



San Jose Elementary Principal Paula Findlay-Smith

Rotarians feed the hungry

San Jose Elementary Principal Paula Findlay-Smith assists with a food distribution effort at her school May 2 that was sponsored by the Rotary of South Jacksonville. The Rotarians generously donated funds to provide 50 families with enough food for a week.

[READ MORE, PAGE 16](#)

The Young Independents

Upwardly mobile young professionals are living through unprecedented times. Despite the challenges posed by the Coronavirus, many have found ways to turn difficulty into a time of reflection. These young, growing adults discuss their careers and some of the unique challenges they have had to overcome during the pandemic.

[READ MORE, PAGE 18](#)

Keeping San Marco beautiful



Marla Anderson and Tiffany Davis accept a San Marco Preservation Society Community Beautification Award on behalf of the San Marco Garden Circle for its work this year on the Landon Park butterfly garden.

[READ MORE, PAGE 21](#)

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Resident

COMMUNITY NEWS

NEW COMMODORE AT THE HELM



Despite setbacks that have impacted many other area businesses and organizations due to COVID-19, the club has persevered and accomplished its goals in a timely manner. [READ MORE, PAGE 6](#)

DREDGING UP A COURT CASE

Furious Millers Creek residents are headed to court in a contract dispute with the Texas-based dredging company they hired to remove sediment from the creek near their homes. Blaming COVID-19, the dredging company walked off the job after completing only 40% of the work and is suing to terminate its contract and collect \$37,500 to remove their equipment from the site.

[READ MORE, PAGE 10](#)

PREPARING FOR DISASTER

Volunteers are needed to assist City Council's Special Committee on Resiliency as it seeks ways to better prepare Jacksonville for future natural and manmade catastrophes as well as pandemics. Residents are asked to join any of three new sub-committees to help the city improve its disaster response.

[READ MORE, PAGE 6](#)

Residents expand lawsuit against San Jose Estates development



When it rains, three San Jose residents claim their property becomes flooded due to an inadequate stormwater drainage system within the adjacent San Jose Estates development.

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

If they say a picture is worth 1,000 words, Kevin Schoepel says he has photographs to show the court that are worth 10,000.

As the lawyer representing Kevin Conner and Lynne and David Robison of the San Jose Forest Subdivision, who are suing the developer of San Jose Estates LLC for water damage to their property, Schoepel recently filed an amended complaint with Duval County's Fourth Judicial Circuit Court adding to the lawsuit six other parties – the St. Johns River Water Management District, Edwards Engineering and engineers Gray S. Edwards and John Anthony Quattrochi of the same

firm, the City of Jacksonville, and the Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA).

After suffering from standing water and soggy grass in their backyards for more than three years, Conner and the Robisons first filed their lawsuit Oct. 23, 2018 against the developer of San Jose Estates LLC seeking compensation to cover damage to their properties, which are adjacent to the San Jose Estates development. Conner and the Robisons claim that the developer's apparent refusal to properly fix a faulty stormwater drainage system on six parcels of land fronting San Jose Boulevard has caused stormwater as well as the water table to rise, causing damage to their homesteads.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

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Letters TO THE Editor

The Resident a 'lifesaver' in troubled times

Dear Editor,

I just had to take a few minutes to let you and your staff know how thankful my husband Jim and I are for *The Resident!* With all that is going on at the national, state, and local level with this virus and the protests and the shootings and stressful news in general, *The Resident* is literally a "life-saver." A breath of fresh air! A joy to receive!

The articles and pictures lift our spirits as we read about all of the really good things that are going on in our neighborhood as well as the surrounding ones. Believe it or not, you could call *The Resident* a "stress reducer". We enjoy the way the paper announces what is going on in people's lives, in local businesses, and finding where we can find different kinds of help if we need it.

One of our good friends, who was considering moving to Jacksonville, asked us some questions about the community. We sent her a copy of *The Resident*. Not only was she able to get a feel of community life in San Marco and Riverside, but she was able to check out Realtors who sold homes in the areas she was interested in.

"The Resident gives us hope that good things can happen even in a pandemic!"

We have been long-time fans of *The Resident*. We have enjoyed reading about our neighbors, what is happening in our local schools, and what kind of organizations are adding to our quality of life here.

Right now, though, *The Resident* gives us hope that good things can happen even in a pandemic! The things we read in *The Resident* show us that no matter what, people will keep doing good things to help their community!

Our deep appreciation to your staff.

Sincerely,
Laura Ward Crooks
Riverside

Call to change Hemming Park's moniker

Dear Editor:

It is time to change the name of Hemming Park to "St. James Park," which was its name for several decades prior to being renamed after Charles Hemming. The Confederate Monument in Hemming Park was unveiled on June 16, 1898, during the reunion of the United Confederate Veterans. A year later, the Jacksonville City Council officially changed the name to "Hemming Park," as a memorial to Civil War veteran Charles C. Hemming, for the sole reason that he had donated the money to pay for the monument. The St. James Building, which was named after the grand hotel that once stood on the site that now houses our City Hall, overlooks the park today. "St. James Park" is the perfect historic name for our park.

Wayne Wood
Riverside

Editor's Note: Hemming Park may be renamed, but it may not be called St. James Park. On June 17, District 9 City Councilman Garrett Dennis filed legislation to rename the Downtown oasis in honor of James Weldon Johnson, an American writer and civil rights activist. Johnson, a LaVilla native and historic public figure, is famous for writing the song, "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing." He was born in 1871 and was known during the Harlem Renaissance for his poems, novels, and anthologies of black culture. He was also principal of Stanton School, founded a newspaper, *The Daily American*, and was the first African American to pass the Florida Bar. In 1906, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him to diplomatic positions in Venezuela and Nicaragua. He also served as executive secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP).

School denounces racism and bigotry

Dear Editor:

The death of George Floyd was senseless and profoundly disturbing. Since this tragedy, thousands of Americans have peacefully demonstrated in cities and towns across the country to voice their anguish and to make clear racism is a deep wound in our nation that we must collectively work to heal. We at Episcopal School of Jacksonville (ESJ) have been pained to learn from some of our Black students and alumni that they have not always felt equally welcome in our community. It was hard to read their social media posts and realize our core belief – respect the dignity of every human being – is not consistently felt. For that we are truly sorry, and our efforts will continue with an even greater intensity to make all feel equally welcome.

I have shared with our ESJ community that any form of racism, bigotry, or exclusion – all of which we strongly denounce – will not be tolerated. We are committed as an institution to do all we can to create a culture that is respectful of all. In recent years, our Awareness, Inclusion, and Respect Initiative (AIR) has established a number of programs, including professional development for administrators and faculty; student forums around ways to continue to improve awareness, inclusion, and respect for all within our community; faculty roundtable listening events with students of color; intentional hiring efforts to diversify the faculty and staff; and more. AIR is working on a series of forums that will begin when school resumes this fall and continue throughout the academic year and in the years to come. We will be considering curricular efforts to ensure all members of our community are heard and their experiences shared and will always review other opportunities and structural changes that reinforce our beliefs.

In early June I wrote to our ESJ community, telling them we must be more than words. We must act individually and as a school to end racism and bigotry. As educators we must support, build up, and ensure we truly are, as St. Paul says, one body with many members. We are committed to never tolerating anyone being made to feel "less than" or "other." Our goal is unity through our differences, which makes us a stronger community.

The Rev. Adam Greene
Head of School
Episcopal School of Jacksonville

Dear Editor:

Thank you for covering news and current events going around my community. I know these days the country is in chaos right now, but reading your paper brings a little sunshine to a very cloudy day. I love reading what my community is doing and what every individual accomplishes with the goals they set out to do.

Edwin Trenton Orr
San Marco

San Marco peaceful protest sends positive message to community

Dear Editor:

On behalf of the businesses in San Marco, I would like to commend Michael Anderson and Stefanie Levine who organized the I CAN'T BREATHE SOLIDARITY: Reflection Walk in San Marco on June 3rd. It was peaceful and safe for all involved. And above all else, it sent a positive message to the entire city that we can effect change by coming together to reflect and listen before we speak. We also appreciate the work JSO did to ensure it remained safe and secure during the walk. As the number of participants grew so did JSO's involvement. Thank you to everyone involved in organizing and leading the walk, and to our community for coming together to signify the change we want to see.

Joe Carlucci
President
San Marco Merchants Association

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Plans for pedestrian-friendly JEA headquarters move forward

By Jennifer Edwards
Resident Community News

The Jacksonville Electric Authority is closer to starting construction on a sleek new multi-story headquarters and parking garage downtown, after the Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB) gave its final approval to the project June 12, although the final version will not be as tall as developers had originally envisioned.

Last year, plans for the headquarters included a nine-story office building and an 850-space parking garage, but Ryan Companies, a Minneapolis-based developer has now scaled back both, while adding more retail space on the ground level of the parking garage. Final plans include a



The proposed site for the new JEA corporate headquarters.

seven-story building with a terrace on the top floor and the adjacent parking garage that will be 100 feet tall rather than 110. The garage will include 657 parking spaces on nine levels, according to the plans, and be cloaked along the sides in alternating metal panels in various shades of blue, green, and tan. The complex overall will be more

pedestrian friendly and feature a unique design feature – a chamfered, or cutaway, corner on the parking garage, at the corner of Adams and Julia Street.

The ground floor of the garage will include 10,690 square feet of retail space.

Working alongside Ryan Companies is planning and engineering consultants Kimley Horn, who are headquartered in Raleigh, N.C. with offices in Jacksonville.

When the project is complete JEA will move from its 1960s-era offices at 21 W. Church St., where it has been headquartered since 1989.

The proposed site is currently vacant but the City of Jacksonville is using it temporarily for parking. It takes up an entire City block, bordered to the north by Monroe Street, to the south by Adams Street, to the east by Julia Street and to the west, Pearl Street.

According to a DDRB staff report, current economic conditions and City requests led developers to change their plans before requesting final approval. Only one member of the DDRB board voted against approval of the project during a June 12 board meeting conducted on Zoom. Board member Bill Schilling recused himself from the vote because he is employed by Kimley Horn.

“I’ve looked at the building, and I think the building looks quite nice, the way it is scaled down. I don’t think the changes have taken away from the spectacular architecture we are going to see down there,” Board Chairman Christian Harden said shortly before the vote.

Board member Brenna Durden also appreciated the design changes, although she wished



A rendering for the proposed JEA corporate offices.

there could have been more multi-colored screening panels on the parking garage, which has open spaces between the paneling.

“I appreciate the thoroughness, I appreciate and like the chamfered corner,” Durden said. “I think that adds a lot to that corner and to the (experience of) people walking down that road and driving down Adams Street.”

In September, project managers had submitted plans for a 220,000 square-foot office building and an 850-space parking deck with 8,500 square feet of retail on the ground floor and 4,900 square feet of open/pedestrian space. At that time, DDRB board members requested changes to increase shade for pedestrians and improve access for those on foot. In June, board members were pleased with plans for more landscaping and shade and wider walkways.

“There will be much more access to the pedestrian path around the building,” presenter John Jay explained, noting that

planters around the perimeter of the building had been reduced in size to make for more room to walk and that an urban open space was included that would be 20 feet deep and 21 feet wide, also with a planter.

Board member Joseph Loretta said he liked the changes.

“I think the pedestrian area worked out pretty well, and I look forward to the project moving forward,” he said in comments before the vote.

Downtown Investment Authority Operations Manager Guy Parola said there are plans to make Adams and Forsyth Streets two-way, which might take about two years. He said the pedestrian area changes “compliment the two-waying of Adams quite well.”

Meanwhile, plans for increased shade for pedestrians via trees and landscaping pleased Board Member Fred Jones, who noted that was one of his chief concerns with the project. “Great presentation,” he said.

The final proposal for new JEA corporate offices and parking garage.



A rendering of the proposed JEA parking garage

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Skybridge links Baptist Medical Center to parking garage

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

With an American flag shining forth within its glassy interior, Baptist Health and DPR/Perry-McCall Construction, Inc. used two 550-ton cranes to lift a new, steel and glass skybridge into place over Memorial Day weekend. The bridge, which weighs approximately 110 tons, is 85 feet long and 10 feet wide and will link Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville and Wolfson Children's Hospital directly to the parking garage when new tower construction is complete.

The skybridge is a significant next step in the comprehensive construction plan of the future seven-story Baptist Jacksonville Entry Building/Wolfson Children's Critical Care Tower. The building, which is planned to reach completion in 2021, will be the new "front door," reorienting the entire medical campus to enhance wayfinding for patients and visitors. The Tower will also have five floors dedicated to pediatric critical care at Wolfson Children's Hospital.

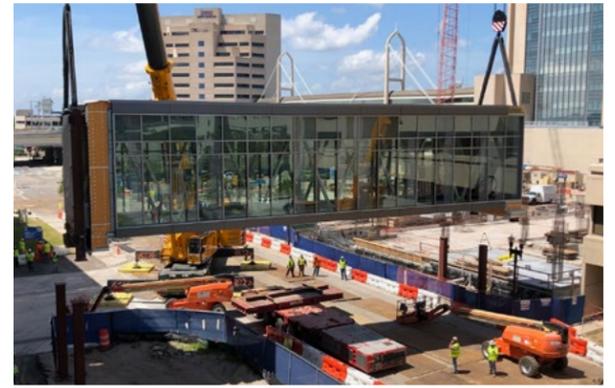
"Seeing the skybridge in place is very satisfying. The bridge has been under construction for several months, prior to it being elevated above Palm Avenue," said Keith Tickell, senior vice president of strategic assets and real estate at Baptist Health. "The project demanded careful planning and state-of-the-art construction and design techniques. Safety remained our No. 1 priority throughout the process, and we look forward to seeing our patients,

visitors and team members cross the bridge into the new building with no exposure to vehicle traffic."

The skybridge will open to pedestrians in late September, which will allow visitors to park in the P2 Garage and cross above Palm Avenue, rather than crossing the street. When the new tower construction is complete, the skybridge will transform the experience of entering Baptist Jacksonville and Wolfson Children's Hospital, as patients and visitors will walk directly from their cars, onto the skybridge and into the second level lobby of the building.

"We want to ensure patients and visitors experience a welcoming introduction to our downtown campus. Parking is often the first interaction with our campus, even prior to entering the facility," said Michael A. Mayo, FACHE, hospital president of Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville. "By connecting our parking garage to the future entrance of both our adult and pediatric hospitals, we are standing true to our commitment of connecting the community to comprehensive health care."

The Tower will include a high-level 92-bed Neonatal Intensive Care Center as well as a 35-bed Pediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU). The Neonatal Intensive Care Center will be comprised of three separate units, replacing the current 56-bed Level II and Level III Newborn ICUs at Wolfson Children's Hospital. These centers will add additional services for highly specialized, rare, and critical conditions, including pediatric post-trauma care.



A new skybridge will span Palm Avenue linking Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville with a parking garage.

"The installation of the skybridge brings us one step closer to the opening of the Wolfson Children's Critical Care Tower, a beautiful facility inside and out," said Michael D. Aubin, FACHE, hospital president of Wolfson Children's Hospital. "This building will be a place of healing and hope, bringing life-saving critical care and treatment to children in our community and well beyond. We know this new Children's Critical Care Tower will impact families for decades to come and are grateful to our donors, whose generous support of our mission makes it possible for us to provide the highest level of care for our most vulnerable patients."

First Coast Relief Fund grants \$3.3 million in COVID-19 assistance

Florida's First Coast Relief Fund has surpassed the \$3 million mark in grants awarded to nonprofit organizations responding to immediate needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. More than 85 agencies are recipients of nearly \$3.3 million since grantmaking began in March. The Fund is a collaboration between The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, Jessie Ball duPont Fund, Jewish Federation and Foundation of Northeast Florida, United Way of Northeast Florida and United Way of St. Johns County. It has attracted more than \$5 million in donations, and grantmaking continues weekly as applications continue to be received.

"By far, the greatest need we've seen to this point is for food and financial assistance," said Kathleen Shaw, a member of the Relief Fund's grants committee and vice president of Programs at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. "We have been able to make grants to some of the big regional food suppliers, like Feeding Northeast Florida and Barnabas, but we've also made grants to many smaller organizations so they can acquire food from the regional food banks and get it into their clients' hands as soon as possible."

Applications from nonprofits are still coming in, and members of the relief fund's grant committee continue to meet weekly to review, approve and ensure grants go out the door quickly. Priority is given to agencies in Duval, Nassau, St. Johns, Baker, Clay and

Putnam counties that provide food; housing; financial assistance for individuals and families; child-care support for first responders and other frontline staff; medical, safety supplies and equipment; and technology support for safety net providers.

Vulnerable populations are a primary focus of relief fund grants. One of the earliest recipients was ElderSource, Northeast Florida's Area Agency on Aging.

"With the resources provided by the First Coast Relief Fund, we are able to help older adults with food, supplies, mental-health counseling through telehealth, telephone reassurance and financial assistance," said Linda Levin, chief executive officer at ElderSource.

The Relief Fund has hundreds of donors at all levels. The following is a list of funders who have committed at least \$50,000 to the Relief Fund for COVID-19: The City of Jacksonville, \$1,000,000; The Humana Foundation, \$500,000; Shad Khan of the Jacksonville Jaguars, \$400,000; The Jim Moran Foundation, \$250,000; J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver, \$250,000; Michael Ward and Jennifer Glock Foundation, \$250,000; Lucy Gooding Charitable Foundation Trust, \$150,000; The Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, \$100,000; Bank of America, \$100,000; CSX, \$100,000; The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, \$100,000; Florida Blue, \$100,000; Humana, \$100,000; Tom and Betty Petway, \$100,000; Truist, \$100,000; Winston

Family Foundation, \$100,000; Ally, \$50,000; Cindy and Dan Edelman, \$50,000; Mrs. Edward W. Lane Jr., \$50,000; Fidelity, \$50,000; FIS, \$50,000; Macquarie Group Foundation, \$50,000; Morgan Weaver, \$50,000; Nancy and Gary Chartrand, \$50,000; Regency Centers, \$50,000; The Riverside Hospital Foundation, \$50,000; TECO Peoples Gas, \$50,000; VanTrust, \$50,000; Zimmerman Family Foundation, \$50,000.

Florida's First Coast Relief Fund is administered by United Way of Northeast Florida with 100 percent of donations going to nonprofit agencies that provide direct services to individuals with needs that are not met by government programs.

Florida's First Coast Relief Fund will remain open until needs stabilize and while funding is available. To learn more, give or apply, visit unitedwaynefl.org/COVID19response.

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SAN JOSE

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The Henley family was on hand to congratulate its patriarch, Thomas Henley, on his new appointment as commodore of the Epping Forest Yacht & Country Club. From left, Thomas, Camille, and Mary Grace Henley with Commodore George Henley, his wife Melody, and his parents Tom and Linda Henley

Epping Forest opens new pool, announces new leadership

Epping Forest Yacht & Country Club recently completed a \$2 million renovation for its multi-purpose family swimming pool area. The enhancement to the club was made on behalf of GATE Petroleum with no assessment to its members.

In addition to the new pool, Epping Forest members welcomed a new commodore and several new board members during a Change-of-Command ceremony June 6 that honored George Henley as he took the helm.

The 4,387-square-foot pool features a zero-entry splash park area for children complete with bubblers, spray jets, a treasure chest slide, and a sailboat positioned in its shallow waters. A vibrantly colored two-sail shade system above the children's pool protects little ones from the sun's UV rays. Underwater benches extend in each direction from the steps to allow parents in-pool seating as they

watch over their children or seek to relax in the pool.

Also updated was the lap-swim area to include four lanes with wall targets. The current water slide structure remains adjacent to the lap-swim area. Dual handrails on the steps assist those needing help getting in and out of the pool.

Other renovations to the pool area include more than 7,000 square feet of paver deck, new fencing around the perimeter, and two emergency exit gates with panic features installed in opposite corners of the pool amenity area. The entire project was completed June 6 by Weller Pools from Apopka.

"We are thrilled with the outcome of the project," said Dan Cook, general manager of Epping Forest Yacht & Country Club. "Members have loved the new addition of the splash park and are excited for the lasting memories it will provide."

City Council seeks residents for resiliency committees

WITH SO MUCH COASTLINE, CITY MAY BE PRIMED FOR FLOODING

By Jennifer Edwards
Resident Community News

Concerned about the prospect of increased flooding and more intense hurricanes, members of the City Council's Special Committee on Resiliency are looking for community volunteers to join three new sub-committees that will be tasked with finding ways to prepare the City for disasters.

The sub-committees are part of an overall effort to increase the City's resiliency – its ability to bounce back from natural and man-made disasters as well as pandemics. At the recommendation of the Resiliency Committee, the City has also committed to hiring a chief resilience officer to head up efforts, though it's unclear when that position will be funded.

"We have 1,100 miles of shoreline in Duval," said At Large Group 5 Councilman Matt Carlucci, who is chairman of the committee. "This is a huge issue for Jacksonville, particularly for sea-level rise. If we don't start doing things for our future generations, we are not going to leave them with the community we should be leaving them with."

Flooding has long been an issue in the historic districts, and a 2013 Duval County report showed that even a small, Category 1 storm could force six feet of water into Downtown, while a Category 3 hurricane could cause a 20-foot storm surge along the St. Johns River, according to a previous report in *The Resident*. Duval County has 22 miles of beaches, 40 miles of the Intracoastal Waterway and the longest stretch of the St. Johns River in the state.

More than 70 community members attended a May 28 Zoom video conference meeting, conducted by the special committee, to hear details about resiliency efforts and learn if, and how, they could join the committees.

At the meeting, the special committee unanimously approved creating the community groups, which will be headed up by City officials and staffers. By the next afternoon, Carlucci's office had already gotten calls or emails from 20 people looking to apply.

Joining Carlucci on the resiliency committee are District 14 Councilwoman Randy DeFoor, District 6 Councilman Michael Boylan, District 3 Councilman Aaron Bowman, District 9 Councilman Garrett Dennis, District 1 Councilwoman Joyce Morgan, and District 4 Councilman Scott Wilson, who is also City Council president. The committee has been charged with proposing policy recommendations for the City Council to consider and to work on definitive, practical action plans, according to the City webpage about the group.

DeFoor, whose district includes Riverside, Avondale, Ortega, and Murray Hill, was firmly in favor of the community participation and active efforts to increase disaster response.

"It's important that we get citizen input," DeFoor said. "We definitely need resiliency. We need a hardening of Jacksonville. The Northeast Florida Regional Council has done a study showing a significant amount of flooding will occur if we don't address this issue."

The three sub-committees will be divided by task – environmental planning; infrastructure and continuity of operations for essential services; and education, protection of local neighborhoods and community outreach. Each committee can be composed of an unlimited number of volunteers.

"I think these committees could get pretty big," Carlucci said. "I never put a limit on public participation – never. The one person who may not get to participate may be the one with the best ideas."

He said Morgan will chair the education subcommittee with Boylan as vice chair, while Dennis will chair the infrastructure subcommittee with DeFoor as vice chair. He also said he hoped Bowman will chair environmental planning.

"I want these to be balanced," he said. "I don't want all environmentalists on this. Aaron Bowman brings a good business perspective and it will keep it balanced."

The subcommittees, once formed, would be expected to report back to the special committee in September.

Chief resilience officer

Last year, Gov. Ron DeSantis appointed Florida's first state-wide resilience officer, Dr. Julia Nesheiwat, however, Nesheiwat left the job in February after being appointed as a homeland security adviser for President Donald Trump. The post, as of late May, had not been refilled. Some Florida counties have also added a resilience officer, including Miami-Dade and Broward, but Duval does not yet have one.

Carlucci said the City has earmarked \$300,000 to fund a resiliency department. DeFoor said it would be hard to envision a coordinated resiliency program without one.

The upcoming budget year will undoubtedly be a tough one given sales tax revenue drops due to Coronavirus-related economic shutdowns and layoffs, Carlucci said, adding that whether it is this year, or later, the City would be appointing someone to the role.

"We are going to hire a chief resiliency officer, we have commitment from the Mayor," he said. "Councilmember Bowman, through a strategic plan, proposed \$300,000 for a resiliency department. We all know that, but we don't know how we are going to be affected by the upcoming budget this coming year. There will be some tough decisions to make."

FDOT begins landscaping project on Hendricks Avenue

The Florida Department of Transportation has begun more road work on Hendricks Avenue/ San Jose Boulevard in both San Marco and San Jose.

Construction on a landscaping project along State Road 13/Hendricks Avenue between La Vaca Road and Dunsford Road began June 12. The project consists of the installation of new landscape material and the planting of Muskogee crape myrtles in the medians along the roadway.

Lafleur Nurseries and Garden Center, LLC was selected to complete the \$600,000 project, which includes approximately four months of construction plus a two-year establishment period.

Traffic will be maintained in accordance with FDOT design standards throughout the project. Posted speed limits will remain in place throughout the duration of construction. Project work is expected to take place during both daytime and overnight hours, Monday through Thursday with periodic lane closures. However, no lane closures will be permitted on northbound or southbound Hendricks Avenue from 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. and from 4 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

FDOT urges motorists to always follow the speed limit and stay within the limits of orange cones and barrels while traveling through construction zones. For up-to-date information regarding construction projects and lane closures, visit www.nflroads.com.



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QUESTION: What is your view of the current Coronavirus threat? Do you think it is still necessary to social distance and wear a mask? Or do you think the threat to public health is not as big of a concern as was once thought by public health officials?

By Marcia Hodgson, Resident Community News



People need to wear masks to keep themselves safe. Sometimes a lot of people wear masks because it is overcrowded and stuff. I don't really like wearing a mask, but I do so I can keep people safe. I want to keep my grandmother and grandfather safe. Also, people need to stay home.

– EMERY SCHNEIDER, SAN MARCO



I think it's overblown in some ways. I think a person of my age, 71, and at risk should keep their distance and wear a mask. I think it is less important for younger people and people not at risk. I'm for opening everything up, but also for being very cautious for people at risk.

– JOHN BONEY, SAN MARCO



I think things should be opened up. I think it's a very big deal, but I think we're going to be having a new norm, and as long as we follow the new norms of social distancing, until a vaccine is found, we need to use wisdom and protect ourselves and others. I believe in wearing masks except when I'm with my family.

– TERRY SCHNEIDER, SAN MARCO



I think it is a legit threat. We should be social distancing and adhering to all World Health and CDC regulations. I prefer eating outside, but I'm not opposed to eating inside a restaurant just as long as we are keeping it to the recommended occupancy. I think the country needs to keep making money and for jobs, but I think we can do that in a smart thought-through manner. We just need the leadership to do that. These are small businesses that are hurting, and we need to support them.

– CLAY WALTERS, SAN MARCO



It seems like people aren't as concerned now as they once were. With the new findings on how it spreads or how not so easily it spreads, it's just like any other flu or H1, N1 or the bird flu. It's all based on where you are and how active you are with people. If you already do a good job of washing your hands and keeping things clean, you don't have to be concerned. And if you are concerned about your health, and the health of others, you should do your best to wear gloves, a mask, and don't get too close to other people. I don't think there is as much of a danger as there was a few months ago.

– JOHN MAYNARD, ST. NICHOLAS



I don't think it's as big of a concern anymore, and I don't think it needs to be. And the social distancing, I don't really think we need it anymore. We did need it, but I think things have calmed down with it. I understand everybody is worrying about it still because you don't really know. I haven't met a single person who has had it. I don't know if it's actually there. I don't think we need to social distance at the moment. I think we're good. If anything, this has taught people how to take care of themselves and to stop touching their faces all the time. Even without the Coronavirus, touching your face is bad for you. You need to wash your hands, sanitize yourself, and if you still feel threatened, wear a mask. It's as simple as that. I often see people wearing masks in the car when there is no one else in the car. That's just ridiculous.

– JARRED BRENNAMAN, SAN MARCO



I don't think it is overblown. I think it is good to maintain a good distance and be safe and just implement that in your everyday life. I think we need to open up the economy. We don't need to stay at home. We just need to stay safe and maintain awareness. I think changes will be implemented in everyday life, and we need this to stay safe, and it would be a good practice to be wary. There is stuff out there that we don't know about.

– LEE BONAR, ST. NICHOLAS



I absolutely believe that it is still a threat, and that we should practice social distancing. If I didn't have bronchial asthma, I would have a mask on. It exacerbates that so I very sparingly wear a mask – just a little on and a little off. Absolutely my greatest fear is when I see huge groups of people together and on top of each other socializing. It makes me fearful for them. I don't know where they've been. I can't control where someone else has been for the last 90 days.

– KYM JOHNSON, SAN MARCO



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Protesters remain calm as they march in San Marco

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

Although rumors on social media tried to fuel fear among residents who didn't know what to expect, San Marco's "I Can't Breathe Solidarity Reflection Walk," which took place in George Floyd's honor, turned out to be exactly what it was advertised to be, a peaceful protest.

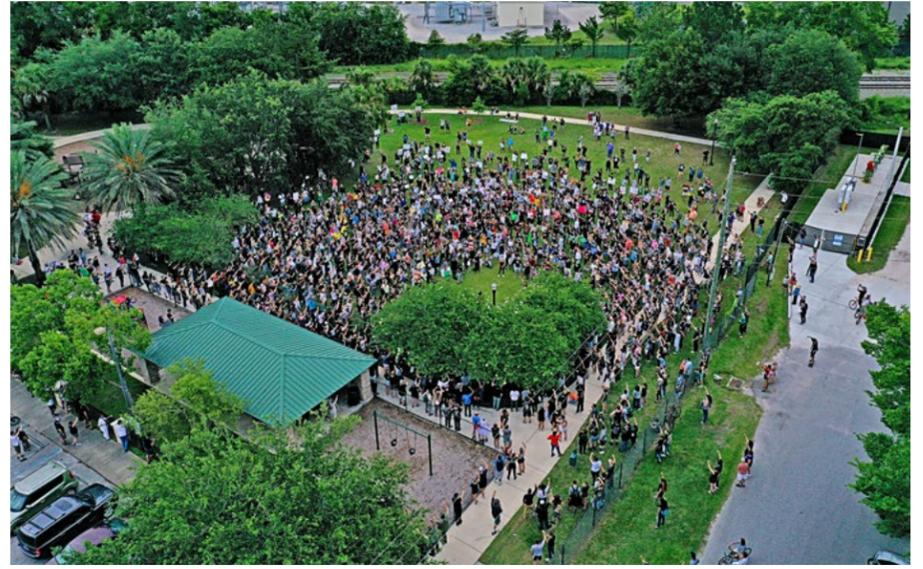
On June 3, between 1,500 and 3,000 community members gathered in Southside Park to stand in solidarity and reflect on the Black Lives Matter movement. The walk was a response to more violent events in Jacksonville earlier in the week that came on the heels of protests ignited by the death of Floyd, an unarmed, handcuffed African American man who begged for breath as a police officer planted a knee to his neck while pinning him to the ground in Minneapolis, Minnesota May 25. The reflection walk was the only major protest scheduled in Jacksonville June 3, said Joe Carlucci, president of the San Marco Merchants Association (SMMA), although a much

smaller vigil was held in Jacksonville Beach the same evening.

"It was the largest crowd I've ever seen in San Marco at any given time," said Leah Roesler, a San Marco resident and member of SMMA.

Organized by Michael Anderson and Stefanie Levine, both local community activists, the event opened with a prayer by Pastor Kimberley Pullings of Freedom Hills Chapel, and later consisted of speeches led by Mistress of Ceremonies Monique Sampson, an activist from the Jacksonville Community Action Committee, and several others from the black community who shared stories about racial inequality that they have experienced while living in Jacksonville.

A former San Marco resident, who formally attended Southside Baptist Church, Anderson said he selected the southside neighborhood because it offered an opportunity to bring the issue into a white community. "We chose the San Marco area to engage the community on the south side of the river and get them more involved in the conversation. Our role was to create a time and space so folks could



Between 1,500 and 3,000 protesters gathered in Southside Park in San Marco to participate in the "I Can't Breathe Reflection Walk" on June 3.



Protest organizer Michael Anderson (in black shirt and colorful stole) joined Mistress of Ceremonies Monique Sampson (with red shirt and microphone) of the Jacksonville Community Action Committee and Pastor Kimberley Pullings of Freedom Hills Chapel (right with black shirt) during the "I Can't Breathe Reflection Walk" June 3 in Southside Park in San Marco.

come together, breathe for a second, and reflect on what is going on at the moment in our city and in our country. We wanted to be able to hear from local folks about what they have experienced by JSO or just by living in Jacksonville and being black and all the undertones of that," he said.

Prior to the event, false information had been posted on several social media websites, causing Carlucci and SMMA board member Anita Vining to personally visit several San Marco Square merchants so they could spread the word that the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office "had no reason to believe the event was going to be a violent protest."

Having experienced violence after a Downtown peaceful protest May 30, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office was ready to assist if things got out of hand, Carlucci said, noting there was an "intense police presence" skirting the event just outside of San Marco Square. "There were 50 cops lined up at Landon (Middle School) with an armored SWAT vehicle, and at Southside United Methodist Church there were at least 50 undercover cops in the parking lot just hanging out, waiting to go. They did not take it lightly," Carlucci said.

"As Sheriff (Mike) Williams has stated, we will continue to assist in these public demonstrations as a matter of public safety," explained Officer Chris Hancock, a JSO public information spokesman in an email. "Though we have not been given specific numbers, officers were present at this event along the proposed route to assist with traffic in the event the walk spilled over into the streets. And as typical in events such as this, there was a contingency of officers on stand-by in case the peaceful protests turned violent," he said.

As a business owner on the protester's route, Kris Barnes, owner of Wick, a Candle Bar on Hendricks Avenue, said she saw neighboring businesses owners boarding up their windows with plywood prior to the event. "I wasn't going to participate in the march because I was more worried about COVID-19, and I was trying to take every precaution, but as the day wore on, people were getting so agitated, and all the stores across from us were boarded up. I thought, nothing says welcome to the neighborhood like fear. It was making me so sad that my neighborhood was so terrified of this peaceful protest," she said. "I was completely confident that JSO was prepared and they weren't going to leave us to be sitting targets. I was amazed at how many people there were, and just about everybody had a mask on."

Scheduled to take place between 6:15 p.m. and 7:30 p.m., the march got a late start. It was originally slated to begin at Southside Park alongside the San Marco Library, with protesters marching along the sidewalk south on Hendricks Avenue to Atlantic Boulevard, where they would circle Balis Park, and head back along the sidewalk on Hendricks Avenue. However, when march

"peacekeepers" recognized provocateurs might be near the Balis Park, they changed the route, forcing marchers to take a sharp turn at Atlantic Boulevard and head toward San Marco Boulevard to Lasalle Street and back to the park, Anderson said.

The "peacekeepers," wore white shirts and were tagged by march organizers to position themselves every 30 or 40 feet to remind protesters to stay on the sidewalk and keep moving, even if provoked by bystanders along the way, said Anderson. "Their policing of themselves was really, really good," said Darren Sides of Southside Baptist Church who attended the march. "They were yelling at the marchers to stay off the grass and to use the crosswalks. Michael did a really good job of keeping everyone in line."

Members of Southside Baptist Church were welcomed by the marchers as they handed out 500 bottles of water and snacks at the corner of Hendricks Avenue and Atlantic Boulevard, said Sides, who organized the water distribution. "They didn't leave a lot of trash. Afterwards we only had a bag of trash that we were able to pick up in 15 minutes," he said.

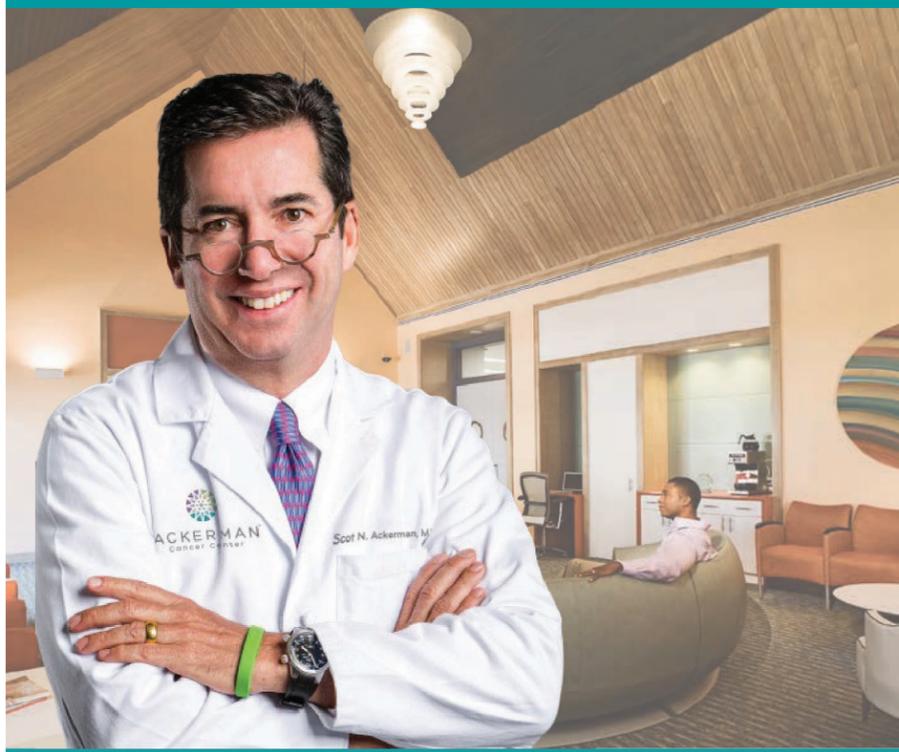
"Someone who was marching posted on the Next Door website that as they went along people were standing outside of their houses and that they felt the love as they walked through the community," said Vining. "People in San Marco were being gracious by handing them water and giving them accolades at the side of the road. I think that, in itself, was positive. I felt so good, especially with all those cute cops hanging around the window of my office as they marched down the sidewalk," she joked.

Roesler agreed. "The crowd itself was very appreciative and the community was absolutely welcoming. Every single person that I was in earshot of was thankful for the water and the snacks. There were a few people who were opposed to the march and had spread out trying to instigate a bit, but the peacekeepers were there saying, 'Don't engage. Don't talk back. They are going to say what they are going to say but keep walking. Keep doing what you are doing.'"

Roesler said she believes in the Black Lives Matter cause and would not have missed the march. "I went because black lives matter, and I wanted to support the cause in my own neighborhood," she explained. "I've been to several other marches around town, but I felt, if there's one in my own backyard I have to attend. I knew there was a lot of negative information going around claiming it was going to be a dangerous, destructive event, and I thought it was important to go and be someone who was there with the intention of being peaceful and to represent the community. I wanted to show that I was not afraid to go to it and that nothing bad was going to happen. And it turned out to be exactly what the organizers intended, which was a positive, peaceful event."

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Small business grant program depleted funds on first day

By Jennifer Edwards
Resident Community News

Less than a week after the Jacksonville City Council passed a bill authorizing \$2,000 grants to small businesses whose incomes were crushed by the Coronavirus, all 4,500 grants available had been spoken for and there was a waiting list.

On May 26, City Council members voted unanimously to approve The Small Business Relief bill sponsored by District 5 Councilwoman LeAnna Cumber of San Marco and co-sponsored by 10 council members. It provides prepaid debit cards to businesses that lost at least 25% of their income due to COVID-19, had less than 100 employees and been open for more than a year as of Feb. 29, 2020.

“It was definitely a successful program,” Cumber said. “I know they had a couple of hiccups on Monday and they were able to resolve those pretty successfully. Everyone, all the businesses in San Marco who were looking for a little bit of help seemed very happy that they were able to apply and get a little bit of that help to get them up and running. I was thrilled to get the support of the community and the San Marco Merchants Association, to get them help as they reopen.”

The Small Business Relief program’s aim is to lessen the pain for business owners, some of whom could not qualify for other assistance. It is a grant program, separate from the Vystar loan program in partnership with the City that would pay the interest on emergency small business loans and potentially reduce the principal. To qualify for the loan program, businesses must have employed at least two people, which left sole proprietors and the self-employed without recourse. The grant program is available to both.

The grant program, by contrast, is similar to a City program that has distributed \$1,000 prepaid debit cards to 40,000 households making \$75,000 or less and have lost at least 25% of income due to the pandemic.

That program is set to expand to more households soon.

Thanks to Cumber’s initiative, small business owners across the historic districts, from small boutiques to spas to retail and beyond, are hoping to find much-needed relief in their mailboxes beginning in July.

In June, City staff were still sifting through applications. The application went on the City website June 1 and, by the end of the day, 4,500 applications had been selected, with several businesses on the waiting list. Staff began reviewing applications the first week and were set to begin informing business owners in mid-June if they were approved, City spokeswoman Nikki Kimbleton said.

As applications from among the first 4,500 were disqualified, others on the wait list became eligible, and the notifications were to be sent out on a rolling basis until all 4,500 qualifying businesses were identified. The grants are given on a first-come, first-served basis, and cards were going out 14 days after notification.

“This is going to be an as-we-go type of thing,” Kimbleton explained.

Those who get the debit cards in hand could use them for rent, mortgage, utilities and business expenses, and in June there were many business owners on both sides of the River waiting and hoping, making plans made for how the money would be spent.

One of those was Christian Thomsen and his wife, Dori, co-owners of Soluna Yoga + Spa on Park Street in 5 Points. The Thomsen’s studio was forced to close during the Coronavirus shutdown as bills continued to roll in. The couple applied for the grant and were waiting and hoping to hear from the City. By the second week in June, the two had cautiously reopened both parts of their business, serving a smaller number of clients and limiting yoga classes to

eight. If they get a debit card, Thomsen said the couple would use the grant to pay their rent and day-to-day operating costs. In the meantime, they were doing what they could while waiting for relief by grant and by the gradual reopening of the economy.

“It is nice to be back and have some sense of normalcy,” he said of the studio’s measured reopening.

In San Marco, the owners of restaurants, boutiques, pubs, and other businesses had also put their welcome mats back out while hoping for grant relief. Brittney Denman, owner of the Hendricks Avenue boutique, A Cut Above, had seen clients return to shop, but lamented that she was forced to take a big loss from seasonal merchandise that went unsold and will now not fetch anything near full price. When the Coronavirus closures began to cascade across the City, Denman had a shop full of Easter dresses and vacation clothing for people looking forward to Easter and Spring Break. By the time she was able to reopen her business at the end of May, they were still sitting on the racks and on shelves.

“Since everything has been shut down, people weren’t buying dresses they could wear places,” she explained. “We had loungewear, candles, that people could utilize during stay-at-home orders, but we did see a decrease in sales. Most of the stuff we sell is seasonal and people are nervous to shop. We have had to liquidate or clearance-out items that are brand new that nobody is needing. With that grant we could buy more inventory or start moving toward fall merchandise.”

About a mile south of her shop, also on Hendricks Avenue, Stu Green was facing a loss of a different kind and anticipating a different use for the grant if he got it.

Green owns a San Marco neighborhood bar called Posting House. Drinks are the primary source of pub’s revenue although the venue offered some limited food options pre-Coronavirus. With Posting House shut down for dine-in customers during the closures, Green had to pivot to a new business model selling package – that is, take-out – drinks.

“At first people supported us, they bought beer and wine and growlers. Once the restaurants opened up, we really did struggle to keep the doors open,” Green recalled. “Thanks to the federal Paycheck Protection Program loan and people really supporting us, we were able to survive those few weeks whilst we were waiting to reopen. We are really thankful for those. The city of Jacksonville grant is one way we can keep going through those tough times.” The Paycheck Protection Program is a U.S. Small Business Administration program that grants loans that may be forgiven if employees are kept on the payroll for eight weeks and the money is used for payroll, rent, mortgage interest or utilities.

If Green gets the City grant, he will use it for business expenses he would normally pay for with his credit card, like utilities such as cable, electricity and supplies. He has seen his business returning since reopening but times are still lean.

“That \$2,000 will be such a help through June and July,” he explained. “Obviously, we are not making this year what we were making last year, so we are so grateful to the City of Jacksonville.”

Joe Carlucci, president of the San Marco Merchants Association, said that association members were excited and grateful for the opportunity to apply for the grants.

“I know for our businesses it was successful and a really good thing. It hit at a good time because the business reopenings happened on Friday (May 29) and then the \$2,000 grant program hit on Monday (June 1) so that was very nice. If a bar or restaurant just opened, they got an additional source of income to use for what they needed. Everyone is thankful that it got passed through City Council unanimously.”

“That \$2,000 will be such a help through June and July. Obviously, we are not making this year what we were making last year, so we are so grateful to the City of Jacksonville.”

— Stu Green, Posting House

City offers financial lifeline to seniors, disabled

The City of Jacksonville launched the Senior and Disabled Financial Assistance Program on June 20 to provide support to senior citizens over the age of 72 and anyone receiving Social Security disability benefits.

“These direct benefits are for our senior and disabled citizens who have experienced a reduction in income or increased expenses during the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Mayor Lenny Curry. “The actions we’ve taken as a City to flatten the curve of COVID-19 were successful, but also placed a heavy burden on many throughout Jacksonville. We must do what we can to help those affected financially because of this virus.”

The grant program allows the city to make one-time payments of \$300 to 3,300 qualifying seniors and disabled citizens. The grants will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis to applicants who meet the following conditions for eligibility: they must reside in Duval County; they must certify that they did not receive funds from the City’s VyStar Small Business Assistance and Employee Retention Loan Program; they must certify they did not receive funds from the City’s Mortgage, Rent, and Utilities Relief Program; they must be either 72 years old or receive Social Security Disability benefits; they must have experienced either a reduction in income or an increase in expenses due to the COVID-19 pandemic; their adjusted gross income did not exceed \$30,000 in 2019; and only one card may be issued per household. Applicants must provide their birthdate and the last four digits of their Social Security number.

Payment cards will be mailed directly to the applicant after their application is reviewed for completeness and accuracy. Once the card is received, applicants need to call the customer service number provided with the card for activation. Payment cards must be used like a credit card, cash back from an ATM, or a register is not available.

Those interested in applying should create a MyJax account at myjax.custhelp.com and follow the link for the Senior and Disabled Financial Assistance Program. The same website and account will be used for the application process.

Citizens can call for assistance with their application over the phone at 904-255-8888.

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Residents to go to court to resolve contract dispute with dredging company

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

Millers Creek Special Tax District residents were “furious,” to learn the Texas-based company they had contracted with to dredge the waterway by their homes had walked off the job in early March citing the COVID-19 pandemic and has filed a lawsuit to terminate its contract, while demanding the board pay \$250 an hour in standby fees.

DredgIt, a dredging company from Houston, Texas, had contracted with the homeowners to remove sediment from Millers Creek in September 2019. It was the lowest bidder of four dredging companies with a bid of \$855,000. Each of the four bids received by the board met the specifications and were based on removing 30,000 cubic yards of sediment. At the time it exited the project, DredgIt had completed only 40% of the work, said former Millers Creek Special Tax District President Michelle Wright.

“We’re invested. We’ve been working so hard for years only to have something like this happen to us. It’s just very unfair,” Wright said. “When we tell people what’s going on, they are just in shock. During COVID-19, there’s been dredging going on all over the city. It’s just their way out of the project because they way underbid.”

During a board meeting June 15 at Mudville Grille, Wright resigned as president of the Millers Creek Special Tax District to make way for the election of John Rowland III, a resident who owns a marine equipment company and has years of experience in the marine business. “When I took this role over a year ago, my goal and passion was to work and manage a dredging project,” said Wright. “As we enter this litigation

phase, I feel that my commitment and passion does not align with this new phase.”

According to the contract with DredgIt, the project was supposed to be completed January 31, said Wright. Although there were different “hiccups” along the road, such as failed equipment, the board didn’t see any red flags. “We had a great working relationship with DredgIt,” she said. “I had talked to the president and he said they were a Texas-based firm looking for a way to get into the Florida market. It was to be a win-win for both of us,” she explained.

However, some residents had heard rumblings from DredgIt crew members that the company had underbid and was “losing its tail on the project,” she said.

Enter the Coronavirus pandemic, and everything changed.

During the week of March 14, Wright received both a phone call and email from DredgIt President Jared Mark saying he was suspending the job due to the unknown nature of COVID-19. “He had a crew of four employees – two on the dredge boat and two on the church property. They could easily social distance. There was a lot of uncertainty at that time, but I didn’t see a problem with it,” Wright said. However, a couple of days later, she called Mark and suggested they could extend the time because of the uncertainty but wanted to put it in writing as a change order at no cost to either party. “I said that we wouldn’t charge him for being late, but I never heard back from him on that. It was two days after he had sent me the email and the phone call,” she said.

Even so, Wright was shocked to receive a letter from DredgIt’s Texas-based lawyer saying the dredging company was terminating the contract due to COVID-19.



Equipment owned by DredgIt, a dredging company contracted by the Millers Creek Special Tax District, stands idle during early May.

“They were asking us to release them from the contract, and there is a clause in the contract called a “standby” that says any delays that are no fault of DredgIt require that we pay a \$250-an-hour fee. They were trying to say that they would waive the standby fee if we would release them from the contract! But they can’t really use that because COVID-19 is not our fault, either. It goes both ways,” she said.

Wright immediately called an emergency board meeting by phone, which was also attended by the board’s attorney, Wayne Flowers of Lewis, Longman & Walker, P.A. Flowers then sent a letter to DredgIt disputing its claim saying that the executive order to stay-at-home due to Coronavirus by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis fully exempted open construction projects. “We cited several current dredging projects going on in Northeast Florida that never stopped throughout this whole Coronavirus pandemic,” said Wright.

Fortunately, the Millers Creek board had purchased a performance bond from Suretec Insurance Company at a cost of \$12,000 when it signed the contract with DredgIt in September 2019. The bond was meant to ensure DredgIt will perform the work to completion and will pay any subcontractors it had hired to work on the creek.

Flowers copied Suretec in his letter to DredgIt to put them on notice that it was considering declaring contractor default under the terms of its performance bond. Suretec’s first step was to serve as mediator during a tele-conference between DredgIt and the board, which was represented by Flowers, Wright, and Bobby Baker, husband to Tamara Grooms Baker, a board member. “We got nowhere,” said Wright. “We were very kind, and we were offering to give them a time extension. They said ‘no, we want off the project.’ The bottom line is they underbid the project and were trying to use COVID-19 as a force measure by saying it made it difficult to work on the project,” she said.

Commissioned with the task to find out how much it might cost to hire another dredging company to finish the job, Wright contacted the next two original lowest bidders – Dames Point Workboats LLC and Bance Diversified, which is also known as BDI. Dames Point Workboats had originally bid \$877,487 and BDI had bid, \$1,187,000, to do the original work. Dames Point was not interested and would not be able to get a bond, she said. Meanwhile, Lance Young of BDI was invited meet with the board June 15 at the Mudville Grille to discuss finishing the project.

DredgIt was also asked what the additional cost would be for them to finish the job, but never came back with a number, said Wright. On May 15, the board finally got a letter from Jacksonville attorney E. Lanny Russell of Smith, Hulsey & Busey with an offer: DredgIt proposed to terminate the contract and drop the standby fees they

planned to charge the board but demanded Millers Creek residents pay half of the demobilization fee – \$37,500 – to remove their equipment from the site.

“What they are banking on – it’s a scare tactic – is that we are limited and don’t have an endless checkbook where we can pay to go into litigation,” Wright said, noting she had an emergency meeting of the board and some Millers Creek residents in mid-May to discuss the next step.

On May 22, the angry board decided to dispute the claim. In a letter written to the DredgIt’s lawyer by Flowers, the board stated that nothing had prevented DredgIt from completing the job and offered a counter proposal: DredgIt should pay all attorney’s fees for the tax district as well \$336,000, what it would cost for another dredging company to finish the job. Also, they demanded liquidated damages due to a clause in the contract that says for every day DredgIt is late past the contract date of January 31 it will pay \$450 a day. That totaled \$52,000 as of the date of the letter.

“We were asking them for over \$400,000 to release them from the contract and not trigger the bonding company, Wright explained, noting if a dredging company loses its bonding capability it affects its ability to get future work. “They lose their ability to bond the minute a claim is made,” she said.

However, DredgIt did not respond to the board’s May 29 deadline and instead filed a claim with the Duval County Circuit Court.

“Everyone is furious. We know we have a strong case. The problem is the litigation costs,” Wright said.

During an emergency board meeting June 1, the board voted to move forward with the litigation and pay for it through private donations and money already budgeted for litigation. The district’s yearly assessment to each Miller’s Creek homeowner of \$3,000 will remain and by law cannot be raised, she said.

The board also contacted the bonding company on June 2. If it agrees that DredgIt is in default, it will cover the cost of the remaining 60% of the dredging project, she said, adding that Suretec will not pay for the litigation costs. Suretec has hired a consultant to investigate the case and advise it in how to proceed, she said.

Recognizing that litigation can take as long as one to two years, the board also decided to request BDI submit a proposal to complete the work as soon as possible. However, during the June 15 board meeting, after the board met with Young, it recognized the risk it would take by hiring the dredging company without first getting the bonding company’s approval. Reconsidering its decision, it voted to wait until its July 20 board meeting to move forward with the BDI contract. “We don’t want to jeopardize our claim with the bonding company by overstepping the process,” Wright said.



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Epping Forest Yacht & Country Club's New Family Pool & Splash Park Completed



Epping Forest Yacht & Country Club, a Jacksonville landmark on the banks of the St. Johns River for nearly a century, has just completed a \$2 million renovation for its multi-purpose family swimming pool area. This enhancement to the Club was made possible by the generosity of GATE Petroleum, with no special assessment asked of its Members.

The 4,387 square foot pool features a zero-entry area for children complete with bubblers, spray jets, a treasure chest slide and a sailboat positioned in the shallow waters. A vibrantly colored, sail shade system above the zero-entry area protects kids from the sun's UV rays. Underwater benches extend in each direction from the steps and allow in-pool seating for parents watching over their children or a place to relax in the pool.

The family pool has been updated to include six swim lanes with wall targets and the current water slide structure remains adjacent to the lap swim area. Dual handrails on the steps assist those needing help getting in and out of the pool.

"We are thrilled with the outcome of the project," said Dan Cook, General Manager of Epping Forest Yacht & Country Club. "Members have loved the new addition of the splash park and are excited for the lasting memories it will provide."

Other renovations to the pool area include more than 7,000 square feet of paver deck, new fencing around the perimeter and two emergency exit gates with panic features installed in opposite corners of the pool amenity area. The entire project was completed on June 6 by Weller Pools from Apopka, Florida.

About Epping Forest Yacht & Country Club

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Curry promotes two in Mayor's office



Jordan Elsbury Leeann Krieg

Two residents of Jacksonville's historic neighborhoods have been appointed to new positions within the mayor's office.

Mayor Lenny Curry has named Jordan Elsbury of Murray Hill as his new chief of staff of the City of Jacksonville. Elsbury previously served as director of Intergovernmental Affairs. Meanwhile, Leeann Krieg of Avondale has been appointed to take over Elsbury's old position as director of Intergovernmental Affairs. She previously served as deputy director in that department.

"Chief of Staff is an integral part of my administration," said Curry. "Jordan has proven his knowledge, leadership, and experience in meeting the needs of Jacksonville citizens while advocating mayoral legislative priorities at the local, state, and federal level. He has also helped build and support invaluable and crucial relationships with government officials and community leaders. With the appointment of Jordan Elsbury as my chief of staff, he joins CAO Brian Hughes to perform at the highest level for the people of our city."

Elsbury's leadership has earned him numerous awards and recognitions including the achievement of Eagle Scout and designation as a 30 Under 30 Florida Political Rising Star. He and his wife, Stephanie, have three daughters and live in Murray Hill.

Additionally, Krieg, who was serving as deputy Director of Intergovernmental Affairs, has been named the director of Intergovernmental Affairs.

A Jacksonville native, Krieg brings more than 15 years of local and state government experience to her role. Prior to joining the Intergovernmental Affairs team in 2018, she served as the executive council assistant to Group 4 At-Large Council Member Greg Anderson. Before joining the City of Jacksonville in 2012, Krieg worked for the State of Florida. She and her husband, Hans, live in Avondale.

Both appointments are effective June 15th.

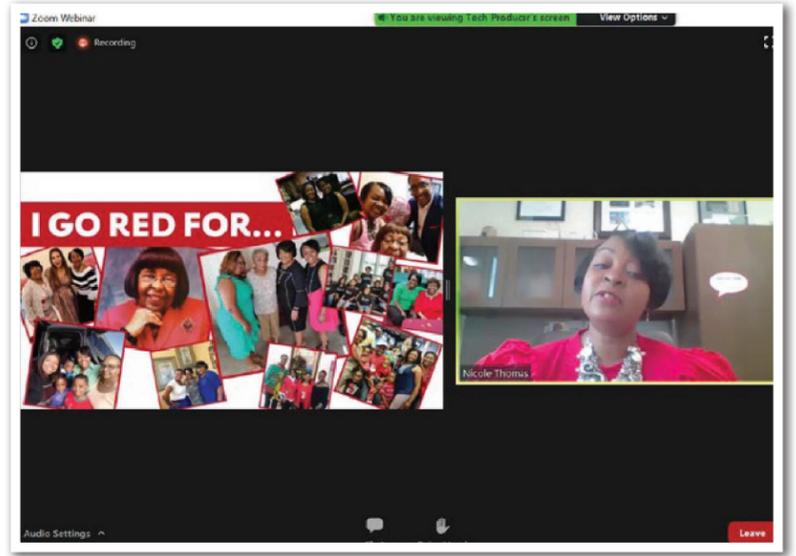
Virtual 'lunch-in' raises record amount for American Heart Association

More than 400 attendees raised a record \$560,000 for the American Heart Association during a virtual Go Red for Women Luncheon via the Zoom video conference platform June 5.

Chaired by San Marco's Nicole B. Thomas, president of Baptist Medical Center South, the campaign kicked off in November 2019 with a community challenge called "GoRedGetFitJax," which challenged women of the First Coast to change just one health



Nicole B. Thomas, chairman of the American Heart Association's Go Red for Women Campaign



Go Red for Women Campaign Chairman Nicole B. Thomas during the zoom "lunch-in."

habit. Thomas's passion for women's heart health has resonated with the community and her hard work joined with that of her executive cabinet garnered the record-breaking results.

The attendance of over 400 participants and day of giving were comparable with what the event would have had at a live luncheon.

The Go Red for Women Campaign broke the market record with over \$560,000 raised for the American Heart Association women's heart health and research. Whitney Spotts, a 34-year-old stroke survivor who was an emergency room physician's assistant, wife, and mother told her story of survival and her fight to get back her life during the event.

Three honored by Leadership Jacksonville

Leadership Jacksonville, an organization that educates, connects, and inspires diverse leaders to build and strengthen their communities, held Celebration 2020 a virtual commemoration honoring three outstanding community leaders and the 30th anniversary of Youth Leadership Jacksonville June 11 on YouTube. This year's honorees were Cindy Edelman, Coley Jones, and Linda Wilkinson.

"There is a common thread between the honorees— they are each committed to elevating youth in Northeast Florida through education, activism and engagement," said Leadership Jacksonville Chief Executive Officer Jill Langford Dame.

Edelman, a member of Leadership Jacksonville Class of 1989, is a former educator, art history lecturer, and community volunteer. She has been active on many boards including The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, Jacksonville Public Education Fund, The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens, Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville and Congregation Ahavath Chesed, The Temple. She was active in founding Youth Leadership Jacksonville.



Cindy Edelman



Coley Jones



Linda Wilkinson

Edelman's commitment to her community focuses on furthering art awareness and quality education.

Jones, a member of Leadership Jacksonville Class of 2014, is the Senior Vice President, Market Executive for North Florida, South Georgia, and the Gulf Coast Business Banking at Bank of America. Jones currently serves as the chairmen of the Leadership Jacksonville's adult program and serves on the board of directors for the Jacksonville Public Education Fund, as vice chair/treasurer of the Museum of Science and History (MOSH) and ElderSource as vice chairman. A native of Jacksonville, Jones is also a graduate of Youth Leadership Jacksonville Class of 1994.

Wilkinson, a member of Leadership Jacksonville Class of 1998, is a community volunteer and Jacksonville native devoted to serving youth in a variety of civic and nonprofit organizations. She was actively involved in the campaign to consolidate the City of Jacksonville, was the first female chair of the Jacksonville Human Rights Commission, first Pediatric Oncology Social Worker at Wolfson's Children's Hospital and the initial staff director for ROCK Camp (Reaching Out to Cancer Kids, now renamed Camp Boggy Creek). She has served on the boards of Congregation Ahavath Chesed, The Reed Center for At-Risk Girls and Riverside Fine Arts Series and has been an active volunteer with many organizations including Youth Leadership Jacksonville.

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Auchter named to historical society board



G. David Auchter IV

G. David Auchter IV has been appointed as a new member of the Jacksonville Historical Society (JHS) Board of Directors. The appointment took place at the JHS April board meeting.

A vice president with Jacksonville's Haskell Company, which he joined in 2016, Auchter is a shareholder, officer, and vice president overseeing enterprise-wide corporate marketing and business development. His responsibilities cover more than 20 global offices, 1,300 Haskell team members, six distinct Haskell brands, and \$1 billion in annual revenue. Auchter also oversees Haskell's public affairs department.

Auchter's name is familiar to all who know the history of construction in Northeast Florida. The Jacksonville-based Auchter Construction Company was founded in 1929 by his great grandfather George David Auchter. The firm's projects included many area landmarks, such as office buildings, museums, hospitals, bridges, and other infrastructure. Downtown's iconic Wells Fargo Tower, originally the Independent Life Building, was built by the Auchter Company, as well as Riverplace Tower and Jacksonville International Airport. Prior to the company's sale, Auchter served as an executive with the legendary firm. He has also served with World Golf Village and Touchdown Jacksonville, the group responsible for bringing major league football to the city.

Auchter received his bachelor's degree from Lynchburg College and has completed executive education through Columbia University. He is a licensed real estate professional, a 2002 graduate of Leadership Jacksonville, and has an extensive record of service to the boards of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, the Jacksonville Public Library, the Jacksonville Sports Council (JAXSPORTS), and numerous other community organizations. He has also chaired the Downtown Development Review Board.

Auchter said his interest in JHS is longstanding. "My first donation to JHS was my great grandfather's State of Florida Professional Engineering certification. He was in the very first class," he said.

New Bolles pool to be named after Jack Tarver

The new 25-meter by 25-yard Myrtha pool currently under construction on the Bolles Upper School San Jose Campus will be named Tarver Pool thanks to a generous gift by the family of Jack Tarver.

The gift brings new momentum to the future of Bolles Swimming and adds to a distinguished legacy of Bolles philanthropy from Tarver's family, which includes his daughter Margaret Tarver Jason, and Missy Jason Pearson and her husband, Josh, of San Jose and their five children Emmy, Kallie, Jessie, Jack, and Charley, all of whom are Bolles students or alumni.

Jackson Williams Tarver was chairman of the board of Cox Enterprises, the publisher of the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, chairman of the board of Atlanta's Federal Reserve Bank, and chairman of the Associated Press at the time of his passing in 1999. Several years ago, his family funded the construction of Tarver Hall on the Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus in his honor. It was the first major academic facility to be built on campus in more than a decade.

The most recent gift will transform the future of Bolles Swimming, an area of athletics that has been personally meaningful to Tarver's family over the years. The Pearsons have been avid participants in and supporters of competitive swimming and are committed to taking the Bolles Swimming and Diving program to new levels. Missy's sister, Katie Jason Oldorp, swam for Bolles from 1989-1994 and went on to swim for Dartmouth College.



The Pearson Family: Jack, Charley, Jessie, Kallie, Missy, Emmy and Josh with Bolles Head Swimming and Diving Coach Peter Verhoef and Bolles President and Head of School Tyler Hodges.

"We are grateful for the high-quality education, community and experience Bolles has provided during our many years as a 'lifer' family - it has enriched our lives in many meaningful ways and it makes us so happy to imagine how this gift will make a difference for other families for years to come," Missy Pearson said.

Construction already has commenced on the project with the Myrtha pool now being installed at the site of the former Loblano Pool. The pool will have an 8-foot minimum depth and full springboard diving facilities as well as elevated bleachers and restroom access, deck-level gutters, and a more efficient use of deck space. The venue will afford athletes and coaches deep-water resources

for training and on-land facilities to match leading global shifts in aquatics.

Newly enhanced indoor training facilities near the pool include office spaces, storage, and second-story multipurpose areas within the current Uible Pool House. This second-floor design will provide new spaces for gatherings overlooking the pool and football field. The expansion will enable Bolles to grow its programming to include diving, triathlon, and masters-level swimming.

"The ability to include more diversified programming raises the bar for everyone," said Head Swimming and Diving Coach Peter Verhoef.

The new pool is expected to be complete by October 1.



Vanessa Seigle-Quinones

New geriatrician joins AgeWell Center

Vanessa Seigle-Quinones, MD has joined the AgeWell Center for Senior Health at Baptist Jacksonville. Seigle-Quinones is a board-certified in Internal Medicine and Geriatrics and is a fellowship-trained geriatrician. Having grown up in Puerto Rico, she is fluent in Spanish and English.

Geriatricians are family medicine or internal medicine physicians who have completed an additional year of training in geriatrics, the specialty that focuses on caring for people 65 and older.

"A geriatrician is trained to look at all of the factors that may affect a patient's ability to age well," said Seigle-Quinones. "We

seek to understand our patients' medical conditions, along with other factors that play a role in healthy aging, like social support, cognitive health, psychological issues, caregiver support, and many others."

Baptist AgeWell is a unique kind of primary care for adults 65-plus that provides comprehensive, coordinated services all under one roof. Caregiver assistance for those who care for an aging parent or relative is another AgeWell service.

"Many caregivers are so focused on caring for an older loved one that they put themselves last. Our care coordinators provide strategies and resources to help them stay healthy and balanced, so they are able to care for their loved one," Seigle-Quinones said.



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The Salvation Army commemorates National Donut Day

National Donut Day is annually held on the first Friday of June, and representatives from The Salvation Army had a sweet time delivering donuts to celebrate America's heroes. On June 5, The Salvation Army thanked the men and women on the front lines of the Coronavirus pandemic by delivering donuts and hope.

The Salvation Army of Northeast Florida staff and volunteers delivered donuts to over 50 local hospital emergency rooms, fire departments, police stations, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, Post Offices, and news stations in honor of their hard work during these trying times. The nonprofit's sponsor, Publix Supermarkets, provided the donuts and helped make the occasion possible.

The National Donut Day tradition started during the days of World War I, when nearly 250 Salvation Army volunteers traveled overseas to provide emotional and spiritual support, fried confectionary, clothes and supplies to troops. For more than a century, the organization has continued to provide snacks, hydration, and comfort to first responders and front-line workers.



Staff and volunteers from The Salvation Army passed out donuts to first responders and front-line workers on National Donut Day, June 5.

"Armed with a helmet, rolling pins and donut supplies, the Donut Lassies provided the soldiers a piece of home from the trenches of eastern France," said Lt. Col. Ward Matthews, national community relations and development secretary for The Salvation Army. "The donut was and continues to be a symbol of the comfort and support that The Salvation Army provides to more than 23 million people in need each year."

Rowland elected president of Millers Creek Special Tax District

John H. Rowland III has been elected board president of the Millers Creek Special Tax District.

He follows in the footsteps of former president Michelle Wright, who resigned during a board meeting June 15 to clear the way for Rowland's election. Wright, who has been president of the Millers Creek Special Tax District since April 2019, said she was resigning because Rowland was better able to lead the homeowner group as it pursues a lawsuit against the dredging company it had hired to dig sentiment from the creek.

A long-time Mayfair Road resident, who has lived in the Empire Point and St. Nicholas neighborhoods since he was two years old, Rowland is a graduate of



John Rowland III

Assumption Catholic School, Bishop Kenny High School, and the University of North Florida, where he earned a degree in business management. He currently is president of the family-owned business, Mobro Marine, Inc., a company that deals in the sale and rental of barges, cranes, and tugboats, which was started by his grandfather, Max Moody, Jr., in 1962.

"I volunteered to lead the board after watching all the board members, especially Michelle Wright, work so hard to make this project successful, and I thought I should help if I could. I have a lifetime of marine construction equipment experience and thought with the problems we are having now, maybe I could be of some service," Rowland said.

'Outside insider' takes helm of San Marco Preservation Society

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

Chris Woolston, "an outside insider" who is a native of the West Midlands of England, will be the next president of the San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS). He succeeds SMPS President Linzee Ott, who handed over the reins during the San Marco Preservation Society Annual Meeting, June 11.

Woolston met his wife, Ashley, in 2004 during a visit to Maine. Following their marriage, the couple moved to America in 2011 with their dog, Winston, living first in Connecticut before settling in Jacksonville in 2012. A fourth-grade teacher at PVPV/Rawlings Elementary School in Ponte Vedra Beach since his arrival on the First Coast, Woolston and his wife first bought at home on Flagler Avenue in San Marco in 2014. In October 2019, they moved to Dunsford Road.

"We have loved living in San Marco ever since," he said. "I love it mostly because it is unique in Florida, in that it is a place for walking to shops and entertainment and seeing strangers who quickly become friends. This is what I grew up knowing, so it feels like a great fit! We've also added two more pups to our pack, Wendy and Moxie, so you'll often see us walking," he said, noting his wife also is a teacher - "She's the best teacher I've ever met!" - for the sixth grade at Liberty Pines Academy.

In addition to his love of dogs, Woolston is a keen runner and an English soccer fan who cheers for Liverpool.

In looking towards his work for the San Marco Preservation Society, Woolston said he wants to follow in Ott's shoes. "It will be a huge ask. She has done such an amazing job with so many challenges and changes. She has faced them all with professionalism and above all, a love for San Marco. Hopefully, I can replicate and continue the great work she has done this year," he said.

Calling himself an "outside insider," when it comes to the neighborhood, Woolston said he is on the inside because he can see what a great place San Marco is and can be, but also has the advantage of being an outsider, having moved to the area fairly



SMPS President
Chris Woolston

recently, so he is able to bring a new perspective to issues and ideas. "I'm also passionate about bringing people together in unity and fun," he said.

"I'll hopefully be able to continue to help SMPS be the voice of San Marco on the different projects that are happening - Publix, the apartments, etc. - and advocating for those of us who live and work here. I also want to keep on with raising the awareness of SMPS as well as San Marco itself, and really showcase what a great place it is to be," he said.

"One of the biggest challenges for SMPS will be supporting the neighborhood following the COVID-19 crisis," Woolston continued. "It has impacted many people and businesses, big and small, and we need to be there for the community to help them recover in whatever way we can and to lend support in whatever guise it may be. Also, as I said earlier, we need to continue to advocate for San Marco wherever there is a challenge or issue.

"Moving forward, I really want to bring more and more people into the SMPS fold, and to have every group within San Marco represented and included. Now, more than ever, we need to show that San Marco is for everyone, as is SMPS," he said. "I want to keep bringing people together, whether that is through our amazing events like Wine Down in the Parks and our happy hours, or through reaching out and making connections, or through having more and more members meet and interact. I want SMPS to help drive connections through the neighborhood."



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Rotary Clubs focus on food distribution to hungry families

The line of cars stretched as far as the eye could see at the intersection of Ortega Farms Road and Timuquana Road near the Community Health Outreach (CHO) facilities June 13 as members from several Rotary Clubs joined those from other charitable organizations to assist in food distribution efforts as part of Farm Share's truck-to-trunk initiative.

More than 600 families and 1,500 individuals were served as approximately 40,000 pounds of fresh produce and groceries were distributed to the families free of charge. Assisting in the food distribution were members of West Jacksonville Rotary, North Jacksonville Rotary and Sunrise Rotary of Amelia Island.

"I've never seen anything like this," said Pat Mulvihill, Rotary Coordinator for the event. Walter Pillsbury, husband to Virginia Pillsbury who co-managed the event for CHO, said her organization dispensed more than 20,000 diapers to those in need. CHO constantly seeks donations of diapers, baby wipes, baby formula, and baby clothes, as well as towels and sheets, he said. Pillsbury also noted that in January and February, CHO distributed groceries to approximately



Rotary Coordinator Pat Mulvihill stands with a handwash station, which was built by Boy Scouts and supplied throughout the city by the Rotarians.

60 families, but since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, those numbers have stretched to 600 families in early June and approximately 1,000 later in the month.

"This is a very important event for nutrition for the people in the West Jacksonville area," said Mulvihill. He added that the Rotary has been involved with the Boy Scouts in producing soap-and-water hand-wash stations from plastic bins acquired from Home Depot for \$30 apiece. Rotary has also arranged to have clear plastic face shields manufactured by Made in Space, Inc., a subcontractor for SpaceX, an American aerospace manufacturer and space transportation services company, and has been distributing them to hospitals, police departments and ambulance services throughout Northeast Florida.



Gloria Maree of the West Jacksonville Rotary Club



Rotary volunteer Pat Mulvihill with Mickey Ulmer of Sunrise Rotary and Dale Moe of North Jacksonville Rotary



Community Health Outreach food distribution organizers Charles Green and Virginia Pillsbury

Florida Cracker Kitchen opens in San Marco

San Marco residents who have regularly made the trek toward the beach for their fix of Florida Cracker Kitchen now won't have to travel so far. The laid-back, Southern-style and family friendly restaurant's newest location on Kings Avenue has come to San Marco and welcomed its first guests in mid-May.

The venue has a native Florida feel and offers comfort food for breakfast, brunch and lunch and features a full-service restaurant, tap room and retail area which features some of the products used in the recipes. Those areas are cautiously open with pandemic measures in place, and a kids' play area and game room are in the works but have not yet been opened in order to keep customers safe.

The restaurant has three other locations – one on Beach Boulevard, one in Keystone Heights and one in Brooksville. The San Marco location is open Tuesday through Sunday.



Elliott Fitch, mayor of Florida Cracker Kitchen

"We are really excited to be in San Marco," said Travis Norman, spokesman for the restaurants and one of the owners. "We like to ingrain ourselves in our community and make sure we are giving back to the community. I don't think there's anything greater you can give back than the safety of our guests."

Drive-by food drive benefits DESC pantry

The members of the Uptown Civitan Club did not let a few raindrops stop them from having a "Drive-by Food Donation Drive" in the parking lot of the First Presbyterian Church downtown June 6. The food initiative took place on behalf of Downtown Ecumenical Services Counsel (DESC) and served needy Jacksonville residents.

Chaired by Nancy Chamblin of San Marco, the donation drive was a big success. Four pallets of non-perishable food and diapers were collected from many Uptown Civitan members as they drove through the First Presbyterian Church parking lot.

Liam Drake, 9, and his sister, Presley, 4, of San Marco set up a lemonade and cookie stand on the site raising more than \$200 from their little enterprise, which they donated to DESC "so that other children wouldn't go hungry."

DESC, a non-profit organization housed in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church, has a food pantry, which reopened in June. Because of the large number of people needing help, supplies were running



Mandy Drake with her children, Liam and Presley, join Chair Nancy Chamblin and Diana Flagg during the Uptown Civitan Club's drive-by food drive June 9.

low. The Uptown Civitan Club decided to step in and see what could be done, because its mission is to reach out and provide services that will benefit all people in the Jacksonville community.

Uptown Civitan had planned a fundraising event at Top Golf for August to benefit DESC, but due to COVID-19, the club had to postpone the event because the need for food was so great.

Rethreaded to add staff, thanks to Women's Giving Alliance

Thanks to a prestigious grant from the Women's Giving Alliance (WGA), Rethreaded, a Jacksonville nonprofit that helps survivors of human trafficking, can now hire more trafficking survivors in part of the largest hiring cycle in its history, which may begin in August.

The nonprofit, which is an initiative of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, will also be able to add a program administrator and a care manager to its Survivor Development Program.

"It is an honor to be the recipient of the WGA grant," said Rethreaded Founder and CEO Kristin Keen. "Over 450 compassionate and intelligent women collectively gathered resources and chose Rethreaded as a grantee. We look forward to witnessing the effects of their investment for years to come. We are so proud to stand with the WGA to empower women to reclaim their lives."

The program administrator and care manager will work closely with Rethreaded's mental health staff and the director of human resources to coordinate staff training and professional development programming. The survivor development program is also supported by a WGA grant.

"The addition of these two staff members will provide the Rethreaded Survivor Development Program the necessary foundation and structure to elevate the quality of our program, offering our staff a greater chance at success," added Rethreaded Director of Finance Nikki Tubig Foiles.

The WGA is a group that combines its philanthropic giving to give back to organizations who are working to end female poverty. This year, the alliance helped eight nonprofits in Jacksonville.

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South Jax Rotary buys food for families in need



The members of the Rotary Club of South Jacksonville along with support from the Rotary Club of West Jacksonville and the congregation of the Memorial Lutheran Church in St. Augustine have raised over \$18,000 to buy food to support Jacksonville families in need due to COVID-19. The Winn-Dixie Gives Foundation donated an additional \$5,000 in shelf-stable food to help with the effort.

“In partnership with Winn-Dixie, the food will be distributed to six area food-banks, and we will be able to feed families of four for up to seven days,” said Dan Robie, M.D., past president of the Rotary Club of South Jacksonville. “This is what we do in Rotary, we come together to help our neighbors and our community just like we would for our own families.”

The Rotary Clubs distributed the food to several food banks in June including Spirit of Life Lutheran Church Food Pantry, St. Catherine Episcopal Church Food Pantry, Community Health Outreach, United Community Outreach Ministry (UCOM), Lutheran Social Services Hunger Relief and First Haitian American Christian Church Food Bank.

When Duval County School classrooms were quarantined in March, San Jose

Marian Ocana, Meaghan Cahill, Elizabeth Pishko, Christina Wilson, Celynn Desfosses, Elizabeth Stout, South Jacksonville Rotary President Bea Fore, Richard Dow, Melissa Dow, Leah Teuschel, Erika Farmer, Tom Gambitsky, San Jose Elementary Principal Paula Findlay-Smith, Jay Plotkin and Allison Clark.

Elementary teacher Leah Teuschel realized students would no longer receive meals at school. The school turned to the Rotary Club of South Jacksonville, which has provided Teuschel with literacy mentors.

South Jax Rotary Club President Bea Fore responded to Teuschel’s call for food. Rotarians donated funds generously, then provided food and volunteers who worked alongside San Jose Elementary teachers to buy, sort, bag, and distribute food to about 50 families on March 21 and May 2. The teachers worked with school principal Paula Findlay-Smith to find the families with the greatest need.

During the distributions, Teuschel thanked the Rotarians by telling them “Your generosity is beyond words. I can’t even think of how to thank you. You are the answer to my prayers.” One Rotarian responded that “the real heroes are the families who have to find ways to make ends meet during this crisis. Thank you, Leah, for making this happen for them.”

Landon, Pine Forest, Stanton named PTA’s of the Year



Landon PTSA Executive Board Members include: Back Row, Greg Scott, Kathy Hartland, Morgaen Brandler, Janet Boeckman, Doreen Abbott, Amy Adams, Scott Pearson. Front row, Noni Mayer, Adrienne Brown, Gage McManus, Terri Nelson, Michele Mathis O’Malley, Robin Yates, Natalie Thomas, Heather Sarra and Jill Bechtold.

The Parent Teacher Student Association of Julia Landon College Preparatory School and the PTAs from Pine Forest School of the Arts and Stanton College Preparatory School received PTA-of-the-Year honors from Duval County Council PTA during the “Presidents’ and Principals’ Luncheon” in May. Although the Coronavirus pandemic caused this year’s luncheon to be cancelled, but it did not stop the virtual celebration where the PTA from one elementary, middle, and high school earned the title of “PTA of the Year.”

Julia Landon PTSA was the middle school winner for the previous year as well, so the PTSA executive board knew it had to set the bar high when planning for this year’s programs. “At our August meeting, we reflected on what went well the prior year. We wanted to continue with the tried and true programs that always have high attendance, such as Donuts with Dad and Lunch with Mom, but also incorporate some worthy new things,” said PTSA President Terri Nelson. “We decided to add a community service component to our schedule, and Landon families responded enthusiastically with over 600 donated canned goods for Feeding Northeast Florida and enough jackets and sweaters to fill six large bags for Mr. Rogers’ Sweater Drive.”

Another area that board members realized could be expanded upon was healthy lifestyles. “PTSA oversees the Running/Walking Club and Walk-to-School Day in the fall but historically has nothing scheduled in the spring,” said Nelson. “We tentatively talked about hosting a speaker presentation, but when Landon faculty Wellness Chair Petika Tave asked if the PTSA would like to help organize a health fair, we jumped on it.” At the March event, participants participated in outdoor activities to get their heart rates up and browsed booths of local businesses. “We really appreciated that two San Marco

entities, 1st Place Sports and JFRD (Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department), were the first vendors to eagerly agree to support our function,” Nelson said.

Although the variety and effectiveness of PTSA programs is a large part of what determines the “PTSA of the Year,” there is also an administrative aspect that is judged. “PTSA is like a business in that we have to prove that we’re complying with not just official PTA guidelines, but also IRS regulations,” Nelson said. “We also need to show fiscal compliance and transparency to our Landon families who provide the financial means to carry our programs out. Having the full support of Landon Principal Katrina Blakely was the icing on the cake that enabled this year’s PTSA Executive Board – over half of which are San Marco/San Jose parent volunteers – to earn the award for Landon once again.”

Led by Lakewood resident and Pine Forest PTA President Rachel Heiser, the PTA of Pine Forest School of the Arts, Duval county’s only dedicated arts magnet elementary school, not only received “PTA of the Year” but was honored to win first place for its historian book in the small elementary school division. This book highlighted the school’s programs benefiting not only the students and their families but also many of the families in the surrounding Pine Forest community. The most successful of these annual programs are the Arts Festival, Mr. Rogers Sweater Drive, Angel Tree, and the Thanksgiving food drive. This year, PFSOTA families collected over 30 sweaters, jackets, and coats to donate to Mr. Rogers’ Sweater drive hosted by VyStar. This year’s Thanksgiving food drive was the most impactful yet. The PTA was able to put together enough take-home meals for 17 families. Each family received non-perishables, as well as fresh produce and a fresh turkey generously donated by Mojo Smokehouse.



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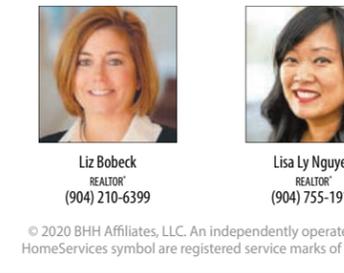
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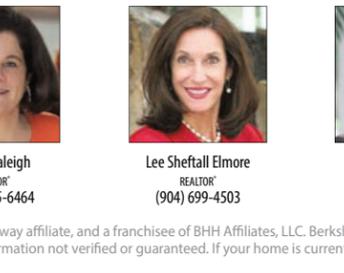
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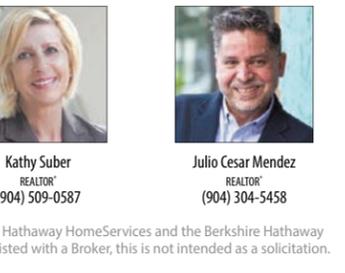
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YOUNG & INDEPENDENT IN THE TIME OF CORONAVIRUS

BY MARCIA HODGSON
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

As residents from Jacksonville's historic neighborhoods grapple with the Coronavirus pandemic, perhaps no group had more resilience adapting to the new reality than the "Young Independents," a group of hard working, aspiring single professionals.

And while enduring the stay-at-home order was no laughing matter for many residents within the local community, Jacksonville's rising youngsters seemed to have their own special cross to bear.

"I joke that singles are the forgotten group during all this because we can't meet up with others," said Sam Mitchell of San Marco.

"Dates are distant and awkward – or maybe that's just me! Families don't want us near their kids because 'we don't know where you have been, and we don't want to give anything to our parents by accident,'" he said.

KATELYN BUSCHINI

It wasn't the disease COVID-19 but the prospect of having to remain alone in her house which sent waves of panic through Kate Buschini when she initially learned of the stay-at-home order. "I love being at my office and I am a very social person," she said. "Being home alone everyday sounded terrifying!"

Remaining alone in her own home was unnerving because Buschini ordinarily spends so much time assisting others by helping them beautify their residences. A Jacksonville native who lives in San Marco, Buschini recently celebrated her sixth anniversary as an interior designer and property manager for Mrs. Howard in Jacksonville Beach. "My mother introduced me to the idea of interior design as a career, as she noticed I had a natural creative ability and an eye for style," Buschini said, adding that when she was growing up she and her mom often read shelter magazines and studied interior design books together. "Upon graduating from Bishop Kenny High School, I enrolled in the interior design program at the University of Alabama. The rest is history!" she said.

Grateful to Phoebe Howard for the education and skills she has provided as her mentor, Buschini said she aims to pay it forward by assisting other newbies in her firm. "With Phoebe's love and support I continue to grow and evolve in my career," she said. "Anytime someone new joins our work family, I reach out with open arms and take them under my wing. Our industry is fabulous, and we have a responsibility to offer exceptional customer service. By being thoughtfully engaged with my team, we are able to provide that."

Buschini also is active in community service. "As a Christian, civic engagement is instinctual for me," she said, noting she served as a member of the Junior League of Jacksonville for several years after moving home from Tuscaloosa, and she is currently an active member of The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital.



Young In

SAM MITCHELL

A "people pleaser" at heart, Sam Mitchell is a desktop administrator at Hueman based at Jacksonville Beach. It is a job he has served the company for more than 10 years.

"I don't think I chose my career as a desktop administrator," he said. "I am a big people person and love to help people and help them. In my role, I get to work with most employees on a weekly basis and help with anything they need. It could be related or just something they need to be more comfortable. The job is the perfect fit for me."

Mitchell grew up on the Southside of Jacksonville, attending St. John's of Stanton College Preparatory School. He worked at First Coast for college, a job, and so on, before returning and settling back in an apartment on 10th Road in San Marco for the past decade.

Giving back to his community is important to Mitchell and he tries to help in "whatever ways" as part of a team that runs an organization called "JAX IS RAD."

"We try to shine light on artists in Jacksonville through host events for them to exhibit their work, whether it be music, art, or printing. I have a lot of fun with local Young Life teams in Jacksonville and try to get to high school students in central Jacksonville."

As a single person, living through the pandemic has been very hard emotionally, said Mitchell. "I am very much an extrovert and I need to be in public to give me energy," he said. "I have been myself as an anti-homebody because I don't like being alone. So, for me to spend that much time at home on my apartment was very hard. I try to get as many walks as possible and to create a routine for myself. I also decided to do some serious cardio and lost about 20 pounds, which is a great bonus. Very clear, I think the weekends v

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Independents HELL

Mitchell works as People Solutions job he adores, and more than four years. "I found me," he says. "I love to get to know people and make contact with them and help them with anything IT related to make them a perfect fit for me." Mitchell is a graduate school. He left the job to travel before starting an apartment on River Street.



very important part for me. Having a lot of time to sit around and not do much was very difficult. I tried to reach out to as many of my old friends as possible and catch up with them over the phone, which was good, but the down time was very hard. Even now, as we are coming out of it, it is still a bit difficult because I do want to meet people, date, build relationships, but in order to do that you need the public to be open AND you need other singles wanting that, too. It's a very bad time to be single to be completely honest."

Mitchell said he has looked toward his mentors for help in the pandemic, but because it is uncharted territory for everyone, he feels he has been in "no-man's-land" as far as getting assistance or advice. "They have never gone through a pandemic as a single so they can only help so much," he said. "We are isolated and then isolated again due to the restrictions. It's all going to be okay, but until we are back to 100%, it's hard to handle sometimes."

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LINZEE OTT

Employed as Community Engagement Coordinator for the State Attorney's Office – the "dream job she never knew she wanted" – Linzee Ott of San Marco found it challenging to spend more than a month alone in her apartment under quarantine while her roommate traveled home to visit her parents. "I took my distancing very seriously. I'm an outgoing people-person, so being alone isn't my favorite, but I forced myself to keep busy. I'm fortunate that I had plenty of work to occupy my time," she said, adding she filled the empty hours doing at-home workouts, walking, being "very intentional" about meal prep, and watching all of Ozark on Netflix. "I did a few virtual happy hours, talked to a few friends I hadn't checked in with in a while, and even sent a few handwritten notes via snail mail."



Ott said her work in the State Attorney's office is a perfect fit for her because it provides an intersection of her background, skill set, and her passion and vision for the community. "When I accepted this position three years ago, I admit I knew little about the criminal justice system, but I have grown both professionally and personally from my experience here. The position itself is an innovative one, created by State Attorney Melissa Nelson when she took office as part of her effort to launch a Community Prosecution Program."

In the Community Prosecution Program, prosecutors often step outside their traditional roles of receiving case referrals, filing criminal cases, and seeking convictions to engage as problem solvers in the community. They instead work directly in neighborhoods to develop relationships with local groups, align enforcement priorities with residents' public safety concerns, and seek solutions to prevent crime. "As Community Engagement Coordinator, I'm part of the initiative. I actively involve our office with community stakeholders, service providers, the faith community, educational institutions, and other government and law enforcement agencies," she said.

A native of San Marco who attended Hendricks Avenue Elementary, LaVilla School of the Arts, and

Stanton College Preparatory School, Ott is a familiar face because she recently stepped down as president of the San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS), and at age 27 was the youngest member to ever be elected to the position. She is very active in her church and has a seat on Theatre Jacksonville's board as an ex officio member. "Beyond that, I was volunteering an average of 70 to 80 hours per month on top of my full-time job, so there wasn't much time for much else," she said. She plans to continue as an SMPS board member and get involved in some projects involving preservation and advocacy for Jacksonville's urban core in the future.

As Jacksonville continues to open even as the pandemic rages on, Ott hopes to have more of a social life. "I'm not on any dating apps or websites, so dating during the time of Coronavirus has been nonexistent!" she said. "Now that restaurants and bars are starting to open back up, I suppose it'll bring the return of a little more opportunity to get together and meet people."



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SMPS presents beautification awards during virtual annual meeting

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

The San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS) successfully passed the torch to a new slate of officers and congratulated nine beautification winners as it held its first virtual annual meeting June 11, which was live-streamed over Facebook Live.

Former SMPS President Linzee Ott oversaw a virtual vote, which subsequently elected four San Marco residents – Chris Woolston, president, Erin Weinberg, vice president, Karen Carlucci, secretary, and Mack Volk, treasurer – with 100% of the votes in their favor. Everyone viewing the public meeting online was able to cast a ballot during the election. Volk had already been serving as treasurer as the position became vacant in 2019.

Heather Stine, administrator for the Society, was also introduced and shown appreciation for her work.

Honored with beautification awards in the residential category were Larry and Wendy Berger for the tasteful renovation they made to their home at 1003 Sorrento Road, which was built in 1936. Their house has made several appearances on social media and was featured in the preservation society's own #Doors of San Marco series as well as on Better Homes & Gardens Instagram. Also receiving beautification laurels in the residential category were Bill and Kara Gist, for changes they have made to their home at 1972 Largo Road, which was built in 1927, and Pat Andrews and Fred Lambrou for 1983 River Road, a historic resident built in 1926.



Miles Howard holds the SMPS beautification award for the mural on the wall of Grape and Grain

The society also presented awards to the owners of the Grape and Grain Exchange for its mural in San Marco Square as well as to the owners of Stubbees Honey Purveyors for the design of its shop, the San Marco Garden Circle for its butterfly garden in Landon Park, and to District 5 Councilwoman LeAnna Cumber and the City of Jacksonville for their work in bringing new playground equipment to Landon Park.

During the meeting, Ott reviewed various activities the Society had been involved with during the past year. She encouraged San Marco and Southbank residents to



Community Beautification Award winners Jude and Stu Green of Posting House

support the Beach Buggy initiative that was started by the San Marco Merchants Association to provide free rides to businesses and homes within the neighborhood's boundaries. She also informed the group about the \$17 million federal grant the City of Jacksonville was awarded in June to fund improvements that will assist in traffic delays caused by trains slowly moving through San Marco on their way to the railyard on the Northbank. She credited District 5 Councilwoman LeAnna Cumber for beginning the initiative while she was still president of the preservation society.

Cumber also said the neighborhood was proud to display Rough's mural on the side of the Grape and Grain pub in San Marco Square. Commissioned by Jonathan Davis and his partners, who own the San Marco watering hole, with assistance from Art Republic, the mural was painted early in the year by Remi Rough, an internationally known artist from London. San Marco Preservation helped select colors for the mural, she said.

San Marco was also in the spotlight during a Downtown Development event sponsored by the Jacksonville Business Journal in December 2019, when a panel discussed several largescale developments planned for San Marco including the pedestrian walkway over the Fuller Warren Bridge.

Ott also discussed Dennis Campay's painting, "The Land We Stand On," which was donated by the artist to the society and now resides in the lobby of the San Marco movie theatre for perpetuity. A reception to celebrate the work was held at the theatre in October 2019. Prints of the painting are available for purchase at Steller's Gallery and the proceeds are put toward a public and children's art fund, she said.

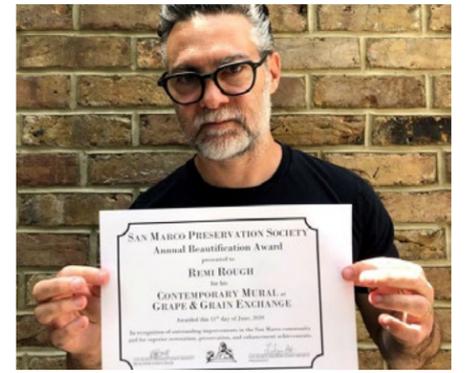
SMPS's annual fundraiser, Wine Down in the Parks, which was originally scheduled for April 18 has been rescheduled for October 17 due to the Coronavirus pandemic, she said. The preservation society also enjoyed a happy hour event at Rue Saint Marc in July 2019, and a similar March get-together to be held at Taverna was postponed due to COVID-19.

SMPS hosted a special talk with Cumber in October 2019 as well as two October 2019 town hall events covering the issues of East San Marco, the Water Taxi and proposed fishing dock in Riverside Park. Two very well-attended events featuring Park Place at San Marco, the apartment complex proposed to be built on land currently owned by South Jacksonville Presbyterian Church, were also sponsored by SMPS in November 2019 and February.

The preservation society has been collaborating with several different organizations over the past year, Ott said. It joined the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida to benefit from the center's wealth of resources, including best practice materials, coaching and skills-building for nonprofit organizations. It also created a board liaison with Theatre Jacksonville, the oldest theatre in continuous operation, which is celebrating its 100th anniversary this year. It increased its



Jake Cumber and his mother, District 5 City Councilwoman LeAnna Cumber accept the SMPS Beautification Award on behalf of the City of Jacksonville for improvements to Landon Park Playground.



London artist Remi Rough and his beautification award for his mural in San Marco Square.



Justin Stubblefield accepts the SMPS Community Beautification award for Stubbees Honey Purveyors

partnership opportunities with the San Marco Merchants Association by holding joint mixers, including the most recent Open Air in the Square, an opportunity to support San Marco restaurants by offering outdoor seating for take-out food, and executing a monthly landscaping payment arrangement to help maintain San Marco Square.

SMPS also signed a formal agreement with the merchants association and the City of Jacksonville to formalize the collaborative work the three organizations have been doing in an effort to maintain landscaping in San Marco Square and other public right of ways.



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San Jose Estates FROM PAGE 1

The San Jose Estates property was formerly categorized as “waste land,” or “jurisdictional wetlands,” on the Jacksonville Property Appraiser’s website when San Jose Estates LLC purchased the property in April 2016 for \$165,000. The land is zoned as RLD-90 (residential low density with 90-foot setbacks), and it is the developer’s plan to subdivide the land into six parcels over nearly two acres, and build “luxury single-family homes” starting in the mid \$400,000s, which would border San Jose Boulevard.

After repeatedly asking San Jose Estates developers Feras Mouded, who owns San Jose Estates LLC, and James O’Nan to fix the faulty drainage system, David Robison, a civil engineer, decided to take matters into his own hands two years ago. He drew up a 24-page document entitled, “San Jose Estates: A Project that Never Ends,” where he outlined a solution that he planned to immediately put into action on his own property that would to dry out his backyard. He then requested \$35,000 from the developer to cover his costs. “We could not wait any longer,” said Lynne Robison in a telephone interview two years ago. “This is absolutely ridiculous. We can’t use our yard because its soaking wet. I want to be able to enjoy my property, and he’s taken that away from me for a year and a half.”

For Conner, the result of the developers clearing the wetlands – “a lake with some cypress trees in it” – and using impermeable soil to fill in their property has been devastating. Eleven months ago, he was forced to move his family out of their home due to water seeping through the foundation, soaking his hardwood flooring, and creating excessive mold within the floors and walls. Conner, who has since purchased a home elsewhere

to live, is seeking compensation from the developers to cover the damage to his home, which is no longer habitable, he said.

“What it comes down to is this. There previously was a big hole in the ground that was a lake filled with trees. That was a large area for the watershed to dump water into so it could rise and lower depending upon the amount of water in there and it would never flood. It never had previously flooded anyone’s property. They took that pond and filled it with impermeable dirt so that the next time it rained the rain had to go somewhere. If there is a huge plug of dirt there then it raises the water level, but we also believe it has raised the water table,” explained Schoepel.

“You can stand in my client’s driveway and see water running out of the driveway across the street that’s at a higher elevation than his, and that’s what we believe has happened to his home,” he continued, referring to Conner’s property. “He never had a problem with the slab, and now the slab is constantly saturated, and it has ruined his hardwood floors and molded everything. What they need to do is compensate him,” he said, noting that one option might be for the developers to purchase Conner’s home only to tear it down and make it into a retention pond. “If they measure the amount of dirt they put in their lake and make a hole with the same amount of dirt taken out of it, that will be the end of the problem, I presume. They have to find that hole somewhere. They are either going to have to take one of their lots and dig a big hole there and make it into a retention pond, or I’ve noticed there is a for-sale sign on the lot immediately south of their property. They could buy that and create a pond, or they may buy my client’s house, if it is not worth repairing, and get permission from the City to take it out of



Flood water stands in the backyards of David and Lynne Robison (left) and Kevin Conner (right).

there and make a retention pond for their overflow. What amazes me is that they destroyed the lake with cypress trees.”

Schoepel said he had given the St. Johns River Water Management District, JEA, the City of Jacksonville, and Edwards Engineering, as well as the two engineers six months’ notice as required by law to make amends without being sued. He said he found it to be particularly interesting that JEA, especially, did not respond because the drainage problem often causes its sewerage lift station on the corner of Madrid Avenue and LaVaca Road to overflow. “We have videos of it overflowing into the water that goes into my client’s and other people’s properties and across LaVaca Road and into the river,” Schoepel said. “That’s human sewerage in that park, and children play in that park. Here you have a lift station that overflows, and that is raw sewerage running out of it. When you have four inches of water over the lift station, it’s overflowing.”

Schoepel said he has served Gray Engineering and its two engineers, Gray S. Edwards and John Anthony Quattrochi first, but has not yet served St. Johns River Water

Management District, The City, or JEA. He said he thought about also suing the Florida Department of Transportation because it gave the developers access to San Jose Boulevard’s stormwater sewer system through a 15-inch valve. “We left FDOT out,” he said. “We can’t see that made much difference, so we didn’t sue FDOT.”

San Jose Estates’s lawyer, Theresa Carli Pontieri of Carli Law PLLC, filed an answer with the court to Schoepel’s complaint on June 8. In it the developers “generally deny any and all allegations contained within the Plaintiff’s complaint and demand strict proof thereof as required by the Constitution, Statutes, Laws and Rules of Civil Procedure,” according a legal document filed in the Circuit Court of the Fourth Judicial Circuit in Duval County.

“I think it will be resolved, and I don’t know how it could be resolved in the developer’s favor,” said Schoepel. “I have photographs. Aerial photographs of the flooding because we flew a drone over. I don’t care what their engineer has to say as an expert, I have these pictures. These pictures are worth 10,000 words.”

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READ USA – Partnering to Provide Free Books!

By Susan D. Brandenburg



During the last few weeks, elementary school children all over Duval County waited eagerly for the mailman, anticipating the delivery of a special package addressed just to them.

Grinning from ear to ear, third grader Sebastian Beckett of West Riverside Elementary fanned his three free books, ordered by him online from the READ USA virtual marketplace. The books will provide Sebastian interesting summer reading, in addition to helping him avoid the “summer slide” in reading achievement that so often occurs between school years.



Sebastian Beckett, 3rd grade, West Riverside

Sebastian is one of approximately 42,000 children scheduled to receive three free brand-new books of their choice through READ USA, a local non-profit that, as READ USA supporter Delores Barr Weaver says, is “an organization committed to a literate community, specifically by providing quality book access, book selection, and ownership to young, eager learners that are economically disadvantaged.”

In 2011, READ USA, which was co-founded by Ellen Wiss and Vanessa Tussey, partnered with Scholastic Books, to hold its first book fair at George Washington Carver Elementary School. Since then, the READ USA Team has annually provided three free books to students at an increasing number of Title 1 Elementary Schools in Duval County. In 2019, READ USA distributed more than 50,000 books to over 16,000 students in



TC Delivers employee Cameron Freeman packs books for mailing as Robert Bierlein and Chris Johnson look on

Title 1 schools, as well as providing new books to teachers in those schools.

“Our 2020 goal was to serve all students in every Duval Title 1 Elementary School as well as community centers and early learning centers – that’s 81 schools, 5 centers, 42,000 students - with over 150,000 new books for their home libraries,” said Ellen Wiss, CEO of READ USA. “Then Covid-19 came along, and we had to change direction from physical bookfairs where children choose their books and take them home to creating a virtual marketplace where the books they choose are mailed to them individually. At this point, thanks to many generous individual donors like Cindy and Dan Edelman, and wonderful community partners like the Community Foundation for Northeast Florida (including the Beaches Community Fund and Women’s Giving Alliance), Ascension St. Vincent’s, Tegna Foundation, Jaguars Foundation, PGA Tour and so many others, we are achieving our goal for 2020!”

READ USA’s response to the pandemic has been greatly enhanced by powerful partnerships formed with key stakeholders such as Duval County Public Schools (DCPS), Scholastic Books, First Book, Jacksonville Public Education Fund, Feeding Northeast Florida, TC Delivers, Florida Blue, and countless others in the community.

In March 2020, as a “first responder” in providing books to children who were suddenly isolated in their homes and attending school virtually, READ USA partnered with DCPS and Scholastic Books to provide approximately 38,000 age-appropriate books and parent engagement packets to all DCPS Title 1 Elementary School students. The books were transported safely by school buses that were delivering meals to the schools.

In May 2020, READ USA forged ahead toward achieving their ultimate goal of serving each child at every Title 1 School in Duval County. The process of creating a new approach has been complicated, time consuming, and expensive.

First, Scholastic Books and First Book delivered books to distributor TC Delivers, the organization used by DCPS for large mailouts. At the TC Delivers warehouse on Phillips Highway, thousands of books ordered by thousands of children were sorted and packaged for mailing.

On June 12, READ USA Board members and TC Delivers employees, all wearing the distinctive READ USA red volunteer apron, worked together to fill book orders and mail them out.

Wearing his red apron proudly, TC Delivers Corporate Vice President and General Manager Mark Mazurkiewicz, posed with long-time employee Tiffany Lewis, each of them displaying a colorful book. Smiling, Mazurkiewicz said, “TC Delivers is proud



A panoramic view of TC Delivers - piled high with books - as TC Delivers employees join READ USA board members to get books to kids

to be working with READ USA on such a great initiative, delivering books to children. While all of us are trying to migrate through these uncertain times, especially due to COVID-19, this opportunity serves a major purpose as it puts books in children’s hands to enable their continued reading growth. It’s a WIN-WIN scenario that our organization is happy to be a part of”

As the work progressed in the TC Delivers warehouse, voices could be heard floating over the bustle of sorting, stuffing and mailing ... “This place has more books than Barnes & Noble!” ... “Did you see the Star Wars books?” ... “I want one of these Princess books for my granddaughter!”

Holding a couple of packages ready to be mailed, TC Delivers Senior Account Manager Chris Liese, commented, “Look around. The pride beaming on the faces of all involved here is inspirational!”

Inspiring indeed, the huge undertaking has engendered a huge price-tag for READ USA and its supporters. “We are believing that all of our funding will come through as promised,” said Wiss, “and we are still asking our community to help us make this happen for even more children who need these books so desperately. It is so gratifying to see the end result – the joy on Sebastian’s face – multiplied by thousands. We can quote statistics all day long about the importance of reading and links between illiteracy and poverty, but when it comes right down to it, books are the essential key to turn Readers into Leaders!”

By engaging DCPS principals and their teachers in the process, READ USA has reached into the homes and hearts of parents



TC Delivers employee Christopher Liese holds some books that are packaged and ready to mail



Mark Mazurkiewicz, senior vice president at TC Delivers and Tiffany Lewis celebrate her 24th work anniversary by sorting books for READ USA

and students with books of their own choice. “READ USA is one of those staircases leading to unlimited possibilities through reading a book,” said RV Daniels Elementary School Principal Lashawn Caldwell, who is also a board member of READ USA.

“We are proud to partner with Read USA to ensure our most at-risk students have access to their own books, providing a pathway to increased literacy, achievement and a love of learning,” said Superintendent Dr. Diana Greene. “Many of us may sometimes take owning books for granted, but for many of our children, this is a rare privilege. I know this by the excitement and joy I always see when children learn they get to choose and keep their own books. It truly touches me to see their reaction, knowing they are more likely to become eager and independent readers. This is a key aspect to strong literacy, and we know that literacy is the gateway skill to all other learning. I am so thankful to Read USA and our community partners for working to give this gift of literacy to our students.”

With summer already in full swing, READ USA has achieved its 2020 Goal and is currently partnering with Kids Hope Alliance, Jacksonville University, and the Mayor’s Youth at Work Program to virtually emulate its 2019 Teen Tutoring Program and repeat its Peace in the Pages event honoring non-violence and the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi. To learn more about READ USA, or donate to help them turn the page on poverty, please visit www.readusainc.com.

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One Big Episcopal Family: merger fulfills dream of many visionaries

The story of Beaches Episcopal School, St. Mark's Episcopal Day School, and Episcopal School of Jacksonville goes back to many visionaries in the Jacksonville community. The Reverend Dr. Robert Ray Parks and Jacksonville attorney and Episcopalian, Lucius Buck, had long dreamed of creating an Episcopal high school in Jacksonville, a dream that began with 265 students in September 1967, on the Munnerlyn Campus, as Jacksonville Episcopal High School (JEHS), now Episcopal School of Jacksonville.

But even before JEHS was established, The Rev. Parks had founded St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Day School, now Beaches Episcopal School, while he was rector of St. Paul's by-the-Sea Episcopal Church. The parish day school was established in 1957 as a school that would serve pre-kindergarten through sixth grade students, though prekindergarten and kindergarten had been offered since 1952. The new school's board of trustees included Buck. By 1966-1967 there were six full grades, with Spanish, religion, and physical education offered as enrichment classes.

Parks and Buck had always been interested in establishing an Episcopal high school downtown, but the vestry of St. John's Cathedral was uninterested in their proposals. However, in 1959, fate intervened. The Dean of St. John's Cathedral, The Very Reverend Charles McGavern, dean of St. John's Cathedral, died suddenly in a plane crash. With the approval of The Right Reverend Hamilton West, bishop of the Diocese of Florida, Parks was named to succeed McGavern. Parks would leave St. Paul's By-the-Sea for the Cathedral in downtown Jacksonville, helping to pave the way for the establishment of Episcopal School of Jacksonville.

Soon after his installment in the fall of 1960, Parks took to the Cathedral vestry a question: Should St. John's Cathedral leave downtown Jacksonville and be moved to a new site on Keystone Bluff or should the Cathedral remain in Jacksonville's urban core? The property he had in mind, and on which ESJ now stands, was originally donated to the Cathedral by Mary Packer Cummings, and upon her death, it was to be used as a home for boys, which closed in 1953 for financial reasons. The vestry voted to build a high school on the 28 acres of waterfront property,

keeping the Cathedral downtown. The elderly parishioners of St. John's Cathedral joyfully received the news that their beloved church would stay put with cheers and the banging of canes and walkers.

The next few years were busy ones. In 1962 the United States Supreme Court banned prayer in public schools (*Engel v. Vitale*), spurring on the desire for an Episcopal school. In 1965 a planning committee, called "The Committee of 100" and headed by Buck, was formed to explore establishment of the high school. In 1966 Horton Reed was installed as the first Jacksonville Episcopal High School (JEHS) headmaster and was charged with hiring faculty, fundraising, marketing the school, and establishing a curriculum, one that would include Latin, Greek, and Russian, as well as physical education, language arts, mathematics, and sciences.

The curriculum "should be strictly college-preparatory and designed to develop children for leadership," the report of the planning ground stated. Boys were expected to wear coats and ties every day. Buck in particular wanted students to be what he called "muscular Episcopalians," who could withstand all challenges with both their intellectual and their physical vigor.

Three years after JEHS held its first day of school, St. Mark's Episcopal Day School was founded on the west side of downtown. The school was originally established in 1970 as a non-profit Christian school, located on the grounds of St. Mark's Episcopal Church as an outreach mission. It began to serve children on September 8, 1970, with one class per grade, grades one through six, with a total enrollment of 107. The Rev. Robert Clingman was the rector of St. Mark's at the time of the school's founding. The classes were held in rooms within the church facility, and the school soon outgrew them. Adjacent properties were acquired allowing for further expansion, including the addition of a pre-school. A new rector, Father Barnum McCarty, arrived at St. Mark's in 1971, and helped to refine the concept of the parish day school.

The original vision for the Episcopal school system in Jacksonville was that of a wheel, with the parish elementary schools serving as spokes that fed into the center – the

St. Mark's Campus: Founding Board of Trustees, 1970-1971

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Beaches Campus: Founding Board of Trustees

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In 1967, the 1957 goal of a pre-kindergarten through sixth grade school had been reached and the faculty roster was as follows:

Principal: Florence Hartsuff	3rd Grade: Lois Jones
Director, Kindergarten: Virginia Huxham	4th Grade: Mary Abdullah
Pre-Kindergarten: Marie Collyer	5th Grade: Corella Johnson
Kindergarten: Virginia Huxham, Mary Brant	6th Grade: Anne Williamson
1st Grade: Margarethe Wellwood	Music: Virginia Hawkins
2nd Grade: Florence Hartsuff	Spanish: Flora Crow
	Physical Education: Mickey Kohnke

high school. The many founders, faculty, clergy, and volunteers who helped to establish the three schools could not have anticipated the seismic shifts that would take place in the world and in Jacksonville over the next 70 years.

"We have our Lord's command – Go Teach!" stated Buck, who served as chairman of the Board of Regents for Episcopal Day Schools in the Diocese of Florida. The founders did not just want to build private schools; they dreamed of founding Episcopal church schools like no other. Today, true to their dream, the three schools continue as one.



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In Memoriam Gary Anthony Roberts

April 14, 1956 – May 28, 2020

Gary Roberts, 64, loving husband and father, peacefully passed away in St. Vincent's Hospital after a brief illness May 28. His beloved wife of 34 years, Terry Russell Roberts and their daughter, Casey, 28, are comforted by the certainty that he is reunited in heaven with their deceased son and brother, Clay, who was killed in a tragic accident in 2007.

Roberts, a Jacksonville native, was the second of three children born to the late Tillman Roberts and Mildred Rogero. He grew up on the Westside and attended J.E.B. Stuart Junior High School where he played trombone and expanded his love of music. He was a 1974 Edward H. White High School graduate, who barely knew his future wife, Terry Russell, in high school for she graduated three years later. The couple finally met at Hyde Park Pharmacy where Roberts worked as a teen, and whose owner, pharmacist Dick Saunders encouraged their romance. They married on June 22, 1985.

Roberts graduated from Mercer University of Atlanta in 1981, with an advanced degree in Pharmacy (PharmD) and completed his

IV Nutrition (TPN) residency there. He was one of the few pharmacists in the nation at that time to specialize in this therapy. In Jacksonville, he worked as the Riverside Hospital Clinical Pharmacist where he developed the protocols to safely maintain a TPN patient outside of the hospital setting, another first. After leaving Riverside Hospital, he became a partner pharmacist at Hyde Park Pharmacy. This move spawned the development of his IV therapy business, which was later purchased by a major prescription benefit management company.

In 2009, he opened Roberts Southbank Pharmacy in San Marco. This became the Roberts' second successful local business; Terry's Kitchen, fresh and frozen meals-to-go, had opened on St. Johns Avenue in 2001.

Perhaps Roberts' most meaningful accomplishment was the creation of the nonprofit charitable organization, In River or Ocean (IROO), which was founded in 2007 in memory of his late son Clay. Clay had been a senior at Bishop Kenny High School at the time of his death. Since childhood, Clay had a strong passion for fishing and boating, which inspired the charity's mission to promote enjoyment of waterways. Their goal is the protection, conservation and effective stewardship of river and ocean resources for present and future generations. The annual Clay Roberts Memorial Inshore Slam Fishing Tournament funds a four-year



renewable college scholarship for a Bishop Kenny senior with the same character and personal qualities as Clay.

Roberts played trombone for more than 15 years in the Westside Baptist Church Orchestra and Jazz Band, where he made many friends, including Pastor Keith Russell. Of his many CDs and vinyl records, a favorite song was "I Can Only Imagine," by the contemporary Christian music group, MercyMe. The song's lyrics describe the joy of entering heaven and the presence of Jesus Christ.

He and Terry supported the El Cheapo Sheepshead Tournament Junior Angler Division, among other local fishing tournaments and are members of the Coastal Conservation Association and St. Johns Riverkeeper. Roberts was a Rotary and Sertoma Club member and served on the Jacksonville University Board of Directors/Marine Science.

His daughter Casey worked with him at their pharmacy. She completed her Childhood and Adolescent Psychology Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of North Florida, with plans to pursue that career. Casey and her father shared a love of all music, played basketball, enjoyed games, and watched football together.

Besides Terry and Casey, Roberts is survived by his in-laws, Terry's stepfather Thomas Russell, her mother Perry Jones Russell of Jacksonville and stepmother Louise Cashion Pinckney of South Carolina,

as well as his surviving cousins, Joe and Nona Regero, Cheryl Roberts, Rocky Roberts, and Kenny Groleau, and surviving niece, Sharon Casper. Terry's late father was Bill Cashion. Roberts is also mourned by the family's much-loved pets, German Shepherd Auggie and Casey's Havanese, Lacey.

William "Bill" Parker, longtime family and close friend of Gary, spoke collectively for Roberts' loved ones.

"Gary was the most positive person and always such a true friend to everyone who knew him. He was so much like their son, Clay. Both were always more interested in the wellbeing of others before themselves," Parker said.

It is well known among family and friends that Gary and his son, Clay, shared an abiding respect and love of God's creations. A partial quote written by Roberts for Clay's gravestone many years ago, may best express the impact of these lives, both lost too soon: "In your short life on earth, you touched so many, leaving countless memories and the hope that we will be with you for eternity."

A memorial service in celebration of Gary's life and reunion with Clay in heaven will be announced at a future date. In lieu of gifts or flowers, the family has requested that donations be made to In River or Ocean, 1625 Atlantic Blvd., Jacksonville, FL 32207 or online at www.inriverocean.org.

Due to the Covid-19 emergency, the 13th annual Clay Roberts Memorial Inshore Slam Fishing 2020 tournament has been cancelled, but a June 20-21 weekend "Fish with Clay" virtual event has been substituted. Information is available on the website.



Terry and Gary Roberts

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THE WAY WE WERE: KEN JURO

BY JENNIFER EDWARDS
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Even though he was not born when his father fought the Japanese during World War II, Ken Juro learned plenty about resilience and conscientiousness from his father's tales about his wartime experience.

Juro, an Empire Point resident who has longtime ties to Ortega, grew up in Spring Park in the 1950s and often worked in the Ortega business his mother co-founded, Rahaim's Walls and Floors. He is also the son of war hero Leo Juro, who, through his strong faith in God, survived horrible torture in Japanese death camps as well as the Bataan Death March, which killed thousands of soldiers.

The Bataan Death March, a deadly, arduous march in 1942, in which thousands of U.S. soldiers were either marched to their deaths, died from exhaustion, or were killed with bayonets, took place on the main Philippine island of Luzon after the U.S. surrendered the Bataan Peninsula to the Japanese on April 9, 1942, according to the U.S. Department of Defense. During the ordeal, approximately 75,000 Filipino and American troops were forced to make the 65-mile march to prison camps, where many were later tortured and/or killed. When Juro's father came back to the States after surviving the camps as a prisoner of war, he weighed only 61 pounds, Juro said. It took the elder Juro more than a year to recover.

In 1939, Leo and his friends were in New Mexico and were excited to assist the war effort when they enlisted in the U.S. Army, Juro said. Leo was serving in the Philippines when the Japanese bombed the archipelago on Dec. 8, 1941, the day after they bombed Pearl Harbor. That attack began the invasion of the Philippines, and Leo fought in Luzon and was trapped and captured by the Japanese after the U.S. surrendered the islands in 1942.

It's hard to say which atrocity was worse – the march or the death camps. His father told him that during the marches, his Japanese captors starved and beat the soldiers and tortured them by day and by night. When they didn't kill them, they ran bayonets through their legs or through their feet if they fell down. If the soldiers asked them for something to drink, they would be given contaminated water or rice that would eat away through their intestines before they died.

"Daddy said soldiers used to find maggots in the streams, and they would hold them



Ken Juro and Coach John Baldwin hold the trophy along with the 8th grade Assumption basketball team after winning the City championship

up on their hands and suck on them to get nourishment because the Japanese wouldn't feed them food or anything. All the rations the Red Cross sent over there, they used for their own soldiers. They didn't give the prisoners any of the antibiotics or anything," Juro recalled.

Leo was in several prisoner of war camps in the Philippines and in Japan including Camp O'Donnell, Nielsen Field, Cabanataun, Formosa, Nokahama, and Osaka, with the worst being Camp O'Donnell, which was located on Luzon in a former U.S. military base.

"In the camps, it was terrible, totally inhumane," Juro recalled his father saying. "All the waterboarding, all the torturing. Think of the worst thing you can and what was done to those men was probably worse," he said.

Juro said his father and the other soldiers kept their sanity by prayer. The men would pray and chant the Hail Mary and Our Father prayers. "All the men who would pray would chant while they were being tortured," he said.

His father was in the Nokahama camp when he was liberated. Health care workers and nurses on converted hospital ships found the soldiers in railroad cars and in caves. Leo returned to San Francisco and began a long, slow recovery from malnutrition, beriberi, malaria, and other illnesses. He later moved to New York, where he met and married Juro's mother, Marie. They eventually moved to Jacksonville, where their sons were born. Juro later petitioned to get the medals his father had earned, but Leo Juro wanted no part of it.

"I've asked my father a hundred million times for a picture of him in uniform. He said there was nothing," Ken recalled, noting his father had objected when he asked former United States Representatives Corrine Brown



The many medals Ken Juro's father, a war hero, received.

and Ander Crenshaw for help in obtaining his medals. But his father was proud to meet, and be acknowledged by, Ret. Lt. Col. Oliver North when he was undergoing dialysis at the VA clinic in Gainesville in the late 80s.

Before he died on Aug. 3, 2004 at the age of 88, Leo Juro finally had possession of his medals but never wanted anyone to see them, particularly his family – his brother-in-law, and sisters, Juro said. "I used to take them wherever we would go because I was so proud. When we held his funeral at Assumption Catholic Church, I didn't bring his medals because Dad always said it was old news and he didn't want anybody to know." However, Father Dan Shashy stopped the service and waited as Juro went home to get them.

"I brought them, and he put them on the casket then proceeded with the funeral. Dad also received a 21-gun salute."

CONTINUE ON PAGE 27



Leo Juro during World War II



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Ken Juro with his mother, Marie, and his brother Greg.

“It was so nice back then,” Juro recalled. “Everybody knew everybody. I played ball, my brother played ball, and we didn’t have a car until I was 12 years old. Back then, to go to Bishop Kenny was \$25 a kid. Assumption was \$10.50. My daddy worked at the post office until 2 or 3 in the morning and he would walk home.”

Juro recalled the time when he grew up as a time when everyone kept their doors opened and unlocked. He would tend to the 40 or 50 drink machines in the area and work at the post office during the holidays. No one had air conditioning and Skinners’ Dairy trucks drove around to people’s homes to deliver milk. Everybody seemed to know his father wherever he went, and he always seemed to run into people he had served with in the military.

“Everywhere we go, we run into someone who knew him. It’s amazing.”

Juro said his father’s war stories helped strengthen him and imparted within him the importance of work.

After his ordeal, his father turned to faith instead of medicine to survive and taught his children to turn away from resentment. Juro recalled as he was growing up, his father would flush medication and sleeping pills down the toilet and tell him he found more peace by going to the church sanctuary.

“Back then, life was so easy and so neat, and everybody knew everybody, especially when there were rotary phones,” he said.

Although his father’s war tales were often grisly and graphic, Juro said he learned lessons of resilience and conscientiousness that have helped him throughout his life, especially his father’s emphasis on the importance of faith within the family.

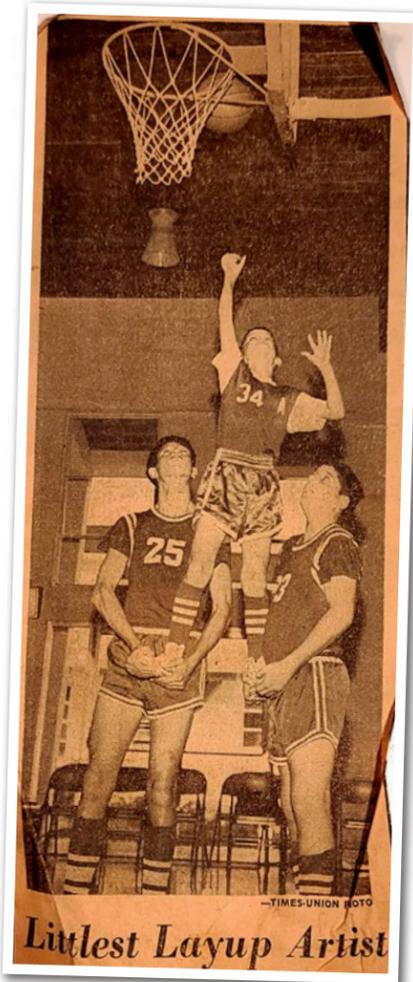
“Buddhism had been shoved down his throat in the war camps, but he was a staunch Roman Catholic. When we all went to college and we would get on the phone, he would say ‘what’s the Gospel about today?’

“He gave me damn good roots,” Juro continued. “He never, never was upset with the Japanese after what they did to him. I had friends who would refuse to go to an Asian restaurant because of what he went through. But he would say, ‘they have good food, they are good people. They need to make money like the rest of us. You just have to trust in God and your fellow man. That’s what you do.’”

Born in Jacksonville, Ken Juro, who still runs Rahaim’s, grew up on the cusp of Jacksonville’s historic districts and recalls going to the Rexall-type drugstore counter, which served breakfast and dinner, and shopping for baseball cards nearby. He also fondly remembers working and spending time in Rahaim’s Walls and Floors, his mother and relatives’ Ortega wallpaper and interior store.

“Ortega has always been quaint,” he said. “It was just so laid-back, like where we were raised in Spring Park. In Ortega, you had the rich people and they were rich and had a pool, but that didn’t matter. They used to have the little ice cream shops where they would sell ice cream cones for 25 or 35 cents, and you could get a double-dipped cone. They also had the little grocery stores, the Mom-and-Pop stores. Those can’t be replaced. I love Riverside and Ortega. A lot of my customers are from the Ortega Area.”

Juro and his younger brother, Greg, attended Assumption Catholic School and Bishop Kenny with the financial help of extended family. His father volunteered as a Bishop Kenny basketball coach and his mother, Marie, sold concessions at the games, which were bought with her own money. Juro graduated from high school in 1969.



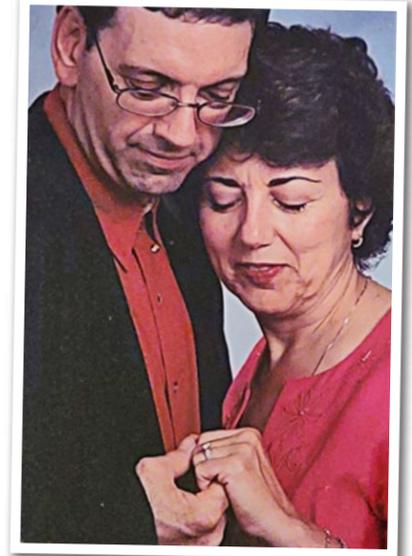
A newspaper clipping with Ken Juro on the right-hand side holding up the water boy for the Assumption basketball team.

“The operator would know who you were and who your family was. She would ask how your mom was,” he remembered.

Leo Juro’s father, Ken’s grandfather, emigrated from Yugoslavia to Montana, where he worked as a coal miner. Leo Juro shortened the family’s last name from Jurovich to Juro, and when Juro once asked his father why he did not change his name back to Jurovich, a task that would only cost \$25 at the time, his reply would be “Why should I spend money on something like that?”

But, his father also taught him generosity and the need to help his fellow man.

“Dad would help anybody,” he added. “If he saw people Downtown begging for money, he would give them money. He used to irk my mother to death. He would be parked on the side of the road, giving \$3 or \$4 dollars. He was just that good.”



Ken Juro and his wife, Carol.



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Canine lifelines for children

By Julie Kerns Garmendia Resident Community News

PROJECT CHANCE PROVIDES SERVICE DOGS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

When the hundred-pound golden retriever quietly pads onto campus and through the entrance of North Florida School of Special Education (NFSSE), everyday activities halt, replaced by excited student squeals and beaming teacher smiles. Most rush to greet, kneel to pet or hug the calm dog with the friendly eyes, tail constantly wagging.

ZenBowie's chill arrival with special education teacher Nikki Szwedzinski of Riverside, wearing his own paw print identification badge, is a game-changer for these students with development or intellectual differences. ZenBowie, 7, is the youngest therapist on staff and the only one whose employment contract guarantees a full salary in dog biscuits.

"ZenBowie's presence helps kids with challenges like autism, to relax and be able to walk

into the school and their classroom. During the school day, if a student feels overwhelmed or upset, sitting with a service dog, talking to it, petting or walking the dog outside, can ease feelings of anxiety and completely change the mood back to positive," Szwedzinski said. "Sometimes when a teacher or parent cannot reach a child, the dog can." Szwedzinski is a service and therapy dog handler and trainer. She is also the daughter of B.J. Szwedzinski, an expert dog trainer since 1976.

B.J. Szwedzinski nearly became a special education teacher herself, but life circumstances interrupted completion of her graduate degree. Instead she turned her deep rapport with dogs and her skills in canine obedience and behavioral training into an in-demand career. In 2008 she founded Project Chance (Canines Helping Anyone Needing Encouragement & Empowerment), fulfilling her goal to help the local community and support mental health. The non-profit organization trains service and therapy dogs, like ZenBowie, for Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia recipients.

Important differences distinguish service and therapy dogs. A service dog is an extensively trained working dog required by a person because of a disability. Service dogs learn specific tasks to help with functions of everyday life or work. As stated in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Titles II and III, service dogs qualify for federally mandated access to public places.

Service dogs act as the eyes and ears of a disabled person and may perform a variety of jobs including medical alert during an event such as a seizure or diabetic low blood



NFSSE students including Presley Harvey, right, with ZenBowie during PE class.



Project Chance Service Dogs Founder & Trainer B.J. Szwedzinski and her daughter, NFSSE teacher Nikki Szwedzinski with her Project Chance service dog ZenBowie and puppies-in-training.

sugar, protection during a medical emergency, tactile stimulation during panic attacks or PTSD episodes, physical stabilization or block from danger (prevent a child from wandering), alert to danger or to the deaf as to someone approaching from behind, retrieve personal items or medication, contact emergency services, open and close doors, plus many more assistance skills.

Therapy dogs are not trained to perform specific tasks for a disabled person, although they must also be obedient and have a calm temperament. They provide comfort, companionship and affection to people in therapeutic situations or institutions.

During a visit to the Arlington campus of NFSSE prior to its temporary closure due to the COVID-19 emergency, B.J., Nikki and ZenBowie introduced several puppies-in-training. Both women are dedicated to training service dogs for children who may not feel at ease or comfortable interacting at school or in public.

Nikki Szwedzinski enjoyed a high-profile career as a trainer in the electronics industry prior to moving home to Jacksonville for a drastic career change. She completed her master's degree to become a special education teacher of students with developmental or intellectual differences, autism, Down syndrome, mental health issues or traumatic brain injuries. She couldn't be happier with her decision.

"Something was missing from my life and career. As a Project Chance board member, watching my mom work since 2008, I saw her service dogs help these children achieve their maximum potential and independence. I wanted to teach and become part of that process," Szwedzinski said. As the NFSSE Project Search instructor, she teaches older students vocational education, resume-writing, career options, work and life skills, employability, life enrichment and independent living.

Pam and Corkey Harvey's daughters Peyton, 12, and Parker, 10, attend Riverside Presbyterian Day School while daughter Presley, 7, who is diagnosed with Down syndrome, attends NFSSE. Presley's consistent response to ZenBowie sums up the dog's beneficial impact on students, according to her grateful mother.

"Presley knows she's safe with ZenBowie and is not afraid of him. He instantly brings out her personality. She lights up, opens up, communicates and interacts with the dog and others," Pam Harvey said. "We love the school's programs; it's a gift that they allow service dogs on campus."

Melissa Leen Koch of Ortega is devoted to her nephew, William Leen, 8, who is diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. She became a board member for Project Chance, because of William and his service dog, Shiloh, 5. Currently busy with infant twin girls, Koch remains a passionate advocate for Project Chance and the life-changing importance of service dogs for autistic children like her nephew.

"When William was diagnosed with autism, our whole family got that diagnosis. It changed our lives. We've learned so much

about how we can help," she said. "Before Shiloh, William struggled, became overwhelmed and completely shut-down for just a family dinner. Now, if that happens, he spends quiet time with Shiloh, petting her and relaxing until he can rejoin us. He was able to be part of my wedding, because Shiloh was there. He attends third grade, with accommodations, at Seaside Charter School. He's visited Disney, Sea World, and can go shopping or ride on airplanes. Shiloh's presence gives him confidence so he can do things and effectively communicate with others." Koch is a corporate event planner completing her master's degree in non-profit management.

Roberta Cooley, a Jacksonville native and San Jose resident, first came to NFSSE in 2005 as the parent of a student, her now-adult son, David. A 30-year, multi-subject teacher, she is currently the NFSSE Garden Resource Teacher. Cooley guides students through the growing seasons, cultivating vegetables, herbs, and plants from seed in the adjacent Berry Good Farms. Students make and taste basic salads and soups from their produce. Cooley first learned about Project Chance because several students had service dogs.

"While not every child is a 'dog person,' when a fearful or hesitant child sees everyone else happily petting the dog, that overcomes fear and encourages more interaction and participation than might otherwise occur," she said. "The dogs give teachers a positive tool to use as a reward. 'If you finish this work, you may walk ZenBowie,' is strong motivation. Walking the dog outside also gives students exercise and breaks during the school day. It's amazing to see the dog sense exactly what a child needs at any given time, which instantly helps lessen or avoid frustration or irritation."

According to research from Autism Speaks, the largest autism advocacy organization in the U.S., service dogs soothe and calm sensory overload. They can quietly recognize, disrupt, or de-escalate anxiety or agitation through subtle tactile touch by leaning against or laying across a child's lap. They promote social skills, interaction, and eye contact and provide critical unconditional acceptance for children with differences. Most importantly, they protect those who lack personal safety awareness and may wander or run away.

Students ages 6 - 22, with intellectual and developmental differences, attend NFSSE to receive academic and therapeutic programs specifically tailored to individual students. Enrichment opportunities include art, music, extensive Berry Good Farm classes and activities, physical education, after-school clubs, summer camps, year-round activities and the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center. A transition program for ages 18-22 is offered and a post-graduate program for ages 22 -40 with community job site and vocational training is available.



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Episcopal schools become one family

By Jennifer Edwards
Resident Community News

A marriage of three beloved Jacksonville schools, long awaited, has finally taken place.

Students who attend St. Mark's Episcopal Day School and the Beaches Episcopal School are now part of the wider student body of Episcopal School of Jacksonville. The mergers have been planned since 2018.

As one school, students and families will have the opportunity to attend events on all three campuses, such as special events and summer camps, according to information released by Episcopal School of Jacksonville. Students, coaches, and teachers from each campus will share in activities and resources across the Four Pillars of Academics, Spiritual Life, Fine Arts and Athletics.

"The mergers advance the passion and commitment each campus has to quality education, which benefits our students and families, as well as the faculty and staff, and the greater Jacksonville community," according to information released by the school.

The main thing students will notice when they come back to their campuses on Aug. 11 is that names of their schools have changed. The main campus is now Episcopal School of Jacksonville, Munnerlyn Campus and continues to serve grades six through 12, St. Mark's is now Episcopal School of Jacksonville, St. Mark's Campus and will continue to serve age 1 through sixth grade, and the Beaches Episcopal School is now the Beaches Campus, serving pre-K through sixth grades.

For St. Mark's Episcopal Day School in Ortega, the merger means more resources, more support, and more enrichment for its students, with the same Christian nurturing

feel. Other than that, there won't be many physical changes, said Beville Anderson, dean of faculty for St. Mark's. The changes will instead be felt in improved resources and instructional support. Teachers from higher grade levels will be available for enrichment and the school will have access to more resources than a school of its size normally would.

"We are so excited about the merger, for many reasons," Anderson said. "We've had a great relationship with Episcopal School of Jacksonville for a long time now, many of our families have enjoyed having their families at both schools. Also, it's really their mission fits our mission very well. We are very excited. We feel like it is a wonderful gift to our families to be able to embrace and engage with Episcopal."

"It's a huge advantage in that we have access to resources that a school of our size would not have access to," she added.

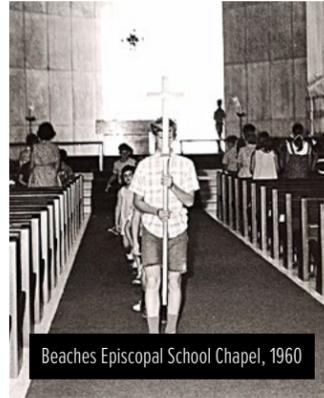
Beaches Episcopal School agreed to the merger in 2018. In June 2019, The Rev. Adam Greene, head of school for Episcopal School of Jacksonville and chairman of the Board of Trustees for St. Marks, issued a statement that Episcopal was entering into negotiations for a merger with St. Mark's. The negotiations were finalized in October after approval by both schools' board of trustees, the vestry of St. Mark's Episcopal Church, St. Mark's Episcopal Church Foundation Board of Trustees and the Right Rev. Samuel Johnson Howard, Bishop of Florida and the Episcopal Diocese of Florida.

The schools were founded around the same time and share similar missions.

Episcopal School was established in 1966 and its 56-acre campus includes a 28-acre estate once belonging to the Packer-Cummings



The first student body at Episcopal School of Jacksonville in 1970



Beaches Episcopal School Chapel, 1960



Sign announcing the opening of St. Mark's Episcopal School in 1970

family. Upon Mary Packer-Cummings death in 1912, she willed the land to St. John's Cathedral, which used it to open a boys' home in 1921. The home for needy children closed in 1953 as a result of financial issues. Some 10 years later, a planning committee began the process of establishing an Episcopalian high school, with the first class graduating in 1970. Current enrollment is 890 students in Grades 6-12.

St. Mark's Episcopal Day School was founded in 1970 as an outreach mission of the St. Mark's Episcopal Church. The school was originally created as a non-profit Christian school, located on the grounds of the church, with the purpose of the school to provide children with the finest quality education and citizenship training, given

by dedicated teachers within a strong Christian environment. The founders of the school were committed to this concept of providing a balanced educational program for the spiritual, intellectual, social and emotional growth of each child. The Rev. Robert Clingman was the rector of St. Mark's at the time of the school's founding. Its six-acre campus is near the St. Johns River.

"These two mergers are the first of their kind in recent Episcopal schools' history," said The Rev. Adam Greene, Episcopal's Head of School. "We look forward to honoring the histories and traditions of St. Mark's and Beaches Episcopal as we become one school, and we are grateful to both St. Paul's-by-the-Sea and St. Mark's churches for their stewardship over the past five decades."

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Isabella Adeeb
Adam Agonoy
Sarah Albee
Melanie Albrecht
Isabella Allegretti
Mason Allen
Rebecca Alteus
Dariana Alvarez Herrera
Cameron Anderson
Chadera Anderson
Noah Arcenas
Eliza Aretz
Evelyn Arriaga Arrieta
Alyssa Asselin
Kaitlynn Avery
Jose Aviles Gomez
Isabel Bachmann
John Back
Jeremy Barber
Samantha Barcia
Anasha Barnes
Harlan Baskin
Jasmine Bass
Valerie Bassett
Travis Beck
Mark Bellemare
Anna Beyer
Noland Blain
Daniel Blazek
Avery Borrero
Destinee Bouldin
Kayla Bowen
Sydney Boyd
Reece Braswell
Ethan Brehm
Lauren Brewer
Riley Bridenback
Tamia Brinkley
Grace Brodeen
Christina Brown
Hanna Bryan
Olivia Cafiero
Arlyn Camejo
Lily Cantor
Lacey Carlson
Qwyn Cephus
Kellyann Cemese
Armenay Chakour
Ashley Chatmon
Ethan Chene
Nur Chodry
Peter Chrusch
Charlotte Chufo

3 National Merit Finalists
2 National Arts Merit Finalists
6 National Gold Medal Scholastic Arts & Writing Scholarships

Jaslyn Clay
Jasper Colado
Madison Cole
Samantha Colon
Rhys Connor
Sydney Copeland
Olivia Cowart
Megan Craver Brooklyn
Crismaru Karis Cuccia
Emma Dahlstrom
Stephen D'Angelo
Kennedy Dartt
Deena Davis
Evette Davis
Travis Davis
Za'Nya Davis
Myka Davis-Westbrook
Janie Day

Hayden Derbyshire
Aison Desuyo
Brandon Diaz
Bridgett Dinkins
Glen Dizon
Ross Dobbins
Mahiza Do Nascimento Farias
Christopher DuClos
David Duong
Avni Dutta
Haley Dutton
Amani Dyson
Mandy Eastwood
Cory Echols
Bradley Edmonds
Delaney Eidson
Marla Eisman
Timothy Elder
Drew Ellison
Louis Falquez
Graciela Fernandez
Emma Flaire
Jerrica Flanagan
Emily Flint
Ned Franklin
Gillian Franz

98%
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will attend colleges,
universities &
conservatories

Miah Friedlander
Larry Fullwood, Jr.
Josephine Gagnon
Vivian Gagnon
Patrick Gallo
Armando Garcia
Ricardo Garcia
Morgan George
Jetti Godwin
Adrienne Gonzales
Jeremy Goodson
Shepherd Grable
Kaimyn Graham
Ta'Mara Green
Kaitlyn Griffin
Jaycie Grizzard
Coleman Grubbs
Laurel Guzman
Allye Hampson
Hazel Hannis
Timothy Hardisty
George Hartsfield, Jr.
Janelle Hasmath
Katherine Hasty
Mary Hayes
Caitlin Henry
Samantha Henzey
Amara Hilbert
Samantha Hill
Aloysius Hofaker
Chloe Hollinger
Shakenya Holloway
Anna Howse
Candido Huertas
Mason Hunn
Abigail Hunt
Leslie Infante
Chosen Iverson-Wilson
Aidan Jackman
Amara Jackson
Allison Jenkins
Maverick Johnson
Aidan Jones
Alexys Jorge

Kearstyn Junifer
Eva Karjono
Hailey Keagy
Catriona Keel
Sebastian Keller
Emily Kellogg
Breana Kinchen
Dominik Klemetsrud
Sabrina Koehler
Skyler Koryciak
Kyla Kramer
Hnine Taya Kyaw
Karlton Lampkin
Jada Landau
Nathan Leach
Daloune Leger
Josiah Leggett
Donaven Leuschen
Dylan Lewis
Gianni Libero
Isabella Liggero
Angel Lin
Jada Lockett
Caleb Lombardo
Anna Lopez
Elior Lubliner
Itamar Lubliner
Michelle Manunga
Grace Marsh
Lilianna Martinez
Kenyana McCray
Karen-June McEachern
Don'Neisha McFadden
Alexandra McFarlin
Aiden McFern
Olivia Meiller
Mia Melanson
Caroline Mendez Valencia
Cahlie Menton
Emily Mikus
Cassy Miller
Israel Miller
Jonas Miller
Sarah Mills
Gracie Mixon
Ana Monserrate-Jacobs
Brailyn Moore
Jeremiah Moorehead
Brandon Mosquera
Georgia Mouro
Miracle Murphy
Morgan Murwin
Eglis Mustelier
Conor Naccarato
Alexa Naparstek
Helena Neal
Abigail Nelson
Emily Nguyen
Hanh Nguyen Nguyen
John Niemczyk
Erynn Norez
Jamarree Oakes
Victoria Oatway
Cassidy Ortiz
Caroline Owen
Jessica Owen
John Owen
Samuel Pabon
Karol Palenik
Avery Peck
Aidan Pedersen
Thaiyana Pittman
Isabela Pizarro P'erez
Ma'Kya Platt
Emma Price
Faith Pringle
Adreanna Pulliam
Timia Raggins
Maggie Rhoden

Kennedy Richardson
Angianette Rivera
Elizabeth Robinson
Lyric Robinson
Jane Robinson
Jah'ree Rodgers
Jamaya Rodgers
Delaney Rose
Aviendha Rounds
Grace Royal
Alli Russell
Taylor Rutledge
Chase Schallen
Paige Scott
Stephanie Sergent
Rebecca Shaffer
Imari Sharras
Jared Shaw
Rebecca Shaw
Katlynn Sherman
Mackenzie Shuman
Mallorie Sievert
Za'marria Simpson
Miracle Singleton
Emma Sprague
Lily Stanton
Harrison Stephens
Jonas Steward
Kathleen Stinneford
Samuel Strickland
Chazmone't Stubbs
Sena Suganuma
Samuel Swiercek
Margaret Szczukowski
Hannah Taylor
Jolena Taylor

US Presidential Arts Merit Scholar
(1 of 20 in the Nation)

Barry Terry
Kenya Thompson
Tyler Thompson
Olivia Tiseo
Isabella Tolbert
Tiemy Touch
An Tran
Madison Tucker
Madison Tuten
Jack Tye
William Van Antwerp
Ethan Venzon
Brennan Villacampa
Rebecca Vitale
Mikayla Walker
Asia Walker-Guye
Maxwell Warren
Sylvia Watkins
Samuel Watson
Abigail Webber
Celeste Weems
Araya West
Jordan Whitsell
Jordan Williams
Kamajhia Williams
Daaryl Wilson
Lydia Wilson
Phaaryl Wilson
Kathryn Winn
Ian Wolff
Mia Woods
Shelby Woods
Alice Woodward
Kyle Worrell
Janae Yates
Emma Yeoman
Matthew Zabatta

Assumption celebrates graduating eighth graders and kindergarteners

Although the commencement ceremonies were different from years past due to COVID-19 and its social distancing requirements, Assumption Catholic School still took the opportunity to recognize its eighth-grade graduates on May 29.

Davis Johnson was lauded as valedictorian and Gordon Whitcomb took salutatorian honors during an early morning ceremony on the Bishop Kenny campus. Assumption Principal Maryann Jimenez addressed the crowd of parents, who were spaced six feet apart from each other on the field.

Assumption kindergarteners also enjoyed a graduation celebration. They came by the school to say goodbye to their teachers, get goody bags and have cap-and-gown photographs taken by their parents.



Assumption Catholic School Valedictorian Davis Johnson poses with school staff members who dropped by her home to surprise her.



Samuel Nguyen a graduate of Assumption Catholic's kindergarten has his photo taken by his mother.



Assumption Catholic School Salutatorian Gordon Whitcomb poses with school staff members who dropped by his home to surprise him.



The digital announcement board at Assumption Catholic School congratulates its kindergarten and eighth-grade graduates.



Recent Assumption Catholic kindergarten graduate Kendall Tripp



Eighth-grade graduates and their families practiced social distancing during commencement ceremonies on the Bishop Kenny High School campus May 29.

Children enjoy safe fun and games at San Jose Episcopal Camp

COVID-19 could not stop the fun and games for the children who enjoyed summer camp at the San Jose Episcopal Day School in May and June. All camp activities followed CDC recommendations. Smaller groups of children were allowed in each activity, which practiced social distancing, scheduled hand washing and sanitation procedures. Fellowship, adventure, and laughter filled the campus, said Eres McKee, a spokesperson for the camps.



Daniel Hodges enthusiastically enjoys art camp at San Jose Episcopal Day School.



Lora Ann Brannock plays hairdresser in San Jose Episcopal's American Girl Doll Camp.



Zooney Sparks creates a masterpiece at San Jose Episcopal's Day Camp.

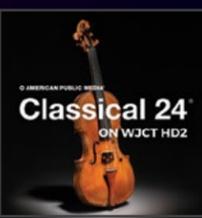


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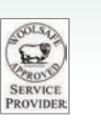


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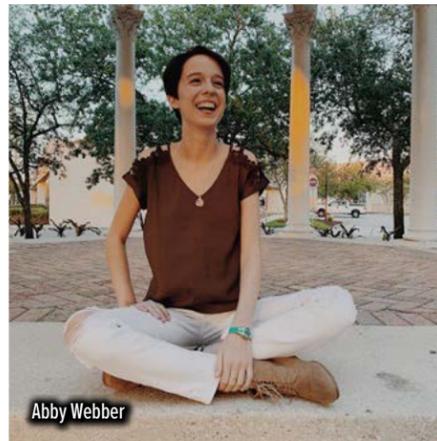
Southside Baptist gives away scholarship money

Nine lucky students will have an easier time paying for advanced education next year having received scholarships from San Marco's Southside Baptist Church in June.

Andrew Lopez, a graduate of Stanton College Preparatory School, received the Cecil B. Carroll Family Scholarship. The scholarship is awarded to qualified high school seniors from Duval, Nassau, Baker, Clay, and St. Johns Counties who have demonstrated strong academic performances and also display the true meaning of citizenship both in their schools and in their communities.

Ashlyn Ange, Hannah Jenkins, Jackson Lyles, Alexis Szczukowski, and Abby Webber were the beneficiaries of the Jared Bynum Scholarship Fund which provides financial assistance to members of Southside Baptist who demonstrate financial need or have participated in Southside's mentoring program. All students need to have completed high school in four years and be accepted to an accredited college or university. The scholarship was established after the death of Jared Bynum, who was killed during a biking accident in 2012. Following his death, his wife and his family established the Jared Bynum Scholarship Foundation to benefit Julia Landon College Preparatory students who had participated in the school's volunteer mentoring program for at-risk students. Primary funding for the scholarships is derived from the annual Mt. Acosta Classic race. Southside Baptist Church is a co-sponsor of the event and manages the scholarship fund.

Meanwhile, Ted Corby, Heather Johnson, Jackson Lyles, Darren Sides and Abby Webber, who are all either current or former members of Southside Baptist Church, were honored with Malcolm and Casile Knight Scholarships. Serving as pastor of Southside Baptist from 1950 to 1977, Dr. Malcolm B. Knight's ministry was characterized by building and missions and he had an interest in educating future church leaders. The Malcolm B. Knight Scholarship was established after his death in 1995 and his wife's name was added after her death in 2010.



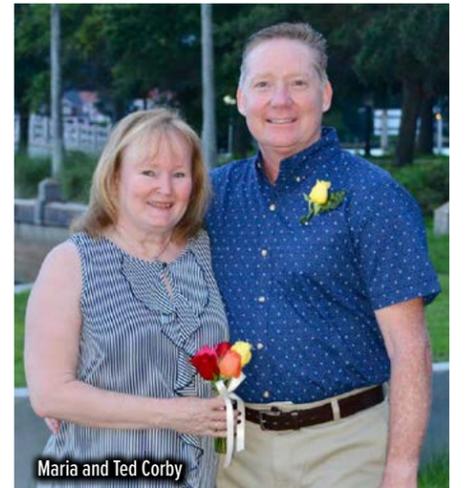
Abby Webber



Alexis Szczukowski



Heather and Bryon Johnson



Maria and Ted Corby



Darren Sides



Hannah Jenkins



Jackson Lyles



Andrew Lopez



Ashlyn Ange

Morning Star celebrates second graduating class



Front: Jodasea "Jojo" Peterson, Taylor Bailey, Meracle Smith. Middle row: Elio El Hajj, Luke Williams. Back row: Raphael Cenicerros, Lorenzo Hall, Simon Mankins, Daniel "Danny" Rogers



Graduates of the Class of 2020 at Morning Star School.

Nine very proud students in bright red caps and gowns received well-earned diplomas during an intimate commencement ceremony celebrating the 2020 class of Morning Star School, a Catholic educational facility that serves children from kindergarten through 12th grade with learning differences including intellectual and developmental challenges.

The in-person graduation event was a special time for the special school as it was only the second in the Morning Star's history. The graduation ceremony would normally have taken place at Bishop Snyder High

School, whose students often serve as mentors to the Morning Star students. However, due to the Coronavirus pandemic, it seemed prudent to offer Morning Star students a small celebratory gathering on their own campus May 21.

Seven of the students were in Morning Star's original high school class and began their studies as freshmen, even before their high school facility was finished, while two joined the class as sophomores. Elio El Hajj began his academic work at Morning Star in the first grade, and Jodasea "Jojo" Peterson, has been with the school since third grade.

Even with the pandemic, parents were treated to a host of graduation activities. Official cap and gown photos of the students were taken May 19. On May 20, Morning Star graduates joined Bishop Snyder High School seniors at a special evening baccalaureate Mass at St. Luke's Catholic Church. Faculty, graduates, and two family members were invited to join the small, unique commencement ceremony in front of Morning Star School May 21. CDC social distancing guidelines were followed during all events.

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Landon student achieves exceptional score on SAT

Sean Thompson, a 7th-grade student at Julia Landon College Preparatory and Leadership Development School, was recently honored for achieving an exceptional score on the SAT,



Sean Thompson

the same test taken by college bound high school students. Thompson, a Miramar resident, took the SAT, a test usually given to students above his grade level, as a participant in the Duke University Talent Identification Program (Duke TIP). Duke TIP is a nonprofit organization that recognizes academically talented students and provides advanced learning opportunities that foster their intellectual and social growth.

Each year, Duke TIP identifies a select group of students as academically gifted, based on their standardized test scores. Those students are invited to take the ACT or SAT, which can provide crucial insight into a gifted student's strengths and abilities. The highest scorers among these students are invited to a special recognition ceremony, typically hosted at one of more than two dozen colleges and universities. While the in-person ceremonies were postponed this year, Duke TIP celebrated these students' academic achievements by providing their families an at-home ceremony toolkit.

HAE student wins DAR essay contest

By envisioning what it might be like to travel on the Mayflower 400 years ago, Ava MacDowell, a fifth-grade student at Hendricks Avenue Elementary, won the American history essay contest sponsored by the Fort San Nicholas branch of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).



Ava MacDowell

MacDowell's winning essay, *Voyage of the Mayflower*, was written in celebration of the 400th anniversary of the landing of the Mayflower and the founding of Plymouth Colony. In it, she imagined what a passenger on the Mayflower might have packed and prepared for the voyage.

MacDowell's prizes included a medal, certificate, and a book by Flagler College professor and author Dr. Roger Smith.

The American history essay contest was open to students in grades 5 through 8 to encourage learning of significant historical people, places, dates, and events.

Fort San Nicholas DAR is one of approximately 3,000 chapters across the United States and in other countries. Last year, Fort San Nicholas celebrated its 70th anniversary. The chapter is named for the historic fort of the same name that stood on Atlantic Boulevard near Bishop Kenny High School. A road marker on the Atlantic Boulevard median placed in 1930 stands on that site.

Two from St. Johns Country Day earn three National Merit Scholarships

Valerie Victoria Cabrera and Lindsey N. Sabo, two seniors from St. Johns Country Day School, have been awarded National Merit Scholarships.

Determined through the National Merit® Scholarship Program, an academic competition for recognition and scholarships that began in 1955, Cabrera and Sabo were selected to receive college-sponsored merit scholarships by the institutions they plan to attend. Cabrera earned the National Merit University of Florida Scholarship and the Benacquisto Scholarship. Sabo earned the National Merit Vanderbilt University Scholarship.

"I'm so proud of Lindsey and Valerie. They are both such bright, dedicated, hardworking young women and everyone at St. Johns is looking forward to seeing their continued achievements in college



Valerie V. Cabrera



Lindsey Sabo

and beyond," said Acting Head of School Mary Virginia Fisher.

Of approximately 1.6 million high school students who enter the National Merit Scholarship competition each year, about 50,000 of the highest achieving students qualify for recognition in the National Merit®

Scholarship Program. Two-thirds (about 34,000 students) receive letters of commendation in recognition of their outstanding academic promise and the remaining 15,000 to 16,000 become finalists and are eligible for awards based on their abilities, skills, and accomplishments.

Wolfson wins state sportsmanship award

Samuel Wolfson School of Advanced Studies was one of 16 schools to take home the 2020 Fred E. Rozelle Sportsmanship Award the Florida High School Athletic Association announced June 4.

Recognizing member schools that promote sportsmanship both on and off the field, the award is given to the academic institutions whose athletic teams demonstrated exemplary sportsmanship during the 2019-2020 regular season as well as FHSAA State Series competition. This year, 14 high schools and two middle schools received the prestigious award. The award, presented annually since 1991, is named in honor of FHSAA Commissioner Emeritus Fred E. Rozelle.

Representing Class 4A, Wolfson was runner-up behind Cypress Creek (Wesley Chapel). The Wolfpack was the only school in Northeast Florida to receive the award.

Classification runner-ups receive \$500 and a commemorative plaque, with the classification winner taking home \$2,500 and a plaque.

"Everyone wants to win... at least all principals want to win. However, being told that your students and coaches are representing your school with sportsmanship, pride, and kindness is better than any win that could be recorded in the books. We are blessed at Wolfson with students that are doing both - winning and showing sportsmanship. My hat is off to these fine representatives of the Wolfpack," said Christopher Begley, principal of Wolfson High School.

Cindy Talley, Wolfson athletic director, echoed Begley's remarks. "I am extremely proud of our athletic program and how our players exhibit good sportsmanship on and off the field," she said.

Wolfson names 'Leaders of the Pack' scholarship winners



Kevin Torres



Christie Beaubrun



Sara Almohamed

Continuing a tradition started by the Wolfson Class of 1969, three seniors have been recognized with alumni scholarships. Named "Leaders of the Pack", these students have demonstrated academic success, leadership in extracurricular activities and personal character.

Kevin Torres, senior class salutatorian, received a scholarship from Class of 1989. He will attend University of North Florida and is interested in real estate entrepreneurship.

Sara Almohamed and Christie Beaubrun received scholarships from Class of 1970. Almohamed will attend University of North Florida and study Biology and Communications. Beaubrun will attend the University of Central Florida and study political science.

"We are deeply grateful that our alumni groups are investing in our graduating seniors. It shows the strength of our Wolfpack family past, present and future," says Wolfson Principal Chris Begley.

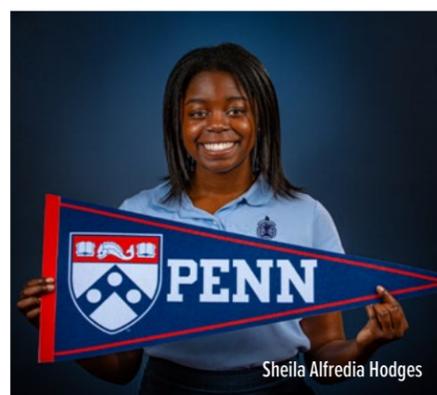
St. Johns honors top students at 2020 graduation

Jordan Sierra Sabo and Sheila Alfredia Hodges were honored as St. Johns Country Day School top students during the school's Class of 2020 graduation ceremony, which took place at the Thrasher-Horne Center on Friday, June 26, 2020.

In a vast slate of awards, in which St. Johns honored linguists, scientists, mathematicians, musicians, artists, athletes, and many more, several honors rose to the top, including the class valedictorian and the school's Edwin Paul Heinrich Award.

"The class valedictorian is determined by the highest high school grade point average (GPA) in the graduating class," said Acting Head of School and Head of Upper School Mary Virginia Fisher. This year's valedictorian was Jordan Sierra Sabo, daughter of Scott and Laura Sabo of Fleming Island. She plans to attend the University of Florida.

Named in honor of the School's founder, the Edwin Paul Heinrich Award is bestowed upon a senior who has been at the School for at least three years and during that time has shown themselves to be representative of the spirit Heinrich, demonstrating strong personal integrity, community responsibility, the development of the individual self, and a true spirit of excellence. "Additionally, the



Sheila Alfredia Hodges



Jordan Sierra Sabo

winner of the Heinrich Award has a touch of godliness, a talent for leadership, ingenuity in accommodation, a rapport with one's fellow man, and a good sense of humor," said Fisher. "It's a tall order, and such a person does not come often!" The winner of this year's Heinrich Award was Sheila Alfredia Hodges, daughter of Lawsikia Hodges of Orange Park.

In addition to winning the regional Rotary speech contest with her discussion of why Fred Rogers would be the ideal person to improve life today and help "connect the world," over her high school years Hodges has served as editor of the

school's yearbook, as a cheerleader, in Youth Leadership Jacksonville, and last year won the Clay Electric "Youth Tour to Washington" contest. She was accepted to Brown University, the University of North Carolina, University of Texas, Vanderbilt, Wake Forest, and many others, but has decided on the University of Pennsylvania.

"I'm so proud of both Jordan and Sheila. They are both such bright, dedicated young women who have both brought much to the St. Johns experience over their years here," said Fisher. "We all look forward to seeing their continued achievements in college and beyond."

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