

RIVERSIDE AVONDALE ORTEGA MURRAY HILL

# Resident

COMMUNITY NEWS

VOLUME I

JANUARY 2007

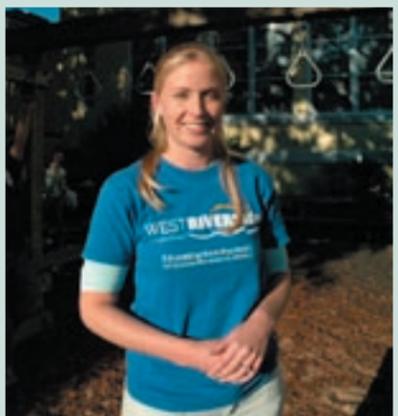
ISSUE I



Shanna Lower with Riley Jett creating Olivia the Pig Puppets in the arts and craft room during the Festival of Trees Children's Event.



The Florida Yacht Club's Tennis Chairman, Chip Travis presents Gordon Terry with The Lifetime Achievement Award



West Riverside Elementary's 5th grade Language Arts Teacher, Lauren Bitner is awarded Teacher of The Year

## Sediment runoff impacting our creeks

By Laura E. Smith

Residents along Little Fishweir Creek first noticed a milky white coloration to the waterway on Thursday, December 14, which continued to intensify the following day.

According to Neil Armingeon, the St. Johns Riverkeeper, he received a phone call Thursday morning about the condition of the creek from a local resident followed by multiple phone calls from concerned citizens on Friday.

Armingeon contacted the environmental quality division of the City of Jacksonville concerning the turbid discharge at Little Fishweir Creek and Park Street. Further investigation by Armingeon and the Jacksonville environmental quality division led to the discovery that the



Riverkeeper, Neil Armingeon looks on as sediment clouded water pours from a broken water main

See Sediment Page 6

## Condo construction finds home in historic district

By Kim Meadows

Riverside Avondale has always been considered a desirable place to live for those who seek the charm of old homes. With the recent surge in residential developments, though, a whole new element has been added to the diversity that makes up the historic district.

In the past couple of years several condominium projects have cropped up or are in the planning stages, despite a slight remission in the real estate market, as a change in lifestyles moves consumers to seek the amenities of a more traditional community.

"Five years ago you probably

couldn't have given these condos away," said Tripp Newsom, a real estate broker with Lifestyles Realty, which has all but cornered the market on condominium sales in the area. "Now times have changed, attitudes have changed and the condos here are a very desirable commodity. There are a lot of people who want to be closer to all we have to offer. We are minutes from everything."

For example, Newsom recently sold one of the units at 1661 Riverside Avenue, a retail and residential project that are literally just a few steps from an expansive riverfront park, restaurants and shopping.

Of the 90 units at 1661 River-

side across from Memorial Park, 80 are already under contract, according to Tripp Gulliford, a partner of Midland Development Group and historic district resident. Construction is nearly completed and closings on at least half the units should take place in January.

Though Midland is primarily a retail development company, Gulliford said the Riverside property and the strong real estate market in the historic district at the time the project was planned in 2004 – called for more.

"We felt including residential was the right thing for the site," he said. "It needed to be more than just a retail development and we had

See Condo Construction page 7

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The Waltz of The Flowers principal performers in Fishweir Elementary's Seventh Annual Nutcracker Directed by Cecelia Futo, Dance Director and Andrea Akers, School Principal

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**(904) 388-8839**

**theresident@bellsouth.net**  
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# Welcome....

If home is where the heart is, then the historical neighborhoods of Avondale, Ortega, Riverside and Murray Hill are where it beats the strongest.

The feeling of community is everywhere. Joined by a maze of sidewalks, residents enjoy the pleasure of spending quality time together. From walking the family dog and visiting with neighbors to meeting fellow moms for an afternoon stroller club or catching up with friends for a day of shopping, our historical district is a place where memories are created.

We find rest in our parks, culture in our museums, knowledge in our libraries, peace in our places of worship, comfort in our homes, strength in our mighty river, diversity in our people and hope in our schools.

We love our beautiful oak trees and colorful azaleas, neighborhood playgrounds and local festivals, block parties and annual celebrations, delightful eateries and specialty bakeries and chocolatiers.

It is here that we take our sons to get their first haircut at the barber-shop on the corner and our daughters to our favorite boutique for the perfect dress for their first school dance.

We are a community that understands the importance of the individual and the power there is in the collective action of many. We blend the old with the new and the historical with the modern to create a place like no other. As members of the Resident Community News we look forward to celebrating our historical community and sharing with our readers the many wonderful things happening all around us.

*-The Staff*

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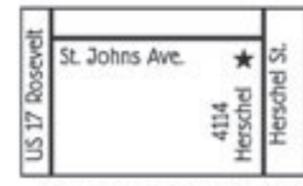
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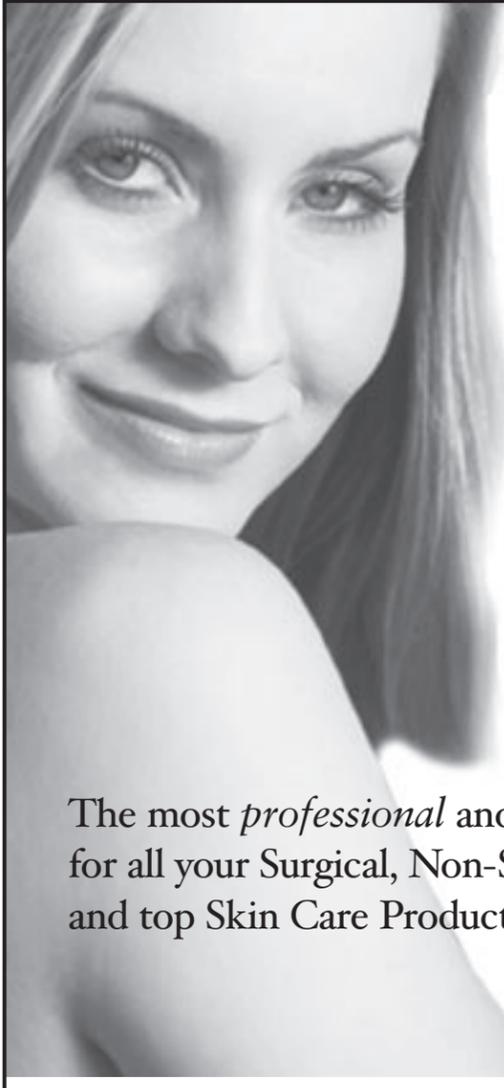
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## Upcoming

### Fun with Flowers

Attend this class, "Making the Impossible Divine" and learn to make all things beautiful. Flowerama, Richard Dover will be the speaker for this January 24 class at the Garden Club of Jacksonville. Cost is \$15 per session and requires pre registration and payment. It includes the lecture, demonstration, and hands on workshop. Begins at 10am. To register or for more information, contact the Garden Club at 355-4224.

### 2007 Annual Girl Scout Father/Daughter Dance

"Paradise Under the Sea" will be the theme for the 2007 Annual Girl Scout Father/Daughter Dance to be held on January 27 from 7-10pm at the Morocco Shrine Center. Ladies ages 5-17 and their escorts, Fathers, Grandfathers, uncles, or other significant male over the age of 18 are invited to an evening of fun, food and dancing the night away! Dress is evening/formal. The cost is \$23 per girl and escort for registered girl scouts, otherwise \$33 per girl and \$23 for their escort. To register or for more information please contact 388-4653 ext. 1112. Registration ends January 19.

### Murray Hill Preservation Society

The Murray Hill Preservation Society meets the fourth Tuesday of every month at 7 p.m. at the Murray Hill Presbyterian Church.

### Riverside Children's Art Center

The Riverside Children's Art Center is dedicated to providing art enrichment classes for elementary aged children and is currently in their second year of operation. Winter classes will begin the week of January 15th. Tuesdays are "The Art of Cooking" provided for 3rd-5th graders as well as "Spanish Language and Culture" provided for Kindergarten-2nd grade. Wednesdays are "Explore the World of visual arts through painting, drawing and sculpture" provided for Kindergarten-5th grade. Thursdays the Riverside Company of Kids spring production will have openings in drama or set design that will be provided for 3rd-5th grade. Clothing design and sewing basics will also be offered. Each class is eight weeks and costs \$80. Financial aid is available. Children may arrive as early as 3 p.m. and after care is available at no additional cost, however children are asked to be picked up no later than 6 p.m. For more

information or to register please contact 389-1751.

### Riverside Presbyterian Day School

RPDS will offer "Kids Are What They Eat" a parent workshop with guest speaker Dr. Valerie Miles, a pediatrician at the Kissling Hall on Thursday, January 18 from 9:15-10:15 a.m. Public Welcome to this event. Also a Traditional Open House Event will take place on Thursday, January 25. This is an admission event, a spaghetti dinner will be offered from 5-6:30 p.m. and the classroom visits will take place from 6-7:30 p.m. Reservations are required please. To make a reservation or for more information on these events please contact Shirley Francis at 904-353-3459.

### Willow Branch Library

Mother Goose story time is offered at the Willow Branch Library, 2875 Park Street on the following Fridays at 10:15 a.m. January 12, 19 and 26. Family Preschool story time is offered Fridays at 11:00 a.m. on January 12, 19 and 26 as well as on Mondays at 11:00 a.m. on January 8, 22 and 29. Movie Day will be offered on early release day, Wednesday, January 10 and 24 at 2:30 p.m. Arts and Crafts will be offered at the Willow Branch library Thursdays at 3:30 p.m. on January 11, 18 and 25. Bedtime stories take place Thursdays at 7 p.m. on January 11, 18 and 25. Join the chess club, and come play Fridays at 4 p.m. No experience necessary. The Willow Branch Library hours is 10-6 p.m. on Monday, Tuesday, Friday and Saturday and from 12 noon to 8 p.m. on Wednesday and Thursday. Please call 904-381-8490.

### RAP Meetings

Public welcome to the Riverside Avondale Preservation meetings offered at 7:30pm at the RAP house on Wednesday, January 17. Please call to be placed on the agenda for the RAP Design Review Committee offered at 6pm at the RAP house on Monday, January 8. The Historic Preservation commission will meet in conference room A of City Hall on Wednesday, January 24 to review COA applications submitted. Call 630-1900 to discuss changes with the Historic Preservation or to be placed on the agenda.

### Murray Hill Branch Library

Preschool story time is offered at the Murray Hill Branch Library, 918 Edgewood Avenue on the following Thursdays at 10:30 a.m. January 4, 11, 18 and 25. The Library is open Monday and Tuesday from 12 noon to 8 p.m. and Wednesday-Saturday from 10 a.m. until 6 p.m. For more information please call 904-384-2665.



## Kindergarten Readiness

You are invited to join us for a parent workshop with

Linda Halverson  
from

The Gesell Institute of Human Development

Discussion Topic

### Kindergarten Readiness

- ✓ Why is a child's stage of development so important in determining whether he or she is ready to start school?
- ✓ What is "developmental age" exactly?
- ✓ Many children have gone to preschool. Why are some of them still not ready?
- ✓ What can I do to get my child ready?
- ✓ But my child is very bright. Won't that make a difference?
- ✓ Won't children be bored if they wait a year before starting or before moving to the next grade?

Families may attend at any of the following locations:

**Monday, January 22**

10:00 a.m. at Jacksonville Country Day School  
7:00 p.m. at The Bolles School

**Tuesday, January 23**

10:00 a.m. at Beaches Episcopal School  
7:00 p.m. at Riverside Presbyterian Day School

**Wednesday, January 24**

10:00 a.m. at St. Mark's Episcopal Day School

Please call 353-3459 with any questions.

Jacksonville Country Day School · Riverside Presbyterian Day School · The Bolles School  
Beaches Episcopal School · San Jose Episcopal Day School · St. Mark's Episcopal Day School



## Private Club Happenings

### Change of Command

The Florida Yacht Club is pleased to announce its Change of Command Ceremony where Commodore John L. Kirby, Jr. will be relieved by Commodore Frederick H. Kent III. This ceremony will take place on Sunday, January 7 and will begin at 4:00 p.m. Cocktails and hors d'oeuvres to follow in the Astor Room.

### Yachtsman Awards Dinner

Mark your calendar for the annual Yachtsman Awards Dinner scheduled for Saturday, January 28. Cocktails at 7 p.m., Dinner at 8 p.m. and awards as well as presentations to follow shortly afterward. Set your sails and drop your propellers, you wouldn't want to be left out. Call today to reserve your spot.

### Yacht Club Oyster Roast

Join your friends for an oyster shucking good ol' time. The Florida Yacht Club Oyster Roast will take place Friday, January 26 at 6:30 p.m. The chef will also serve Seafood Chowder, Tomato Onion Cucumber salad, and corn bread. Call for reservations today!

For more information call (904) 387-1653

Send calendar submissions to [theresident@bellsouth.net](mailto:theresident@bellsouth.net). Information must be received by the 10th of every month for the following month publication and will be published as space permits.

## Letters to the Editor

### New and Needed Voice

Congratulations to The Resident for being a new and needed voice.

Your challenge will be to report and lead in a manner that reflects the best interests of our community.

One of the distinguishing factors that set us apart from other areas of Jacksonville is the historic designation that we enjoy in Riverside and Avondale.

Unfortunately, for too long, we have been "represented" and "informed" in a paternalistic manner by a small, self appointed, group of so called "leaders" that seek, in the name of "Preservation", to fight against change.

Their view of preservation is to shrink wrap the Historic District in an attempt to take us back in time a half century or more. But our community is moving forward...we must embrace change.

Even the most pristine forest recycles itself to replace dead and decaying sections with new growth. Change is good; society and our area need it.

While it is of paramount importance to preserve our precious assets we must do so with common sense. Property rights must not be trampled in the name of preservation. Managed growth must be our calling. We must encourage participation from those that enjoy our quality of life but may not realize that we are in jeopardy "running off" the difference makers in favor of maintaining a stagnant aggregation of old bones and peeling paint.

The challenge to The Resident,

will be to encourage debate, promote improved quality of life and fight provincial change haters so that we can all thrive in our beautiful community. Good luck!

### I. Mark Rubin, President

*The AccuBuild Companies Riverside (AccuBuild is a Real Estate Development Company with commercial projects in Riverside, Avondale, Ortega and San Marco)*

### Coffee Shop Closes

This past year we have had the wonderful opportunity of owning and running Perks! Coffeehouse on St. John's Avenue in the Shoppes of Avondale. During this time my family and I have gotten to know many people in this unique community, and have truly enjoyed being a part of it. Our lives have been enriched by meeting talented local artists like Samantha Merritt (currently a guard at the Cummer), Desiree Kantrim, high school guitarist Eric Day, (a local John Mayer)!, and keyboard player/elementary music teacher Melissa Auippy, as well as a large number of warm and genuine neighbors and business owners from the area.

While we greatly value these experiences, they do not meet the fiscal goals we needed to reach to keep the shop going. When we evaluated that reality against the needs of our 3 young children, we decided that we must, very sadly, close the business and move onto the next chap-

ter in our lives.

We want to say Thank You: To everyone who became our guest or friend; To the musicians and artists who loaned us your talents, To the local shopowners and business people who gave us your support, To our wonderful employees who grew with us and stuck with us, and To all the friends and family who gave us their support from the beginning.

You belong to a unique community, and we hope you will take full advantage of it by seeking out those local entrepreneurs who are working so hard to make their small businesses work. Please continue to support the local talent- there is a lot of it here! Owning a business has been one of the most challenging and rewarding experiences of our lives. Thankyou for being a part of that experience.

Sincerely,  
**Michelle and John Strout**  
*Perks! Coffeehouse*

### Enjoying the Neighborhood

I want to commend the town-center on Stockton Street.

Since leasing my office space at 875 Stockton Street (the Marybuilt Building) I have been able to broaden my scope of services to better serve my clients in the downtown area by shortening the commute time and without the inconvenience of the parking issues. I enjoy the laid back atmosphere of the neighborhood and

can still be downtown in under 5 minutes. I am opening a tax service that neighborhood residents can walk to while serving any businesses in the downtown area.

**Tammy Ramos**  
*Tammy Ramos & Associates, LLC*

### Congratulations Resident

Congratulations on your new publication!

The Riverside, Avondale, and Ortega neighborhoods are the heart of Jacksonville's historic and cultural energy. Your focus on the lively news and events in our community is a wonderful contribution to what makes our area so unique.

Thanks for helping to tell our stories and to bring people together.

**Dr. Wayne Wood**  
*Founder*  
*Riverside Avondale Preservation*

The Resident welcomes Letters to the Editor from readers. Letters in no way reflect the opinion of The Resident or any member of it's staff. Letters must include the writer's address and daytime phone number to be considered. Send your letter to [theresident@bellsouth.net](mailto:theresident@bellsouth.net).



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# Sediment runoff impacting our creeks

From Page 1

sediment runoff was flowing down Park Street and entering Little Fishweir Creek just downstream of the Park Street Bridge. The source of the runoff was from a water pipe break on Eloise Street.

According to Ebenezer Gujjarlapudi, director of the Jacksonville Environmental Resource Management Department, JEA responded to a brake in the water main on Eloise Street Thursday evening and a crew worked late into the night to isolate the break and make repairs to the pipe. The High Density Polyethylene pipe is three years old and made of a heavy plastic that is fused together.

Gujjarlapudi said that the joint that secures the pipes together failed, which caused the break. While a crew was cleaning up from the first break they discovered a second major leak in the pipeline on Friday. The second joint failure created a large volume of water that first had to be isolated and the valve closed before bails of hay were used to attempt to contain the runoff per JEA protocol.

The joint failure accident caused a large rush of water and sediment, some of which flowed into Little Fishweir Creek creating the milky white clay appearance.

Gujjarlapudi is conducting an ongoing investigation and is working with JEA to determine what caused the accident that led to the

increased level of turbidity in the creek.

"We are trying to build a time line to discover what happened," he said, adding that his office is gathering information about the creek and how JEA responded to the accident.

The United States Army Corps of Engineers is conducting a study to restore Big Fishweir Creek and is looking for input from the community.

"One of the big problems in Big Fishweir and Little Fishweir creeks is that they are being filled with sediment runoff," said Neil Armingeon, the St. Johns Riverkeeper, adding that it is due to multiple projects, some involving construction development.

His concern is how the sediment runoff is impacting the creeks. He explained that the problem is two-fold. The buildup of sediment smothers the aquatic life. Area residents who live downstream no longer have water access because they cannot get their boats in and out of the water. Fishweir Creek at one time was a deep waterway that is no longer navigable due to the sediment buildup.

For Mike Webster, a concerned citizen who lives on Big Fishweir Creek, it is about restoring a natural resource that benefits the entire community.

"Our creeks are the veins and capillaries of the St. Johns River,"

said Webster, adding that they are vital to the health of the river.

Big Fishweir and Little Fishweir creeks flow through a three-square mile area that includes both the communities of Avondale and Murray Hill.

Webster said that the first of the sediment runoff was initially deposited in the 1980s after a heavy rainstorm, during which construction was going on upstream. Sediment runoff from construction projects at the time rushed down the river during the heavy rains and deposited along the banks of the creek, creating sandbars. Twenty years later the sandbars, complete with foliage and maple trees, have altered the flow and appearance of the river. The sandbar located in front of Webster's home has become an island within the creek.

The restoration effort is a joint project by the city and the federal government that was brought forward by the City of Jacksonville in cooperation with the Jacksonville Waterway Commission, he said.

A preliminary restoration project has been completed, which resulted in a recommendation to continue to the next phase. The Jacksonville District of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is collecting information to be addressed in the aquatic ecosystem restoration study of Big Fishweir Creek.

The funding for this project is provided by Section 206 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1996. The popular program has

been handling waterway restoration projects throughout the country.

According to the preliminary report it was determined that the water quality and ecological conditions within Big Fishweir Creek have been adversely impacted by urban development and associated pollution. The objective of the current study is to complete a comprehensive review of restoration alternatives for the creek.

Specific projects may include the removal of sediments and contaminants combined with the reestablishment of submerged aquatic vegetation and wetland habitat, which in turn would improve water quality, fish habitat and wetland functions, as well as offer additional sanctuary for the federally threatened manatee.

To share comments and suggested improvements to Big Fishweir Creek, residents are encouraged to contact the organization by mail. Letters should be addressed to the Department of the Army, Jacksonville District Corps of Engineers, P.O. Box 4970, Jacksonville, Florida, 32232-0019, to the attention of Paul Stodola at the Planning Division, Environmental Branch.

According to Paul Stodola, the official deadline for letters is January 12, 2007, but he will take comments into February. He did stress that it is to the advantage of the public to send comments as early as possible.

There will be other opportunities in the future to provide input as well.

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# Condo Construction

From Page 1

confidence in the demand for residential in the neighborhood.”

Just down the street, Oak Street Lofts, a much smaller development with eight units is planned near Five Points. Construction on the 1,500 to 2,300 square foot lofts should start in the first quarter of 2007, according to owner Mark Rubin, president of AccuBuild Companies. And just around the corner, another small development, Chelsea Lofts on Herschel and Goodwin streets, has sold seven of the 20 units it's constructing and should complete by next summer. Another smaller development on Riverside Avenue across from St. Vincent's Medical Center, Prado Walk, will offer ground floor retail with six condominiums on the upper two levels of the three story structure. The project should be completed by spring 2008.

VillaRiva, the first to foray on to the scene in this established community known for its diverse architecture, mature tree canopy, quaint shops and closeness to the river, nearly sold out all of the 66 luxury condos before the project on Riverside Avenue was completed in 2005. Now, a year later all the units at the Mediterranean style high rise on the St. Johns River have been sold and some resales are netting owners a decent profit, according to Bryan Weber, managing director of Flagship Communities.

Bishopgate, another high rise project being considered on the river, is in the planning stages and would add another 80 units to the burgeoning condominium market in the historic district. WG Pitts Company worked on revisions such as lowering height and moving setbacks through the summer that were suggested by Riverside Avondale Preservation and is now seeking a partner to move forward with the project.

“We have had a great deal of interest and inquiries,” said Will Pitts, president of the company and managing member of Bishopgate. “We are looking for the right development partner for the project.”

There has been some speculation in the marketplace as to whether Bishopgate might be delayed or scaled back with the current dip in the real estate market, but developers of the site are holding on to what many think will be an upswing come spring. “This is typical this time of year,” said Sally Suslak, manager at Atkinson Realty Group. “This is traditionally a slow time for real estate.”

The softening real estate market, though, has slowed or changed some of the planned residential developments up the river in Avondale and just outside the historic district

near Ortega. And while sales of new construction in the historic district is holding its own, with all the units that have hit the market developers are making concessions to pull buyers in, Suslak said.

Capt. Kris Schmid, Harbormaster for the Ortega Landing Marina, a new development on Lakeside Drive just outside the historic district, said the current real estate market pushed the project back about six months in an effort to meet higher end clients.

The initial plans for Ortega Landing called for 74 units – mostly of smaller square footage starting at 1,100, with only four penthouses being offered. But the market didn't bear for those smaller units, so the development company, MLG Capital, went back to the drawing board. The redesign proposes 40 units of 2,500 with a groundbreaking expected in March of 2007 and a 12 to 14 month completion date, Schmid said.

In the meantime, the 192 slip marina is in place, with the clubhouse following at 40 percent complete, which will all serve to pull in buyers for the condo units, he said.

“A lot of the sales are driven by boaters,” Schmid said

The St. Johns Village Center, with a land use approval for 166 units proposed for the site where the Commander Apartments currently sit on Fishweir Creek in Avondale, has been shelved for the time being, although the development company for the property is still out seeking interested parties to take the project over.

The New York family who owns the property free and clear, and tote a large real estate portfolio, had planned to venture into their first development project with the property but backed off when the market shifted, according to Michael Balanky, a local developer brought on to oversee the project and president of Chase Properties.

“The Commander Apartments is in limbo,” he said “There's no debt on the property so there is no big motivation to move on it. The family decided they didn't want to attempt their first project with a softer market so we put it out there to see if there was interest from developers.”

If a developer doesn't step up to the plate with the right price, Balanky said, they'll go ahead and jumped back into developing the property when the market picks up again early next year.

This may be good timing since many national and local real estate professions and developers believe, come spring, the market will start to blossom again and the area will be buzzing with activity.

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# Historical District holds steady in Buyer's Market

By Laura E. Smith

It is a buyer's market and with so much to choose from in the historical districts of Jacksonville people are drawn here from everywhere.

"Jacksonville is a city made up of several small towns, each with different characteristics," said Carol Miller, marketing director for the Fred Miller Group in Ortega. "There is a real strong sense of community here."

Riverside, Avondale, Ortega and Murray Hill are small historical towns that appeal to a wide range of people.

Riverside, Avondale and Murray Hill offer a good mix, including young professionals and first-time homebuyers, she said, adding that Ortega has older, more well-established residents.

The stable economy, reasonable property taxes, mild weather, proximity to the water and downtown, friendly atmosphere and host of cultural activities are some of the many reasons buyers choose the area.

"We see a lot of young professionals coming from California, Georgia and New York," said Miller, adding that people are migrating south from Atlanta.

"It is a great time to buy," she said. "Mortgage rates are still very desirable. Home prices are moderate and competitive."

With more homes on the market, first-time homebuyers can take

their time to find exactly what they want.

"People need to look at real estate as a long-term investment instead of the quick-flip," she said. "We are seeing a return to homebuying."

Watson realtor, Terri Cornell,

**"The market in the area is holding steady,"**  
-Clark LaBlond

agreed that buyers can be a bit choosier because they can get a bit more for their money than a year ago. She still sees a fair share of investors due the attraction of the neighborhoods.

"In the historical district homes have so much personality and charm," said Cornell, adding that the assortment of wonderful shops and restaurants enhance the community feel.

She noted that Murray Hill saw a lot of renovation in 2006 and that prices are rising, but still affordable.

Clark LaBlond, manager of the Watson office in Ortega, added that many people who move to these neighborhoods have a special appreciation for historic homes.

"The market in the area is holding steady," said LaBlond.

From brick bungalows and historical estates to condominiums and urban lofts, the properties available

are as diverse as the buyers.

For Michelle Gallagher, sales manager for Lifestyles Realtors for Riverside/Avondale, it is that diversity that continues to propel sales.

"We are not feeling the negative impact that the Northeast and other parts of the country have," said Gallagher.

She also sees homebuyers coming from New York, as well as Virginia, Texas and South Florida. The area is particularly popular with Californians because of the cost of living and the climate, which is comparable to San Diego.

Residents enjoy the downtown living, the historical architecture, and the short commute to the city.

"People do not want to commute 30 minutes," she said.

While the rehab of homes may have peaked in Riverside/Avondale in 2000-2001 there are still many experienced builders continuing to renovate historic homes. She is especially enthusiastic about the Mur-

**"Everyone is very friendly people genuinely enjoy living in these neighborhoods."**  
-Sally Suslak

ray Hill revitalization project.

Sally Suslak, vice president of Atkinson Realty in Riverside, added that affordable homes in Murray Hill give first-time homebuyers an opportunity to get into the market.

"From Murray Hill in the low 100s to the most expensive riverfront property in the heart of Avondale for 4-million, there are a mix of styles, choices and price ranges," said Suslak.

As for the interest in the area from newcomers to Florida, she explained that the architecture and community feel of all four neighborhoods are similar to northern neighborhoods. The buildings look like any street or any town in the country with big oak trees and sidewalks. This is a comfort to a lot of people, which makes the neighborhoods very welcoming.

She has also noticed another trend. People who moved out of the neighborhoods 20 years ago to other parts of Jacksonville are now moving back. They are returning for the traditional southern charm the neighborhoods provide. Residents can walk everywhere to restaurants, shops, work and to meet their neighbors.

"Everyone is very friendly," she said, adding that people genuinely enjoy living in these neighborhoods.

"I have seen many friends move away to start careers in other parts of the country, ultimately to move back. More business are moving into downtown Jacksonville, and our area offers these professionals a short commute - which ultimately gives them more time with their families," said Nathan Miller managing broker of Remax.

"Local businesses and the community work together to make this place a special place for our families and children. Developers strive to capture this lifestyle by master planning communities like Traditional Neighborhood Developments (TND's) that offer this community involvement. Many of these developments offer neighborhood schools, shopping, and business opportunities that we already have," added Miller.

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# Homestay Bed & Breakfast Make Changes in 2007

By Laura E. Smith

Local homestay bed and breakfast inns, where the homeowner is also an innkeeper, make changes in 2007 to adhere to Florida state law.

Some homestay B&B owners have elected to close for part of the year in order to maintain their homestead exemption. Others have decided that areas of their home used exclusively by guests will be deemed commercial, and they will continue to operate the entire year.

"We are trying to draw a delicate balance between homesteaders who do not rent out their home versus those who rent it for part of the year for commercial purposes, including homestay B&Bs," said Jim Overton, Duval County Property Appraiser.

Overton has worked closely with the owners of the five homestay B&Bs in the area to come up with a solution. They are the House on Cherry Street B&B, the St. Johns House B&B, the Dickert House B&B, The Jenks House B&B and the Downing Street B&B.

Florida Statute 196.012, in relation to the Florida Statute [www.leg.state.fl.us](http://www.leg.state.fl.us) for homestead assessments, states that property rented for more than six months is presumed to be used for commercial purposes.

While the law has been on the books, the office prior to his did not enforce it properly, said Overton, adding that he is taking a less severe

interpretation than other areas of the state that treat homestay B&Bs as strictly commercial properties.

In order to mollify the concerns of B&B homeowners in regards to their property taxes he has relied upon the six-month provision of the law by stating that if a homestay B&B does not stay open for more than six months and the owners keep it just under that, they will keep the homestead exemption, he said.

A homestay B&B has the option to stay open the entire year by relinquishing the homestead exemption on the portion of the property that is used exclusively for commercial use. Rooms that the homeowner also uses for residential purposes, such as a dining room, are not involved.

"The homestay B&Bs serve a useful public purpose," he said. "They are not a hotel, nor do they function like one. They provide accommodations for people coming to town, many visiting family in the hospital. We are trying to treat the B&Bs differently because they provide a service."

Owners of homestay B&Bs live in the same house the guests stay at, so they are able to meet the individual needs of their visitors.

"For many of us this is the way we contribute to our community,"

said Victoria Register - Freeman, owner of the House on Cherry Street B&B, "It is a ministry."

Register - Freeman explained that traditional homestay B&Bs are based on the English model where homeowners open their residence to guests by providing a bed and breakfast, thus the name. They are designed with service in mind, not profit. With only a few guest rooms available to visitors, the owners cook the meals, tend the gardens and maintain the home. Homestay B&Bs are located in landmark buildings in historic districts.

"People who stay here really want to insert themselves into the community," she said, adding that many choose to stay in one of the area B&Bs to experience the community first before planning to buy property.

During 2007 the House on Cherry Street B&B will be open in January, March, April, October, November and December.

Joan Moore, one of the owners of the St. Johns House B&B, said that she has elected to be open January, February, April, May, November and December.

The prairie-style house plays host to an assortment of guests, including those attending local festivals and visiting family.

"We have many repeat guests," said Moore, adding that since it is a historical home that needs to be maintained she hopes guests will continue to visit under the new schedule.

Moore works closely with Betty Dickert, owner of the Dickert House B&B, just down the street. They often have families stay between the two homes for special events such as weddings. Dickert will be open in January and then decide about upcoming plans for the year.

"My biggest accounts are connected to the hospital," said Betty Dickert. "Patients and their families come from all over."

Like the other innkeepers, Dickert very much enjoys what she does and hopes she will be able to continue to run her B&B under the new schedule while still being able to pay the costs involved.

Owners of The Jenks House, Tom and Rae Merten, will remain open the entire year because they have decided to remove the rooms used exclusively by visitors from the homestead exemption. The rooms involved are the guest bedrooms and the guest bathrooms.

With a mix of business travelers, tourists and families visiting area residents, he has decided to pay the additional taxes in order to be able to stay open throughout the year.

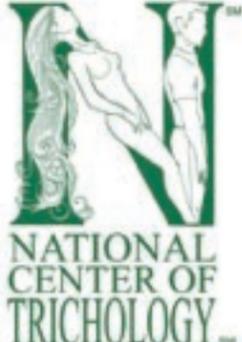
"We enjoy what we do," he said. "We enjoy the people."

The owner of the Downing Street B&B declined an interview.

**"People who stay here really want to insert themselves into the community"**

**Victoria Register - Freeman**

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# Director's History of experience, a fit for our Parks

By Sherry Selph

It has been nearly a year now since John Culbreth became Jacksonville's new Director of The Department of Parks, Recreation, Entertainment, and Conservation. Mr. Culbreth first served for 30 years in the City of Atlanta. His last position was Deputy Commissioner for Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. He then went on to become Director of Parks and Recreation for Fulton County Government. With 36 years of government experience under his belt, Mr. Culbreth is putting his expertise to excellent use here in Jacksonville – that of overseeing the largest urban park system in the country. Of Jacksonville's 390 parks, there are approximately 66 parks located in the Riverside, Avondale, Ortega and Murray Hill communities.

Even as Jacksonville's population increases, land acquisitions will enable our citizens throughout the entire city to have a retreat where they can leave their daily routines behind to just relax and rejuvenate, both now and in the years ahead. "Acquiring land before it is developed creates an excellent parks infrastructure for the city," says Culbreth. "For example, Atlanta, with a population four times that of Jacksonville, has only about 100 parks. It becomes too prohibitive to purchase land after an area has already been developed. Jacksonville has been very proactive in the past by acquiring and developing parks for future generations. Jacksonville has done an outstanding job in acquiring preservation park land, as well," he adds.

Mr. Culbreth will be looking to the private sector to donate funds, as well as neighborhood associations who might want to adopt a park. Through an adoption of a Park Agreement, the association fills out a contract that states their responsibilities. Garden clubs can also get involved in activities such as refurbishing parks, which in turn helps to bring new colors to the parks with the changing seasons. To help with the overall upkeep of the parks, the



John Culbreth, Director of The Department and Parks, Recreation, Entertainment, and Conservation.

city is working towards establishing endowments that will have recurring funding for maintenance, varying programs, capital improvements, and special project capital campaigns.

When pressed to name a couple of his favorite parks, Mr. Culbreth says Hanna Park (located on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean) and Memorial Park (in Riverside)

would be his choices right now, taking into account he has many parks yet to visit. Memorial Park has its own Advisory Board of Directors, who work with the city to aid in the maintenance and preservation of the park. The Memorial Park Association is the model Mr. Culbreth would like to see implemented for other parks. Designed by the Frederick Law Olmsted firm, the dedi-

cation ceremony for Memorial Park was held on Christmas Day in 1924, and the park is being nurtured by caring individuals to this day. The park is best known for its bronze statue, "Life", sculpted by Charles Adrian Pillars (1870-1937).

As for visitors' safety in the parks, cameras have been installed unobtrusively throughout various parks in the city. In addition, there are approximately 40 JSO officers who maintain a residence for themselves and their families at the entrance to a number of parks, with plans for this number to grow in the future. In exchange for free housing, the officers are responsible for monitoring the park after hours, and information is maintained regarding those entering the parks during these times. Patrol cars parked at the entrance to a park can be a major crime deterrent. Mr. Culbreth hopes to extend this program to maintenance workers, as well, who will maintain the parks on the weekends and evenings, and then go on to their day jobs. The maintenance program was a success in Atlanta under Mr. Culbreth's direction.

Of course, all the effort, planning, and money involved in developing Jacksonville's park system is just part of what it takes to make our parks truly successful. The most important aspect is the end result – that being Jacksonville's citizens and visitors utilizing the many features our parks provide, such as golfing, swimming pools, nature trails, boat ramps, adult and youth athletics, hiking and biking trails, skateboarding, beaches, BMX bike riding - and the list goes on. To further investigate all that the many parks in the Avondale, Riverside, Ortega, and Murray Hill communities have to offer, or throughout the city, simply go to [www.coj.net](http://www.coj.net) and select Parks and Recreation. The website offers information on each and every park in Jacksonville, as well as information on becoming involved as volunteers. So, get out there and explore some of our parks soon. There truly is something for everyone.

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# Ortega's Columbus Park Restored

By Laura E. Smith

Columbus Park in Ortega has undergone restoration thanks to a joint effort by concerned citizens and local government.

Located at Roosevelt Boulevard at the end of Baltic Street, Columbus Park is one of the four original circular parks that were designed into the Ortega development plan in the early 1900s.

When Old Highway 17, once referred to as Ortega Boulevard, was updated to become New Highway 17, part of the park was compromised to be used for the new road. Now semi-circular in shape and smaller than the other parks, it began to deteriorate.

Road construction vehicles were parking in the park even though it is illegal and the grass had worn thin and bare, said Rich Hardin, president of the Ortega Preservation Society.

The Ortega Preservation Society donated \$15,000. With an additional \$30,000 from the city of Jacksonville, work began on the revitalization of the park.

Under the direction of Harrison Conyers, board member of the Ortega Preservation Society, the park underwent a facelift, which included curbing around the park to prevent trucks from parking on

the property, lawn care, a new sidewalk, additional park benches and decorative trash receptacles.

A large, columned-brick wall has been erected at the edge of the park facing Roosevelt Boulevard, marking the entrance to Old Ortega as a National Historic District. The community was granted this distinguished honor in 2004.

"Our neighbors use the park," said Harrison Conyers. "We wanted to create a garden park with a southern habitat."

The Ortega native envisioned a park with the kind of flowers and trees his grandmother enjoyed.

"My grandparents, George E. Utsey Sr. and Hazel Tyler Utsey, were one of the first families to live in the Fairfax Manor subdivision and later move to Ortega Forest," said Conyers, adding that his grandmother was a founding member of the Fairfax Manor Garden Club.

Her garden was full of hydrangeas, camelias and azaleas, he said.

He would like to plant the colorful southern flowers under the stately oak trees that are currently at Columbus Park. He hopes to acquire additional funding to begin the planting.

Conyers said it was from his grandparents that he learned the importance of being involved in his community.



Harrison Conyers, board member of the Ortega Preservation Society and organizer of the restoration of Columbus Park welcomes residents to visit the park on Roosevelt Boulevard.

As a major civic leader, his grandfather was an early leader of Goodwill Industries in Jacksonville and a founding member of Meninak, a civic club that serves the needs of local children.

"My grandparents started Utsey's Shoes more than 60 years ago," he said, "It was a stable part of the Avondale shopping center for many years. It was the largest family-run shoe chain in the South."

There were multiple shops throughout Jacksonville. Shoe

stores were also located as far north as Valdosta and as far south as Orlando.

The Columbus Park project was made possible due to a partnership between the Ortega Preservation Society and the city of Jacksonville, he said, adding that he is grateful to Jacksonville City Council President Michael Corrigan who has been instrumental in helping to secure funding for the park renovation.

## Quest to move home could hurt historic district status

By Kim Meadows

The issue of whether a property owner can move his home out of Riverside Avondale is now in the hands of the courts, and could potentially lead to a dismantling of the Historic District guidelines if the appeal is successful.

After being defeated by three layers of local government decisions to move the Dutch Colonial to make way for a mix used development project, Mark Rubin, owner of 1662 Stockton Street, is taking the issue of property rights versus historic preservation to the Circuit Court.

In doing so, Rubin said he will have to put on trial the historic dis-

trict guidelines and the decisions city agencies made in denying his request to move his property to San Marco, citing "ambiguities" in the ordinance as the basis for the appeal.

"Unfortunately I will have to attack the preservation ordinance," said Rubin, president of AccuBuild Companies. "I really don't want to do that because it could do away with the historic district protection but I believe the law protects property rights. This could be a significant case in the history of preservation in Jacksonville."

The City Council voted unanimously to deny the appeal at its November meeting after the Land Use and Zoning Committee upheld

the decision of the Jacksonville Historic Preservation Commission to move the historic home built in 1906. The General Counsel's office will now be responsible for defending those decisions in the Circuit Court appeal.

Riverside Avondale was designated as a local historic district by ordinance of the City of Jacksonville in 1997. This legislation sets up certain guidelines and procedures to protect the neighborhood from inappropriate construction and demolition or removal and follows the United States Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings.

Members of the non profit agen-

cy Riverside Avondale Preservation, which offers residents advice on how to follow the guidelines, collected several hundred signatures in support of keeping the home in the neighborhood. The advocacy group is confident that the historic district guidelines will prevail and could be strengthened by the appeal in the long run.

"We have a good strong ordinance," said Jordan Logue, chairman of Riverside

Avondale Preservation and historic district resident. "If there are any ambiguities or weaknesses, let's fix them. We may have to lose one house to save the district but we welcome the challenge so that we can avoid something like this in the future."

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# Revisit the rich history of The Cummer Gardens

By Sherry L. Selph

Like many great people and places, the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens also has a storied past, full of twists and turns along the way. And, like all great stories, it is always nice to hear it told again, perhaps in another way.

In the early 60's, the Cummer estate included a collection of about 65 paintings. From that small, private collection, The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens has grown to be the second largest art museum in Florida today. However, the Cummer is about more than the wonderful paintings and sculptures it houses within; it is also about the Gardens that surround it. And Riverside has the distinct honor of being able to lay claim to such a wonderful piece of history – both inside, with its wonderful collections of art, to the artistically designed gardens without.

Approaching the gardens from the upper tier, the first thing that catches your eye is the famous 200-year-old Cummer Oak. No one could argue that this magnificent oak is not a work of art itself. The sight of it is the perfect greeting as you begin your leisurely stroll through the gardens. It is as if, arms wide, the tree is saying, "Welcome, come on out!"

Even though the home of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur Cummer was razed in 1960 to make way for today's museum, the gardens are thriving and offer a beautiful glimpse into the history of landscape architec-



ture. The very first garden was planted at the time the Cummer's home was built (in 1903, at a cost of \$20,000). While most gardeners of the day were mainly planting vegetables, Mrs. Cummer was an avid gardener and ahead of her time. She enlisted the help of 11 gardeners to create her vision (com-

pared to one head gardener today). Today, visitors can stroll the two acres, first winding their way from the Upper Garden to the Tea Garden. It was in the Tea Garden where Mrs. Cummer gathered her friends

and organized the Garden Club of Jacksonville, which grew to be the largest in the world. The number of joining members continued at such a rate, Mrs. Cummer was inspired to invent the idea of garden circles. Continuing on from the Tea Garden, you enter the English and Italian Gardens. The Olmstead Garden is in the process of being restored, so is not currently open to visitors. With the St. John's River as a backdrop, the sites, smells, and sounds beckon the senses. You can feel the breeze on your skin, smell the fragrant aromas, see the beauty - and enjoy.

The English Garden, originally called the Azalea Garden, was planted in 1903. Mrs. Cummer had attended a lecture by a well-known botanist and learned about the azalea. They had been introduced to Europe from Asia in the early 1800's and were slowly making their presence known in this country, mostly in the northern climes. After making a trip to Charleston Gardens to see the azaleas in bloom, Mrs. Cummer petitioned a nursery in Glen St. Mary to grow them. It is easy to forget that, at that time, there were no garden shops as there are today, and everything was grown from seed. After seeing how beautiful they were, she began planting hundreds of azaleas throughout the city. So, come early spring, when you are admiring the hundreds of blooming azaleas throughout our city, you can

say a thank-you to Ninah Holden Cummer.

After a trip to the Villa Gamberaia near Florence, Italy, Mrs. Cummer fell in love with the four reflecting pools she saw there. Inspired, she solicited the help of Ellen Biddle Shipman (1869-1950), and the Italian Garden was created in 1931. In 1933, House & Garden magazine dubbed Shipman "the dean of American women landscape architects." Throughout her career, she designed more than 650 gardens, with the Italian Garden being one of the few of her gardens still in existence. Two reflecting pools are the focal point of the Italian Garden, along with roses that bloom throughout the year. A dense display of blue Agapanthus, which means, "flower of love," blooms in May – all from one bulb Mr. Cummer sent back home while on a trip to Egypt.

In addition to the many varieties of seasonal annuals, roses, and evergreens planted throughout, there are other works of art to admire, such as original sculptures by William Mercer (1858-1939), known worldwide for his sculpted and cast concrete garden pieces. His barrel chairs, planters, and pink stone bench in the Tea Garden beckon you to take a moment to admire the surroundings. Sculptress, Anna Hyatt Huntington (1876-1973), donated her Diana of the Hunt bronze piece, which can be seen on the upper tier. A gargoyle retrieved from a demolished building in New York City stands watch in the Italian Garden. Other garden ornaments include a mosaic fountain and basin in the English Garden and a three-tiered fountain in the Italian Garden. One of the first putting greens ever created lies between the English and Italian Gardens, which Mrs. Cummer gave to her husband (an avid golfer) as a birthday present.

The next time you drive, jog, or walk past The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens, take a moment to reflect on the fact that there is something wondrous behind the museum building – part of Jacksonville's rich history. Better yet, plan a visit (or another visit) to look at the gardens again - in a new light, perhaps.

Special thanks go to Mrs. Bobby Arnold, a past president of the Garden Club of Jacksonville, for graciously agreeing to share her knowledge about a part of Riverside's very interesting past.

**The next time you drive, jog, or walk past The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens, take a moment to reflect on the fact that there is something wondrous behind the museum building**

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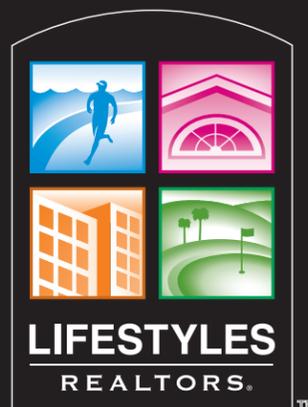
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### Social Diaries



By Amy Rains Nix  
Social Editor

Welcome to the Resident Social Diaries! Here you will find fantastic social party and event pictures throughout the year. I will document the dozens upon dozens of upcoming events such as fundraisers, charity balls, galas, and every other fun thing that takes place in our community. If there is an event that *you* know about that *I* should know about, please send an email with you event information and the daytime phone number to [theresident@bellsouth.net](mailto:theresident@bellsouth.net) I will surely be there to capture all of the excitement.



Doug Holt, Eve Krasutsky, Jennifer Criswell, Beverley Brooke, Cassie Norris and Cindy Guy enjoy the Autumn Open House at Prudential Network Realty Avondale Office.



Festival of Trees Chair Lacy Shaw and Junior League of Jacksonville's President Genni Jett enjoy the ambiance of the Jacksonville Public Library at the Annual Night of Lights Party.



Paul Trautman shows off his 1967 Ford Mustang fastback at the Park & King Heart of Riverside Festival.



Lauren Weedon, Rebecca Moore, Jana Robinson at the Night of Lights Party



Florida Yacht Club Tennis Chairman Chip Travis presents the Female Player of the Year award to Anne Lee.



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Presentation of the 2006 Debutante Coterie took place at The One-Hundredth Thirtieth Annual Christmas Ball at the Florida Yacht Club on Saturday, December 23, 2006.

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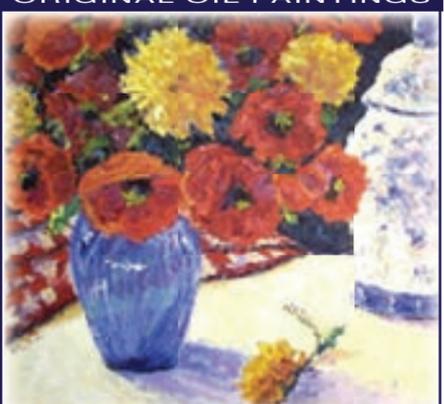
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### Social Diaries



Celebrating Graduation from FCCJ's nursing program is Julie Sniffen, Jessica Bork, Jeniffer Beninati, Lisa Spurlin, and Susan Berry.



Florida Yacht Club Tennis Chairman Chip Travis presents the Male Player of the Year award to Dave Rondeau.



The Rieck Family enjoys Luminaria by bicycle.



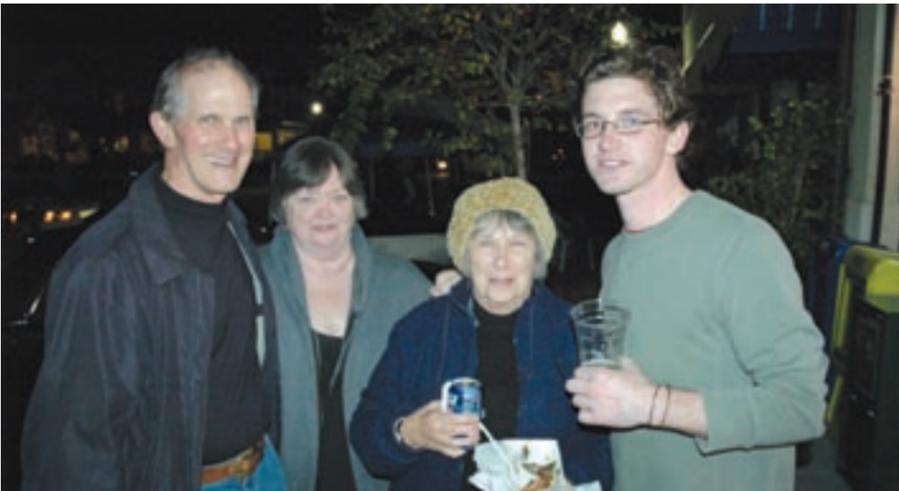
Jill Liberatori, Matthew Bowler, Executive Director of RADO and Susan Bancks at The RADO 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Riverside Harvest Gala which took place at the 5 Points Theatre.



Maureen Sharon, Vice Chair and Doug Decker, Chair enjoy the RADO 1st Annual Riverside Harvest Gala.



Paul and Barley Hilpert at the Christmas in Avondale celebration.



Mike Sheridan, Margaret Taylor, Helen Lyons and Brent Taylor came out for the Heart of Riverside Festival.



Parker and Jeremy Summerford at the Christmas in Avondale celebration.

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# The Great Outdoors



By Seth H. Williams

The need for neighbors to come together as sportsmen and outdoor lovers becomes imperative as we begin 2007. Outdoor regulations and preservation of land and waters is the passion of many. Young "residents" will seek refuge in the outdoors and the legacy that is left behind should reflect the level of care.

I would like to take the time to welcome all of our new readers to

an experience unlike any before. This is a great time for the city of Jacksonville and we are a strong influential portion of the city. The people of Riverside, Avondale, Ortega and Murray Hill demand outlets for recreation and The Great Outdoors will be there to document the events that take shape.

I would like to kick off this inaugural issue with a nautical twist. It's the time of year when a cold snap sets in and the occasional trip out on the water is halted by a nor'easter. Contemplating storage and care for



In a recent offshore score, Jason Arteaga caught this Wahoo while trolling the outer ledge off Jacksonville. The winter Wahoo bite is on!



Jeff Morrow travelled to Costa Rica to land this beautiful sailfish on a flyrod. "January is a great time to land these amazing billfish." said Morrow.

your vessel is extremely important in this season. Your focus should be on taking the care to winterize your boat properly. You count on your boat to get you to your favorite spots and you must take care of it while it's at rest. This means taking advice from experts. Improper care of idle boats at the marina slip and/or neglecting your boat on its trailer may result in engine difficulty or serious trouble resulting in costly mechanical repair or replacement.

Yamaha / Mercury Certified Technician, Mike Manier, of Mobile Marine Express strongly urges the use of a stabilizer in outboard

engine tanks. "Gas is refined so cheaply these days, it is stale in about a month," he adds, "it (stabilizer) won't help with gas that's already in your tank, you must add it when you fill up." The important point here is to check the bottle for instructions and ratios. The stabilizer can be picked up at your local boating supplier.

Don Langford, a diesel specialist with Sea Hawk Marine, Inc., agreed about fuel stabilizers and stated that, "diesel engines are a bit different, they should be run weekly at a minimum to recycle the fuel in the tanks to prevent the

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Tom Edwards, a local attorney, shot this elk on a recent trip to the Canadian Rockies.



Mike Park took this 217-lb. 8-point buck at Live Oak Plantation in Adel, Georgia. Miller Electric employees Buck Oden, Mike Park, Rick Ferguson, Chad Cason, and David Byrd are pictured from left to right. Live Oak Plantation has been used by several groups from Miller Electric to build customer relations with quail hunting and occasional deer hunts for several years.

## Wild Game Recipe of the season...

As the hunting and gaming slows down in January, venison you've stockpiled needs to thaw out and be enjoyed. Give this one a try it's relatively easy to prepare:

Begin by using half-inch thick medallions cut from the loin... Next...Pour four cups of low-sodium beef broth in a saucepan and simmer until reduced to two cups to intensify the flavor. (venison stock is even better)

Place this to the side and begin the sauce.

In a saucepan, melt two table spoons of butter then add...

- 1 cup of mushrooms sliced (baby portobellos are great)
  - 1 garlic clove, minced
- When the mushrooms become soft and the garlic colors add...
- 2 cups of beef broth
  - ½ cup Tawny Port
  - 1 tablespoon of Worcestershire sauce

Simmer the sauce until it thickens slightly.(appearance of about a cup of liquid) Meanwhile, dry the medallions with a little pat down and begin to season with salt and pepper(sea salt grains are best, and fresh cracked pepper)

In a stainless steel cast iron skillet melt 2 tablespoons of butter. Saute the medallions in the skillet searing both sides (about 2 minutes per side) Finish the medallions to your preference (med, med-well, med-rare...sear em' and leave em' if you like it rare) in a 300-degree oven in the skillet.(always use caution with hot skillet exiting oven) If you used a homemade stock sauce will thicken on it's own, if you use a canned broth, you may need to add a little roux or cornstarch mixed in cold water to thicken the sauce... When the sauce is ready finish it with: Salt and pepper to taste A splash of balsamic vinegar to your liking.

Pour the sauce on both plates leaving left over for a topper if you like, then, remove medallions from the oven and place over the sauce...Sprinkle with a garnish if you wish...parsley perhaps..

This meal is excellent served with a butternut squash soup to start and accompany the medallions with garlic (or my favorite horseradish) mashed potatoes maple glazed carrots and a glass of Cabernet or Merlot if you so choose.

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fuel from gelling." He went on to discuss the importance of running a diesel engine up to the proper rated r.p.m.s (revolutions per minute) at the manufacturers recommended temperature, which ensures proper circulation of fuel. Your boat should leave the dock, take a spin and return to the marina or slip it came from. Both of the engine specialists recommend regular scheduled replacement of fuel filters on both diesel and gasoline engines as well.

Hopefully, bringing the pros to you, the reader, shed some light on common maintenance issues, that was the goal. These suggestions are priceless and new boat owners

may never forget these preventative measures.

The Great Outdoors looks forward to hearing about the trips, travels, and enjoyment our readers experience in the Florida outdoors. There are also many adventurers who go on Safari, some who fish the Western Pacific Coast in search of the elusive White Marlin, and others who climb high peaks in the Peruvian Andes. Whatever your adventurous heart desires, gets your blood pumping, and satisfies your soul, I would like to hear about it. Send photos and e-mail to The Great Outdoors [resident@bellsouth.net](mailto:resident@bellsouth.net).

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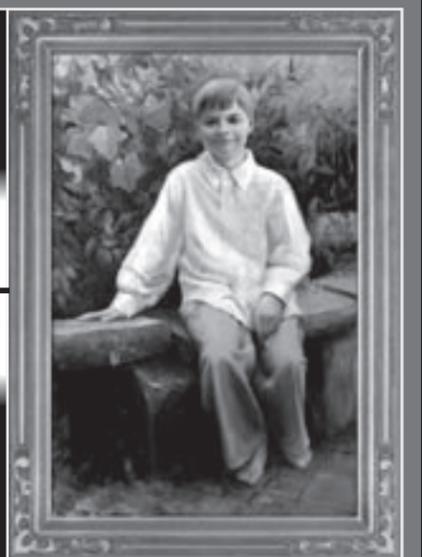
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## Resident of the Month

By Laura E. Smith

For one Avondale resident her artistic talents took her on the road, but when the job was done she always returned to the river to hang her hat.

"I was raised here," said Florence Railsback. "Of all the places I have been, I always come back to Avondale. This is my home."

The youngest of six children, she moved to Jacksonville from Miami when she was a child.

Her father, John Ben Kori, a chemist and real estate developer, was originally from Jacksonville. He went to Miami to make it in real estate. One of his largest Miami investments, the elaborate \$250,000 Arcade Building built in 1926 on W. Flagler Street, included 66 apartments and an assortment of retail shops.

Upon returning to Jacksonville, Kori purchased property on Riverside Avenue across from the fire station. The building he constructed there housed both shops and apartments. Florence grew up nearby with her brothers and sisters in Riverside.

After marrying Fred Isaac, she moved to Avondale where they built a home. More than 57 years later,



Florence Railsback at her home in Avondale.

the traditional brick house is filled with hats, antiques, family pictures and many wonderful memories.

"I raised my two children here," said Railsback, adding that they attended Fishweir Elementary School and Lee High School before going to college.

She is proud of her children, Fred Isaac, a local attorney, and daughter, Janet Blacker, director of Christ Episcopal Church Preschool and Kindergarten in Ponte Vedra

Beach, as well as her grandchildren Kori, Paige, Cami and Rogers.

The same home where she raised her children was also her office.

She opened her own interior design business, Florence's Interior Design, after working for the prestigious interior decorating studio at the May-Cohens Company in downtown Jacksonville for 15 years. While working for May-Cohens she traveled to New York City to attend interior design school.

"I sold the most business in the history of May-Cohens in Jacksonville," she said smiling. "I'd rather sell than eat."

Passionate about interior decorating from the beginning, she worked tirelessly to design for both residential and commercial properties in Jacksonville. From large estate homes to the Gulf Life Insurance Company, she did it all.

She sold the entire package, including flooring, carpet, tile, furniture, wallpaper, paneling, fixtures, drapery and fabrics.

"Whatever they required, I produced it to make their house beautiful," she said. "I would go to their home, tell them what they needed, and choose colors and scaling."

When she decided to embark on her own venture, her one-woman operation grew quickly through word-of-mouth referrals.

"I never advertised," she said, "One client told another."

From Sea Island, Ga., to Ocala, Fla., and many towns in between, she enjoyed traveling, meeting peo-

ple and creating custom designs.

"Wherever they needed me, I went," she said. "I gave it the look it required, and I never duplicated."

A Georgia real estate developer and owner of Sea Palms Inn on St. Simon's Island, was so impressed with the 40 condominiums she designed and decorated, he and his wife asked her to do their home as well.

One of her favorite design jobs was an 86-foot custom-designed yacht that a multi-millionaire commissioned her to do. She also decorated the interior of his 55-foot Hatteras yacht, as well as his home in Cross City where he lived with his wife.

"I met a lot of lovely people," she said. "I loved decorating. It was amazing how things would turn out. I would be so proud of what I did. It was fabulous."

Not one to sit still for long, she described herself as a go-getter who loved a challenge. She purchased property on the ocean and built herself a beach house after first drawing the plans for her coastal retreat in the sand.

In addition to designing, she would also travel to speak to groups like the Perry Women's Club in Perry, Fla., to give decorating tips.

As a member of the Woman's Club of Jacksonville since she was a young woman, the talented designer also created all of the floral decorations for the organization, participated in dance productions and made many friends.

Although retired, she is still a member of the American Society of Interior Designers, and continues to enjoy helping friends decorate their homes. She is also a member of The Garden Circle and the St. John's Presbyterian Church in Avondale.

"God was good to me," she said. "He made me a successful woman."

Sitting in her great room overlooking the St. Johns River, a room that she added onto her house complete with a welcoming fireplace, floral paintings, and 20-foot beams that support the ceiling acquired from the original downtown Jacksonville railroad station, she said that she has so much to be thankful for as the new year begins.

"I loved what I did," she said. "Do what you love."

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## Movers & Shakers

By Ophelia Henry



Leader and Activist Elaine Burnett

Arriving from New York in 1979, Elaine Burnett settled herself and her two children in Riverside.

She feels she has chosen a great place to set down roots. She worked for Blue Cross / Blue Shield until her retirement this year.

Elaine's philosophy is to be involved. "We as individuals should be involved as a matter of course. We should make a social investment," says Ms. Burnett.

A Leader and Activist Elaine put action with her dedication. Elaine sits on three boards, Riverside Avondale Development Organization (RADO), Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) and Citizens Planning Advisory Council (CPAC). Strongly involved with her local government, she is investing her voluntarism in Jacksonville.

Her interests are primarily centered with the development of her Riverside neighborhood and in the arts and education.

Elaine openly encourages community residents and business owners to be more pro proactive toward issues that arise in their neighborhoods. She leads by example. "Jacksonville is a growing city. Even the success of the thriving area of Riverside needs constant cultivation warns Ms. Burnett. Attitude and how you see yourself rolls over to how you see your community" Burnett advises.

Elaine is proud to announce a new initiative for her time. She's a new Grandmother!

## Engagements & Milestones



Allison Bassett celebrated her 1st Birthday! Happy Birthday Allison,



To be married this month, Ansley Marie O'Steen and Edward Ward Blakely.



Announcing the marriage of Marshall Byard Dixon son of Margaret and Robert Dixon to Betsy Michele Butler daughter of Victoria and Rodney Butler of Riverside. The wedding was October 6th, 2006 at the Winterbourne Inn in Orange Park, Florida. The couple honeymooned in Captiva Island. They will reside in Avondale.

## Have A Sweet New Year!

By Richard J. Hull II

Pastor, Riverside Avenue Christian Church

Before starting a New Year's diet indulge in some special sweets.

**Lifesavers** remind us that when life gets tough and we seem to be in over our heads we need help. We can't do it alone. Some days instead of being on top of things, things seem to be on top of us and we need help.

We need more than each other. We need strength greater than our own. Addicts who have confronted their fate realize they need a higher power. One time Jesus' followers were in a boat and a storm came up. Afraid they cried out "Lord, Save us, we are perishing!"

Have some Lifesavers and remember that we need each other and we need God.

**SweetTarts** help us appreciate the differences in people. Sweet-Tarts are a candy that flavors our life with opposites, sweet and tart. Most of us are filled with opposites. We are helpful one moment and unhelpful the next. We are appreciated one day and a pain the neck the next.

A healthy marriage often is made up of people with differences. One enjoys life and finds good ways to spend money. The other saves money and invests in the future. As the Apostle Paul said it: "There are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit."

Have some SweetTarts and appreciate the differences in people.

**Hugs and Kisses** remind us how much we need to be embraced. The shaking of a hand is formal and polite. But a hug says, "You are important to me."

The Bible describes a time in worship called "the Holy Kiss". Embracing each other helps us be embraced by God.

Have some Hugs and Kisses and remember you are loved.

**Butterfingers** keep us humble, reminding us that everyone makes mistakes. You know the term butterfingers; it is used in baseball a lot. If the shortstop drops the ball the player is said to have butterfingers, slippery fingers.

Basic to life is the need for forgiveness. We celebrate the forgiveness that God gives, and we celebrate the forgiveness we can give to others. Paul says, "Forgive each, other just as the Lord forgives you."

**Snickers** And of course we have to have Snickers. Snickers improve our attitude. Attitudes make a difference. Sometimes I go into a store grumpy and find the clerk is unpleasant. Sometimes I go in with a smile on my face and the clerk is very nice. The difference usually is in me, not the clerk.

The Bible says that "God provides us everything for our enjoyment." What a great attitude. I realize such confidence is put to the test by mosquitoes and natural disasters and war. Still, even in hard times attitude can make a difference. In the New Year go to work with God and put on a smile and improve the attitude. Have a sweet new year.





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## Cooking with Sherry

By Sherry L. Selph

Happy New Year! And welcome to "Cooking with Sherry," The Resident's cooking column. I am Sherry L. Selph, and a Jacksonville native. I have watched alongside many of you as our city has grown over the years. My favorite part of town has always been the areas The Resident will be covering, both because I have fond memories of times when I have lived there and because of the rich history of the area. I am looking forward to broadening the scope of this space and including the participation of the "Residents" of Riverside, Avondale, Ortega, and Murray Hill on a regular basis. This is your newspaper and, as such, my goal is to cater to your requests, listen to your suggestions, feature your tried-and-true recipes, and offer ideas that will enhance your cooking experiences. Occasionally, I may ask for specific types of recipes, as seasons, holidays, or special events dictate. Remember, however, that this column will be spotlighting you, the readers, and those topics that pertain strictly to your community. Just as the kitchen is the heart of a home, I will see to it that your interests, contributions, and community will be at the heart of each and every column I write.

I also would like to feature our local chefs from time to time, in the hope that they will share some of their insights, their love of cooking, and perhaps, one of their reci-



pes. As it so happens, I am pleased to introduce one of our local chefs - from the oldest private yacht club in Florida - for our Inaugural issue.

"Happy New Year! I hope everyone had a wonderful 2006 - and wish you an even better 2007! I am Chef Stephen Bechan, the Executive Chef of the Florida Yacht Club. This past December marked my first year with the club, and let me tell you, time flies when you're having fun. I moved up from West Palm Beach, where I was the Chef of the Seafood Bar at the Breakers Hotel in Palm Beach. Before moving to south Florida, I was the Executive Sous Chef at the Amelia Island Club. My first taste of Florida was when I went to the Ritz Carlton on Amelia Island for my Pennsylvania culinary school internship in 1997. I have enjoyed being back in

Jacksonville - I have family in the area, and love coming to work in Ortega.

For those of you that had your midnight toast with Champagne and opened too many bottles (and now have some left over), we thought you could use a recipe for the left-over wine. This sauce would be great with a poached or baked fillet of Salmon."

### Method:

In a large saucepot over medium high heat, sweat the first four ingredients in the olive oil for 2-3 minutes until onion is translucent. Then add the Thyme, Bay Leaf and Peppercorns. Cook for 1 minute. Add the Champagne and simmer until the liquid is reduced by half. Then add the Heavy Cream and reduce

by half. Turn off the heat and stir in the butter till emulsified. Season with salt and pepper, then strain the sauce through a fine mesh sieve and serve.

### Champagne Sauce

1-cup Onion diced  
1-cup Celery diced  
1-cup Carrot diced  
1-Tbsp. Garlic, minced  
1 Sprig Fresh Thyme  
1 Bay Leaf  
1 Tsp. -  
Whole Black Peppercorns  
¾ Bottle Champagne  
1 Quart Heavy Cream  
¼ cup Butter  
2-Tbsp. Olive Oil  
Salt & Pepper to taste

### Sherry's Cooking Tip:

**SWEAT:** To cook vegetables in fat over gentle heat so they become soft (but not brown), and their juices are concentrated in the cooking fat. If the pan is covered during cooking, the ingredients will keep a certain amount of their natural moisture. If the pan is not covered, the ingredients will remain relatively dry.

Remember, your suggestions and feedback are always welcome. Please submit them to *the resident@bellsouth.net*.



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# West Riverside Elementary School Murals Under Restoration

By Laura E. Smith

Before Lee Adams became a well-known artist of flora and fauna, he was first a student at West Riverside Elementary School.

Now some of his most famous works of art are not only on display at the school, but they are also under restoration as part of a fundraising campaign that has brought the alumni of the neighborhood school together to benefit current students.

Adams was commissioned by the state to create eleven murals for the Florida exhibit at the 1964 World's Fair held in New York City. Each mural, measuring 10 feet by

12 feet, was to represent the life, culture and commerce of Florida. After the fair ended, the murals were placed in storage in Tallahassee.

When he and his wife Mimi died in a car accident on Roosevelt Boulevard in 1971, the city of Jacksonville mourned their loss. As a painter of plants, animals, and birds, he had contributed so much to the community through his artistic talents. His wife was also an artist, but it was her efforts to clean up the St. Johns River that began her groundbreaking career as an environmentalist in the early 1960s. Following their

tragic deaths, Mayor Hans Tanzler created the Mimi and Lee Adams Environmental Awards in 1972 to recognize those working in conservation and preservation.

Later under the direction of the Jacksonville Historic Landmarks Commission, the Florida murals were returned to Jacksonville in 1980 to remain part of the Lee Adams Trust. The murals were to be put on display in public places in honor of the couple.

Since both Adams and his children had attended West Riverside Elementary School, two murals depicting Florida orange groves and a cattle roundup are now on display at the school. Two more are on permanent loan from Jacksonville University to the school. One depicts a celebration of NASA and space exploration while the other features transportation and communica-

tions.

The murals have been cleaned and stripped. This month Jacksonville artist, Charlotte Ashford, will begin the restoration and conservation work.

"As an alumnus and resident of the neighborhood, I am keenly aware of the importance of tradition and the quality of education that is currently being delivered at West Riverside Elementary School," said Doug Milne, Jacksonville attorney and chair of the West Riverside Elementary School Alumni Association. "Anything we can do to benefit the school is a direct overall benefit to the community in general."

Milne said that the paintings by Adams present a unique opportunity that helps from a cultural perspective, as well as general interest.

"We have decided to not just stop at raising the funding to bring

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about conservation of the paintings, but to go beyond that and generate additional projects," he said.

Monies raised through the alumni association will also be used to refurbish the library with books, purchase a new sound system for the school auditorium, add new playground equipment and lay down an outdoor track.

He encouraged all alumni to get involved with the school.

"They need to go back," he said, adding that they would be impressed with the vibrancy of the students, the genuine interest in learning and the quality of the facility.

Milne has also enjoyed mentoring two brothers for the past three years.

The part that is so gratifying

about mentoring is that the children who are selected are chosen because they need to have an adult to converse with and once the interaction starts, they just blossom, he said.

School principal and alumna Howard Caraway added that he is glad fellow alumni are coming back to the school and he has noticed that both his students and the visitors benefit.

"Regardless of the profession they are in when adults walk out of an elementary school, they are lighter on their feet," said Caraway. "The reward is a two-way street."

West Riverside Elementary School is now ranked as a "B" school based on the scores obtained on the FCAT exam.

"What we are trying to do is to

bring back alumni and people in the business community, and have them feel that West Riverside Elementary School is part of the community," he said.

Caraway understands the importance of role-modeling, goal-setting and teaching his students to believe in themselves. He wants his students to invest in themselves, so they are better prepared for the next level as they enter sixth grade.

Built in 1911 West Riverside is the only the oldest continuously-operated elementary school in Florida and the site of the first Florida Parent Teacher Association, according to Meta Parkinson, school secretary and bookkeeper.

Parkinson, who is also an alumna, is responsible for coordinating

the alumni efforts at West Riverside, including gathering school memorabilia for a future exhibit.

"It started with a small group with a real heart for it," said Parkinson, adding that the alumni association has continued to grow and is working with the current school PTA.

Either reading to children or donating money to restore artwork, she is pleased to see alumni contributing to the school.

"We are building an awareness that people need to be in this building," she said. "There is a legacy here. These children are our responsibility."

For more information, contact Parkinson at 381-3900.

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## The Renovators

By Laura E. Smith

Many who are drawn to the historic neighborhoods of Avondale, Murray Hill, Riverside and Ortega share a passion for the restoration of historic buildings.

From craftsman-style bungalows to colonial revival homes, those in the business of preservation are hard at work adding to the revitalization of these historic neighborhoods.

The Dennis family in Avondale and Matthew Bowler, executive director of the Riverside Avondale Development Organization, are part of the ongoing restoration movement.

Terry Dennis, a retired Jacksonville battalion fire chief, and his wife Bonnie have taken on the daunting task of bringing the McConnel House at 3222 St. Johns Avenue back to its once former glory.

"We are trying to give it a spectacular look," said Terry Dennis. "Mrs. McConnel was a gracious southern lady. We want to capture her grace and charm."

Located on the corner of St. Johns and Seminole avenues, the impressive two-story white house features four fluted, square columns. It is considered to be one of the oldest homes in Avondale. Built circa



The McConnel House circa early 1900s before the porches were removed by Mrs. McConnel. Photo courtesy Terry Dennis.

1904 by Walter Drake as a private residence overlooking the St. Johns River, the building was purchased by Frederick P. McConnel and fellow real estate developers in 1914.

According to Dennis, Fred McConnel DeMartini, the grandson of the late Frederick McConnel, was told that the massive structure was moved by oxen from its original location on the river a block away to the current address. The developers subdivided the riverfront property into a block-long development called "Elizabeth Place."

McConnel moved into the home with his wife, Moriat Eloise Gary McConnel, and their daughters, Mary Alice and Moriat. Three generations later DeMartini, the son of Mary Alice, sold the house in July 2005 to the Dennis couple.

Based on architectural history books, in addition to colonial revival architecture, the home also has Greek revival and neo-classical elements, said Dennis.

He has consulted local historians and historical preservation organizations for additional information.

Working from the top down, Dennis is enjoying learning about both the McConnel family and the home.

He discovered an extensive collection of Christmas cards in the attic dating as far back as the early 1900s, some sent to the McConnells by many prominent families in Jacksonville over the years. He found that since the house did not have central heat and air, each season the McConnells would change out their draperies in accordance with the weather, all of which were stored in the attic.

Since the attic was a large open area, it will become his media room complete with a wide screen television and an authentic Irish pub. Dennis, like McConnel, is of Irish descent, so a historical pub seemed only fitting.

While restoring the second floor bedrooms, he discovered that transom windows had been inserted above each door to control airflow. Using the historical model, the transom windows will be reinstalled. The home has four fireplaces, two of which are on the second floor. They will be restored. Gas logs will be added for safety.

He plans to leave the original glass windows and restore those that have been broken over the years, as well as reinstall shutters to protect the rare glass in times of heavy weather conditions.

The master bath will be trans-

formed from an outdated 1960s look to an elegant larger bathroom with modern conveniences. The other bath on the second floor will have a special touch — the original ceramic claw foot tub found in the garage apartment behind the house.

Restoration of the hard pine floor in the hallway that runs between the bedrooms is also underway. The wide staircase that descends to the first floor will be renovated, as well as the original elevator that is still in working condition.

Most southern homes had a music room or parlor where women entertained and an elegant library where men would relax or plot business strategies, he said.

Plans for both are included on the ground floor. A music room for his wife will feature antique instruments such as a vintage piano and harp. Dennis is looking forward to spending time with friends in his library.

Other rooms, including a formal dining room, living room, butler's pantry and kitchen will undergo extensive restoration and renovation. The original cast iron registers are no longer in use, but will remain in the house as a part of history.

Central heat and air have been installed. Plumbing and electrical

work have been updated to code.

"Going through the house has been like a history in wiring," said Dennis, adding that there was no electricity when the house was originally built, so electrical work was added as needed over the years.

"We are constantly traveling with pictures of the home in-hand to research what would have gone in the house," he said.

Delicate chandeliers, antique mirrors and period door knobs are just some of their latest finds.

The house has been on the Riverside Avondale Preservation tour of homes even though it was under reconstruction. Dennis was delighted with the response he received from the community.

"We got so much support from the neighbors," he said. "A lot of them knew the McConnel family. It gave me such a boost. We are committed to them to display as much of the history of the home as possible."

He hopes to have the home completed for the upcoming 2007 RAP tour in the spring.

"I am a caretaker," he said, adding that while he plans to make the house his home, he knows that the house will outlast him.

After restoring 12 buildings in the area, Dennis and his wife were ready to take on the 6,000 square foot structure.

"My wife saw the columns," he said. "It was her choice."

His wife Bonnie added, "The history of the house is fascinating. I can't wait to move in."

After 34 years with the Jacksonville Fire Department in which he served the Avondale neighborhood, a job that he said he absolutely loved, Dennis is just as happy with his latest endeavor.

"The pleasure is the challenge," he said. "This has been a passion."

He was drawn to the older neighborhood because he grew up in another Jacksonville historical neighborhood — Springfield.

Matthew Bowler, executive director of RADO also has ties to Springfield. After graduating from college, he served in the AmeriCorps program in Springfield and later became vice president of Operation New Hope there for six years before joining RADO.

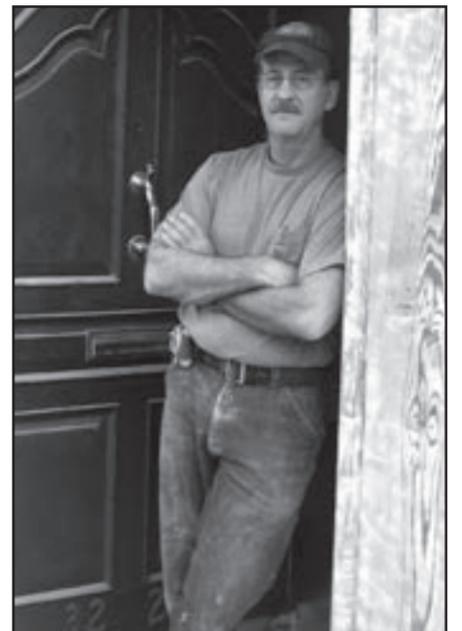
"I have a passion for developing around the urban core," said Matthew Bowler. "These are such awesome neighborhoods."

Like Dennis, his goal is to bring back both homes and neighborhoods to their original feel in order to benefit the community.

RADO was created in 1999 by members of RAP who wanted to ensure that there was affordable housing for various income levels, especially for those who serve the community like teachers, police officers and firefighters.

As a community development corporation governed by a board of directors from RAP, RADO is a non-profit that works with the city of Jacksonville and government approved contractors to renovate existing homes and build new houses in the historic craftsman-style.

The goals of RADO include the maintenance of affordable housing, removal of slum and blight, the preservation and restoration of



Terry Dennis stands in the large doorway at the entrance to the McConnel House.

historic homes and the building of appropriate new construction, said Bowler.

His efforts are focused on New Riverside and North Riverside. New Riverside is the area considered west of Stockton Street and north of Post Street, but south of I-10 and is within the historic district. North Riverside begins on the other side of I-10 and is not under RAP jurisdiction. Building projects are currently underway in both areas.

According to Bowler, since RADO has a non-profit status, it is able to acquire land and home parcels from Jacksonville that are in the city inventory. Before abandoned property can be deeded over to RADO from the city, a thorough investigation is done to make sure that there is no one can claim ownership of it. The property must be used as affordable housing.

Most three bedroom, two bath homes completed by RADO range from \$125,000 to \$180,000.

There are two programs qualified buyers use in purchasing the homes. Head Start to Homeownership provides assistance with the down payment and closing costs. Buyers must put up \$500 toward the purchase of the home. The bond program provided by the state not only offers 0 percent interest loans to the buyers, but it also lowers the cost of the home by an additional \$15,000.

Buyers qualify for a home built by RADO based on income, and they agree to live in the home for at least 10 years.

"The subsidies are structured to promote homeownership and stable homebuyers," he said.

The homes have a historic look, but inside come complete with all of the modern conveniences. They are brought up to code and are fully upgraded, including hardwood floors, new tile, cabinets and appliances.

In addition to adding homes to existing neighborhoods, RADO will begin construction of a new development on a vacant lot off Green and Myra streets in 2007, said Bowler. The environmentally-friendly model homes, 12 in all, will include energy-efficient bulbs, appliances, window coverings and water heaters.

Future plans for RADO include developing mixed-use commercial properties that will contain both residential and retail space.

# St. Marks parishioners return to Mississippi

By Laura E. Smith

A group of parishioners from St. Mark's Episcopal Church in Ortega returned to the coast of Mississippi in December to play the part of Santa Claus once again, this time to more than 80 deserving families who lost everything during the 2005 Hurricane Katrina tragedy.

The Jacksonville-based Episcopal Diocese of Florida, under the direction Bishop Samuel Johnson Howard, organized the Katrina Relief Task Force following the hurricane in August of 2005.

"After Katrina struck we felt compelled to do something," said Cheryl Hardin, a member of St. Mark's Episcopal church and the task force representative for the first coast region west. "We formed a plan to help the coast of Mississippi and three weeks after the hurricane hit we went to Camp Coast Care in Long Beach."

Camp Coast Care, a Christian community that provides hospitality to volunteers wishing to serve in the Hurricane Katrina recovery effort, operates a recovery and reconstruction mission for those in need on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. The organization is a mission point of the Lutheran and Episcopal Disaster Response, an outreach of the Lutheran and Episcopal Services in Mississippi.

After spending a week in the heavily hit coastal region, the committee from the Episcopal Diocese of Florida formulated a plan to make a five-year commitment to help the communities of Long Beach and Pass Christian, Miss.

"The diocese has sent work teams to Mississippi every month for the past 16 months," said Hardin. "This was the second year the diocese had adopted families from the devastated area for the holidays. We identified the needy families through Camp Coast Care."

While monthly work teams concentrate on helping the coastal residents rebuild their homes and their communities, the special team that traveled just before Christmas arrived with a truck full of wrapped presents for 80 families.

From essentials like blankets, towels and sheets to favorite toys



Rich, Cathy and Cheryl Hardin prepare to travel to Mississippi.

and books, the truck arrived filled to the brim.

Hardin explained that families completed a form identifying their names, ages, clothing sizes and likes and dislikes, so parishioners in Jacksonville, as well as throughout the diocese knew what to purchase. Parishioners from St. Mark's Episcopal Church bought gifts for 25 of the 80 families, as well as gift cards. Members of Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Riverside also participated. With more than five regions involved, the truck made one last stop in Tallahassee to pick up the last of the gifts before arriving in Mississippi.

Local families that traveled to Mississippi to help personally distribute the gifts to the area residents through Camp Coastal Care were Hardin, her husband Rich and their daughter Cathy, Ruth and Harvey Granger with their daughter Corrine Granger, Lamar and Dolores Kaleel and their family and Mike Depew who also donating the use of his 24-foot truck so they could make the trip.

"There was a great response to the program this Christmas," she said. "We had more families involved this year. This first year we helped 50 families."

By going in person and meeting the families the local churches are helping, a connection has been established between the people of coastal Mississippi and the residents of Jacksonville.

"It was an incredible experience," said Hardin, adding that the first year she went she saw firsthand how upbeat the residents of Long Beach and Pass Christian were when they arrived with their church bus of presents. People were appreciative and many commented to her that if it wasn't for the faith-based organizations involvement in Mississippi they would not have had their needs met.

Her favorite story is of a home that the bus pulled up to and the mother came out to ask why they were there because she had not signed up for the program. No sooner had they begun to disembark when her daughter came outside to look at the truck grinning from ear-to-ear, realizing that it was she who had provided Christmas for her family. The 12-year-old girl had filled out the form for her family at her school where Camp Coast Care had gone to identify families.

Another woman from the Mississippi told Hardin that the most important thing is that the Jacksonville community is still thinking about them.

There is still work to be done said Hardin, adding that a team of 12 to 15 people leaves every month and they are always looking for volunteers. Participants do not have to be members of the Episcopal Church.

For more information about the Katrina Relief Task Force visit [www.diocesefl.org](http://www.diocesefl.org).

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**NEPTUNE BEACH INVESTMENT**, Concrete Block Home 4 Blocks to Ocean. 259K 372-4477 (Lic. Re. Owned)

**OCEANSIDE CONDO BRAND NEW SOUTH JAX BCH.** Walk to the nicest shops and restaurants. Pool view, fitness center and Clubhouse. 1 Block Semi-Private Ocean Front. \$329,000 887-1551(Lic. Re. Owned)

**SOUTH JAX BCH HOME** - Hardwood Floors, 3 BRS, Completely Remodeled. Close to Shopping and Relaxing by the Beach. \$1500 mo/ \$1000 sec. 887-1551

**TRADITIONAL ORTEGA ELEGANCE** - This beautiful 4 BR / 3BA home is perfect for relaxing or entertaining. Huge lot, gourmet kitchen, refinished wood floors, private deck, updated baths. See page 27 for Details. Call Remax 322-5500.

**UPDATED AVONDALE CHARM** - \$309,900 Historic touches and modern convenience are paired beautifully in this 3 BR / 1 BA home. Fireplace, deck, huge backyard. New plumbing. A/C, den MLS 334727. Listed by Judy Davis. See page 27 for Details. Call Remax 322-5500.

**WALK TO THE BEACH:** 2BD/2BTH with garage, fireplace, and walk in closet. Beautifully furnished and tenant occupied. Investment/Income producer. (904) 208-1308

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# Junior Residents



Markeisha Battles prepares to serve the ball for the Lake Shore Lady Raiders. The Raiders defeated the Lakeshore Lady Warriors 25-23 and 25-9.



Best friends Diamond Byers, Chelsia Kirksey and Eriyonna Miller at the West Riverside Elementary Festival.



Nicole Burtto, Jalys Rivera, Richard Hull, Janelly Miranda, and Jamileth Miranda celebrate at the West Riverside Elementary Festival.



Dutch Heavener, Sara Albee, Reese, Riley and Ryker Jett taking a bow after their reenactment of the children's favorite book Olivia the Pig during the Festival of Tress Children's Event.

 An advertisement for Beneteau sail and power boats. It features two images of boats: a sailboat on the left and a powerboat on the right. Below the images is the text:
 

**BENÉTEAU SAIL AND POWER**  
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 contact Jeff Knoll (904) 387.5047  
 jeff.knoll@st-barts.com



Six year old Austin Morrison makes an in bounds pass for The Lions, a YMCA youth league team.



We were relocating and needed to sell quickly. We knew we could trust Cindy with our home when we were away. She recommended minor touch-ups and rearranging to make the best impression. And in less than one day on the market, she found two buyers!!

Bill and Carol

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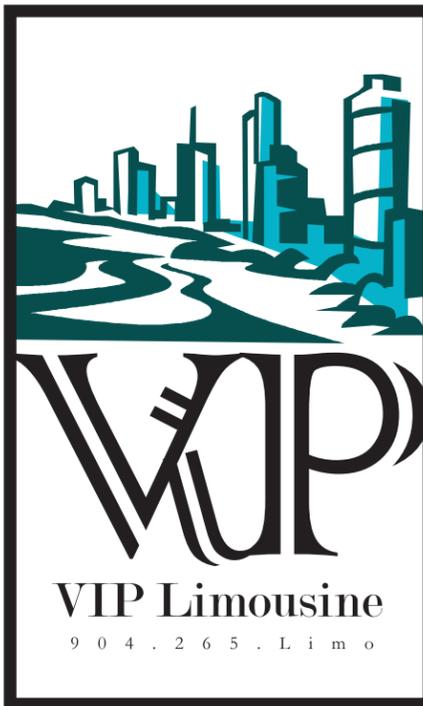
Prime time means crisp air, blue skies and lots of snow.

February 2-10, 2007	Bad Gastein, Austria	\$1479
February 23-28, 2007	Breckenridge, Colorado	\$1124
March 2-6, 2007	Lake Tahoe, Nevada	\$890

Book early for Spring Break Vacations! Duval is and Clay counties are the week of March 17, St. Johns is the week of March 24.

March 16-25, 2007	Engelberg, Switzerland	\$1499
March 17-24, 2007	Steamboat Springs, Colorado	\$1199
March 16-23, 2007	St. Patrick's Week in Ireland!	\$1466
March 17-24, 2007	7-day Eastern Caribbean cruise on the Glory	\$746
March 31-Apr 7 or April 1-8	Copper Mountain	\$999

Trip details may be found on our website: www.Colemantravel.com Or call us and we'll fax or mail details to you RESERVATIONS: contact Coleman Travel at 904-388-7669, toll-free at 866-611-7669, fax 904-854-8040; email info@colemantravel.com; Mailing address: 4000 St. Johns Ave, Jacksonville FL.



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Riverfront in Old Ortega \$2,375,000 Key West-style two-story cedar-shingle. 4BR/4,100 sq ft. Architect designed/completely remodeled. Pool, dock, boatlift, boat slip, and 125 feet bulkheaded riverfront. MLS 336951. Listed by Ann McAfee.



Updated Avondale Charm \$309,900 Historic touches and modern convenience are paired beautifully in this 3 BR/1 BA home. Fireplace, deck, huge backyard. New plumbing, A/C, den. MLS 334727. Listed by Judy Davis.



Come Home to the Charm of Avondale Renovated in 2002, this 4 BR/2 BA/2,736 sq ft home boasts wood inlay floors, sun porch, wood trim, updated bathrooms, large fenced yard, and more! MLS 340704. Listed by Dena Calivas.



Waterfront Access to St. Johns \$409,000 Bring your boat to this all brick 3 BR/2 BA. 2,178 sq ft, Florida room, stone fireplace, upgrades, landscaped yard, dock, boat lift, and more! MLS 342911. Listed by John Middleton.



Traditional Ortega Elegance \$634,900 This beautiful 4 BR/3 BA home is perfect for relaxing or entertaining. Huge lot, gourmet kitchen, refinished wood floors, private deck, updated baths. MLS 320994 Listed by Nathan Miller.



Pristine Mandarin Home \$249,900 Like new 3 BR/2 BA home has 1,403 sq ft, spacious kitchen, large patio, designer touches, upgrades, amazing amenity center, and more! MLS 327927. Listed by Jerrie Flug.

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