor. And theirs is not going to be on the first floor, it's going to be on the top floor. Respectfully, I don't think renting out the clubhouse of the facility is a multi-use."

The application was originally scheduled to be heard on Feb. 7 by LUZ, but was deferred two weeks at the request of District 14 Councilman Jim Love as a result of the objections brought up during the Jan. 31 meeting. The deferral would allow Harden and Wyman Duggan, a Rogers Towers attorney representing TriBridge, to meet with Love and Park Plaza residents Dan Edelman and Tim Burleigh to find compromise on a list of 25 issues.

"Dan negotiated directly with the developer's representative and, far more than that, came up with a winning strategy for us," said Burleigh.

As the Feb. 22 LUZ meeting approached, the two sides had settled on most of the issues, but the number of units was still a sticking point. Love requested another two-week deferral, which was noted on the LUZ agenda the morning of Feb. 22.

Much to the surprise of the Park Plaza team, just a few hours prior to the LUZ meeting they were notified the developer was willing to concede the last of the major points in order to avoid the two-week deferral.

Regarding density, the number of units was reduced from 140 to 125, bringing the density down to 75 units per acre.

"It's not just a re-zoning, it's an amendment to the 2030 Comprehensive Plan."

— Paul Harden, Attorney representing Park Plaza



View of TriBridge Residential development from St. Johns River

Regarding the mixed-used aspect of the plan, special events for non-residents and the sale of alcohol are expressly prohibited. A "finished" riverwalk was eliminated unless the City gives the developer a substantial REV (Residential Recapture Enhanced Value) grant, but at the City's request there will be a floating water-taxi dock on the property.

Regarding noise, pool deck hours will be limited, with closing hours of 10 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 11 p.m. Friday, Saturday and holidays. Outside amplified live music and the playing of music by a DJ are prohibited.

The setback of the southeast corner of the building was increased from 35 feet to 50 feet. Park Plaza residents will have an opportunity to review the lighting,

landscaping, and sound abatement plans for comment only during the design phase.

The nine protections covering Park Plaza in the existing 2006 PUD were restored to the new PUD. One of those protections includes a pre-construction inspection of Park Plaza Condominium to provide a baseline against any future damage caused by the development of the new property.

The final agreement led to the approval of the legislation by LUZ without opposition from Park Plaza, who would not oppose it at the Feb. 28 City Council meeting.

"One of our best decisions was to hire Paul Harden as our lawyer," said Burleigh. "He did a superb job. Without him, we could not have obtained nearly as much as we did from the developer."

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Tree canopy survey will help create a tree culture

By Lilla Ross
Resident Community News

Residents could get a better understanding of how many trees grow in Jacksonville if the City Council approves the funding for a comprehensive survey of the tree canopy.

Last month the city Environmental Protection Board approved a \$103,000 proposal from Greenscape and Public Trust Environmental Legal Institute of Florida for a citywide tree survey. The measure must be approved by the City Council, which could take three or four months.

“The biggest reason to do this is that it creates a baseline,” said John November, executive director of Public Trust. “It gives us data about where trees are and what could be planted. This will help the city make sound strategic decisions about where to plant trees that will have the greatest impact.”

Inventories of trees in neighborhoods and parks have been done in the past. For instance, Groundwork and the University of North Florida recently inventoried trees in Springfield and Eastside as part of the Tree Rx urban forestry plan.

The proposed survey, by Plan-It Geo, is different because it is comprehensive and will use geospatial technology that will analyze data from an aerial perspective, November said. It would take about a month to complete.

The survey data would be available to the city and to organizations like Riverside Avondale Preservation for use in making strategic decisions about where to plant trees.

Strategic planting of trees is a key urban planning tool because trees increase the economic value of property and reduce energy use, air pollution and stormwater runoff.

The Riverside Avondale Zoning Overlay has good protections for trees and landscaping, and property owners are encouraged to plant trees, said Nancy Powell, a RAP board member and chair of the Zoning Committee.

“Our existing mature tree canopy is one of the things that attracts people to our neighborhood,” Powell said.

One of the challenges facing Riverside Avondale is that many of its trees are reaching the end of their natural life and have to be removed, she said.

For instance, the water oaks that were given away to homeowners to celebrate the end of World War II only live 50 to 60 years and are now dying, Powell said. And, Boone Park is losing some of its trees.

Trees also have been lost in storms, or because homeowners have removed them to avoid storm damage, Powell said.

Local groups protect canopy

Periodically, several groups have made efforts to build the tree canopy.

Greenscape has planted over 350,000 trees since 1975 and sponsors the annual flowering tree sale each spring. This year it is hosting a daylong Tree Festival Saturday, April 1 at Metropolitan Park, 1410 Gator Bowl Blvd., where it will give away 5,000 trees.

The local Sierra Club chapter is making the restoration of the tree canopy one of its priorities with a community education effort.

Greenscape and Scenic Jacksonville launched the JaxDigsTrees initiative in 2015 to encourage residents to plant trees.

The yearlong initiative was a celebration of the 15th anniversary of the passage of the amendment to the city charter to

preserve and protect trees. Developers are required to protect certain trees, replace those they cut down or pay into a city tree mitigation fund.

Money from the fund can be used to plant trees around the city, such as the initiative to plant native trees at all public schools.

In 2015 Public Trust filed a complaint against the city for failing to enforce the amendment and a city tree ordinance.

November said the tree survey would help the city make good use of the \$10 million in the fund.

Joe Anderson, forester for JEA, applauds any effort to protect and grow the tree canopy because trees are an important part of the city infrastructure, helping reduce energy consumption and stormwater runoff.

A mature shade tree on the south side of a house in Jacksonville can reduce energy consumption by as much as 20 percent, Anderson said. And trees planted in business districts can reduce heat, pollution and stormwater runoff.

Powell said the RAP zoning overlay requires trees around businesses. For instance, tree islands are required in areas with on-street parking, but some businesses are taking out the right-of-way to provide more parking, and that reduces space for trees.

Trees are in the economic interest of businesses, too. Studies have shown that trees planted around stores attract customers and give them shady places to park.

Powell said Riverside Presbyterian Church and the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens made good use of trees in their parking lots.

Rain that falls on pavement has nowhere to go but into drainage sewers, and in Riverside the street sewers lead straight to the river.

But the leaves of a tree slow down rain as it falls, reducing flooding, and the roots help the soil absorb the rain and slow down its flow. Even a tree island in a parking lot or median can soak up some of the stormwater.

“If you think about a tree, it’s a natural pump with pipes and fibers,” Anderson said. “The roots will reach into the available space, find the water, send it up through the trunk and branches and out the leaves into the air. Without that pump, the water would be lost.”

“You look at clouds, that’s water vapor and a lot of it comes from trees,” Anderson said. “A mature oak can release 80 gallons of water a day.”

In areas of Riverside that are prone to flooding, improving drainage is part of the answer, Anderson said. Planting more trees is the other part.

November said he hopes the information from the tree survey will help people think differently about the canopy.

“This will help us create a tree culture in Jacksonville,” November said. “It will help lead the way in revolutionizing the way people see trees in the community, to take ownership and to help the city grow to the next level.”

“We already have a lot of success, we have a lot of issues, and we have a lot of potential, but we need the community to step up.”

The value of a tree

Calculate how much a tree saves you using the National Tree Benefit Calculator: <http://treebenefits.com/calculator>. You’ll need to know the species and its diameter.

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Women's Center announces community initiative to expand

New facility needed to address increase in sexual assaults

By Kate A. Hallock
Resident Community News

Each year The Women's Center of Jacksonville hosts an appreciation event to thank its major donors and sponsors for their ongoing support. Although the Chocolate and Champagne Reception this year followed Valentine's Day by a week, it was no less sweet to unveil a new community initiative and expansion plan.

In October 2014, the Women's Center took over the City of Jacksonville Victim Services Center on 10th Street to provide sexual assault forensic exams to survivors of sexual violence age 18 or older. In two years, the Springfield-based center had outgrown the demand.

"We are responding to a community need. Sexual assault is a community issue," said Teresa Miles, Women's Center executive director. "We have seen a 25 percent increase in sexual assaults in the fourth quarter 2016 over 2015."

To address the need, the Center purchased another building specifically to house the sexual assault forensic exams.

The state-of-the-art facility at 5300 Emerson Street will include a forensic lab, sexual assault examiners, showers, counseling rooms, and will serve all genders, victims and adult survivors of sexual abuse as children. There is absolutely no cost to the survivors beginning to end, including one



Front, Lori Armstrong, Sarah Wiese; back: Nicki Mizell, Robin Graber, members of the Rape Recovery Team at the Women's Center of Jacksonville



Jan Gallagher, Shirley Webb, Cheryl Anthony



Sarah Mannion, Leanne Prendergast, Judge Gary Flower, Sharon Simmons

year of free counseling, said Miles. "We wanted to improve the environment for survivors, so they can walk in and know they are safe here."

The idea, which has been percolating prior to Miles' taking the leadership position in 2016, is a \$3 million project that includes \$500,000 for the purchase of and renovations to the 28-year-old former office building on the Southside, as well as funding for long-term operations sustainability.

"With every program we started, we really looked long term. We don't want to start a program we don't think we can sustain," said Sharon Simmons, board member and a member of the Women's Giving Alliance. "The main issue for funders is sustainability. We didn't want to take this one on unless we knew we could sustain it."

Simmons and former executive director Shirley Webb had independently come across the office building last summer and both knew it could be a good fit for the Women's Center.

Right off I-95, near Beach Boulevard and Spring Glen Road, with two bus stops nearby, the new victim services center offers easy access for Duval County clients as well as those from Baker and Nassau Counties.

The down payment on the building was made possible through the last of a \$500,000 challenge grant made by the Delores Barr Weaver Fund three years ago, but the financial need doesn't stop with the purchase.

"We're not just raising money to pay off the loan or for the renovations, but to have a state-of-the-art facility for years to come," Miles said, referring to future fundraising efforts as a community initiative. "Our intent

is to bring the community together to do this brick by brick."

Simmons, who has expertise in real estate law, was instrumental in helping find the building, negotiate the purchase, set up building inspections, review the contracts and loan documents, and participate in a lengthy due diligence process before taking the potential purchase to the board in September 2016.

"They authorized us to negotiate up to a certain price, and we were able to get it below that," said Simmons.

The Women's Center is planning to meet in the next month with architects and contractors to begin the renovation process, so there is no timeline yet for occupancy.

"Some of our Rape Recovery Team advocates will move into the new space after it has been renovated," said Miles.

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Library friends planning for 2018 anniversary celebration

By *Kate A. Hallock*
Resident Community News

The Friends of the Murray Hill Library have four goals for the next year as they prepare for the 50th anniversary of the library in 2018.

“Beautification is the first goal,” said FMHL Board Treasurer Judy Klein, who noted the library was the last public building built in Murray Hill before city-county consolidation in the late 1960s and is the only public building on Edgewood Avenue, the “Main Street” of Murray Hill.

The Friends of the Murray Hill Library held its annual meeting Feb. 21 at Maple Street Biscuit, preceded by refreshments and a silent auction featuring “The Great Courses,” college-level courses in digital formats.

Local architect Peyman Ata Abadi, founding principal of P.A. Studio, spoke on beautifying the library during the annual meeting. He commented about the importance of the library to a community which has all the traits of a great neighborhood – walkability, mixed housing, increased density and smart transportation.

A library brings us together by serving as an early voting site, by offering summer reading and lunch programs, by making the Internet available to those who don’t have access, Ata Abadi said.

Some of the beautification ideas being considered include installing flags or banners in the arches, adding lighting, landscaping, and bicycle racks. “We’re in the planning stages right now,” said Klein, who shared three more goals.



Friends of the Murray Hill Library Board of Directors: seated, Elizabeth Breting, Marylou Sutherland; standing: Nancy Beecher, John Peck, Judy Klein, Jay Stuckey and Florence Rando (not present, Bill Brinton)

“We want to increase visits and circulation. We will prepare for the 50th anniversary of the library and, finally, we want to get Mondays back.” Budget cuts in the past decade led to closing the Murray Hill Library and Sundays and Mondays, but Klein said libraries should be open every day and accessible to all.

The Friends of the Murray Hill Library was founded in 2010 to protest city budget cuts which affected library hours, personnel, programs and materials.

Following two weeks of temporary closure in February for upgrades, the Murray Hill Library re-opened Feb. 23 with new carpeting, expanded teen area, laptop station, and other computer and furniture upgrades.

Neighborhood welcomes playground renovation

By *Kate A. Hallock*
Resident Community News

The Charles E. Bennett Memorial Playground on the ground of the Riverside Avenue Christian Church is getting a much-needed facelift. After raising \$37,300 of its \$50,000 goal through YouCaring, a compassionate crowdfunding site, the congregation authorized demolition of the 15-year-old playsets in preparation for new equipment by Southern Recreation.

Demolition began in late February and the new playground was open for business two weeks later in early March. The old playground equipment was donated to the family of a nearby neighbor who, although not a member, has done a lot to help the church.

“Dan Bierce and his brother are also going to build a cross for us from some of the old wood from one of the swings!” said Kelly Paterno, director of the Riverside Children’s Art Center. “We all feel it’s a great blessing that the playset is going to a good home and that our new cross will be from them.”

The playground was created to provide a safe place for neighborhood families to meet, play, enjoy the outdoors and make memories together. Maintaining the playground is a ministry of the congregation and is freely offered as a place for families to spend time together.

In addition to upgrading the play equipment, new landscaping and outdoor musical equipment are planned for the popular neighborhood playground. To donate, visit youcaring.com and enter Bennett playground in the search box.



Out with the old and tired, crews get ready for brand new playground equipment at Riverside Avenue Christian Church.

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Residents say waterways make Jacksonville great

By Marcia Hodgson, Resident Community News

March 25 is the 21st Annual St. Johns River Clean-up and Celebration for what is touted as the city's biggest asset. *The Resident* asked a random sampling of residents for their thoughts on the river. Although most agree our waterways are important assets, some feel otherwise.

Do you agree that our waterways are our city's biggest asset and attraction? If so, what can we do to improve them? If not, what do you think is Jacksonville's biggest asset for drawing businesses, visitors and new residents? Send your thoughts to editor@residentsnews.net



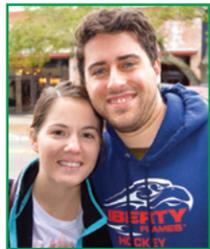
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I've always thought we don't capitalize enough on the draw of the river and some of the real estate is just not well used. Downtown could be a huge booming downtown, if we could add some great riverfront attractions like more restaurants, and retail. That would make it a real destination.



Carl Rosen, Murray Hill

I don't agree that the river is the city's main asset. I think it's the people and the Southern culture with the strong undertones of art, all the community artists.



Andrea and Jeff Pardine, San Marco

We agree that it is the main attraction. Any cleaning efforts they do would help. The river is dirty. They should try to build stationary kayaking or paddle-boarding businesses in the Riverside community.



Bobby Marino, Murray Hill

I don't think it is the river so much as the culture down here. It's lovely. There are a lot of talented artists in Jacksonville. I moved from Connecticut to Jacksonville for the art and the thriving music scene.



Charlie Broward, Avondale

I agree the waterways are a huge attraction. I wouldn't know how to improve them. You do see huge algae buildups, but what can you do to improve that? Everyone is still going to want to fertilize their grass. The Beaches is the biggest attraction, but the St. Johns River is a part of that. Boating and fishing – most people love to fish the creeks, particularly Sisters Creek on the Northside. I can't imagine not living near a major body of water or the beach.



Kay Ehas, Riverside

Yes, I think we need to improve on storm water and septic tank removal and take care of litter. Jacksonville is full of litter and it's disgusting what we are doing about our litter problem.



Diane Raines, San Marco

I agree the river is our greatest asset. We need to support the Riverkeeper and support the people who really understand the ecology of it all so that we can keep it clean. To me that is the Riverkeeper and Quinton White of JU (Jacksonville University).



David and Julie Moore, Avondale

Yes, it is an attraction. What they need is a nice city dock for people to sit on and fish. Someone from out of town has no idea how to access the river. Then they need to get a hold of President Trump and get him to open up snapper season.



Tim Thompson, Jr., Avondale

The waterways are what make Jacksonville so great. Back in the days that's what built Jacksonville with the ports and also having Downtown on the river. It's not only beautiful, but it helped with traveling by boat and logging and stuff. We still need to crack down on pollution, but we've done a good job over the decades, and I don't know whether we'll ever be able to eliminate all pollution. I really don't want Jacksonville to get any bigger, and now it is growing at a record pace. The river is a huge attraction to why people live here. How do you improve on that?

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Forty years after first river cleanup, St. Johns River still ‘troubled waters’

By Lilla Ross
Resident Community News

Fifty years ago, Jacksonville dumped 15 million gallons of raw sewage and 90 million gallons of industrial waste into the St. Johns River – every day – and thought nothing of it. “If you fall in the St. Johns, you’ll die of pollution before you drown,” Gov. Claude Kirk was known to say. And he wasn’t kidding. In 1971 the city health department warned that anyone swimming in the river downtown could contract 27 communicable diseases, according to news reports at that time.

The river was dying, and no one cared. A few years earlier, in 1969, Jacksonville Mayor Hans Tanzler had called foul.

He vowed to clean up the river, but it wouldn’t come cheap. Tanzler wanted a \$90 million bond issue plus federal money to install pipelines to divert sewage to new treatment plants, according to news reports. Taxpayers responded with a recall campaign.

Tanzler persisted and, 40 years ago, in 1977 celebrated the cleanup with the first River Day Festival by skiing under the Main Street and Acosta Bridges with a couple of beauties from the Cypress Gardens Water Ski show.

There was a lot to celebrate. The city had spent \$154 million to build three treatment plants, close 78 sewage outfalls and lay 150 miles of sewer lines, according to news reports. New regulations required permits and set fines for violations.

The St. Johns, though far from clean, had gotten a new lease on life and, the city was starting to think of it less as a toilet and more as an asset.

After Tanzler left office, during the 1980s the St. Johns River became the focus of development – Metropolitan Park, the Jacksonville Landing, the Riverwalk, and residential high-rises were built. The river became the backdrop for the Riverside Arts Market. And, aerial glamour shots taken during Jaguars games in the 1990s gave the city and the nation a new angle on the river.

Over the decades, the St. Johns has gone from being a dump to an asset to a resource. And it entered the 21st century with two new allies – Mayor John Peyton and the St. Johns Riverkeeper.

In 2006, the city, JEA and the state Department of Environmental Protection signed the River Accord, committing \$700 million to improve the health of the river by upgrading treatment plants, eliminating failing septic tanks, capturing and treating stormwater. The goal was to bring the nutrient level in the river down to below state and federal standards.

Riverfront plans good for river’s future

A major effort, initiated by City Council President Lori Boyer, is under way to improve public access to the river with the creation of a Maritime Management Plan. A team from Jacksonville University, the University of North Florida and the Northeast Florida Regional Planning Council has been collecting information for the project.

A survey of more than 750 residents last year found that 65 percent of the respondents had accessed the river using a boat ramp, park or fishing pier within the previous month. More access points are in the works, such as the floating dock installed recently at Wayne B. Stevens Park in Ortega Farms.

Also in the works are design standards that will be critical as plans progress to develop the downtown riverfront.

The Downtown Investment Authority is accepting proposals for the redevelopment of the riverfront, including the Shipyards, after rejecting most of Jaguar owner Shahid Khan’s proposal late last year. In the meantime, Khan’s amphitheater project at EverBank Field, Daily’s Place, is expected to be complete by May with the first concert July 1.

After many years of planning and fundraising, the Cold War-era guided missile frigate USS Charles F. Adams is expected to arrive in May to begin its new life at the Shipyards as the only warship museum in Florida.

The Florida Times-Union’s riverfront property on Riverside Avenue is for sale, and Peter Rummell and Michael Munz are moving ahead with plans for a residential development on 30 acres on the Southbank.

Jimmy Orth, executive director of the St. Johns Riverkeeper, said the development that is going into downtown is the best type because it is redevelopment.

“The infrastructure is already there,” Orth said. “You’re not eliminating natural features that provide ecological benefits.”

And the new projects will provide more ways for people in Jacksonville to develop a relationship with the St. Johns, he said.

“People don’t use the river enough,” Orth said. “If they’re not using it they won’t care about it and feel passionate about it.”

River health still faces challenges

In the past decade, major progress has been made. For instance, JEA upgraded treatment plants and reduced nitrogen discharge by 1.6 million pounds a year.

But in older neighborhoods like San Marco and Riverside, stormwater from lawns and streets goes straight into the river, Orth said. And failing septic tanks around

the city, including Miramar, are releasing fecal coliform into the river.

The latest challenges facing the river are chronicled in the Riverkeeper’s new documentary, “Troubled Waters” and the annual State of the River Report, issued by Jacksonville University and the University of North Florida.

The St. Johns is still polluted. Now the big problem is too many nutrients – nitrogen and phosphorus – from fertilizer and not enough oxygen, ideal conditions for algae bloom that are harmful to humans and wildlife.

The water and sediment are contaminated with pesticides, hydrocarbons like polychlor biphenyl or PCB, from industry, and metals like copper, cadmium, nickel and arsenic, byproducts of coal-fire electric plants.

Microplastics have been added to the list of pollutants. The Riverkeeper and the

Marine Science Research Institute at JU have launched a new effort to identify them.

Some of these problems will require millions of dollars and new governmental policies. Others can be achieved with low-tech solutions and behavior changes.

“Some of them are easy and effective,” Orth said. “Reduce or eliminate your lawn and replace it with native plants. Reduce or eliminate fertilizers and pesticides.”

Planting trees or creating bioswales, like the one in front of the San Marco Library, can help reduce stormwater runoff and filter pollution. Using water permeable paving, like the parking lot at Cummer Museum and Gardens, also can reduce runoff.

And then there’s the annual cleanup when thousands of volunteers who collect tons of trash and debris from along the river. The cleanup is part of River Month, established a decade ago by Mayor John Peyton.

Come out for annual river cleanup

This year’s river cleanup and celebration is from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, March 25, at sites around the city, including these in the urban core and historic districts:

- Azalea Creek at Boone Park, 3700 Park St.
- Fishweir Creek, Fishweir Park
- Ray Ware Door Stop, 4048 Herschel St.
- Historic Murray Hill, Murray Hill Library, 918 Edgewood Ave. S.
- Memorial Park, 1620 Riverside Ave.
- Northbank Riverwalk at Sydney J. Gefen Park, 505 Alfred duPont Place
- Yacht Basin Park, 2941 St. Johns Ave.
- Hollybrook Park, King Street at McCoys Creek Boulevard
- Klutho Park, West 2nd St. at Boulevard St.
- Balis Park, 1987 San Marco Blvd.
- River Oaks Park at Craig Creek, 1000 River Oaks Rd.
- Southside Park, 1513 LaSalle St.

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Honorees announced for Cultural Council's 41st Annual Arts Awards

The Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville continues the tradition of hosting its annual fundraising event with this year's 41st Annual Arts Awards on Saturday, May 6, at the historic Glass Factory in downtown Jacksonville.

Proceeds will benefit the Cultural Council's Artist Grant program, which activates art projects and cultural events in the greater Jacksonville area.

Jacksonville's premier arts and culture gala will honor six individuals and one business who have demonstrated the highest impact on arts and culture in the Jacksonville community.

This year is also the debut of the new Community Impact award. The event's presenting sponsor is Regions Bank, Honorary Chair is Heather Moore and Event Chair is Rebecca Ryan-Gonzalez.

The Arts Awards Gala host committee consists of Kristi Aiello, Scott Ackerman, Martha Barrett, Molly Curry, Franklin Danley, Rebekah Davis, Dr. Mauricio Gonzalez, Irene Lazzara, Missy Peters, Marsha Oliver, Rachel Roberts, Ryan A. Schwartz, and Sonia Thomasino.

Guests will arrive in downtown Jacksonville's urban core and enter a strikingly beautiful and unexpected space that reflects art and culture in Jacksonville.

In addition to the many local artists, performers, and innovators, guests will enjoy cocktails, a gourmet dinner and artistic surprises all leading up to the unveiling of the eight awardees.

Prior to the 7 p.m. arts awards presentation, Cultural Council Founder Helen Lane and Arts Advocate Joannie Newton will host a VIP sponsor reception beginning at 6 p.m. Tickets and sponsorships are still available by visiting www.culturalcouncil.org/muse. For more information, contact Ryan Ali, Director of Development, at ryan@culturalcouncil.org or (904) 358-3600.

Meet the Honorees

Emerging Artist: Ebony Payne-English, program director for The Performers Academy, is a writer, performer, educator, and human rights activist as well as the first woman to establish her own chapter of the international poetry organization, Black on Black Rhyme. Payne-English has performed all over the nation and has been recognized as a double finalist at the Southern Fried Poetry Slam.

Arts Innovator: Mark McCombs, founder of Renaissance Jax, funded \$187,500 to expand Lego League teams into all Jacksonville middle schools during the 2016 school year. This year Renaissance Jax will work with 2,000 students across 20 counties in Northeast Florida.

Robert Arleigh White Advocacy: Christopher Lazzara has partnered with UNF students and supported the creation of sculptures for public art installation at Jacksonville Beach, Seaside Sculpture Park.

Art Educator: Dustin Harewood has served passionately as a professor of art since 2004 at Florida State College of Jacksonville, Kent Campus. He has revitalized the program by challenging his students and uncovering their vision and artistic abilities in the classroom.

Helen Lane Founder's Award: Diane Brunet-Garcia has championed fair compensation for artists, actors, and performers through advocacy and partnership with the Cultural Council and leading arts organizations in Jacksonville.

Business: PNC Bank has launched Arts Alive, a program which will fund projects in greater Jacksonville for three years. The program will bring multi-year grants to artists, nonprofits, and programs geared towards cultivating and growing a vibrant Jacksonville. PNC Bank's Arts Alive program awarded \$75,000 in grants in its first year, and will fast-track the grant process for year two, aiming to award \$100,000 in 2018.

The Cultural Council will also announce the Community Impact Award, a new award for this year.

Awards given at 42nd annual preservation meeting

There were many new faces at the annual Riverside Avondale Preservation meeting held Feb. 16 at the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, among them a new board chair, new executive director and new Riverside Arts Market team.

Keith Holt, who took over as chair of the RAP Board of Directors last year, will continue for a second year as board chair. He spoke about RAP's many accomplishments in 2016, some of which were projects that had been started within the past several years, such as the opening of the John Gorrie Dog Park at Riverside Park and the Riverside Avondale Community Garden on Park Street near the Willowbranch Library.

Two new programs started in 2016 were First Fridays, an opportunity each month for a small business to host a cocktail hour for residents and other business owners, and the Centennial Heritage Program, which recognizes 100-year-old buildings in the historic district.

For his role in the Centennial Heritage program, Andy Goshen was presented with the Neighborhood Advocate award. He was also instrumental in getting ATT to revise their standard approach to infrastructure boxes in the historic district.

It was new executive director Adrienne Burke's first annual meeting, at which she introduced John Silveira, the new Riverside Arts Market senior manager, and Liz Grebe, market manager.



Receiving an award for Outstanding Site Improvement are Friends of the Willowbranch Library Hella Shull, Cristina Maduro and Roxanne Henkle with Scott Adams and Marshelle Berry of the Jacksonville Public Library, and District 14 Councilman Jim Love.

A panel of five credentialed professionals served as judges for seven of the 10 awards. The judges included Marty Hylton, director of the University of Florida Historic Preservation Program; Steve Lazar, president of VRL Architects; Jose Miranda, principal architect with Miranda Associates; Erin Minnigan, a St. Augustine's Historic Preservation and Community Development Planner, and Jenny Wolfe, Historic Preservation Officer for the City of St. Augustine.

The judges voted to honor the Willowbranch Library and Friends of

the Willowbranch Library with Outstanding Site Improvement; the Friends of Boone Park South for Outstanding Placemaking; architect Bill Leuthold for New Residential Construction (3900 Richmond St.), and also Neighborhood Architect; architect Jeff Lane for New Commercial Construction (South Kitchen & Spirits); Donny Mak for Residential Rehabilitation (1822 Mallory St.), and, for Commercial Rehabilitation, Robert Freeman Lee, owner of the property at 3540 St. Johns Avenue which was converted from a nail salon to Le Macaron, a French bakery.

Other awards were presented to Nancy Powell, for Outstanding Board Member for her work as head of the Zoning Committee, and to Daniel Miller and Brightway Insurance as Neighborhood Friendly Business.

The final order of business for the membership was a vote on board members, including new treasurer Carolyn McGovern, and new members Lawson Carr, Janice Young, Joi Perkins and Mark Moss.

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SOLD

5171 YACHT CLUB

5/5-4,625 sqft. SOLD by Allison Steilberg! Outfitted with the BEST of everything this house has been TOTALLY renovated and offers INCREDIBLE views of the St. Johns River & downtown skyline.



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Real estate market moving, heating up

Low inventory impacts pace of progress



By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

Although there may be some debate among real estate brokers as to whether the temperature of the housing market in the historic districts is “hot,” “super hot,” or merely “warming,” one thing is for certain: inventory is low and well-located properties, in good condition and which are priced right, do not sit on the market for very long.

“Things are selling quickly, especially homes that are priced well. My last couple of listings have received multiple offers in the first week. One was under contract in the first five days,” said Laney Smith, founder and broker with Cowford Realty and Design in 5 Points.

Sheron Willson, broker-manager of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices

Florida Network Realty in Avondale, agreed. “It’s a really good market as far as properties are selling quickly. Most are less than 90 days,” she said. “What’s significant is that inventory is low. When properties come on the market and are properly positioned, which includes condition and pricing, they will sell very quickly, sometimes even before they are officially on the market.”

After suffering from the devastating real estate recession in 2007, it has taken housing values in the historic districts nearly 10 years to recover. Fred Miller, CEO, broker/owner of Fred Miller Group Realtors in Ortega, describes the market as “warming up,” saying the future shows great promise due to seller confidence.

“The climate for appreciation for residential real estate values is getting

better by the month,” Miller said. “Home sellers are coming into the market. In a year or two it will be a full-blown increase in values, and it is getting faster and stronger as you go east in Jacksonville, however, oceanfront values are not back yet,” he explained.

“From Amelia Island to St. Augustine, it is as high as it has ever been, and it has surpassed values since 2007, but oceanfront has not,” he continued, noting one oceanfront property, which was listed in Ponte Vedra at \$15 million, only sold for \$5 million. “Riverfront values are going up faster than non-riverfront, but they are not rocketing up. Recovery is still nascent. It’s not like striking gold.”

“If you compare the market now to 2005-2006, which was the hottest market, this is not that hot,” said Gonzalo Mejia,

broker associate at Watson Realty Corporation’s San Marco/San Jose office. “But if something is listed at the right price, trust me, it will be gone.”

Jeff Chefan, CEO at Manormor Sotheby’s International Realty in San Jose, also concurs. “The confidence level in the marketplace is there,” he said. “But it’s tough to do a blanket statement that it is hot.”

The market is scalding in Nocatee where the number of houses sold in 2016 rose 103 percent over the year before, and also in Northeast St. Johns County where it is impossible to find a vacant lot on the ocean for less than \$3 million, Chefan said.

“Meanwhile on the river here, it is difficult to find an 8,000-square-foot home for that

Continued on page 17



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price,” he explained. “We sold an 8,500-square-foot home with two acres of land on the river for \$3.5 million. Prior to the crash, River Road and Ponte Vedra Boulevard were comparable in values to land and home. When you say the market is hot, it depends on what area, price point and product. Is it a resale, land or new construction?”

In Jacksonville, as a whole, overall sales prices went up seven percent over the past year, said Clark LaBlond, director of career development at Coldwell Banker Vanguard Realty in Avondale. “The bottom line is inventory is tight overall in Jacksonville,” he said, noting to get a more accurate picture of how the historic districts are doing, each neighborhood should be considered separately.

“The historic districts, I wish I could lump them all together, but they are very different markets,” he said. “Generally speaking, these markets did very well during the past year. At the end of the year, inventory was so low, so demand was higher.”

“Inventory is low, and people are buying, so if we had more inventory things would sell faster.”

— Sally Suslak, broker, with Traditions Realty

Statistics in historic districts

The following is a breakdown of real estate statistics for each historic neighborhood from December 2015 to December 2016 according to the MLS:

- In Avondale, the number of houses sold rose 14 percent; the average sale price rose six percent; the median sale price rose 13 percent with the median sale price in 2016 at \$250,000; the average number of days properties were on the market dropped eight percent.
- In Riverside, the number of houses sold rose seven percent while the average sale price rose eight percent; the median sale price rose one percent with the median sale price in 2016 at \$186,000; the average number of days properties were on the market dropped nine percent.
- In Murray Hill, the number of houses sold rose nine percent; the average sale price rose 14 percent; the median sale price rose 33 percent with the median sales price for 2016 at \$104,250; the average number of days on the market dropped three percent.
- In Ortega, the number of houses sold declined one percent; the average sale price rose five percent; the median sales price declined one percent with the median sales price in 2016 at \$280,000; the average number of days properties were on the market dropped one percent.

“Murray Hill has a younger demographic and is in transition. The homes there are traditionally smaller, but people will give up square footage just to live in this area,” said Lorri Reynolds, managing broker/vice president of Watson Realty Corporation in Avondale.

“Riverside is seen as fun and up-and-coming. Avondale is charming and stands



“The climate for appreciation for residential real estate values is getting better by the month.”

— Fred Miller, CEO, broker/owner of Fred Miller Group Realtors

on merit,” she said. “People in Ortega love living in Ortega and don’t want to move. People living in Ortega stay there.”

Meanwhile in San Marco, the market is consistently hot, said Missie Sarra LaPrel, a realtor with Re/Max Specialists. “People want to live in San Marco because of its charm, character, its village concept and the fact it lies in the hub of (Jacksonville’s) wheel, making it easy to get to the beach and other places. People like Lake Marco. The schools are good, it is close to the hospitals and there are so many parks. These features are critical to its popularity,” she said, noting living in the Hendricks Avenue Elementary district is particularly attractive to young families.

According to MLS:

- In San Marco, between December 2015 and December 2016, the number of houses sold declined two percent; the average sale price rose 14 percent; the median sale price rose five percent with the median sales price in 2016 at \$273,000; the average number of days properties were on the market dropped nine percent.
- In San Jose, the number of houses sold rose seven percent; the average sale price rose 11 percent; the median sale price rose 14 percent with the median sales price in 2016 at \$174,000; the average number of days properties were on the market dropped 17 percent.

Continued on page 18

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Continued from page 18

- In St. Nicholas, the number of houses sold rose three percent; the average sale price rose 13 percent; the median sales price rose 30 percent with the median sales price in 2016 at \$120,000; the average number of days properties were on the market dropped eight percent.

During the recession, when the bottom dropped out of the market, out-of-town buyers and “flippers” came in and invested in the historic districts, said Janie Boyd, founder/broker of Janie Boyd & Associates in Avondale. “They took a lot of the houses and fixed them up,” she said. “Now the neighborhoods have new construction with renovated homes, and we have a whole new market. Two-income families want new construction. Our neighborhoods have benefited from that.”

First-time home buyers are also pleased to purchase flipped houses because often they are on tight budgets and do not have money to make renovations, said Linda McMorrow, broker/owner of The Legends of Real Estate in San Jose. “Those with really tight budgets are happy to buy homes that are not updated. There is a lot of competition in that part of the market. Sales have not dwindled.”

In San Marco, brick bungalows are in high demand, and since many have been updated with additional square footage, buyers are relishing the option of buying slightly larger homes, said LaPrel.

Smaller houses always sell because they are more affordable, said Sally Suslak, broker, with Traditions Realty in Riverside, adding that homes priced from \$400,000 to \$1 million are considered the “move-up” market. “Everything is in demand, with bungalows being in high demand,” said Willson.



Low inventory drives market

There are less than five months of inventory in the historic districts, with less than four months’ supply in Murray Hill, said Willson. “In the historic districts, we don’t have a developer to increase inventory. We depend mostly on the resale of current properties. Many people think they might like to sell, but where would they go? Some people are very happy where they are. Some people are waiting,” she said, adding now that some homeowners have rebuilt equity since the crash, realtors are starting to see a “come on.”

Lack of inventory can also hamper the market because buyers have so little to choose from, said Suslak.

“Inventory is low, and people are buying, so if we had more inventory things would sell faster because people would have more to choose from,” she said. “People want to look at several things to know what’s out there.”

“The market is being driven by lack of inventory,” Mejia agreed.

And although one might think low inventory might cause a spike in prices, this hasn’t necessarily been the case.

“Nocatee is up 103 percent because they have inventory. They can’t keep up and build enough,” Reynolds said. “The fact that you have multiple contracts makes the market hot, but not hot enough. If you don’t have enough listings, it is not hot with frequency. 2016 was a surprising

year in that most of us expected to sell more, but the problem was there was not enough inventory,” she continued.

“Even though we saw increases in median prices in Avondale, Ortega and Riverside in single-family homes, as well as an increase across the board of median prices in Jacksonville, there still was a shortage of inventory. Sellers who are thinking about selling should put their house on the market, not only because of demand, but also because interest rates are rumored to be going up and probably will,” Reynolds said.

Continued on page 19

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Interest rates gradually rising

Interest rates went up 25 basis points from 3.25 to 3.50 a few weeks ago, said Miller. "It would be nice to see Janet Yellen leave it alone. Rates are inching up, and I expect we'll see another small increase this year."

However, slightly rising interest rates aren't necessarily a hindrance to the market. Often they serve as a clarifying factor for buyers who are unsure whether to jump in, said Laney Smith. "Having them go up slightly encourages people to make their plans," she said. "It's hard to play the market right. You just need to jump in when we have houses to choose from."

Although the rates "blipped" upward recently, McMorrow said she thinks they have stabilized. "Even when interest rates were 15 and 16 percent, people still needed a place to live so they just paid it and didn't look back," she said. "Later, they refinanced. Interest rates don't really stop a thing. At the end of the day, people proceed."

Mejia agreed. "Interest rates are still low. For some people, it will make a difference, but those people should realize maybe they should have bought something before. They need to take advantage now," he said. "We've seen a change in interest rates, but it doesn't impact affordability. I doubt they will skyrocket in the future. We've talked about them going up over the last three years. They will go up some, but not skyrocket to seven percent or higher. Maybe they will go closer to five percent."

Political winds changing

Although brokers in the historic districts differ as whether the election has had any impact on the real estate market, nearly everyone agrees things have been "positive" since the new administration came in last November.

"I think the general outlook with the political change is positive for real estate," said Lee Norville, owner/broker of Norville Realty. "I think there is a lot more confidence in our real estate market."

Chefan agreed and said he has noticed a greater sense of "stability" and a higher "confidence level" among his clients, especially in their desire to "move forward" with their businesses. "The new administration's commitment to growth has impacted the market positively," he said.

Boyd said she does not think national politics has any bearing on the market and believes people are generally more confident. "I don't see the political climate in my business," she said.

Meanwhile, McMorrow said people are responding positively to the booming stock market, which has risen substantially since the election. "The people I deal with are very optimistic and positive due to the

Financing eases

With new growth and a new attitude in Washington, some brokers have noticed financing is becoming more flexible, with some rules easing.

"I'm already getting emails from lenders saying they can get buyers qualified at a '500' credit score," said Reynolds, noting the mortgage process could be "dumbing down" with lower credit scores. "Already lenders are saying, 'send me your buyers,' but if there is chance they might default that does not make me happy. That is okay for a short-term sale, but in the long term it will collapse the industry."

Helping to keep things in check are appraisals, Reynolds said. "The appraisal must validate the purchase. We've seen some appraisals not hold. I think appraisals are going to help restrict what happened in 2006. Appraisals inherently restrict values in the market. They are a check-and-balance to prevent runaway inflation."

LeBlond said he has also noticed financing is starting to ease, but with the existing safeguards still in place he believes the market will continue to be strong and stable. "Lenders are more flexible with the options they are offering their customer base," he said. "It's a good thing when buyers have options. We still need to use caution. Lending guidelines are still strict but there's an opening up to different kinds of loans."

Overall, brokers in the historic districts see a rosy future in Jacksonville real estate. "Just generally, we are seeing growth in the city. Businesses are growing, relocation is happening. It's good for our economy. The confidence level is there. People are recognizing how good our quality of life is in Northeast Florida," said Chefan.

"The confidence level is there. People are recognizing how good our quality of life is in Northeast Florida."

— Jeff Chefan, CEO at Manarmor Sotheby's International Realty

stock market, which has responded in great favor," she said.

Not one to discuss politics, Barbara Swindell, founder and broker of River Point Real Estate in San Marco, said, "Everyone has the feeling the economic situation is up in general, borne out of the news and the stock market."

However, Smith said her clients, particularly those from overseas, are more cautious. "I think it (the political climate) matters," she said. "People want to see how things will play out because there have been so many changes in such a short time. My international clients are especially cautious. Some of them have been nervous about purchasing a home."

"Those with really tight budgets are happy to buy homes that are not updated."

— Linda McMorrow, broker/owner of The Legends of Real Estate

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Rotary Club cooks up support for Sulzbacher Center



Rotary Club of West Jacksonville volunteers, front: Dane Jensen, Mike Crumpler, Phil Voss (in apron), Elliott Jacob (grandson of Terry Vereen), Jack Wulbern (in apron), Alton Yates (in apron); back: Vincent Coyle, Michael Prendergast, Bob Kidd, Terry Vereen, Mark Klebe, Allen Wulbern, Ed Turner and Ed Lombard

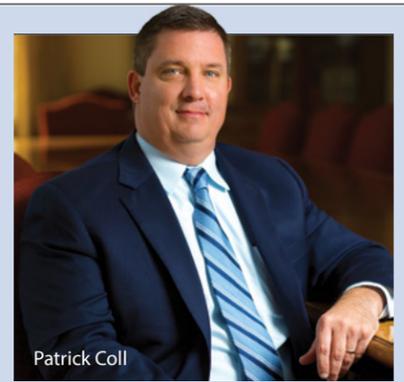
Rotarians around the world helped their communities for Valentine's Day, and locally, the Rotary Club of West Jacksonville showed its heart for the homeless.

"In keeping with Rotary's motto, Service Above Self, it is important for us to demonstrate that Rotary has Heart by directly reaching out and helping members of our community who are in need of food and shelter," said Kathleen Cold, Rotary Club of West Jacksonville president.

As part of the Rotary Club of West Jacksonville's community outreach, the club has supported the Sulzbacher Center through financial and volunteer support.

"Getting together to cook and serve meals at the Sulzbacher has been a big part of our club's dedication to helping different populations in our community – especially those who are in at-risk situations," said Edward Lombard, president-elect.

The Rotary Club of West Jacksonville will celebrate its 50th Anniversary and Presidents Night at the Florida Yacht Club on Friday, June 16, when Cold will finish her term and Lombard will assume office as Club President. Proceeds from this event will be donated to the Rotary Foundation's Polio Plus campaign to help eradicate the world of polio.



Patrick Coll

Patrick Coll joins Smith Hulse & Busey

Trial lawyer Patrick P. Coll of Ortega has joined the law firm of Smith Hulse & Busey as a shareholder. Before joining Smith Hulse, Coll was a Director at Bedell, Dittmarr, DeVault, Pillans & Coxe in Jacksonville.

Coll has more than 20 years of civic trial experience in cases involving products liability, contracts, employment disputes, business torts, real estate litigation, probate litigation, mergers and acquisitions, professional malpractice and other business disputes.

Coll is a member of The Florida Bar, American Bar Association, The Jacksonville Bar Association, the Florida Bar foundation and former Barrister in The Chester Bedell Inn of Court. He is recognized in Best Lawyers in America, Florida Trend Legal Elite, Florida Super Lawyers and has an AV Preeminent Rating by Martindale-Hubbell. Coll is also a member of the Florida Board of Bar Examiners.

Coll graduated with honors from the University of Florida College of Law and the University of Florida.

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Spring has Sprung

Jacksonville's spring climate brings out happy buyers in swarms. Like a bee, I find myself busily buzzing from home to home as I help sellers get ready to sell. Buyers are buying with record speed in our historic areas but sellers, be forewarned. Buyers expect the house to pass inspections and that, my friends, is not always an easy task. Curb appeal, great photographs and staging gets buyers inside your house but taking the contract to closing often requires fixing the worn out systems prior to marketing. The crawlspace, attic, roof, AC system, wiring and plumbing all need to be serviceable. Avoid buyers backing out of the purchase by knowing your home's condition.

Allow me to take this moment to shout 'thank you' to my favorite, fearless contractors who tackle all the quirky things we find in crawlspaces and attics. I couldn't do this job without you and your incredible patience and wisdom.

And to you my lovely buyers and sellers... thank you for endlessly allowing me to open doors for you. The stories you share with me are forever inspirational. Without you, I'd be bored to tears with nothing to do on some all too quiet beach. Don't let that happen...keep calling me. I love my job because of you and your beautiful homes.

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Former naval aviator named 107th commodore of Florida Yacht Club

The Florida Yacht Club, second oldest in Florida, installed Matthew Tuohy as its 107th Commodore.

Prior to a varied career in business and education, Tuohy spent almost three decades as a Naval Flight Officer, flying the S3A and S3B Viking. His early assignments included duties on the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower, the helicopter carrier USS Inchon, and the aircraft carrier USS Kitty Hawk. Tuohy also served on the Joint Staff in Washington D.C. as the Assistant Deputy Director for Operations (Information Operations).

Born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, Tuohy was a member of the inaugural NROTC class at Jacksonville University, where he currently serves as the Director of the School of Aviation. He holds both a bachelor's degree and a master's in business administration from JU, as well as several other degrees from other institutions.

The Venetia resident is a former member of the Jacksonville University's Board of Trustees and the Past President of the JU



Captain Matthew W. (Matt) Tuohy

Alumni Board of Governors. Tuohy was the JU Distinguished Alumni Award recipient in 2000. Additionally, he was named to the inaugural Class of 75 "Distinguished Dolphins" during JU's 75th anniversary and was awarded the JU Distinguished Service Alumni Award in 2013.

Tuohy is the Past President and member of the Board of Directors of the Jacksonville Council of the Navy League of the United States. He is the Vice Chair and member of the Greater Jacksonville Area USO Board of Directors.

Plant of Year nominated by Late Bloomers Garden Club

Each year since 1995, the Garden Club of America (GCA) has identified a stellar North American native plant to receive its Montine McDaniel Freeman Medal for Plant of the Year.

The magnolia ashei, commonly known as the Ashe magnolia, was named the 2017 Plant of the Year. The deciduous understory shrub or small tree native to eight counties in Florida, was nominated by Leslie Pierpont, of Ortega, a member of the Late Bloomers Garden Club. The 2017 winners were selected from 18 plants nominated by members of GCA clubs.

Pierpont is a horticulture judge for the GCA, and founded Native and Uncommon Plants in 2001, after moving to Jacksonville from Connecticut and realizing that most of the plant material in Northeast Florida was not native, but from places like Asia. She sold the business to Alfred and Leslie Romeu in 2015.



Leslie Pierpont, member of the Late Bloomers Garden Club, nominated the award-winning Ashe magnolia.



The Ashe magnolia was named 2017 Plant of the Year (Photo by Steven Christmas)

The Florida Department of Agriculture lists the Ashe magnolia as endangered due to a small population and restricted area of growth. The plant's glossy dark green leaves grow to two feet. The large citrus-scented, creamy white, saucer-shaped flowers have purple stains at an interior base of six to nine petals. The flowers bloom in spring, then set fruit borne on cone-shaped, pink-purple aggregates that add fall interest.

'Collaborate and Give' launched by local restaurant group

Three local restaurants will participate in a monthly nonprofit support program, which launched Feb. 27 to benefit the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund as the first recipient.

IL DESCO, located at the intersection of Park and King Streets in Riverside, Bistro Aix on San Marco Boulevard, and Ovinté at the St. Johns Town Center, are part of Forking Amazing Restaurants, an independent restaurant group which launched Collaborate and Give.

Through this program, Forking Amazing Restaurants will donate 5 percent of food sales generated at those restaurants over a three-day dining period, beginning on

the last Monday of each month, to a designated nonprofit partner.

"As a Jacksonville-based restaurant group, we take great pride in supporting nonprofit organizations that make our community a better place to live," said Matt Mannick, president of Forking Amazing Restaurants. "Tom Coughlin's leadership yields amazing results – both on the field and in the community. Since 1996, the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund has provided much-needed support for local families tackling childhood cancer. We look forward to raising awareness and funds for this worthy organization through Collaborate and Give."

Library board adds Ortega woman as trustee

Ortega resident and Leadership Jacksonville CEO Jill Dame has joined the Jacksonville Public Library's Board of Library Trustees as an At-Large Member.

Dame is a past recipient of the Junior League of Jacksonville's Tillie Fowler Community Leadership Award, Leadership Jacksonville's Distinguished Leadership Award, JCCI's 2005 Milestones Award for work as Chair of the Role of Nonprofit Organizations Study Implementation, and was chosen as a 2013 Woman of Distinction by Girl Scouts of Gateway Council and as a 2014 Woman of Influence by the Jacksonville Business Journal.

She has been actively involved in the Junior League of Jacksonville, PACE Center for Girls Jacksonville, the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida, Willing Hands, Girls on the Run of Northeast Florida, Episcopal School of Jacksonville, Jacksonville Women's Network, The Meninak Club of Jacksonville, and the Florida Bar.

Dame replaces former trustee and most recently Board Chair, Erin Vance Skinner, who served from 2009 – 2016.



Jill Dame



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President Billie Nimnicht III, center, and his employees celebrate being named 2017 DealerRater Dealer of the Year.

Nimnicht Chevrolet named DealerRater Dealer of the Year

Nimnicht Chevrolet, a local car dealership owned and operated by the Nimnicht family for over 75 years, has been named 2017 DealerRater Dealer of the Year.

The prestigious award recognizes auto dealerships across the United States and Canada that deliver outstanding customer service based on consumer reviews written on DealerRater.com by new and used-car shoppers and customers who have had their vehicles serviced at the dealership.

"It's all about the customer experience," said Billie Nimnicht, president of Nimnicht Chevrolet. "We appreciate that so many people took the time to write a good review, and we continually get great reviews."

The reviewers evaluated Nimnicht on its customer service, quality of work,

friendliness, pricing and overall experience. DealerRater has an audience reach of more than 40 million consumers who read more than three million dealer reviews.

Nimnicht has demonstrated consistently high PowerScore ratings for customer satisfaction, placing it in the top of its class. The PowerScore is determined by an algorithm that factors the dealership's average DealerRater consumer rating and the total number of reviews written about the dealership during the 2016 calendar year.

"We are very proud of this distinction," said Nimnicht. "It has taken a lot of hard work and dedication from our outstanding family of employees. Customer service is our number one priority, and this award shows that we really do care about our customers."

"You can't have happy customers without having happy employees," said Nimnicht as he talked about the employee motivation programs which helped the dealership earn its achievement.

Family Support Services recognizes Corrigan for hands-on involvement

Family Support Services of North Florida (FSS) honored Dr. Matthew Corrigan, board vice chair, at its annual board meeting Jan. 24 with the 2016 Board Member of the Year Award for his significant volunteerism and work with youth in Extended Foster Care, ages 18-22.

Dr. Corrigan, of Avondale, is Chair and Professor of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of North Florida.

He has worked closely with young adults in FSS's Independent Living program, assisting them in determining what classes at UNF were appropriate for their educational goals and arranging for them to sit in classes to integrate them into the college atmosphere.

"Our board members are not only made up of influential people, but members who take pride in being involved hands-on with our organization and FSS's young adults in so many unique ways," said Kaywork.



Dr. Matthew Corrigan with Naomi McGowan, FSS Board Chair

Dr. Corrigan also helps coordinate UNF college tours for the annual Challenge series and Passport to Leadership programs. He is a resource for FSS staff for post-secondary educational guidance, supports the mentoring program for ages 18-22 and participates in the FSS surf camp each year.



Jack and James Robison

Grassroots Natural Market celebrates a milestone

Locals were fortunate the day Jack and James Robison decided to open their doors in the 5 Points area of Riverside. The brothers, a dynamic duo of business knowledge with a fondness for natural foods, paired up to bring their concept to the neighborhoods.

The arrival in 2007 of Grassroots Natural Market at 2007 Park St. created an entirely new format for shoppers seeking an alternative to the "Big Box." From vitamins and herbs to craft beer, cheeses, and organic produce, freshly-made juices and smoothies,

the Robison brothers created a hot spot for consumers. For anyone seeking an alternative, neighborly option to the typical grocery shopping experience, Grassroots provides that sense of place.

As part of their company philosophy, the Robisons have been helping local nonprofits that improve upon the greening of our environment. Their team of passionate employees help people find unique products on their shelves every day, helping shoppers to lead healthier lives.

"We want to thank the community for making the last 10 years of business so successful, and we look forward to continuing to serve you," shared the brothers.

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Shell teams up with Daily's, raises over \$50,000 for St. Vincent's HealthCare Ministries

In a partnership with Daily's, owned and operated by First Coast Energy, Shell made a \$1 donation per fill-ups when customers used their Fuel Rewards® card.

Since October, the Fuel Up for a Cause campaign resulted in a check for \$51,692 to benefit St. Vincent's Mobile Health Outreach Ministry.

At a Feb. 23 check presentation at the Daily's at 4225 Roosevelt Blvd., First Coast Energy President/CEO Aubrey Edge spoke about his company's commitment to the City of Jacksonville and to St. Vincent's.

"Giving back is what today is all about. Everyone here knows that Daily's is very, very committed to giving back to our communities, whether it be our commitment to Daily's Place, in revitalization of downtown Jacksonville, or our many charitable endeavors, such as St. Vincent's Mobile HealthCare Ministry.

"This ministry does a tremendous job in our neighborhoods for underprivileged children and families throughout north Florida," said Edge. "It's a one-of-a-kind ministry and we're really, really proud to be associated with it."

Tom VanOsdol, St. Vincent's HealthCare System Chief Operating Officer and interim President/CEO, noted that with five mobile health care units, last year over 16,000 unique individuals were able to get access to health and dental care.

"Only through the generosity of our donors, and only through this unique mobile health outreach ministry were we able to take the care they need to where they are," said VanOsdol. "Beyond the



Aubrey Edge, First Coast Energy President/CEO, Mark Theobald, Shell Wholesale Territory Manager, Tom VanOsdol, St. Vincent's HealthCare System COO, and Jane Lanier, St. Vincent's Foundation President, with students from St. Matthew's Catholic School, a recipient of sports physicals from the St. Vincent's Mobile Health Outreach Ministry.

economic partnerships this creates for folks like Aubrey and the team at Daily's, this literally creates the opportunity for them to serve alongside us as the hands and feet of Christ. I know of no other program that is this broad and vast and is serving this many people."

After the check was presented by Shell Wholesale Territory Manager Mark Theobald and Aubrey Edge, St. Vincent's Foundation President and Chief Development Officer Jane Lanier, CFRE, thanked Shell and Daily's for the donation.

"What unbelievable partners. You have set the example for the whole corporate and business community throughout the

whole United States, not just Jacksonville, not just the Southeast. Daily's creativity just is beyond measure," said Lanier. "It's really nice to know Daily's cares about the health and well-being of our children in all of the communities throughout Northeast Florida.

The donation will benefit St. Vincent's efforts to bring fully staffed doctors-offices-on-wheels to areas of the Jacksonville community where these services are needed the most. It is the only mobile provider of free acute and preventive medical care, as well as health screenings and education, in Northeast Florida.

Local artist turns author for wilderness park book

Watercolor artist Kathy Stark, of Lakeshore, signed copies of her new book, "The Wilderness of North Florida's Parks," at a launch Feb. 23 at the Museum of Science and History (MOSH).

The book, a family-friendly exploration of the natural parks system in North Florida, includes watercolor paintings, sketches, notes, historical facts and maps, which serves as a guide – and a tribute – to the expansive, unspoiled stretches of wilderness in Florida.

Stark and her dog Tanner, who can be found in many of the illustrations, spent years exploring the parks and capturing their wild beauty in sketches that became the basis for the paintings, and eventually, for the book. Published in partnership with the Timucuan Parks Foundation, a portion of the proceeds will support that nonprofit, which advocates for North Florida's parks.

MOSH will host an accompanying exhibit through May 28, sponsored by Merrill Lynch, which is also underwriting the cost of 333 books to be donated to public libraries and public school libraries in Duval, Clay, Nassau and St. Johns counties. The exhibit will travel to other gallery venues in the area.



Kathy Stark with Anthony Kurlas, market executive with Bank of America Merrill Lynch, underwriter for Stark's book and exhibit



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Woman's Club makes impact on young lives in Riverside

The West Riverside Elementary School reading program is well funded, thanks to a \$16,000 donation from the Woman's Club of Jacksonville, whose Heritage Committee adopted the local school as a project this year. In addition, the money will pay for a versatile sound system which can be used outdoors and can connect to a variety of devices.

The sound system was the original request and, to the school's surprise,

enough funds were raised to add the reading intervention program.

The reading program Leveled Literacy Intervention (LLI) is designed to quickly bring up to grade-level competency children who find reading and writing difficult, according to Shawna White, principal at West Riverside Elementary. She noted the program was used with great success at Ruth N. Upton Elementary School.



Shawna White, West Riverside Elementary principal and Teresa Shoemaker, reading coach, with the Heritage Committee of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville: Irene Woodworth, Mary Anne Saadeh, Laura Crooks, Ann Trotter, Katherine Schnauss Naugle, Judy Davidson

Westside foster parent honored for quality parenting

Support Services of North Florida (FSS) honored foster parent Maria Vasquez at its annual board meeting Jan. 24 when CEO Lee Kaywork presented Vazquez with the 2016 Foster Parent of the Year award for "exhibiting an exorbitant amount of love, patience and going well above and beyond the concept of quality foster parenting."

Vazquez made certain her foster children were involved in extracurricular activities and had opportunities to participate in events, school functions and friendship outings like any other child. She also fought through barriers to keep foster children in the same schools they attended prior to placement in her home. She has supported visitations with biological parents and facilitated weekly Skype and Facetime sessions with pre-adoptive families to help build relationships.

"It is one of the hardest and yet most rewarding jobs to do, but people like



Tori, daughter of Maria Vazquez, Foster Parent of the Year Maria Vazquez, and Lee Kaywork, CEO of Family Support Services of North Florida

Maria, who are loving parents to our foster children, are the reason FSS is so successful," said Kaywork.

Based on the Southbank, FSS is the lead agency for foster care, adoption and family preservation in Duval and Nassau counties. For more information about FSS, visit www.fssjax.org.

Dog café opens in Venetia Plaza

Jacksonville Dog Café held its official grand opening Feb. 11 at 5535 Roosevelt Blvd. Located in a room behind Tony K's Barber Shop, the nonprofit offers adoptable dogs and potential owners a casual place to socialize without the stress of a shelter environment.

Founder Carolyn Cantrell Snowden of Ortega Forest already had a pet walking/sitting business when she got the idea for the dog cafés from a Facebook post. After holding half a dozen pop-up cafés at a variety of venues last year, Snowden began looking for a permanent site.

"I had feelings of déjà vu at our grand opening...a mixture of nervous excitement much like I did on my wedding day," said Snowden. "There were lots of witnesses as we were cutting the ribbon and celebrating much like when the doors of the church opened and people are watching when I walked down the aisle toward a new chapter in my life. Different outfit this time, but a few of the same key people, like my husband, Andrew, there with me."

Rescue groups may use the dog café for free, making donations to help overhead. Snowden said donations above what's needed for operating expenses will be given back to rescue groups.

Tony K will donate \$2 to the dog café for every haircut on the first Saturday of each month. For information about hours, visit jaxdogcafe.com or call (904) 610-0746.



Carolyn Cantrell Snowden with Scruffy, an adoptable dog.



Chloe Powell hugs Charley, a four-month-old Great Pyrenees puppy

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The Pajcics have always been basketball fans so the firm was thrilled to sponsor a recent basketball legends event at Jacksonville University. Former NBA all-stars and hall of fame members joined together for a memorable time all in support of JU Dolphin athletics.



Steve, Michael, and Curt Pajcic golfing with the great Artis Gilmore

NBA legends Artis Gilmore, George Gervin, Rick Barry and Robert Parish

It's a fabulous way to recycle flowers. The Pajcic Firm recently donated to Bouquets of Kindness, a charitable organization that takes flowers leftover from weddings or events to nursing homes, hospices, hospitals and more. Lisa Kirkwood's husband is one of Michael Pajcic's former clients. Lisa used a portion of his settlement to start the foundation so she could spread a little joy to those in need. All donations, including the actual flowers,



to bouquetsofkindness.org are tax deductible.



Martindale-Hubbell's list of Top ranked Law Firms



Annual Red Rose Ball was 'some enchanted evening'

The 36th Annual Red Rose Ball, themed "Champagne in the Enchanted Garden," was hosted by the St. Vincent's HealthCare Foundation Feb. 3 at the Jacksonville Marriott at Southpoint.

The enchanted evening of black tie and gowns featured a cocktail hour, dinner and dancing to music by The RiverTown Band, as well as a silent auction and a live auction hosted by Charlene Shirk. Honorary chair was Betsy Lovett; co-chairs were Betsy and Steven Siegel, M.D., Nanette and David McInnes, M.D., and Paula and Michael Phelan, M.D.

Each year, the Red Rose Ball raises money to continue the Mission to serve the sick and the poor in Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia. This year, the event raised more than \$350,000 and all proceeds will benefit the St. Vincent's pulmonary program, for early diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer.



Tracy and David Williams



Rob and Caroline Frazier with Ann Carey and Keith Holt



Neetal and Dr. Saamil Oza



Ward Lariscy with Betsy Lovett

SOCIAL R

Matt, Lisa and Michael Obringer



Chris, Erica, Dave, Patty and Don DeStephano with Leanna and William Nash

Sidney and Ruthie Simmons

Annual charity ball celebrates Silver Anniversary

Catholic Charities hosted the 25th annual Black & White Ball Feb. 25 at the Jessie Ball duPont Center, a popular event venue and the location of Catholic Charities' Jacksonville office.

Honorary chairs for the gala were Julie and Joe Helow. Event Chair was Paola Parra Harris and Mistress of Ceremonies was Charlene Shirk, a moderator on The Chat. Platinum sponsor was the Alfred I. duPont Foundation.

Over the past 25 years, the annual ball has raised almost \$3 million for Catholic Charities' Emergency Assistance Program, benefiting families in need. Over 20,000 individuals were served by the organization in 2016, receiving assistance with food, utilities, rent, housing support services and case management.



Catholic Charities Development Director Kelly Kunkel with Sydney Edwards and Executive Director, Lauren Weedon Hopkins



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REGISTER

Lang Lang makes Jacksonville debut at Symphony gala

Jacksonville Symphony supporters enjoyed a pre-concert reception with world-renowned pianist Lang Lang, who made his Jacksonville debut Feb. 17 performing Bartok's Piano Concerto No. 2, as well as pieces from both Tchaikovsky's and Prokofiev's *Romeo and Juliet* in a Valentine's Day program entitled Valentines in Verona.

During the gala, Symphony President and CEO Robert Massey announced the Vision

2020 campaign to raise \$50 million, half of which will be used to increase the endowment and fund special initiatives, including capital improvements in the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts, recording projects under Courtney Lewis and touring. Co-chairs of the campaign are Gilchrist Berg and Carl Cannon, with honorary co-chairs Robert Jacoby and Robert Shircliff.

The event also marked the 20th anniversary of Jacoby Symphony Hall at the Times-Union Center for Performing Arts. Jacoby Hall opened for the first time on April 26, 1997. The Symphony has performed since 1949 and has featured artists such as Isaac Stern, Benny Goodman, Duke Ellington, Marilyn Horne, Luciano Pavarotti, Joshua Bell and Itzhak Perlman.



Joe and Anna Spiak with Mary Lou and Aaron Krosnick and Kevin Chase



Sasha and Fiona Peters with Natalie and West Herford



Libby Jennison with Caroline and Kevin DeQuisto, Crystal and Justin Ashourian with Erin and William Colledge

Two more join ranks of Children's Champions

Established in 2006 by Episcopal Children's Services, the Children's Champion Award recognizes individuals and organizations which work passionately to elevate the welfare of children in the community.

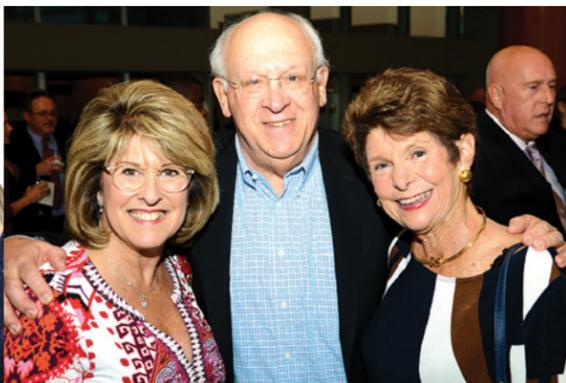
Honored at the 2017 event were Deborah Gianoulis, president and CEO of the Schultz Center, and Davalu Parrish, former president and CEO of The Bridge of Northeast Florida, Inc.

The women join the ranks of previous female honorees such as Delores Barr Weaver, Pamela Paul, Joanie Newton, Betsy Ross Lovett, Connie Hodges and Helen Lane. Nine men and three organizations have also earned the award over the past 11 years.

Chair for the Feb. 16 event at the Omni Jacksonville Hotel was Inger Geraghty, wife of Florida Blue CEO Patrick Geraghty.



Anne-Marie Hulsey with Hillary Whitaker and Kerry Shewchuk



Honoree Deborah Gianoulis with Howard and Joy Korman



Dr. Warner and Sherry Webb



Event Chair Inger Geraghty with Patrick Geraghty

Neighborhood!

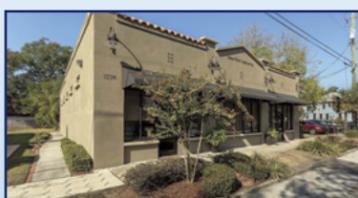
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Planning for Celebrity Chefs event in full swing

The planning meeting for the 31st Annual Celebrity Chefs Tasting Luncheon and Silent Auction, to be presented by the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary, was graciously hosted by Marilyn Carpenter at her home in Mandarin Jan. 31.

The annual Celebrity Chefs event, to be held Thursday, Mar. 30, at the Prime Osborn Convention Center, will include a silent auction, which raises thousands of dollars for special projects. Supporters will take home a recipe book of dishes served at the tasting by leaders of local nonprofit organizations.

The Auxiliary membership includes over 100 women who work throughout the year to make this event possible. Funds raised through this event support several of The Salvation Army's programs including scholarships for homeless children at the Child Development Center; contributions to the family self-sufficiency fund and purchasing bus passes for the Towers Center of Hope and social service programs; purchasing clothing for Angel Tree bags distributed to low-income families at Christmas time, and ongoing support of the Adult Rehabilitation Center.



Heather Corey, Hostess Marilyn Carpenter, Mary Love Strum and Major Janine Vincent



Kate Rouh, Patty Moss, Phyllis Andruszkiewicz

Artists guild speaker wants to tile the town

Now in its ninth year, the Jacksonville Artists Guild (JAG), showcases a variety of artists and puts the spotlight on an artist as event speaker each month.

At its Feb. 13 meeting at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, JAG displayed art from Ortega resident Tim Baker, Bob Mielnikowski of the Southside, and Sha Sha Preston. Featured speaker was Kate Garcia Rouh, who has been an active, exhibiting artist in Jacksonville for over 30 years. Rouh also has taught in the Duval County Public Schools for almost 20 years and retired in 2016 after serving as the Art Resource teacher at West Riverside Elementary School.

Rouh and husband Kenny are RouxArt, Inc., whose goal is to tile Jacksonville with mosaic art. Installations may be seen in Murray Hill, at Community First Credit Union, under the south end of the Main Street bridge, in Hemming Park and Main Street Park, and many other places. RouxArt has been awarded several grants, a Spark Grant from the Cultural Council in May 2014, and an Art Ventures Grant from The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida.

The guild meets the second Monday of each month, October through May, in Leatherbury Hall at St. Mark's Episcopal Church, 4129 Oxford Ave. at 5:30 p.m.



Tim Baker with Caroline, Eric and Bonnie Bedenbaugh



Jean Dodd, Maxine Kroll



Linda White and Linda Tuschinski with Mike O'Brien, Executive Director of Greater Jacksonville Area USO, Carol Hamilton



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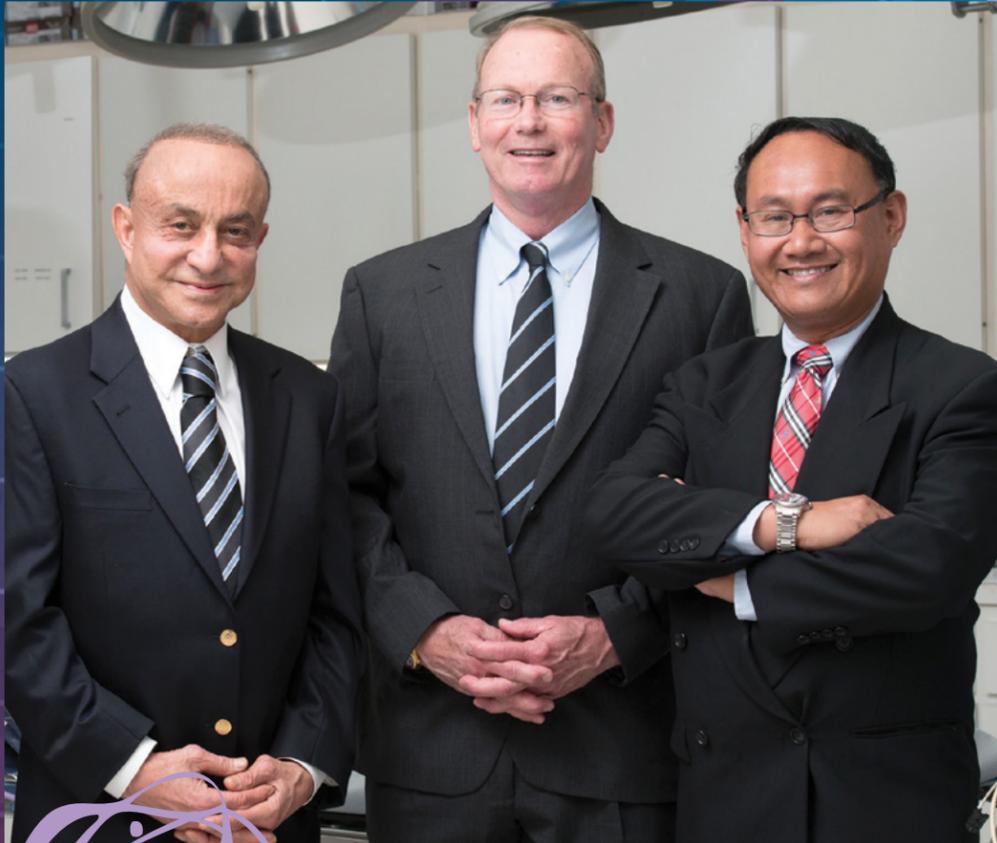
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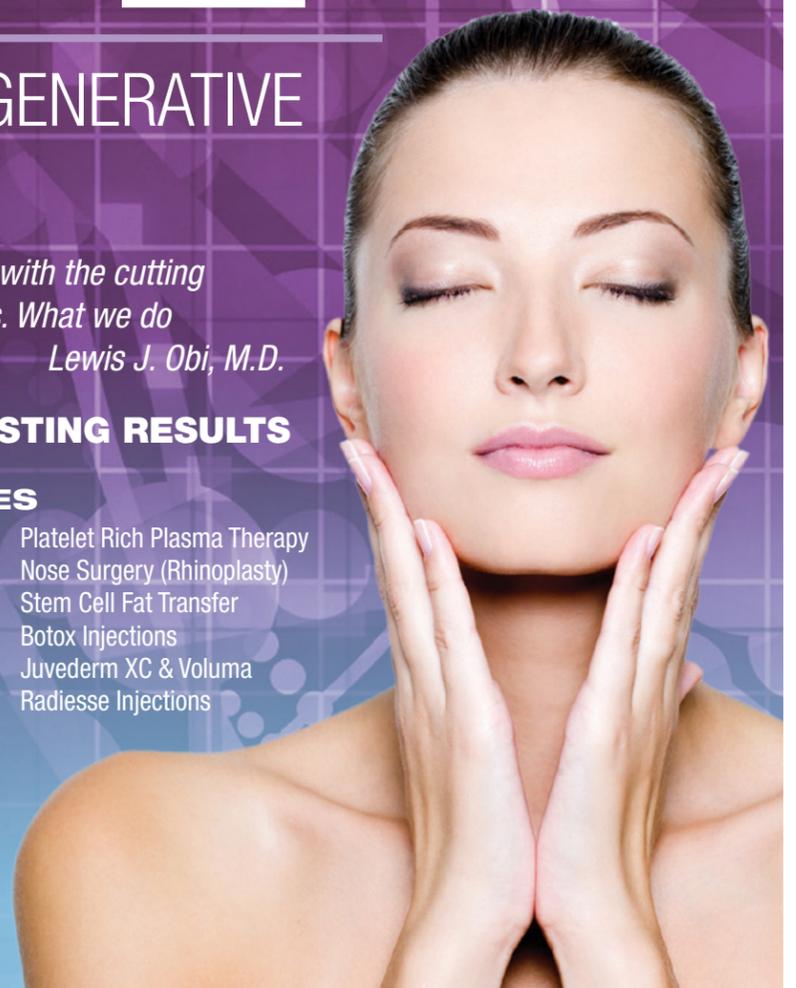
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4th Annual Heart of the Runway sets stage for successful support

Ever the gracious host, Linda Cunningham opened the doors to her Kings Avenue boutique Feb. 9 for the 4th annual Heart of the Runway fashion show and luncheon to benefit North Florida School of Special Education.

As in past years, 140 guests dined al fresco in the courtyard or amid racks of Cunningham's unique designs, enjoying a meal catered by the school's own Berry Good Farms. In addition to a parade of fashions provided by Cunningham, and by Dillard's for the young ladies and men, NFSSE's own Angels of the Woods circulated among supporters. The calendar models brought attention to the school's expansion project, which will include a lower school campus and equestrian center.

Gross results from the show were nearly \$12,000 and Linda Cunningham will donate 10 percent from all sales that day, according to Melanie Jensen, NFSSE development director.



A.J. and Kathryn Anderson



Diane Rodriguez, Katie Elksnis, Audrey Cabi



Patty Myers, Jennifer Pinckney, Debra Rains



John Hayt, Carl and Rita Cannon, J.F. and Peggy Bryan, Delores Barr and J. Wayne Weaver

Giant giraffe on permanent display at zoo

Visitors to the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens can enjoy a close-up encounter with a 20-foot tall 1,500-pound giraffe at

Donor Plaza. The zoo commissioned the steel sculpture, which was designed by UNF Professor Jenny Hager and installed by Hager's husband, sculptor/instructor Lance Vickery, with the help of UNF art and design students. The giraffe was dedicated on Feb. 2 at a reception hosted by J.F. and Peggy Bryan, Carl and Rita Cannon, John and Gerri Hayt, and J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver.



Michael and Ellen Hughes with Peggy Bryan



Tom and Jane Schmidt

Carpenter Society meets in Brooklyn

HabiJax homeowner Santoria Walker and Jacksonville Sheriff's Office Zone 5 Assistant Chief Deloris Patterson of the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office were the guest speakers at a Carpenter Society event hosted by Habitat for Humanity of Jacksonville, Inc. Jan. 24 at Hobnob in Brooklyn's Unity Plaza.

Walker, who purchased her HabiJax home in 2011, shared a heartwarming story about finding hope through homelessness. Patterson spoke about her experience working with the New Town community, where HabiJax has focused all of its housing services and home building since 2011.



Martin Harrell with Angela Leatherbury and Harry Goodall

Carpenter Society events are held quarterly, and showcase homebuyers and individuals active in the HabiJax community. Anyone interested in supporting HabiJax should contact Morgan Andreas at mandreas@habijax.com or call (904) 208-6638.

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Soaring high, HEAL serves those on autism disorder spectrum

Leslie and Bobby Weed, co-founders of HEAL (Helping Enrich Autistic Lives), welcomed guests to a celebration under the stars Feb. 23. Held on the second floor of the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse, Starry Skies & Butterflies celebrated 10 years of grant-making to serve the needs of children on the autistic disorder spectrum in Jacksonville.

The star-studded event featured world-renowned performance painter David Garibaldi, and 1970s dancing to the music of Boogie Freaks. In keeping with HEAL's mission to support other nonprofit organizations who serve children with autism, proceeds from the auction of a special mosaic created by the North Florida School of Special Education was donated to the school.

HEAL has granted over \$2 million locally since its beginnings, and in 2016 began iHEAL, a program to distribute 200 iPads to children with autism in local schools.



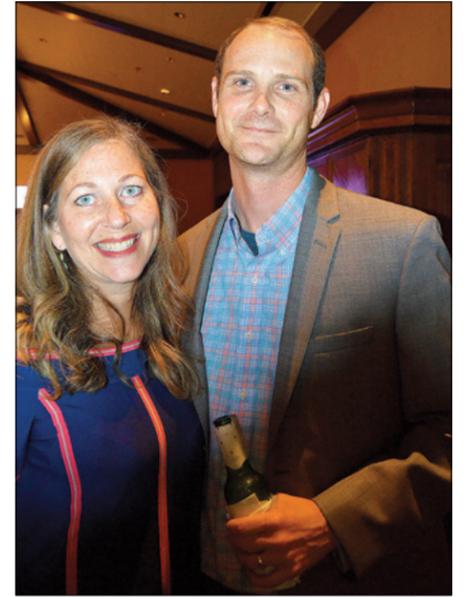
Breanna Bryant with Dawson, the Henderson Haven's assistance dog



Hank Griffis with Heal Co-founders Leslie and Bobby Weed



Debbie Joye, Roberta Konradi and Carla Jennings



Tracy and Jason Bethea

Homeless advocate praises City Rescue Mission

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

Ron Hall, co-author of the New York Times best-selling book, "Same Kind of Different As Me," was the guest of honor and featured speaker during the annual City Rescue Mission banquet Feb. 16 at the Lexington Hotel on the Southbank.

Prior to dinner, Hall, a wealthy art dealer and advocate for the homeless, signed his

book, a heart-warming story about a life-changing encounter with a dangerous, homeless drifter who he befriended while doing volunteer work at a homeless shelter.

During the event, Hall said he was impressed with his visit to Jacksonville's City Rescue Mission. "I have visited over 300 homeless rescue missions in 40 states, and I would rank Jacksonville in the top five, in regards to the care that is given to its clients, its facilities, which are well

maintained, and its staff. The clients are happy here," Hall said.

"Penny (Kieviet) is in the top five of homeless mission executive directors. What she has done with the amount of money she has, to provide the amount of services, quality of services and success rate of those who graduate from the program is in the top five. She is doing a fantastic job," Hall continued. "You don't know how hard it is to raise money for mission work, and there is no one more needy than those who don't have a place to live."

Hall said the City Rescue Mission provides Jacksonville residents, particularly its faith-based community, with the "opportunity" to get involved. "The homeless problem is



City Rescue Mission Executive Director Penny Kieviet with Author Ron Hall and Karen Fletcher

a simple thing to solve," he said. "It's fashionable to talk about the homeless, but not to talk to the homeless. The homeless consider themselves faceless. They aren't scary, they are just lonely people looking for someone to talk to them. They are people looking for a friend," he said.

Homelessness is a "faith-based" problem, Hall said. By engaging with homeless and working to find them places to stay, collectively Jacksonville churches could solve the problem in a month, he said. "I'll bet there are twice as many churches as homeless people in Jacksonville," he said. "If every church took in just one or two, I believe all homeless could be accommodated in 30 days."



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10th Annual Root Ball goes 'into the woods'

"Into the Woods," the theme of the 10th annual Root Ball held at WJCT TV Studio Feb. 11, was evident throughout the evening with guests in flannel shirts and other woody garb, and a menu abounding with items named for flora and fauna.

Patrons dined on Little Lamb Bites, Assorted Earthy Breads, Ethereal Bird of Prey and Forest Wilde Beast, as well as Roasted Woodland Roots and Lichen This Risotto. Even items in the silent auction bore woodland signatures, such as Journey into the Woods, a seven-day North Carolina get-away for six donated by John Hurtubise and Ric Goodman.

Proceeds from the ball benefit both Greenscape and The Late Bloomers Garden Club, which has partnered with Greenscape of Jacksonville, Inc. on the Root Ball since 2007 to raise awareness of the importance of trees in our community.



Mary Jane Morris and Greg Allegro

Chairs for Root Ball 2017 were Laura Haley and Mike Robinson, and Tree of Life presenting sponsors were Jennifer and Joseph Duke.



Leslie Pierpont, Barbara and William Harrell



Dick Pierpont, Anne and Randall Mann

New philanthropic class chosen



Front: Jason Spencer, Alison Trager, Ben Trager, Kirsten Martino, Ben Setzer; back: Marshall Hill, Glenn Miller, Doug Tutwiler, Blair Sherman, Dan Foley (Photo by laird/blac palm, inc.)

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida has selected its latest group of next generation philanthropists, naming 10 to the Weaver Philanthropic Initiative Class of 2017. The Community Foundation has been nurturing potential philanthropists for nearly 20 years, periodically offering them the opportunity to learn more about our community's needs, and how to maximize their charitable giving.

The Weaver Philanthropic Initiative Class of 2017 includes Blair Sherman of Granada, Jason Spencer of Riverside, Glenn Miller and Doug Tutwiler, both of San Marco, as well as Dan Foley, Marshall Hill, Kirsten Martino, Brent Trager, Alison Trager, Ben Setzer.

Program alumni and members of The Community Foundation's Board of Trustees welcomed the Weaver Philanthropic

Initiative Class of 2017 at a reception in November. In January, the class began its six-month education process, including opportunities to experience hands-on grantmaking. Along the way, members will learn about the critical issues and abundant opportunities that exist in our community. At its conclusion, participants will have a strong understanding of their own philanthropic leadership style, as well as an enlightened look at the grant-making opportunities in our area.

The Community Foundation has been identifying and guiding the next generation of philanthropists through this program since 1999. In 2013, in recognition of the philanthropic leadership provided to the community by J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver, the initiative was renamed the Weaver Philanthropic Initiative.

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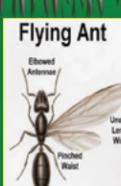
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Young Lawyers put the heat on for good cause

The Young Lawyers Section of the Jacksonville Bar Association kept chili pots stirred Feb. 18 to raise \$8,000 for the Anthony J. Stinson Association for Change, a Northside charity which offers tutoring, mentorship and civic guidance to help youth at risk find ways to resolve conflicts peacefully and to avoid violence. Stinson's teenage son was killed in a drive-by shooting in 2013. The event also provided four carloads of in-kind donations, such as board games, school supplies and snacks.

Bringing chili, charity and community together under the Fuller Warren Bridge, 36 teams vied for prizes in several categories. The "Crowd Favorites" included chili made by Smith Hulsey & Busey, Ansbacher Law and McGlinchey Stafford, while "Best Overall by Judges" was given to Moseley Prichard Parrish Knight & Jones, who also won Meatiest, Johnson and Lufrano, and Jacksonville



The Jacksonville Asian American Bar Association team won Best Overall and Most Original. Front, Bella Aguila, Maria Aguila; back: Nicole Liu, Phoenix and Dee Stresing, Art Stresing

Asian-American Bar Association, which also was awarded Most Original.

Other winners included Brennan Manna Diamond for spiciest chili, Spohrer and Dodd for Best Cornbread and McGuire Woods for Best Fixins.



The McGlinchey Stafford team was a Crowd Favorite: Wes Ridout, Gabriel Hartsell, Amy Kisz, Jessica Vantroot, Daniel Pasky



The Moseley Prichard Parrish Knight & Jones team won Best Overall and Meatiest Chili: Joni Poitier, Shea Moser, Kendall Greiner, Carol Adcox, Karen Fitzpatrick (back), Stephanie Temple



The Spohrer Dodd team of Saul Weinstein, Steve Browning, Keith Maynard, Jay Howanitt was voted Best Cornbread.



32nd Annual Women for Christ luncheon served 560

Officers and committee members pose with guest speaker Kelly Minter (front, fourth from right) at the 32nd annual Women for Christ luncheon held Feb. 21 at the Prime Osborn Convention Center. The group began a non-denominational effort to bring outstanding Christian speakers to Jacksonville in 1985. The annual event has always been held at the Prime Osborn and this year seated 560 women. Past speakers have included Christian authors and, in 2010, Pam Tebow, mother of former University of Florida football quarterback and Jacksonville native Tim Tebow.




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Vikings invade 91st Revellers Pageant and Ball

The 91st Annual Mystic Revellers Pageant and Ball had a Viking theme to celebrate the start of the 10th decade of Ye Mystic Revellers and Mardi Gras in Jacksonville. Captain of this year's event was Mark Holley; vice-captain was Trey Martin; David Basset served as King and Queen of the Court was Sara Parsons.

The always-entertaining black tie event is unlike any other outside of New Orleans, with skits provided by Revellers' members, an open bar, a live band and dancing at the Jacksonville Fairgrounds until they close it down in the wee hours of the morning.

"There was some spectacular stuff this year, including a full-size multi-headed dragon, a cannon, a cyclops, a minotaur and a Viking boat," said Holley, who noted he probably shook almost half the hands of the 800 or more in attendance.

Ye Mystic Revellers is North Florida's oldest Mardi Gras organization, established in 1923, whose primary focus is to continue the city's rich Mardi Gras tradition.



Eric and Jenifer Roper, Bert and Sandy Ralston, Carson and Amanda Skinner, Connor O'Leary, Trey and Christy Martin, Mark E. and Ivy E. Holley, Alan and Beth Weldon, Lorine and Jason Wilson, Laurie and John Naugle, Kris and John Trotter (Photo by Eric Miley)



King David Basset and Queen Sara Parsons; front: Jeb Naugle, Broward L. Naugle, Ella Cate Wise, Poppy Applegate, Bishop S. Holley, Pierce Holley, Kenneth Wise (Photo by Eric Miley)



Cesiney Sapin and Ida Uffelmann



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Celebrity journalist speaks at Florida Forum

Former Fox News anchor Megyn Kelly, now with NBC News, was the second of three distinguished speakers in The Women's Board Florida Forum speaker series, now in its 25th season. The Jan. 30 event at the Times-Union Center for Performing Arts was well attended as guests were interested in hearing Kelly's views about the election season and the state of journalism.



Susan Lemasters with Mike Demont and Shelley Klempf

The Florida Forum has featured a wide array of speakers in politics, entertainment, business and more, and has contributed more than \$7 million to Wolfson Children's Hospital.



James and Judy Root with Ward and Betsy Huntley



Mary Love Strum with Carolyn and Clancy Houston, JoJo and Michael Grove

Mukti Freedom Gala provides second chance for victims of human trafficking

"Renewed: To be Made Strong Again" was the theme of the 6th annual Mukti Freedom Gala, a fundraiser for Rethreaded held Feb. 11 at the Glass Factory downtown.

Mukti, which means "freedom" in Bengali, is the nonprofit's primary fundraising event to provide meaningful work for women survivors of human trafficking. The gala included dinner, silent auction, poetry readings, live music and shopping Rethreaded's products, including scarves, handbags, and jewelry.

In five years, the Barnett Street-based organization founded by Kristin Keen of Riverside has provided more than 17,000 hours of work to 24 survivors locally, and helped to sustain the freedom of more than 2,200 women internationally.

Proceeds from the ball will support Rethreaded's Survivor Advocate Program, which provides survivors of human trafficking with case management, mental health counseling, crisis counseling and classes.



Rethreaded Executive Director Kristin Keen with Chris Byers



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The Customers Have Spoken

*O'Steen Volkswagen Awarded Elite 2016
Customer First Club Award for Fifth Straight Year*

For the Fifth Consecutive Year, O'Steen Volkswagen has been awarded the Customer First Club Award for achieving high ratings in customer satisfaction. The Jacksonville dealership achieved the prestigious prize most recently in 2016, earning membership into the coveted Customer First Club after receiving some of the highest Customer Service Experience Survey ratings from among all Volkswagen dealerships in the country.

Identified over many years as an industry leader in customer satisfaction, O'Steen Volkswagen remains part of an elite group of Volkswagen dealerships that excel in all customer service standards. This most desired recognition has been awarded to only 45 Volkswagen dealers out of 662 in the United States.

Through an annual Customer Service Survey, Volkswagen customers play an important role in selecting their brand's elite Customer First Club members. The 45 dealers named to the First Club this year excelled in all aspects of the consumer experience, including new car, pre-owned and service.

"Being awarded the 2016 Customer First Club award for the fifth year in a row, as well as being recognized as one of the best Volkswagen dealerships in the country out of over 662 dealerships is such a great honor," said Tom O'Steen, the dealership's co-owner. "This award represents



The entire staff of O'Steen Volkswagen was excited to earn the well-deserved award.

"This award represents the 100-percent commitment our team has to give quality service to our clients every day, all year long."

*Tom O'Steen
O'Steen Volkswagen co-owner*

the 100-percent commitment our team has to give quality service to our clients every day, all year long. This award is especially meaningful, because it reflects the level of satisfaction our customers have received from our dealership. We are very grateful that our customers recognize and appreciate the high-level of service we seek to provide at O'Steen Volkswagen," he said.

Bill Olive, the dealership's general manager, also expressed his appreciation for the conscientious effort of all who work at O'Steen Volkswagen. "We look forward to honoring and rewarding our hard-

working employees and their families this spring. Through the upcoming appreciation event, we plan to celebrate the hard work of all our trusted staff," he said.

The O'Steen family has been a part of the Jacksonville community for four generations and has been in the automotive business since 1969. O'Steen Volkswagen is located at 11401 Philips Highway, Jacksonville, Florida and provides sales and service on New and Pre-Owned Volkswagens, as well as all types of automobile makes and models.



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Robert parked his wheelchair and got moving again

Walking used to be a difficult task for Robert Hogan. But thanks to the Balance Program at AgeWell, the former marathoner has parked his wheelchair and walker and is active again.

Robert has a neurological condition that causes fluid in his brain and throws off his balance. A physical therapist at AgeWell introduced him to the Balance Master system, a device that assesses and treats balance and stability issues with exercises tailored to a patient's needs.

"The Balance Master was impressive. It pointed out what I could and couldn't do and helped restore some of my balance and ability," said the 81-year-old Atlantic Beach resident. The therapy is one of many offerings at Baptist AgeWell Center for Senior Health.

A former long-distance runner with more than 200 marathons under his belt, Robert is now able to shop, cook and do more. He's even participating in adaptive race-walking competitions.

"I am amazed by how much more active Robert is," said his wife Gladys. "He walks 1 to 2 miles a day and is much happier, all around."

To make an appointment, call **904.202.4AGE (4243)**.



Robert Hogan is active again after working with Physical Therapist Bruce Cathcart at Baptist AgeWell Center.

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Aging in Place

Senior nonprofits discuss setting up neighbor-to-neighbor village communities

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

The well-used statement, "It takes a village," does not necessarily apply only to the concept of raising children. Village to Village network, a new concept in senior living which helps elderly residents stay in their homes longer, may soon come to your neighborhood.

On Feb. 3, the Community Advisory Council (CAC) of the AgeWell Institute of Baptist Health welcomed more than 50 representatives and other stakeholders of Jacksonville nonprofits and other organizations that cater to its senior community to hear Natalie Galucia, executive director of the Village to Village Network, speak about the Village concept, which started in Boston in 1999.

Also speaking at the event was Gloria Niec, executive director of Celebrations Thriving in Place Village in Orlando. Niec explained the nuts and bolts of setting up a Village in the Celebrations community near Disney World.

The concept was born on Boston's Beacon Hill in 2001 when a group of residents founded a nonprofit called Beacon Hill Village so they could access necessary services from their homes instead of being forced to move to into retirement communities.

The idea is powered by residents who have a strong desire to care for themselves with the help of community volunteers through a neighbor-to-neighbor network, rather than see themselves being taken care of by others in assisted living facilities.

There are currently 200 open Villages in the United States with more than 150 in development in 45 states and the District of Columbia, said Dr. Kenneth A. Tannenbaum, chair of the CAC. "Frankly, it's not enough," he said, noting he hoped the community discussion Feb. 3 would spawn grassroots

efforts within the neighborhoods of Jacksonville. Although the AgeWell Institute of Baptist Health is willing to help facilitate the process by offering neighborhood groups resources, information and coordination assistance, Villages must be initiated by the older residents within the local community that will use their services.

"We can't do it. The only way to do it is to get it started by the people who live there who want to do it," he said.

In her talk, Galucia said with the Baby Boom generation aging out, soon there will be more adults ages 65 and older than can be accommodated by existing retirement communities. "We can change the way people age in America and the Village model is one way," she said, adding the model is "very adaptable" and can translate to every community's individual wants and needs.

Villages are an inexpensive and easy way communities can address the current and unfolding challenges connected with aging, she said. They focus on the whole person, allowing senior residents to break down a sense of isolation and more easily find a way to socialize and have a sense of connectedness while living in their own homes.

Most Village programs range from 25 to 900 resident members and often begin within small, geographically-based neighborhoods that have a goal to consolidate and coordinate essential services such as transportation, hands-on assistance within the home, yardwork, or bookkeeping, Galucia said. Villages also often provide lists of approved home-maintenance contractors, some of which may provide discounts to members. By relying on a mixture of paid and volunteer help, members receive the assistance they would receive at a retirement community without uprooting themselves from their homes.

The key to the Village concept is volunteerism, she said. Programs and services

are mainly provided through volunteer-based, neighbor-to-neighbor, pay-it-forward mutual support services, although some Villages do have paid employees, she said.

Other principles inherent within the Village model which Galucia discussed were:

- Grassroots self-governance: the program is for and led by older adults
- Consolidator of Services: Villages often use a "one call does it all" concierge service provider.
- Service and Information Resource Center: Rather than duplicating existing programs and services, the Village acts as a broker, consolidator, and connector to help members access the information and services they need.
- Collaboration: Cooperation among local Villages, and across generations, as well as with other senior service agencies, businesses and municipal programs is essential.
- Self-supporting: Villages are funded through membership dues, grants and donations.

Average annual membership fees range around \$450 per year for an individual and \$650 for a household, and \$90 for low-income members, which can be broken down into monthly payments, Galucia said, adding that Villages also often include "subsidized" memberships depending on individual resident's needs. An average Village raises approximately 40 to 60 percent of its funding through donations, grants, and membership fees.

The Village to Village Network is a national organization that provides online resources, education, and expertise to assist

community members in establishing and managing their Villages.

"I was intrigued to learn more about the Villages concept," said Celeste Pattee, an Avondale resident who attended the community discussion. "I understand the need and purpose of mobilizing a community to help one another. I am fortunate to live in a friendly neighborhood where neighbors look out for one another. I believe the Villages concept would thrive in my neighborhood and many more neighborhoods throughout Jacksonville," she said, adding that the framework may already exist in the form of neighborhood watch programs.

"Since attending the AgeWell event, I have talked with friends and associates about the Villages concept and all are intrigued and wish to learn more. I believe the Villages concept can become a reality in Jacksonville with more outreach and education," she said.

"It is such a natural fit for our city because we are a city of neighborhoods. We don't say we're from Jacksonville, we say instead we are from Riverside, or St. Nicholas, or the Beach. We are a city of neighborhoods and that's how we operate here," said Audrey Moran, senior vice president, Baptist Health Social Responsibility & Community Advocacy, noting it is Baptist Health's desire to be a partner by assisting neighborhood groups by offering technology, food and drink, and meeting space as they seek to organize their Villages.

"We have to do it this way, because we are so large. Since we are already neighborhood-oriented and are a city full of people who care about each other, this is something we can do," Moran said.

"We can change the way people age in America and the Village model is one way."

— Natalie Galucia, executive director of the Village to Village Network

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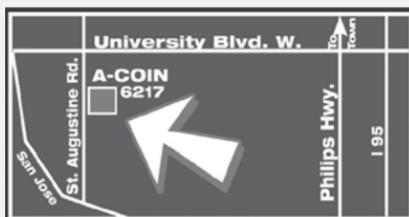
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Repainting Murray Hill one blank wall at a time

New York artist donates time to new mural on Edgewood Avenue

By Kate A. Hallock
Resident Community News

If Jason Tetlak has his way, Murray Hill will become known as a fun, creative place to live and work. A graphic designer, former elementary school art teacher, and member of the Murray Hill Preservation Association board, Tetlak has big plans for the historic community.

As coordinator for the MHPA-sponsored mural project, Tetlak began procuring blank walls and willing artists in 2016 to beautify the century-old neighborhood. He was also involved with the Murray Hill centennial celebration block party in September 2016, which gave him another big idea, although he's not ready to go public with it yet.

"I think it will put Murray Hill on the local map as an annual event destination, similar to Christmas in Avondale," he said, while declining to give details.

In the meantime, the fifth of six murals was completed in mid-February with a different twist. Tetlak broadened his search for talent and reached out to several New York artists. "Bringing a New York artist down to Murray Hill helps spotlight what's going on here," he said.

Tetlak found an artist known as Jerkface, who said he enjoys painting in new locations and had never been to Jacksonville.

Jerkface, 34, was born and raised in New York, and although he attended art school he didn't graduate. "I didn't let that stop



New York artist Jerkface uses a hydraulic lift to get the height he needs to paint a 1,000-square-foot mural featuring comic strip characters Calvin and Hobbes on the side of the Bank of America office in Murray Hill.

me," he said, referring to his art, which focuses on blending unrelated cartoon characters such as Popeye and Donald Duck, or Care Bears with Wu Tang Clan, and putting his own spin on them.

"We try not to give the artists parameters," said Tetlak, adding that so far there have been no objections to the other four murals, which are located on Tradewinds Bar (Post and Edgewood), Boot Rack Saloon on Lenox, Grater Goods in the Murray Hill Plaza (across from BBVA Compass) and on the side of a barber shop which abuts the Murray

Hill Theatre on Edgewood Avenue. "The more freedom you give, the more established artists you'll get," he said.

The week-long mural project began Feb. 13 when Tetlak and the artist primed the 66-foot-wide by 15-foot-high wall on the southern side of the Bank of America branch office on Edgewood Avenue with white paint. Jerkface estimated he would use between 20 and 30 cans of bright spray paint to create the Calvin and Hobbes mural.

Unlike the other mural artists, who received a stipend for their work, Jerkface donated

his time, but travel, lodging and materials were covered by the preservation society, said Tetlak.

The last of current crop of murals will be painted by local artist Nicole Holderbaum at the Florida Christian Center, 1115 Edgewood Ave. S.

Tetlak would like to continue the mural project and is seeking funding and building owners willing to participate. "I counted more than 50 buildings in Murray Hill with blank walls that could support some type of public art," he said.

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The Way We Were: Elizabeth (Betsy) Towers

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

Real estate, construction and Avondale are the common thread throughout my life, said Avondale native Betsy Towers.

Towers is member of a longtime Avondale family perhaps best known for its connections with the law firm Rogers Towers, P.A., which was co-founded by her grandfather, Charles Daughtry Towers in 1926.

However, the Towers family has also had a major role in the building of Avondale itself.

Seven generations of Towers have lived in Florida with five generations having made Avondale their home at one time or another, said Towers, noting that growing up she lived in four Avondale houses within a three-block radius, and her current residence at Beau Rivage is within six blocks of where she spent her childhood.

A native of Jacksonville, Charles Daughtry Towers and his bride, Elizabeth, moved from Downtown to Avondale in the early 1920s, and joined his brother, Robert Sheffield Towers, to build houses in Avondale, Towers said. Robert Towers worked and later ran his father's hardware store, Towers

Hardware Company, which had branches throughout the city, Towers said.

"He (Charles) practiced law with William Rogers, and in their practice I believe they saw a lot of title work," Towers said, speculating on her grandfather's early interest in construction.

Later, her father, Bill Towers and his brother, Charlie, who were also both lawyers, banded together to form the construction firm, Hercules Builders. Together, they developed the Cedar Hills Shopping Center on Blanding Boulevard, as well as a nearby Westside subdivision comprised of 2,000 houses in the 1950s.

"The story goes that Daddy came home at 11 p.m. one night and said, 'Pokey, I need to have the names for 50 streets by 7 a.m.' and he went to bed," said Towers, referring to her mother, Jean, who goes by Pokey. "At that time, my mother was reading nursery rhymes to us, so she sat down and went through our Peter Rabbit books and all our fairytale stories. That's why those streets are named Peter Pan and Tinker Bell. The folks living on Flopsy Street, they got together later and petitioned the city to have the name changed," she said.



Betsy, Polly, Pokey and Towers at Timuquana Country Club, 2000

The construction bug has extended to Towers and her siblings, Billy, John, and Agnes, who jointly own Florida Title Group as well as a few real estate parcels they plan to develop, and an industrial park complex. Her brothers, Billy and John, founded the residential construction firm Atlantic Builders in 1983, which was the second largest privately-owned residential construction company in Florida. After they sold the company in 1998 they built under different names until 2009, when they opened another company, New Atlantic Builders. Her nephew, Will Towers, is a general contractor, who built his own Ingleside Street home and has done a lot of construction in Avondale.

"I think my story is a story of repetition. I know it sounds boring, but it seems we've been carrying on in construction with the next generation in Avondale," she said.

"One of my earliest memories is going to a job site with my father," Towers recalled. "I must have been three years old. I remember Dad had a big truck, and it was before seat belts. Kids would stand up in the car, and I was standing next to Daddy while he was driving the truck and our dog, Queeny, the boxer, was next to me. The three of us were going out on a Saturday to check the job sites on the Westside off Park Street," she said.

Born in St. Vincent's Hospital, as was her father before her, Towers lived for two weeks

at her grandparent's home at 3500 Richmond Street before moving to a home her father had built at 3745 Riverside Avenue.

"Uncle Charlie and Aunt Beezie had built the house next door at 3750 Riverside Avenue," Towers explained. "There were five girls in Uncle Charlie's family and my family had four. We were really raised like brothers and sisters," Towers said, noting her mother, who had four children within five years, hired Helen Jefferson, a housekeeper who lived in and was instrumental in raising the family. Jefferson lived with the Towers in three Avondale homes, 3745 Riverside Avenue, 1980 Greenwood Avenue and the Lane-Towers House at 3730 Richmond Street, which is the largest single-family dwelling in the Riverside-Avondale Historic District. At the family's 1,500-acre Middleburg farm, where the Towers spent weekends and summers, Jefferson had her own suite.

"I think of her as my 'other mother,'" said Towers, referring to Jefferson. "She was there for us through thick and thin. She was so supportive. I remember when one of the teachers at Fishweir called Momma complaining about me, and Momma was so supportive of the teacher, Helen said, 'Teacher's ain't perfect, ya know.' She was sticking up for me," she said. "She was family," she said.

Continued on page 43



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Towers attended Fishweir Elementary School, Lake Shore Junior High and graduated from St. Johns Country Day School in 1969 when the Orange Park school “was more of a Jacksonville school.” Her cousin, Cathy Towers Hardage of Avondale, was in her class at Fishweir.

Because of her extensive family’s construction background, many of the houses in Avondale have special significance for Towers. “Either my grandparents built the house, or a relative lived in the house, or somebody I knew lived there,” she said. “There is no area of Avondale that I am not familiar with or related to in some way.”

When she was growing up, Towers said Avondale was like a small village in a big city, and as a kid she roamed the area from 5 Points to Ortega. “We never went over to the Southside, -- that’s what we called it, the Southside,” she said. “When Jacksonville Episcopal School was founded I was at St. Johns (Country Day) and there was no level for me to go there (at Episcopal). But my brothers and sisters went there and that expanded our world. They were going to school with people who lived on the Southside, and those kids visited us at our house (on Richmond Street). There was even a boy named Tom Dent – Helen called him ‘Southside.’ They even had friends from the Beach. Growing up in Avondale, we never knew anybody who lived at the Beach.



With daughter Polly in Ortega, 1991

and to live near people who have lived elsewhere but really care about Avondale.”

Because of her intimate familiarity with the neighborhood, “everywhere I look holds a memory,” Towers said. She recalled the 10-cent store where Bonne Nuit is now located in Avondale, where she and her siblings would go after they received their allowance. When she and her siblings graduated from Fishweir Elementary they were treated to hamburgers at Penney’s Drive-In, located on St. Johns Avenue where the Loop recently stood. The sandwiches were small and cost a penny.

Tower, who furthered her education at Bradford Junior College in Boston, Vassar College in New York, and Moore College of Art in Philadelphia, where she studied photography, said her interest in painting was ignited while she was in elementary school. She and her cousin, Morley, took art lessons from Marjorie Edwards in her Avondale studio on Saturday mornings. “She was English, and she would serve tea and cookies and I thought that was so civilized,” said Towers.

Allen’s Supermarket inhabited the area formerly inhabited by Cowford Traders. “They would deliver groceries to your house, which would come in boxes. They even would put the perishables in your refrigerator,” she recalled. “I don’t think that lifestyle is available anywhere in the world now.”

After college, Towers returned home to the Lane-Towers house, where she set up a

dark room on the third floor and worked in Jacksonville as a freelance photographer. It was through an Avondale connection – Helen Lane’s son-in-law, Bill Emory – that she got a job as photo editor at the Gadsden County Times in Quincy, Florida. “When you think about it, the strain of Avondale continues,” she said. “Even my career had Avondale ties.”

Towers met her husband, Ed Mingledorff, in Quincy and was married 10 years. After her divorce, she returned to Jacksonville with her two children, Towers and Polly Mingledorff, and raised her kids at her family’s farm in Middleburg – North Fork Ranch – located at the north Fork of Black Creek, which housed cattle, horses, and 100,000 chickens, the eggs of which her father had sold in grocery stores when she was growing up.

“Daddy loved the lifestyle. He was a lawyer, cattle rancher, builder and egg man,” she said, noting her family spent

most weekends and summers at the ranch when she was a child. “The egg system was all automated and the eggs would go on a conveyer belt to the processing house. Every so often the equipment would go down and we would have to wash the eggs by hand to meet the delivery deadline to the grocery stores,” she recalled.

Eventually the ranch was sold to the Gateway Council of Girl Scouts, Inc., and Towers moved with her children to Ortega for eight years before she finally settled in Beau Rivage in 2014. Since then she has earned her real estate license and works with her family as a site agent at Patriot Ridge, a new Westside community where New Atlantic Builders is constructing homes.

“I wanted to get back to Avondale where I can walk out of my condo and go three blocks to a restaurant. I want to be near my family and friends,” Towers said. “I can’t imagine living anywhere else.”



Brother Billy’s wedding, 1978; Agnes, Kathy and Billy, John, Betsy



Bill, Pokey and baby Betsy in Avondale, 1951

“Our parents grew up together and it seemed like everyone married someone who they grew up with. It was a very insular neighborhood,” she continued, noting her mother, Pokey, grew up at 1717 Edgewood Ave. in Avondale and met Bill Towers when they both were 14 years old. After Bill Towers died in 1972, Pokey later married Dr. Jim Lyerly, a neurosurgeon who had attended grade school at West Riverside and Lee High School with her. Her Aunt Beezie grew up in the neighborhood as well.

“Back then, people married people they went to Lee High School with, but now it is more broad, which I really like. I like the expansion of the village into a neighborhood,

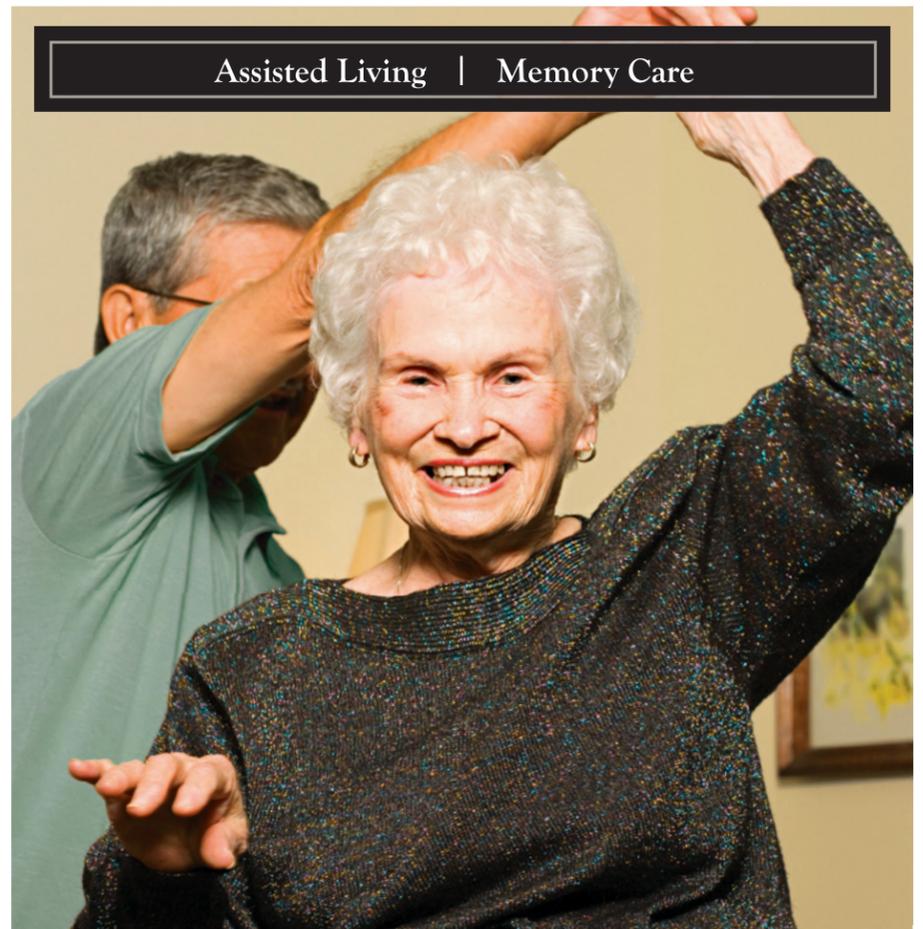


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Jr. Residents

Stockton holds Sports Science Spectacular

The annual John N.C. Stockton Elementary School Science Spectacular, organized and funded by the PTA, wrapped in sports this year under the theme “Stockton Sports Science Spectacular - STEM Race to the Finish Line.”

Nearly 500 kindergarten through fifth grade students rotated through eight hands-on science stations in which they completed a science experiment or activity. Each station focused on a unique element of sports science and demonstrated such principles as chemical reactions, friction, center of gravity, kinetic energy, air pressure, momentum and inertia, among others, in fun and engaging ways.

The January 20 whole-school event was engaging, instructional and encouraged higher thinking skills while helping students connect science to their day-to-day lives. The Orlando-based Mad Science Company presented two Mad Science Olympics assemblies.



Stockton “Dad” John England and his daughter, Addy, participated in the annual Stockton Sports Science Spectacular. Behind them is the target for the javelin throw, where students used weighted pool noodles to test force vs. momentum.

Parents were also involved in the day-long event, which has been chaired for the past three years by PTA member Emma Benton, with help from former PTA president Stacey Russell and Bobbie Brewer, current PTA president. About 60 volunteers, including many fathers, ran each activity while college students from FSCJ and UNF helped. The PTA provided a barbecue lunch for all volunteers.



Dr. Carl Freeman of Jacksonville Orthopedics Institute shows students an X-ray from a sports injury sustained by a Jacksonville Jaguar.



‘Mad Science’ draws students, parents to Science Night

Students at West Riverside Elementary School got a little taste of science as they cooked up a batch of slime during Science Night Feb. 9. An instructor from Mad Science of Northeast Central Florida conducted interactive demonstrations in chemical reactions, bubbling potions and yes, the creation of slime, which each student took home.

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Fishweir Elementary School is seeking artifacts for its upcoming centennial celebration. If you have old photos or newspaper clippings, or other items of interest, contact Kathy Brantley or the school office at (904) 381-3910. The celebration is set for Friday, May 19, 5-8 p.m. at the school, 3977 Herschel St.

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'Renaissance' student designs Extravaganza program

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

Although Anna Covart comes from a family of artists and is studying visual arts at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, her heart also lies in the field of science – astrophysics to be exact.



Anna Covart

Covart, an Avondale resident, designed the program cover for Douglas Anderson's premier show, Extravaganza, which was held Feb. 11 at the Times-Union Center's Moran Theater.

"The cover was something I just threw together. I didn't expect it to be picked. When it was selected, I was pleasantly surprised," Covart said.

"I loved the painting of the ballerina," she said. "I wanted the cover to have a

painterly-brushy feel, even though I was designing and editing in Photoshop. Plus, I wanted to utilize what I have learned about radial composition."

Covart, a senior, is truly a "Renaissance woman," said Scott Reneau, a teacher at DA. She plans to major in physics and has already been accepted at the University of Maryland, the University of North Florida, Florida State University and is waiting to hear from the University of Florida.

Formerly a student at Fishweir Elementary and LaVilla School for the arts, Covart said she fell in love with physics after being introduced to it as a junior at DA. "The class was so interesting and fun. I love that physics is everywhere and in everything. It is so challenging, and I'm determined to continue with it," she said.

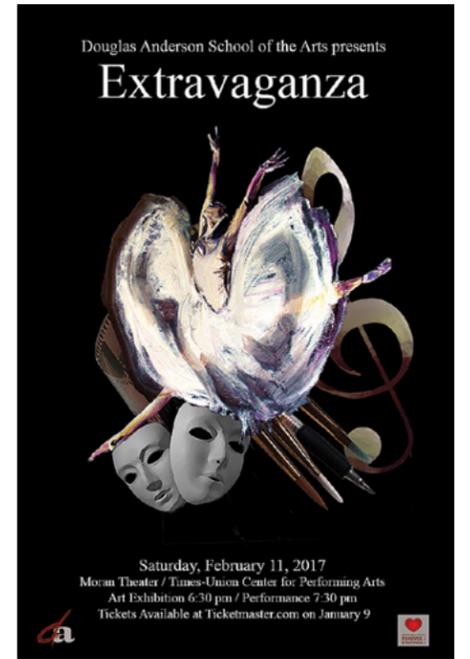
"I adore Neil deGrasse Tyson, the astrophysicist and cosmologist," Covart continued, adding she loves the sciences and has asked for books on physics for Christmas. "I'm

fascinated with space. I'd love to work for NASA and send people to Mars."

At Douglas Anderson, Covart also serves as the founder and president of the National History Honor Society. "I wanted to help kids who might be struggling in history, which is another love of mine," she said. "So, I decided to start a community that could help with tutoring and inspire kids to appreciate history."

Covart's siblings are also involved with art and painting. Her brother, Zach, also an Avondale resident, owns Covart Family Painting, a Jacksonville paint and refinishing business. Her sister, Stevie Covart Garvey, and brother-in-law, Aaron Garvey, of Murray Hill, founded an artist residency program, Long Road Projects, in Jacksonville. Covart's younger sister, Rachel, is a sophomore studying theatre at Douglas Anderson.

"We were fortunate to grow up in Avondale, an arts-based neighborhood, and have the arts all around us," Covart said.



Extravaganza Program, designed by Anna Covart

West Riverside teachers lead garden club

Two West Riverside Elementary School teachers are going above and beyond their duties to pass along their love of learning and the outdoors to their students.

Abby Solano, third grade dual language teacher, and Jill Mullins, art resource teacher, are leading a garden club for third through fifth grade students who commit to attending a set number of meetings, held on non-early release Wednesday afternoons. Students get to experience the school's gardens, and have thus far learned about growing herbs, succulents, and fresh vegetables.



West Riverside Elementary School teachers Abby Solano and Jill Mullins joined forces outside the school walls.

Mood music sets brush strokes



Art students at Central Riverside Elementary paint while listening to a variety of music styles.

Allowing the music to move their brushes across their papers, art students at Central Riverside Elementary used their feelings to create the lines of their artwork. They painted fluid, curved lines when the music was slow, then painted quick, shorter brushstrokes when the music moved to a faster beat, according to Terry Woodlief, art teacher at CRES.

After teacher-led conversations about how colors can evoke feelings, students used warm or cool colors to complete their paintings, then compared them, describing their work as active, hot, cool or relaxing.

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Local students cart home Scholastic Art Awards

Three schools – Bolles School, Episcopal School of Jacksonville, and Douglas Anderson School of the Arts – were well represented when 23 Riverside/Avondale area students were recognized during the Northeast Florida Scholastic Art Awards (NEFSSA) Feb. 4 at the Florida Theatre.

It was the sixth annual awards ceremony for a regional scholastic program sponsored by the Northeast Florida Art Educators Association, Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Jacksonville University and the Jacksonville Public Library. In conjunction with the awards, the Jacksonville Public Library and the Cathedral Arts Project hosted exhibitions of the winning student artwork.

The Cathedral Arts Project community gallery displayed the works of 20 Gold Key and 21 Silver Key senior portfolio winners. Meanwhile, the Jacksonville Public Library's main branch displayed the Gold and Silver individual winners as well as the honorable mentions.

Gold Key winners received a \$10,000 renewable scholarship for up to four years to SCAD, JU, UNF or New Hampshire Institute of Art. Silver Key winners received a \$5,000 renewable scholarship, said Meg Sacks of Episcopal School in Jacksonville. In the past few years, participating students at Episcopal have been offered more than \$4.3 million in scholarships.

Gold Key winners will progress to national adjudication where their work may earn a

place in a ceremony at Carnegie Hall in New York, where national medals, scholarships and inclusion in a national traveling exhibition will be awarded.

Bolles School

Three students from the Riverside/Avondale area were among 34 students from Bolles who were recognized during the art awards. In all Bolles' students took home 54 awards, including an artist from the student newspaper, The Bugle.

Twelve students were Gold Key winners, and their works will continue on to the National Scholastic Art Awards. Fourteen took home Silver Key awards and 28 received honorable mention.

Tommy Ropp of Avondale took home a Silver award in sculpture. Marlo Morales of Ortega received two honorable mentions in photography, while Lewis Culver of Ortega received one honorable mention in photography.

Douglas Anderson

Sixty-six students from Douglas Anderson School of the Arts amassed 211 awards including 19 for senior portfolios. In total, DA students carried home 72 Gold Keys and 65 Silver Key awards.

Twelve of the students hailed from the Riverside/Avondale area with two – Madison Cox of Avondale and Ozni Foxglove of

Ortega receiving Gold Keys for their senior portfolios – and Preslen Alteus of Ortega taking home a Silver Key for his senior portfolio.

In addition to his Gold Key for his portfolio, Foxglove took home an individual Gold Key in drawing and illustration.

Ramses Allen and Madison Cox, both of Avondale, needed a wheelbarrow to carry their awards home. Allen received five Gold Keys (mixed media (2), painting (2), printmaking), two Silver Keys (drawing and illustration, painting), and two honorable mentions (painting, printmaking). In addition to winning Gold for her portfolio, Cox received two American Visions Nominations, four Gold Keys (painting (3), photography) and a Silver Key in painting.

Anastasia Utley of Riverside received four Gold Keys in the painting category. Jessica Oleynik of Ortega received Gold in sculpture. Also receiving Gold Keys were Anna Covart of Avondale in photography, and freshman Emma Flaire of Riverside, who took home two Gold Keys, one in sculpture and one in painting. Both pieces of artwork were created when Flaire was an eighth grader at LaVilla School for the Arts last year.

Kianna Henshaw received two Silver Keys in painting. Isabelle Redenius won a Silver Key in printmaking, and Jillian Cruickshank of Ortega received a Silver Key in painting.



Shameca Baker, a soldier in the U.S. Army, speaks to 7th and 8th grade students at St. Matthew's Catholic School.

St. Matthews students learn about careers from the pros

During National Catholic Schools Week, January 29 to February 4, Catholic schools around the country celebrated the annual recognition of Catholic education in the United States under the theme "Catholic Schools: Communities of Faith, Knowledge and Service."

Shameca Baker, a U.S. Army soldier and parent of three students at St. Matthew Catholic School, was one of a variety of professionals invited to speak to the students about their jobs and careers during the local school's own week of festivities.

Scout Sunday celebrated at St. Mark's

St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Ortega celebrated Scout Sunday Feb. 5, a national day of recognition for Boy Scouts on the Sunday closest to February 8, the date Boy Scouts was founded in the United States in 1910. The Boy Scouts was started in England in 1907.

"Scouting is an amazing program that helps instill leadership, self-confidence, and good citizenship in youth," said James Holyer, charter representative. "It helps today's young men and women grow into tomorrow's leaders just as it has continued to do so for over 100 years – and for almost 90 years at St. Mark's."

St. Mark's is one of the very few organizations in the North Florida Council that sponsors all three branches of Boy Scouts: Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Venture Crew, which is co-ed.



Front: Austin Hadd, Harland Chadbourne, Blake Sheftall, Sean Yates, Scoutmaster Matt Morgan; middle: Charter Rep James Holyer, Candice Dunn, Jacob Holyer, Daniel DeLong, TJ Laquidara, Buck Williams; back: Tony Hadd, Scott Sheftall, Luke Morgan, Frank DeLong

Best Picture nominee a learning tool for Venetia students

Students from Venetia Elementary School attended the Oscar-nominated movie "Hidden Figures" to understand the influence of African-American female mathematicians in the NASA Space Program.

Accompanied by Venetia Elementary teacher William Jackson and Lee High student Breyonna Fox, the girls saw the results of a STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) education, and what it means to be engaged in 21st century learning.

Venetia Elementary is a Medical Magnet School, preparing students not just for high-level academics, but for those interested in the diversity of the medical fields.



Gabrielle Cogdell, Breyonna Fox (Lee H.S), Alondra Calhoun, William Jackson (teacher) and Asya Fox

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Homeschooled robotics team takes 'pet project' to state



The Crazy Cat Ladies Lego robotics team took first place at the Northeast Florida regional competition: Sydney Woods, Emily Puckett, Lana Gerstenberger, Kaitlyn Jenkins, Gigi Gerstenberger, Brooke Turner

By *Kate A. Hallock*
Resident Community News

Taking first place in the FIRST Lego League (FLL) Northeast Florida regional competition Jan. 28 means more than advancing to the state meet on May 6 for Avondale resident Emily Puckett.

Prior to the state competition, the all-girl Lego robotics team will compete in the FIRST World Festival Championship in Houston, Texas, April 19-22.

Puckett's team, Crazy Cat Ladies, is coached by Lolita and Jason Gerstenberger, who started it three years ago; this is Puckett's second year on the team. The six Crazy Cat Ladies are homeschooled in the 6th and 7th grades, and live in different parts of Jacksonville.

FIRST (For Inspiration and Recognition of Science and Technology) is the organization which runs Lego robotics competitions of all levels around the world. Locally, FLL teams are in most of the schools, thanks to the persistent work of Mark McCombs of Renaissance Group, according to Puckett's mother, Heather.

"A team is given a real-world problem, creates a solution, and develops a project around their solution," said Heather. "This

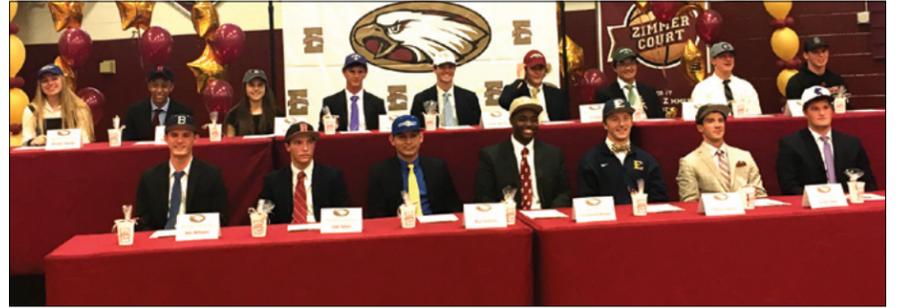
year's theme was to create or improve upon an interaction between animals and humans such that the lives of both are improved."

The Crazy Cat Ladies' project, Friendly Pets-Happy People, is an app that brings together bored house pets with pet-less residents in assisted living communities.

"It's different from pet-therapy visits in that the people get to be in control of which pets they want a visit from, and when and how often the pet visit is," said Emily, who stated her team spent many hours on the project, the robot design and the programs.

Each robotics team begins with an EV3 robot base (called a brick), and uses Lego pieces to create various attachments, all connected to sensors and motors which carry out specific tasks. The teams work to create the best tools and programming to have the robot carry out the most tasks in the least amount of time.

"This has been an exciting and nerve-wracking experience. Getting the robot to be really precise takes so much work!" Emily said. "Competition day is long and stressful but so much fun! I love being part of this team with such great friends. I like that our project is for service in the community."



Speakman Smith, Chandler Washburn, Cole Tollett, Jacob Fiegal, Kyle Williams, Thomas Bosley, Joseph Brunell, Trey Spratling-Williams, Chase Scovill, Adam Boselli, Tad Ponder, Max Tandron, Sam Ohno, Katie Ralys, Dorothy Poucher, and Trenton DiFilippo.

Episcopal athletes sign letters of intent

Four Episcopal School student athletes from the historic districts have signed letters of intent to play sports at colleges and universities throughout the United States.

The four were included in a total of 16 Episcopal athletes who signed commitment letters during a special signing ceremony at the school Feb. 1.

Playing football for Georgetown University next year will be Joseph Brunell of Ortega. Tal Ponder, also of Ortega, signed with Hampton Sydney College in Virginia to play lacrosse.

Avondale's Chase Scovill signed with East Tennessee State University to play baseball, and Dorothy Poucher, also of Avondale, committed to the volleyball team at Hamilton College in New York.

Also signing from Episcopal were Speakman Smith, swimming, Howard University; Chandler Washburn, crew, United States Naval Academy; Cole Tollett, baseball, Rhodes College; Jacob Fiegal, baseball, Ursinus College; Kyle Williams, baseball, Berry College; Thomas Bosley, men's soccer, Furman University; Trey Spratling-Williams, baseball, College of Charleston; Adam Boselli, football, North Carolina State University; Max Tandron, baseball, Florida State College Jacksonville; Sam Ohno, golf, Dartmouth College; Katie Ralys, women's soccer, University of Georgia; and Trenton DiFilippo, baseball, Kenyon College.

School play fun and games for cast, audience

What seemed like a cast of thousands was, in reality, over 100 fifth- and sixth-grade students at Riverside Presbyterian Day School who presented the musical "A Kid's Life" on Feb. 16 to an auditorium of appreciative parents, grandparents and friends.

The musical, which included solos by Grace Medure, Maggie Maye Stoll, Ty Officer, Natalie Rabil, Collin Poe, Jianna Lee, and Isabella Buschini, told the story of grandparents who come to the rescue when a loss of power leaves the kids without access to cellphones and laptops. Grandpa and Grandma (played by Graham Worley and Grace Huie) introduce the kids to a



Front: Gracie Huie (Grandma), Collin Poe, Atlantic Diebenow, Natalie Rabil; back: Caylin Rozier (Mother), Jack Pruden (Father), Graham Worley (Grandpa)

day filled with daring and adventure, music and imagination...all without fancy gadgets.

The play was directed by Lisa Butler, music teacher. The technical crew of 12 were guided by Debbie Rogers, director of instructional digital design.



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Runners enjoy tree-lined streets, river views

Runners of all ages came out for the 39th Annual Ortega River Run, presented by St. Vincent's HealthCare and Digestive Disease Consultants Feb. 25. Local streets in Ortega and Lakeside were blocked off for the two-hour run, which finished with a street fair at St. Mark's Episcopal Church and Day School in Ortega.

The Ortega River Run is one of the largest races held in Jacksonville, serving as a five-mile, two-bridge training run for the Gate River Run Saturday, March 11. Proceeds from the Ortega River Run benefit the financial aid scholarship program at St. Mark's Episcopal Day School.



Anna, Lauren, Claire and Amelia Wilson with friend Gracie Hammond



St. Mark's Episcopal Day School PE Coach Holly Joyner with daughter Avery and son Cooper



Vanessa Holland and son Blake



Trey, Csar with sons Cort and Max, wife Sunny Gettinger



Lori and Tesla Swain with Susan and Merrilee Sykes

Two Stockton students win math medals



Mathletics winners Ian Rasch and Cadence Bellamy with Coach/Teacher Alicia Willis (center)

Six students representing John N.C. Stockton Elementary School competed among 150 Duval County fifth graders at River City Science Academy on Feb. 11, with two taking home medals. Stockton, whose theme this year is "Where the race to excellence is never finished," is a science, technology and mathematics magnet school.

Cadence Bellamy, John Connors, Ryley Ecklor, Ian Rasch, Spencer Scurti and Sean Wheatley competed to solve 15 problems in 30 minutes on a paper-based test, and were not allowed to use calculators.

Bellamy earned a silver medal and Rasch a bronze during the competition. All students received a Certificate of Participation and a commemorative Mathletics T-shirt.

Participation in Mathletics provided students an opportunity to use their math skills outside of the classroom.

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Want to get involved in the community? Sometimes it just takes a little push to do something, from the smallest gesture to the grand donation. Get ready to get nudged.

BY MARIAN JOHNS, RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Shoes, clothing and food...too many people in our community struggle to have these basic necessities. This month *The Resident* takes a look at several nonprofits which focus on helping people fill that void by providing these daily essentials to those in need.

St. Francis Soup Kitchen

The St. Francis Soup Kitchen, run completely by volunteers, serves hundreds of meals each week at its Providence Center location in downtown Jacksonville. In addition to serving meals, St. Francis volunteers operate a clothes closet on the premises, give out reading glasses, books and bags filled with canned goods.

Donate: Donate women's and men's clothing including jeans, shirts, socks, and underwear. Travel-size toiletry items such as shampoo, soap, razors, toothbrushes as well as towels and washcloths are also needed. Since the Soup Kitchen is operated on donations, financial contributions are always welcome. For a complete list of items needed at the Soup Kitchen visit stfrancissoupkitchenjax.org/donations. Financial donations may be sent to St. Francis Soup Kitchen, 134 East Church Street, Jacksonville, FL 32202.

Volunteer: Volunteers (must be 14 or older) are needed on Friday from 8:15 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. to prepare meals and on Saturday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. to help serve meals, clean and reset tables. For more information visit stfrancissoupkitchenjax.org/volunteer.



Downtown Ecumenical Services Council, located at 215 N. Ocean St., takes delivery of food from the Second Harvest Food Bank of Central Florida. Staples, such as rice and beans, supplement grocery budgets for those in need.

Downtown Ecumenical Services Council (DESC)

The Downtown Ecumenical Services Council (DESC) provides food, clothing and financial aid to people in need of emergency assistance.

Donate: Just a \$50 donation to DESC can provide a week's worth of groceries to a family of four. You can also donate personal care items such as deodorant, toothbrushes and shampoo. Men's jeans, shorts, work boots, women's shorts and children's clothing are also needed. For a complete list and more information visit descjax.org or call (904) 358-7955.

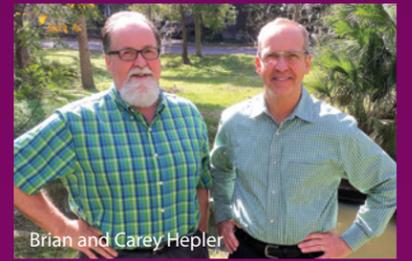
Volunteer: For information on how you can give some of your time to help DESC, go to descjax.org/volunteer-desc/ or call the volunteer office at (904) 358-3935.

Rethreaded

Rethreaded works to break the cycle of the sex trade, such as human trafficking, drug addiction and prostitution, by teaching female victims the skill of sewing.

Donate: You can join in the fun and help support Rethreaded at the annual Mukti Freedom Gala held each February or at the upcoming Spring Garden Concert Party to be held on Friday, March 10. Visit rethreaded.com for details on their fundraising events.

Volunteer: Come out for "Volunteer Tuesdays" and help with inventory, tagging and sorting merchandise or working in the retail store. Sign-up for volunteering shifts is done online at rethreaded.com or call (904) 438-8109. You can also host an event such as a house party or Grace Scarf making party. All the details about hosting an event can be found at rethreaded.com.



The Hepler Brothers Did Something

For the last 15 years, Brian and Carey Hepler of Riverside have used one of Jacksonville's most popular events, the Gate River Run, as a platform to help those in need. Each year, the brothers collect thousands of pairs of shoes, as well as T-shirts, at the race and then donate them to the St. Francis Soup Kitchen, Downtown Ecumenical Services Council, and Rethreaded.

"The shoe drive has stuck with us so long because the need is great. People who run homeless shelters will tell you 'shoes are like gold,'" said Carey.

"I like how a small ripple creates a flow of goodwill," said Brian. "For many folks in our area, a pair of sturdy shoes makes a great deal of difference in their lives. An Act of Congress was not required to make a difference...just a piece of string around the finger to help remember to 'grab the shoes' you want to donate."

"We have seen folks with torn, sole-less shoes and even some with no shoes at all," said, Jim and Diane McVety, co-directors of the St. Francis Soup Kitchen. "Our guests are so grateful for a nice pair of sneakers and often are heard saying 'what a blessing.'"

The brothers came up with the idea after being inspired by an article in *Runner's World* magazine, which profiled a young girl who collected running shoes.

"I thought it was a great idea because runners always have too many shoes. They've lost the cushioning for running, but they are great for walking around in. Runners always have way too many t-shirts too, so they were a natural add-on," Carey said.

"I like to think I am motivated by the idea that we live in a 'global village.' We are all connected, regardless of whether we see visible strings," said Brian. "If we work together for the good of one person...we raise the good for all of us. If one of us is in pain, hurting or in need, all of us have a duty as inhabitants of the planet to lessen that pain."

"I believe it starts with small acts of kindness, which can domino to a very large change," he said. "The shoe donation is just one example of the 'butterfly effect.'"

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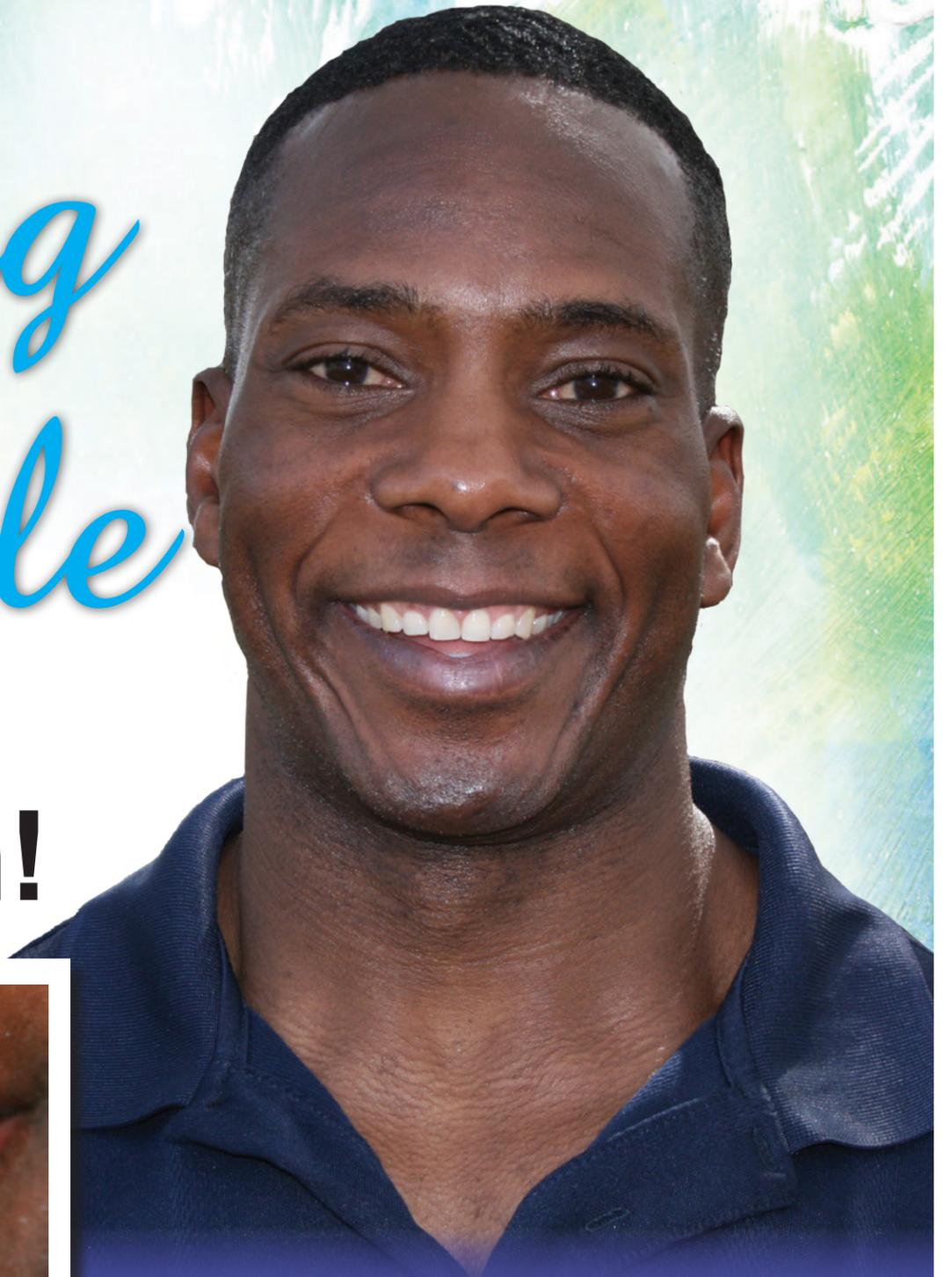
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