

New murals reflect city's identity



Chris Clark

Inspired by the theme, "Lift Every Voice," Art Republic sponsored a series of new public art installations in August to reflect Jacksonville's diverse multicultural identity and history, which included 15 new murals by well-known artists from throughout the world including Chris Clark.

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Texas company takes over development of The District

By Lilla Ross

The Resident Community News

A young, feisty independent specialty finance company has taken over The District project on the Southbank.

Preston Hollow Capital of Dallas bought the Elements Development of Jacksonville LLC, including the 30 acres of land, from Peter Rummell and Michael Munz in early September. "They stepped into our shoes," Munz said.

Preston Hollow was founded in 2014, the same year Elements Development was formed. It has \$2.1 billion in assets, \$1.3 billion in equity capital, and has closed on \$2 billion in projects. It specializes in the municipal bond market and has worked on projects for schools, hospitals, and senior living. It prides itself on speed and flexibility.

"We put a lot of money, heart and soul into the District," Munz said. "They're a really good company. They like the master plan. Preston Hollow is committed to that concept. We made the decision that they're the right group to make sure the vision is realized. We are looking forward to how it all comes together."

The District is a 30-acre site formerly occupied by JEA's Southside Generating Station. Preston Hollow

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Residents from Jacksonville's historic districts and visitors alike flocked to San Marco's new "outdoor living room" on the plaza of San Marco Train Station Sept. 12 to celebrate the grand opening of Setlan Coffee Co., a new food truck located at 1435 Naldo Ave. Dotting the upward landscape were dozens of floating umbrellas, similar to the colorful parasols that rise above Yoel Moshe Solomon Street in downtown Jerusalem. A sample of "living art," the vibrant sunshades represent the artistic vision of Tiffany Ashurian, vice president of AshCo, Inc.

Neighborhood group gives up fight in church development lawsuit

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

Right Size San Marco, a grass roots neighborhood group comprised of more than 1,000 members, has decided to cry "uncle" in its appeal of the City of Jacksonville's decision to allow a good portion of the South Jacksonville Presbyterian Church campus near San Marco Square be rezoned so that a four-story, 49.5-foot tall apartment complex may be built.

In a letter sent to members of the neighborhood group Sept. 28, the group informed its supporters and donors of its decision to stop the appeal process. "Due to multiple threats of sanctions against us, as well as the judge's ruling, we are stopping the appeal process," wrote Right Size San Marco Founder Jon Livingston in an email to *The Resident*.

The group had appealed the City's zoning decision with the State of Florida Division of

Administrative Hearings (DOAH) and had been disappointed when on Aug. 10, Florida Administrative Judge Francine Ffolkes recommended in favor of the City of Jacksonville and its decision to approve the church's amended application to rezone its property. The new zoning legislation, which was approved Feb. 25 by the Jacksonville City Council, 17-1, allowed for Park Place San Marco, a 133-unit, four story, 49.5-foot tall residential complex to be built within the San Marco Overlay, a zoning ordinance that mandates buildings shall not exceed 35 feet within its boundaries.

Right Size San Marco's appeal against the city revolved around the question of whether the City Council's vote to approve a small-scale development amendment to the 2030 Comprehensive Plan was in compliance with state law. The 2030

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

Providing hope for the homeless



Sulzbacher President and CEO Cindy Funkhouser recognized longtime board member John Wilbanks as the "epitome of a servant leader," for his 13 years of dedicated service to the nonprofit that offers housing, healthcare, and hope to Jacksonville's homeless. The award came during Sulzbacher's virtual Traditions event, which celebrated its 25th anniversary and raised more than \$425,000 on Sept. 30.

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Publishers' Note

Brinlee Belle Poling

It is with grateful, happy hearts that we introduce our second grandchild, the beautiful Miss Brinlee Belle Poling, to this wonderful community. Miss Brinlee was born July 2, 2020 to our daughter, Tarryn, and her wonderful husband, Brandon, and she joins a very proud and delighted big brother, Bradford.



Brinlee's precious, new life has energized all of us with fresh excitement and renewed hope for a better, brighter future. We are thrilled that our family is growing, and that she has joined not only our family but can also be part of the extended *Resident* family that we so dearly love.

It is true that our children expand our hearts, and our grandchildren further show us how limitless love truly is. We share our joy with every reader, and hope that this small glimpse of new possibilities can better help us all adapt to both the changes and new challenges we all face due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Thanks to our caring community, together, we will survive this storm.

Although it may mean continuing to wear masks that make us look like surgeons, instituting handwashing as our most important new hobby, or being forced to temporarily forego warm Southern greetings that include hugs and kisses, we feel certain this temporary time of trial will only bring increased strength and unity to our community.

As we celebrate Miss Brinlee, our family's newest blessing, we look forward to a fresh focus on the future while finding joy in every moment along the way.

Although we are required to remain socially distant for now, please remember that the staff of *The Resident* is just an email or phone call away.

Thank you for continuing to share your inspiring stories, news, and ideas that reflect the spirit and heart of our neighborhoods. It is our privilege to ensure that *The Resident* continues to make certain those important and uplifting stories reach as many readers as possible through our newspapers each month. We appreciate your support, and we are especially grateful for our faithful advertisers.

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Millers Creek board settles legal dispute

LOCAL COMPANY HIRED TO COMPLETE DREDGING PROJECT

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

Millers Creek residents can breathe a sigh of relief that they are no longer going to encounter a costly legal battle against the Texas-based company they had contracted with to dredge the waterway alongside their homes.

On Sept. 22, the board of the Millers Creek Special Tax District resolved its dispute with DredgIt amicably, said board president John Rowland. Terms of the confidential settlement were not disclosed.

In its monthly meeting held at the Mudville Grille Sept. 21, the board voted to hire Brance Diversified, a local dredging company, to complete the dredging project the Texas-based company had started. Brance Diversified – known as BDI – is expected to remove 16,000 cubic yards of sediment from the creek bed by creating a 50-foot-wide, 5-foot-deep, wish-bone shaped channel through the creek, said Rowland. The cost of the second dredging project is \$45 per cubic yard. The Millers Creek Tax District expects to pay approximately \$720,000 to complete the project. BDI was one of the four companies that had originally bid on the work.

In March, employees from DredgIt cited the unknown nature of COVID-19 and walked off their job of removing sediment from Millers Creek. Unwilling to discuss the matter with the Millers Creek board, DredgIt subsequently hired Jacksonville-based attorney E. Lanny Russell of Smith, Hulsey & Busey to sue the Millers Creek Special Tax District board for standby fees of \$250 per hour and half of the demobilization cost of removing its dewatering equipment from a lot along the shore of the creek. The Millers Creek board countered by filing a lawsuit against DredgIt for attorneys' fees as well as the cost of finishing the project – at least \$336,000 – the contracted cost to finish the job, which was only 40% complete when DredgIt left the job site.

During an emergency meeting held Sept. 14, the board gave authority to Rowland to act on its behalf alongside attorney, H. Keith Thomerson of Chartwell Law, a litigation specialist it hired to shepherd it through the legal dispute. A seven-hour mediation session was held Sept. 15 and was followed by a week of negotiations before a settlement was finally reached on Sept. 22, said Rowland. "It's unfortunate. We would have rather gone forward with the first company we'd contracted with, but it didn't work out that way, and there were a bunch of other

circumstances involved," he said. "I think as long as we can get the project completed, we'll be okay. It's long overdue, and we'll all be happy when it's over. We're glad we did not get dragged into litigation because that had us going down a different path. We just want to complete the dredging project and live on Millers Creek."

In contracting with DredgIt in September 2019, the Millers Creek board had purchased a performance bond from Suretec Insurance Company at a cost of \$12,000. The bond was meant to ensure DredgIt would perform its work to completion and would pay any subcontractors it had hired to work on the creek. Suretec was involved as a third-party participant in the mediation efforts, said Michelle Wright, former president of the Millers Creek board, who joined Rowland in the mediation discussions.

In contracting with BDI, Millers Creek is not planning purchase a similar performance bond, Rowland said. "We won't be able to afford a bond on this one, but I work closely with Lance Young and BDI in business related with my own company," Rowland said. "With them being local, I'm pretty confident we're not going to have any issues. BDI is going to knock it out before we would be able to have the niceties done."

Because BDI is finishing up a dredging project in Ft. Lauderdale and will be returning to Jacksonville to begin a dredging job in Isle of Palms in a few weeks, it has agreed work on the Millers Creek project in between jobs, Rowland said. He estimated the dredge would be finished within 45 to 60 days.

Planning to move its equipment north to work on the Isle of Palms job anyway, BDI agreed to waive its mobilization fees when taking on the Millers Creek project, which would have been a very big cost, Rowland said. "We're going to be in between the job they just finished and the job they were going to do, so we fit right in," he explained.

BDI began mobilizing its equipment Sept. 30, said Wright. "It's ironic that is the exact same day DredgIt mobilized its equipment a year ago," she said.

Because the board can only afford to dredge a 5-foot-deep, 50-foot channel, most Millers Creek residents will have to contract with BDI independently to dredge the portion of the creek leading to the channel from their private docks, Rowland said.

During its meeting Sept. 21, Louis Joseph, a board member, questioned whether Millers Creek homeowners would be happy with having to pay extra to independently have the creek dredged to reach their docks. But even in contracting with DredgIt, it was never part of the plan for the dredge to include the portion of the creek immediately next to residents' docks and bulkheads, said Wright.

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Is there a first responder you know who has gone the extra mile during the Coronavirus pandemic and deserves some recognition? Perhaps you know a healthcare worker, fire fighter, or police officer who has put in extra time or gone the extra mile to make sure those in our community are healthy, safe, and secure. *The Resident* would like to join with you in celebrating our true neighborhood heroes by awarding one extra-special hero with a dinner for two at Bellwether Restaurant, a downtown eatery famous for its made-from-scratch sauces, house-cured meats, and farm-to-table ingredients. Also, in the cards is a feature article celebrating the winner in the November issue of *The Resident*.

To enter, please write up a nominating statement explaining why the person is a hero, and what they have done to make an impact on others and/or help those in need during the COVID-19 pandemic. We ask that you limit your statement to 500 words or less and send it to us by Wednesday, Oct. 21. Don't forget to include your contact information as well as that of your hometown hero. Statements can be emailed to editor@residentnews.net or to Marcia Hodgson at marcia@residentnews.net or sent to us by snail mail to Marcia Hodgson, Managing Editor, c/o The Resident Community News, 1650-302 Margaret Street #310, Jacksonville, FL 32204. Winners will be announced via *The Resident's* Instagram and Facebook pages as well as within the pages of the Riverside and San Marco editions of *The Resident*.



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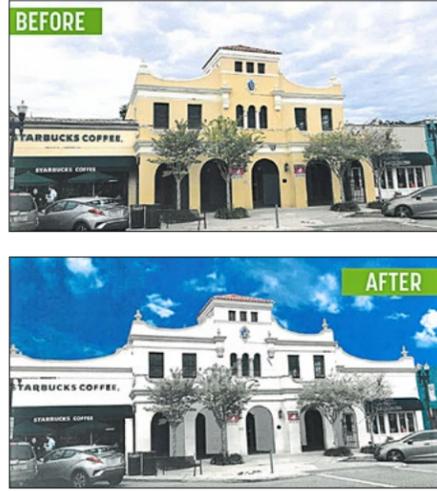


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Centerpiece of San Marco Square sports bright new look



Workmen prep the exterior walls of the Starbucks façade next to San Marco One as part of an extensive exterior renovation by Sleiman Enterprises.



San Marco One, before and after its exterior renovation

“It’s a privilege for us to be a part of this historic building’s story and Jacksonville’s storied history. We look forward to bringing an experience like no other to this location.”

— Toney Sleiman,
CEO of Sleiman Enterprises

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

One San Marco, as it is affectionately known to longtime San Marco residents, is sporting a whole new look.

The large Mediterranean Revival building with the prominent central tower located at 1974 San Marco Blvd., directly across from the Lions Fountain in Balis Park, as well as its two adjacent buildings, – 1972 San Marco Blvd., home to Beau Outfitters and 1972 San Marco Blvd., home to Starbucks – have had their exteriors fully renovated by commercial real estate owner and developer Sleiman Enterprises.

Sleiman, a Jacksonville-based company, purchased the collection of buildings in August 2019 with the intent of upgrading and securing a new tenet for the long-vacant historic two-story structure.

“We love it. It looks great. They really went above and beyond,” said Joe Carlucci, president

of the San Marco Merchants Association. “Not only did they redo the paint, but they redid the top architecture and used Bill Jaycox, a local architect to do it as well.”

The renovation included repainting the exterior to its original color, off white, and adding a “winged” feature to the Starbucks and Beau Outfitter’s buildings. The roof was replaced, also. To ensure its authenticity, Sleiman worked closely with the San Marco Preservation Society, residents of San Marco, and Bill Jaycox of JayCox Architects and Associates to ensure the building evoked its original integrity, said Samantha Ashcroft, a spokesperson for Sleiman Enterprises.

According to “Jacksonville’s Architectural Heritage, Landmarks for the Future,” by Wayne Wood, a local historian, the San Marco One building is the first commercial structure built on San Marco Square in 1926-27. It was designed by Marsh & Saxelbye. The Town Pump Drugs and Sundries was its first commercial tenant, and later became

The Town Pump restaurant and liquor store once Prohibition was repealed in 1933. According to Wood’s book, the façade of the building originally featured a Spanish tile roof and was twice as wide as it now appears, and “arcaded one-story wings on either side of the present building have been enclosed behind modern storefronts.”

When The Town Pump closed in 1983, the building was renovated as a restaurant and a new arcade was added to simulate the 1926 configuration,” according to Wood’s book.

Black metal gates that closed in the arcade have been removed and will not be replaced, said Ashcroft. “It is not in the plans to put those back up,” Ashcroft said. “We’ve gotten a lot of positive feedback with the widening of the sidewalk from the residents in the area and the historical association we have been working with. Historically they were not there,” she said, noting some changes might be made depending on the future tenant, but that

Sleiman intends to preserve the history of the building as well.

“It’s a privilege for us to be a part of this historic building’s story and Jacksonville’s storied history,” said Toney Sleiman, a resident of San Jose and CEO of Sleiman Enterprises. “We look forward to bringing an experience like no other to this location.”

On behalf of the merchants, Carlucci said everyone he knows of is pleased with the renovation results. “Starbucks and Beau Outfitters now pop. And they have those neat new awnings. It is now restored back to its true glory as the centerpiece of San Marco. It really brightens up that whole center stretch. Also, I’m glad they took the gates off. I like it open. It looks more inviting,” he said.

“They have done a really good job with the project,” he continued. “Now they are trying to find a tenant. If they do what they did with the aesthetics of the building with the new tenant, then we’re going to be in really good shape.”



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Neighborhood group gives up fight in church development lawsuit

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Comprehensive Plan overshadows the San Marco Overlay and the City Zoning Code. The site-specific amendment, which was added to the City's future land-use map, enabled developers Harbert Realty Services of Birmingham, Ala., and Corner Lot Development Group of San Marco, to use a calculated weighted-average height, to combine the 49.5-foot tall residential building and the 26-foot tall parking garage instead using the strict height measurement

of 35 feet for the apartment complex, as mandated by the San Marco Overlay. A calculated weighted-average height has never before been used in Jacksonville.

After Judge Ffolkes recommended in favor of the city, Right Size San Marco had planned to file a second appeal, a writ of certiorari, with the United States Court of Appeals to further review the case, but, after some consideration, decided to drop its second appeal.

In its letter to its supporters, Right Size San Marco explained its objective in filing the two appeals as well as its reasons for withdrawing from the legal battle. The text of the letter is as follows:

"As you know, for the past year, Right Size San Marco, along with you and over a thousand residents' help, has been fervently trying to preserve and protect the historical character and charm of San Marco.

"It has been a tough fight that has unfortunately fallen on deaf ears.

"Both the San Marco Preservation Society and Right Size San Marco tried to persuade our city council area representative. Instead of following her constituents and the Overlay, she helped push a last-second site-specific amendment, allowing the developer to bypass local zoning codes as well as the San Marco Overlay.

"We then filed two appeals. The first appeal to the Division of Administrative Hearings (DOAH) in Tallahassee recently ruled in favor of the City, allowing the city council to spot zone the church property in the Comprehensive Plan.

"The Comprehensive Plan is the land-use "constitution," dictating land use and controlling zoning for all Florida cities and counties. The Comprehensive plan was used to "end run" the quasi-judicial process and provide the City a safety net for its actions. Because the City adopted this strategy at the 11th hour, the City circumvented the usual zoning property route. The Overlay became irrelevant and useless, allowing the developer to receive precisely what they wanted.

"The verdict did not focus on motives, like why the City needed to use a site-specific amendment to bypass local zoning codes and the Overlay."

Because the Comprehensive Plan overrides all local zoning codes, the ruling in the first appeal trumps our second appeal's argument that the City is completely ignoring the Overlay and its height restrictions. Due to that and multiple threats of sanctions from the developer's attorney, we are withdrawing our second appeal.

In the end, the apartments 50-foot facade will become the largest building in San Marco, even higher than the proposed Publix next door.

This ruling has established a precedent. Developers are drooling over the new weighted-average height option and using the comp plan amendment to ignore Overlays and build taller buildings throughout Jacksonville. If you can do it for this property, why not other properties?

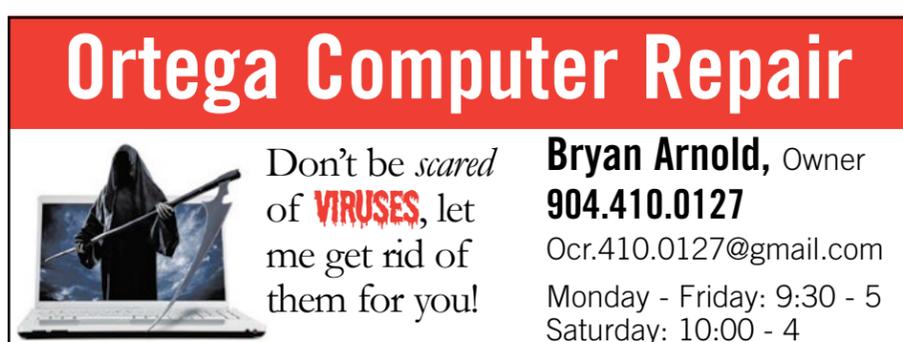
As you can imagine, we are deeply troubled that the city council would approve legislation so they could completely ignore code they helped create. In the same city council meetings, they applauded a city councilmember's efforts in creating a new Overlay yet approved a site-specific amendment to strike-down the San Marco Overlay. You can't make this stuff up.

This fight has been discouraging for so many, yet there are so many positives through it all. For one, surrounding residents for miles have a passion for preserving and protecting San Marco's unique character. This passion is rare when compared to many areas around Jacksonville. The community donated to the appeal, was present and vocal at town hall meetings, voiced their concerns at extremely long city council meetings, and even put signs up in their yards. To all of those that have supported us, thank you! We could not have done this without your support.

"We would also like to thank Council Member Matt Carlucci. As a long-time resident of this community, he understands how valuable and unique San Marco's character is. While other council members said they wouldn't do this in their district, yet voted along with our local representative, Mr. Carlucci was the only one that took a stand for the Overlay, even if it cost him future council votes. Thank you for your continued commitment to the area!"



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Texas company takes over development of The District

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gave Elements a \$20 million mortgage on the property last year.

Rummell and Munz planned to develop the site as a mix of residential, retail, office and hotel space, with a marina and waterfront park with a completion date in 2022.

But the \$600 million project was mired in complications, including environmental issues, and delays.

In 2018, the City Council approved a redevelopment agreement that would give Elements \$56 million in property tax rebates. The rebates, called Recaptured Enhanced Value or REV grants, are 75% of the property taxes and are dependent on how much of The District is built and added to the tax rolls.

The city committed to paying \$26.5 million to construct 3.5 acres of park space, a 1,900-foot Riverwalk extension with bulkhead, a boardwalk trail, 100 parking spaces and three road extensions.

Elements agreed to issue \$31 million in Community Development District bonds to finance the infrastructure, transfer property to the city and submit the permits for the horizontal construction. The deadline was Jan. 13 this year but the company asked for and received an extension until April 13.

When the coronavirus pandemic hit, Elements requested a suspension of performance deadlines, citing a "force majeure" provision.

Lori Boyer, CEO of the Downtown Investment Authority, put the deadline on hold until Sept. 1 and then gave Elements until Sept. 30 to issue the bonds.

On Sept. 4, Elements issued a press release announcing that Preston Hollow had assumed "all the rights and entitlements" to the project, including the land. Two weeks later, Preston Hollow said it would issue the bonds by the end of the year.

Preston Hollow has financed a similar project, Pinecrest, in Cleveland, Ohio.

The 58-acre Pinecrest has 87 luxury apartments, 400,000 square feet of retail and dining space, a dine-in movie theater, two Class A office buildings with 164,000 square feet of space, a 145-room AC Hotel by Marriott apartments and a 754-space parking deck. Retailers include Whole Foods, Urban Outfitters and Sephora.

While Preston Hollow provided the financing, the lead developer was Fairmount Properties, an company in Orange, Ohio, that specializes in large-scale, mixed use specialty districts.

Last year, Pinecrest received the gold designation — the top honor for mixed-use developments — in the New Developments category at the International Council of Shopping Centers Global Awards for North American Design and Development.

In comparison, The District is a small project, with 950 residences, 134,000 square feet of retail, a 147-room AC Marriott, 200,000 square feet of office space and a 125-slip marina. The city plans to use four acres on the riverfront to extend the Riverwalk, add greenspace and trails.

In a David vs. Goliath move, Preston Hollow captured the attention of the financial world last year when it sued the old, established asset manager Nuveen, owned by TIAA, for defamation, antitrust and business interference.

Preston Hollow accused Nuveen of organizing a boycott against the smaller company and issuing "a series of threatening and anticompetitive communications," including threatening to withhold business from Deutsche Bank if it did business with Preston Hollow.

This spring, Preston Hollow won the case when a Delaware judge ruled "Nuveen used threats and lies in a successful attempt to damage the plaintiff in its business relationships."



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Brooklyn renaissance transforms historic neighborhood

By Lilla Ross

Resident Community News

Architect Joe Cronk said nobody had to sell him on Brooklyn.

“We’re ex-Haskell guys. We grew up on Riverside. Brooklyn is a vital link between 5 Points and LaVilla and Downtown,” he explained.

And Cronk isn’t the only one who is “sold” on Brooklyn. In the last five years, the historic black neighborhood has undergone a renaissance that has transformed vacant lots and dilapidated buildings into high-rise residences and busy shopping centers.

And, the renaissance isn’t over. A hotel, a major office building and more apartments are in the works, along with road and infrastructure improvements that will add momentum redevelopment in neighboring LaVilla as well as Downtown.

Cronk’s contribution to the renaissance is the proposed Hub Brooklyn.

In its promotional material, Cronk Duch Architecture describes the concept for the Hub as “a place to meet friends for coffee and artisanal fare, a refuge from the office grind, a spot to refresh after walking the Emerald Trail, perhaps cocktails and al fresco before the evening’s big event.”

It was warmly received by the Downtown Development Review Board, which still must give its final approval.

The Hub will be two stories built on 0.2 of an acre, what Cronk described as a “lost lot” at Forest and Riverside. The firm’s design studio will take up part of the second floor, but the rest of the space will be devoted to food and beverage by their primary vendor Southern Grounds.



Rendering of The Hub

The food space will be divided into three pods for fast casual, including a coffee shop and a bar. Seating will be available inside and outside on the second-floor terrace or under cover on the first floor. Cronk hopes to have it completed by next fall.

Cronk envisions people stopping by for their morning coffee, coming back for lunch and lingering over a beer after work.

The site is well positioned to become a neighborhood gathering spot.

New FIS headquarters

Across Riverside Avenue, Fidelity National Information Services Inc., a Fortune 500 company, is building its new 12-story world headquarters. Retail space will be included in the adjacent eight-story garage, which will have parking available for the public.

FIS, which has offices down the street, bought the former Florida Blue parking lot in June for \$14 million. Florida Blue is building a new \$22.5 million garage on Forest Street.

Lori Boyer, CEO of the Downtown Investment Authority, said those projects add some important elements to the redevelopment of Brooklyn — people and parking.

FIS, which has 1,200 employees, is expected to add 500 more when the building is completed in 2022. And both FIS and Florida Blue are allowing public parking in their garages.

FIS will tower over the new residential district that has sprung up in the last five years.

“It was a collaborative effort with a lot of people,” Boyer said. “When 220 and the shopping center came together is what helped Brooklyn take off.”

In 2016, the Winston YMCA opened its new facilities that replaced the Yates YMCA.

The Brooklyn Riverside, a five-story modernistic complex of 310 units, emerged behind Brooklyn Station.

The \$55 million Vista Brooklyn project is quickly taking shape between 220 Riverside and Brooklyn Station. The 10-story building, developed by Bristol Development Group and NAI Hallmark, will have 308 units, 14,000-square-foot of ground-floor retail, a roof-top pool, dog park and bar.

Next door to Brooklyn Station, another shopping center, 12,500-square-foot retail Brooklyn Place, came along this year, featuring Chipotle and Bento Asian Kitchen.

A hotel on Oak Street

And, Brooklyn is getting its first hotel. A Residence Inn by Marriott is planned for 357 Oak St., west of Unity Plaza. The \$10.2 million project is a seven-story hotel with 136 rooms that will be built by Pinkerton & Law Construction of Orlando Inc. Baywood Hotels of Miami owns the site.

The DDRB approved the project design and the city has issued permits for demolition and construction of the hotel and pool. Pinkerton

220 Riverside

Boyer said the two projects that launched the redevelopment of Brooklyn were NAI Hallmark’s 220 Riverside and Regency Center’s Brooklyn Station shopping center, anchored by Fresh Market. 220 Riverside is a multi-use development with 294 apartments and 17,000 square feet of retail space fronted by Unity Plaza with an amphitheater and pond. The city contributed major road improvements to Riverside Avenue and Forest Street as well as a stormwater pond.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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& Law Construction of Orlando was issued building permits for the project in July.

Another hotel is rumored to be under consideration for the multi-use redevelopment of 1 Riverside, the former home of The Florida Times-Union.

Morris Communications of Augusta, Ga., has proposed a 200-room hotel, 300,000 square feet of office, 400-500 multifamily units, plus retail. But the company has yet to make a presentation to the DDRB.

McCoy's Creek

A much-anticipated aspect of that project is the "daylighting" of McCoy's Creek, which runs under the buildings. The creek is a key part of Groundwork Jacksonville's Emerald Trail project, a 30-mile network of trails that will encircle Downtown.

The part of the 10-year, \$31 million project that includes Brooklyn will involve restoring the creek from the river to Myrtle Street to improve water flow, promote a natural habitat for fish, plants and wildlife and create recreational options like kayak launches.

The city added the Gefen kayak launch several years ago. And now, the city is putting in a new public dock at Jackson Street near the YMCA, which is expected to be complete next year, and another at Post Street in 5 Points. The goal is to have public docks at regular intervals for recreational boaters who might want to come to the Arts Market or for dinner, Boyer said.

A new park dubbed the Artists' Walk, will be put in under the Fuller Warren Bridge from Riverside to Park street. Work on that project won't begin until the multi-use path being added to the bridge is complete sometime next year.

That path will give pedestrians and cyclists dedicated space over the busy

bridge and connect the Northbank and Southbank Riverwalks.

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority plans to build a Skyway station at Leila Street and Riverside. The \$800,000 project will link the Central Skyway Station at West Bay and Lee streets in LaVilla to the Northbank.

Park Street Road Diet

The DIA's Park Street Road Diet project will reduce Park Street from four to two lanes and add on-street parking, a bike lane, and landscaping. The goal is to slow down vehicular traffic and open the area to pedestrians and cyclists and connect with the Emerald Trail. Money is in the budget for construction but it is still in the design phase, which Boyer expects to be complete by the end of the year.

The road diet project will launch another phase of development with the focus on Park Street, Boyer said.

Trevato Development Group plans to renovate commercial buildings at 301 and 339 Park St. into a food hall, similar to Krog Street Market in Atlanta. It would have multiple tenants with artisanal foods, retail and dining.

"They're ready to go with some of it, but they don't want to get ahead of the road diet," Boyer said.

Redevelopment in that area is already underway with the Lofts at Brooklyn, by the Vestcor Companies. The five-story, 133 units will be affordable and workforce housing, along Spruce Street between Jackson and Stonewall streets.

Boyer said the Lofts are important because they are the first project on the other side of Park Street, and they are mixed income, which gives people who live in Brooklyn the option of staying.

Shotgun houses, modest dwellings

Brooklyn has been a black neighborhood since after the Civil War when Miles Price bought the Dell's Bluff plantation. He sold the southern half to Florida Union editor Edward M. Cheney and Boston developer John Murray Forbes, who developed the suburb of Riverside.

Price kept the northern half and renamed it Brooklyn. One of Brooklyn's streets is named for him.

The shotgun houses and other modest dwellings were built on streets named for for Confederate heroes — Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee, Stonewall Jackson — and occupied by former slaves and veterans of the Union Army known as Buffalo Soldiers, a name given to them by Native Americans.

A decrepit, boarded-up house at 328 Chelsea St., known as the Buffalo Soldier's Home, is the last remnant of that time and considered one of the most endangered historic buildings in Jacksonville.

Brooklyn was annexed by the City of Jacksonville in 1887.

The residential character began changing with the arrival of the Florida East Coast Railroad line in the late 19th century that cut through its eastern border.

The opening in 1921 of the Acosta Bridge, first to span the St. Johns River, brought a growth spurt to the area and new interest in developing it commercially. In the 1950s, Interstate 95, cut across its western border.

In the 1960s, desegregation gave blacks the opportunity to live anywhere, and they began to move out and commercial and industrial moved in.

Office buildings sprang up along the riverfront corridor. But without a strong neighborhood advocate like Riverside Avondale Preservation, the rest of Brooklyn fell into decline.

Building a restaurant district

In the 21st century, a new emphasis on downtown redevelopment pulled Brooklyn into the boundaries of Downtown Jacksonville. It now had an advocate — the DIA.

The DIA could offer incentives and Boyer said the Hub is the only Brooklyn project that hasn't received incentives — property tax rebates, loans, grants, property swaps, infrastructure.

Retail and restaurants quickly filled in the Fresh Market shopping center and 220 Riverside's retail space. Some of the early comers, like Corner Bakery Café at Brooklyn Station closed, and eventually was replaced by First Watch, a restaurant serving breakfast and lunch.

The retail space at 220 Riverside had a tougher ride. Sbraga & Co., Hobnob, and Brixx Wood Fired Pizza are restaurants that have come and gone. The vacant retail space was sold a year ago to Mid-America Apartments LP of Memphis, Tenn. Anejo Cocina Mexicana, a Ponte Vedra Beach restaurant that eyed expansion into Jacksonville, is the new tenant at 220.

The Unity Plaza amphitheater, which had been expected to be a community venue for concerts and venues, has fallen silent. But Boyer thinks it will get a second wind when the new apartments around it fill up and the transportation pieces fall into place.

The 2010 Census recorded about 40 residents in Brooklyn, but by 2023 the residential population will be well over 1,000 and the workforce about 8,000.

"You really need a targeted food and beverage district. It's really hard to get people to come from six blocks or six miles on a regular basis," Boyer said, "But if there's a cluster of things with thousands of people working and living around it, you create an atmosphere that is attractive."

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COVID sparks dramatic uptick in residential market

REAL ESTATE MAY LEAD THE WAY TO ECONOMIC RECOVERY

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

The residential real estate market in Jacksonville's historic neighborhoods is sizzling hot, and believe it or not, much of this is due to COVID-19.

Although there is no question that the Coronavirus pandemic has negatively impacted many businesses on the First Coast, the opposite has been true of the housing market, according to many local real estate professionals.

"The entire area has seen increased demand including the historic neighborhoods," said Jeff Chefan, CEO at Manormor Sotheby's International Realty. "Our business has increased over 39% year-to-date from our best year ever."

"My office has closed on more year-to-date than in all of last year, and there are still three months left in 2020," said Lorri Reynolds, vice president/managing broker/state instructor of the Avondale/Ortega office of Watson Realty Corp. REALTORS®.

"The economy is very strong. I'm selling more houses than I've ever sold," agreed Missy Cady-Kampmeyer, owner/broker of Cady Realty. "The buyers and sellers are solid. People are willing to work and make the transactions work. I feel like it is a very strong housing market."

Perfect storm of events

Contributing to the red-hot residential market may be a perfect storm of events. The Coronavirus shutdowns in March and early April caused many residents who were housebound in their homes to desire to move to a place with more space indoors and outdoors to better accommodate the needs of their isolated families. Also, historically low interest rates, which have given buyers more purchasing power, coupled with a lack of inventory have caused many realtors to enjoy multiple offers on their listings.

Another factor is a large influx of out-of-staters, particularly from California, the Midwest and the Northeast, who have discovered Northeast Florida, with its lower number of COVID-19 cases and death rate, as a great haven to shelter in place. "One reason people want to be here is that Florida has been less restrictive in its restaurant and bar policies," said Kimberly Smith, vice president /managing broker of San Marco/San Jose Watson Realty Corp. REALTORS®.

In fact, more than 1,000 people a day are heading to the Sunshine State with many recognizing Duval County as the place to be. Its low-density metropolitan area with arts, entertainment, and restaurants as well as beaches, waterways, parks, and breathable greenspace, is especially attractive during the pandemic, said Chefan, adding the region also seems safer because it has not encountered a direct hit from a hurricane since Hurricane Dora in the 1960s.

As they arrive, many out-of-staters are seeking maintenance-free condos near the ocean or river as secondary homes hoping to have an escape where they can work remotely if COVID-19 flares up again, he said.

"Jacksonville has become even more hot for relocations," said Heather Buckman, an owner/broker with Cowford Realty & Design. "In a time where social distancing is the practice, and we all are spending more time in our homes, Jacksonville has a lot to offer. We are the largest city in the contiguous United States, and we have a relatively low cost of living, making Jacksonville a great place to escape crowded urban settings. Also, many of us believe that the shift towards telecommuting will continue after COVID-19 fades. As people find they can work from anywhere, places like Jacksonville are even more desirable. Why stick to a crowded, expensive metropolitan area when you can move to Jacksonville with its lower cost of living, extra space, and all the amenities of a larger city?"

The Domino Effect

According to *Florida Realtors* magazine, the 30-year average mortgage rate dropped to 2.86% in September, down from its previous record-low Aug. 13 of 2.88%. It is now cheaper than the average adjustable-rate loan of 3.11%. And this inexpensive money coupled with a low inventory of homes has created a sellers' market, where 18% of homes in Jacksonville are selling over list price, said Buckman. "The sellers' market puts them at an advantage, and we are seeing a lot of multiple offer situations. If someone is looking to sell, they truly couldn't pick a better time."

Also good news is that the Federal Reserve plans to keep interest rates low until 2022 causing a stimulus that has affected every corner of the housing market, said Chefan.

"What we are finding is a lot of first-time buyers who would normally be renting can now come into the market. This creates a tremendous move-up buyer market. First-time buyers are shopping now when the interest rates are low, and the price point those families can get into is a lot higher. This creates a domino effect where it continues to move up the ladder. The

"We see some folks moving here from out of state. Most are moving for tax reasons and the fact they can get so much more for their money here as opposed to their home state."

— Sally Suslak,
Traditions Realty

"The world will never be the same. In our profession, the home has become a safe haven. People want to have a place they come home to, where they love to eat dinner. Because people are not going out as much, they are looking to have that yard space. Pool homes are a hot commodity. Pool homes are selling like you can't imagine."

— Missy Cady-Kampmeyer, Cady Realty

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\$200,000-\$400,000 range has gone up and the \$400,000-\$600,000 range has gone up because that initial first-time buyer is looking for a place under \$200,000, which has pushed up the values of the homes. The low interest rates enable all buyers to get into higher-priced houses. People who may have bought their homes for \$150,000 are now selling them for \$250,000 and taking the equity they have in that house and putting it into a new home," he said.

As Managing Broker of Berkshire Hathaway Florida Network Realty, Josh Cohen concurred. "In the current market climate, all price ranges are in high demand. We really haven't slowed down in any sector. The luxury space is busy down to the entry-level market. Many renters are transitioning into home ownership. With rates as low as they are, there really has never been a better time to enter the market. People are able to move up as well as they now qualify for more."

But a healthy real estate market is nothing new to the First Coast because inventory has been low for some time, said Jill Mero, realtor, broker/owner of Mero Realty. "The real estate market in Northeast Florida was booming before COVID-19 and has barely been affected by the pandemic as buyers are still buying in a market with less inventory," Mero said. "What has changed the most is the way we conduct our business. We are seeing more virtual showings and virtual open houses. We are careful to make sure we follow the CDC guidelines of social distancing, mask wearing, and sanitizing when showing property to buyers or when buyers enter our listings. Real estate technology has already progressed to the point where almost all of our transactions are handled electronically so we were kind of ahead of the game in that respect," she said.

Business adaptations

When the Coronavirus shutdown caused many businesses to close or drastically curtail their services, realtors were deemed "essential" and were able to continue working, while adapting their protocols and standards of practice to the new reality. "The realtor community has done a wonderful job of making sure the public is safe," said Ted Miller, president and broker of the Fred Miller Group. "We wear masks, socially distance, and have hand sanitizer at all showings. We also ensure that no one involved is ill within the household. We wipe down surfaces afterwards, and encourage only decision makers to attend the showings," he said, noting all clients are vetted to make sure only qualified buyers with an immediate need take in-person tours.

"The real estate industry has not missed a beat," agreed Cohen. "In fact, we have

CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

grown and evolved during the pandemic. We have become more familiar with new technology like virtual meeting platforms that enable new and efficient ways to communicate and service our clients.”

The demand for “comprehensive digital marketing,” so buyers can familiarize themselves with houses without setting foot on the property has been accelerated by the pandemic, said Miller. “Buying a home is still the largest single investment most people make, and to buy it off a video walk-thru, virtual tour and floor plans is pretty remarkable. Buyers can do it nowadays and know what they are getting.

“This is a big shift in buying behavior,” Miller continued. “Buyers know the homes very well before they go into them. We are using every piece of technology that’s available to help buyers and sellers. It’s expedited the process, especially for the buying public because they are looking at things they already know they are interested in,” he said, adding that since the pandemic began, he has sold more homes sight unseen than in his previous 22 years combined in the industry.

And the need for realtors to hold open houses has also waned due to the pandemic.

“There are fewer open houses available in the market due to COVID-19,” Miller said, adding that because new listings frequently encounter 10 to 20 showings per day and attract multiple offers on the first weekend, there is no need to hold an open house. “We’re selling things before we can get to it,” he said. “The biggest reason open houses have dwindled is the lack of inventory. Things are selling so fast. People don’t seem to mind because they are a little more cautious about where they go and the environments they are entering into.”

Lure of historic communities

And while all homes are selling fast all over Northeast Florida, Jacksonville’s historic neighborhoods are particularly attractive to buyers due to their proximity to downtown and the St. Johns River. Buyers love the small shops dotting the commercial areas, the physical beauty of the landscape, as well as streets that are bike friendly and walkable, and the sense of community that pervades the area, said Miller.

“People like being able to see or wave at your neighbor without having to sit in their living room. You know you are part of a community and not closed off because you have to keep your distance,” he said.

Other than St. Johns County, where parents might seek a “better” school district, the historic neighborhoods are the most requested area of Jacksonville due to their “walk score,” said Cady-Kampmeyer. “People want parks, biking, and outdoor activities. They want outdoor bars and wine tastings with bistros and rooftops. Hands down, the walk-score ability of the historic district is the No. 1 calling card in the community. People also want the tight community feel, the little boutiques, the little shops. Essentially, they want Mayberry. They want to know their neighbors,” she said.

Another reason that buyers are flocking to the historic neighborhoods during the time of COVID-19, is that people are not as interested in communal amenities such as community swimming pools, clubhouses, or waterslides, said Reynolds. With Coronavirus lurking they would rather have a more spacious yard with a pool. “Neighborhoods like Ortega, Avondale and Riverside are true neighborhoods,” she said. “They don’t have HOAs.”

Chefan agreed. “What we are finding is that people are looking to be more spread out. They are looking for that lifestyle with more space, more outdoor living area. They are looking for more space within their property and a further proximity to their neighbors. They want a larger footprint to maneuver, one that is near parks or

greenspace,” he said. Homes in the historic neighborhoods are highly desirable, especially those that front community treasures such as Whatley Park in San Marco or Boone Park in Avondale. Greenspace is a big boon for the neighborhood, he said.

And that also accounts for an uptick of sales of riverfront homes along the St. Johns, which had previously slowed down after Hurricanes Matthew and Irma. “We see more sales on the riverfront and a lot of it has to do with lifestyle and people’s ability to spend time in a boat. They want something they can add to their day-to-day lives without being cooped up indoors and isolated,” he said.

“Homes that are the most popular right now have extra outdoor space or – better yet – a pool! We are all spending more time at home, and that will not change at least for the foreseeable future. For that reason, homes that have an extra-large lot, or some kind of outdoor feature are extra popular!” explained Buckman.

In fact, multiple offers are coming in on homes at all price points, even at the higher end, but the sweet spot is the \$250,000 price range and below, with some homes having as many as 20 showings per day. “As a listing agent, you will not be growing old with that listing,” said Reynolds, adding she attributes the buying surge to a loss of confidence in the stock market by some investors. “They are turning their wealth into real estate because real estate is more tangible,” she said.

Broker and owner, Sally Suslak of Traditions Realty said \$350,000 is the average price of homes in the historic neighborhoods, because there are small and large homes within the community. “Homes below this price point are ‘flying off the shelf’ as long as they are priced right,” she said. “Every buyer has a different idea of how much space they want and need. Some people are nesters and others love the wide-open spaces.”

“We’re selling everything \$600,000 and under very, very fast, and the mansions are going, too,” added Cady-Kampmeyer.

In fact, real estate may be what spearheads the local economy back to recovery. “When the world experiences a life change, real estate is always involved. Realtors were considered essential in the beginning when the Coronavirus was announced in March, but more than just being essential, I believe real estate is going to lead the local economy back into recovery because every life change a person has can mean a change of location. Everyone needs a place to live,” said Reynolds.

Re-examining life due to COVID-19

One thing is for certain, the Coronavirus and the subsequent shutdown caused many residents to reexamine their lives and lifestyles. For some, there is a desire to move closer to children and grandchildren. For others, being cooped up with a spouse has become grounds for marital discord. Others may see a need to downsize after being furloughed, losing a job, or deciding to retire early.

“Interest rates are at a historic low. When they started hitting sub-3% numbers, buyers really started taking notice. Between low interest rates and home never being more important than it is today, most buyers want to find something they love today – not tomorrow. We’re also seeing a lot of refinancing going on. Lenders are extremely busy and many are backed up due to the surge of refinancing.”

— Heather Buckman, Cowford Realty & Design

workplaces, and family headquarters. Having more square footage and larger outdoor areas helps to make people feel like they can fit it all in without feeling cramped.”

“There’s no question homes with a true home office or guest suite are in high demand,” said Cohen. “Many people are still working from home and these newly desired features offer a better work-at-home experience.”

Also, during the shutdown, when residents found they had nothing to do by stare at the four walls, many also decided to renovate their homes in an attempt to make them more liveable. “Once things began to loosen up, many decided to put their homes on the market because they looked great,” Reynolds said. “They’ve been saying, ‘the house looks good, interest rates are low, but the house doesn’t really suit us anymore, let’s sell it,’” she said.

Cady-Kampmeyer agreed. “Nobody is on the fence anymore. Because the seller market is so strong, if people were thinking about it before, they are selling and for more than what they expected. Then they are buying a house for less of a payment because of the interest rates,” she said.

A strong finish to 2020

In years past, as the holidays near, the market often slows down after Halloween, but because this is 2020 that may not be the case. “We may have fewer buyers looking, but they will be more serious,” Reynolds said. “No one thinks that COVID-19 is going away anytime soon. If you are going to have to stay in a house and spend more time in it, you might as well make the best of it.”

Suslak concurred. “This market will only stay as strong as it is now as long as the interest rates are low, and the COVID-19 virus is still a serious threat to their well-being,” she said. “Who knows how long that will be?”



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LETTERS to the EDITOR

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School board member: Vote yes on half-penny sales tax

It has been my honor to serve as your school board member for the past eight years. In that time, we have accomplished great things together for students and for Jacksonville.

Our graduation rate is at an all-time high of 86.5%. We've transformed Wolfson High School to a Leadership Academy, keeping more students in their neighborhood for high school. In partnership with the city, we planted a tree at every school throughout Duval County and brought environmental education alongside the plantings. We've partnered with local businesses to grow career education, and with local colleges and universities to expand opportunities for students to earn college credit before they leave high school. Last year, 77% of students completed courses that make them eligible for college credit and a reduction of post-secondary debt.

Still, there is one thing left for us to do before I am term limited in November: Pass the referendum that will allow Duval County Public Schools to make your school buildings worthy of the students who learn there, the adults who teach there and the neighborhoods that surround your schools. And we need your "yes" vote to do it.

Updated buildings are good for students. The half-penny sales tax will allow us to bring our buildings, the oldest in the state, up to modern standards for safety, technology, and the learning needs of today.

Light, air quality, and acoustics impact human performance, regardless of whether those humans are children learning to read or adults teaching them. Whatever your work, imagine doing it in a building that is poorly lit, loud, hot, leaking, and often distracted with maintenance staff trying to repair outdated systems because there is no money to replace them.

Yet, for too many Duval children, the school environment is just that. Windowless spaces, inefficient or inoperable air conditioning, and classrooms where external noise is a constant distraction are the norm in many schools – many of which are mobile units disconnected from the school building. These environments are challenging for anyone trying to do their best work.

Updated buildings are good for neighborhoods. Better school buildings improve property values. When you drive past a building with cracked windows, moldy siding, and crumbling pavement, it's discouraging to residents. Why invest in their properties when public schools are unable to invest in their schools? Imagine bright, inviting, well-designed buildings with a new wing instead of a sea of mobile units. Research shows that new buildings communicate pride and that translates to higher property values and a sense of community.

Updated buildings are good for the economy. The monthly cost for the average family will be \$6 per month while the investment in communities will be millions. The needed planning, architecture, design, construction, logistics, accounting, furnishing, and technology enhancement will create jobs and grow key industries for the next 15 years. The current workforce will have advancement and the highly skilled graduates from DCPS will have entry points to the world of work and desirable careers to apply their college degrees. The students who grow up here will have more reasons to stay here. All those gainfully employed residents will have money to spend in small businesses, buying homes, and enjoying recreation. As the economy grows, we all win.

Almost every major community in Florida has made this choice for its children and its future. It is time for Duval to do the same. Learn more at www.ourduvalschools.org

Ashley Smith Juarez

Duval County School Board, District 3



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Constitution Week, a time to reflect on liberty, freedom

The United States Constitution stands as a testament to the tenacity of Americans throughout history to maintain their liberties and freedoms to ensure those inalienable rights to every American. The Daughters of the American Revolution initiated the tradition of celebrating the Constitution in 1955. DAR petitioned Congress to set aside the week of September 17-23 each year to observe Constitution Week. After adoption by Congress, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the resolution into law on August 2, 1956.

The DAR Regents Council of Northeast Florida urged citizens to reflect on the United States Constitution during September's 65th observation with the following three goals: to encourage the study of the historical events that led to the framing of the Constitution in September 1787; to remind the public that the Constitution is the basis of America's great heritage and the foundation for its way of life; and to emphasize U. S. citizens' responsibility to protect, defend and preserve the U. S. Constitution.

Constitution Week is an opportune time to learn more about this important document and celebrate the greatest vision of human freedom in history, the U.S. Constitution.

Toni M. Weatherford, President, Regents Council of Northeast Florida

Carol Elefterion, Regent, Amelia Island Chapter, NSDAR

Brenda Onur, Regent, Fort San Nicholas Chapter, NSDAR

Maria Miller, Regent, Jacksonville Chapter, NSDAR

Linda Brenner, Regent, Jean Ribault Chapter, NSDAR

Beth Briand, Regent, Kan Yuk sa Chapter, NSDAR

Deborah Brannon, Regent, Maria Jefferson Chapter, NSDAR

Judith Delmar, Regent, Ponte Vedra Chapter, NSDAR

Terreca Hurley, Regent, Sophia Fleming Chapter, NSDAR

Resident appreciates *The Resident's* ultra-local coverage

I enjoyed the "Cool Jobs" profile on Managing Editor Marcia Hodgson in the August issue of the *Resident Community News*. Her positive attitude toward grassroots reporting and coverage — and supported by the business community — is critical for any newspaper to survive and thrive, especially a monthly publication like *The Resident*.

As one who spent 43 years in the newspaper business in Florida, I can appreciate the ultra-local coverage Marcia provides on social events, business news, schools and organizations — such as the report in the September issue on the San Jose Car & Truck Show's record \$10,000 fundraiser for the Bishop John J. Snyder Community at San Jose Apartments for seniors. As Marcia would say, "That's cool!"

Joe DeSalvo

President, San Jose Apartments Board of Directors

Reader tips her 'hat' to *The Resident*

It is long past time that I write to you and express my appreciation for the *Resident Community News*. I live in the Lakewood area and receive the San Jose-San Marco-St. Nicholas edition. It is wonderful to be able to keep informed of what is happening and of upcoming events.

I have lived in Jacksonville since 1963 and am so proud of our city. Since I no longer subscribe to our local newspaper, the *Resident* is often my sole source of community information. So much of our new today is politically motivated and is, sadly, "slanted." *The Resident* seems to have found ways of reporting events focusing on residents sharing opportunities to be involved in projects – all without any bias. How refreshing!

I have a friend who now lives in Baton Rouge, Louisiana but was born and reared in Jacksonville and lived here for part of her adult life. I often send *The Resident* to her as she still takes great pride in the schools she attended and in San Marco. Another friend is a former principal of Hendricks Avenue Elementary School. She lives near the inter-coastal waterway. Whenever there is news of the school and its students, I copy and give those articles to her. Your news is reaching far beyond this area.

I am president of The Lakewood Community (TLC), and we deliver baskets to welcome new neighbors. Always included in the basket are the latest issues of *The Resident* and *Historic Life*.

Let me note that I like seeing the articles in "our" issue about other Jacksonville communities – Avondale, Riverside, etc.

A "tip of the hat," a toast, all the accolades possible to you and your staff for the wonderful work you are doing!!!

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QUESTION: Do you have faith in the United States Post Office to deliver and execute mail-in ballots for the upcoming presidential election? Regardless of your political position, do you think they can handle the task? Do you have trouble with your mail? Have you noticed that packages or mail are not delivered in the proper timeframe?

By Marcia Hodgson, Resident Community News



No. I'm personally not having any issue with my mail. When it comes to mail-in ballots and the election in general, I really have a hard time answering that. I can see how political interests could cause it to be influenced one way or the other, but I'm not sure that I believe that it will be. Absentee ballots, voting in person, all of that is still out there, and there are plenty of reasonable ways to vote without having to do a mail-in ballot. The virus situation seems to be, maybe, reaching the waning stages so maybe that will help the situation as well. It's a tough question. I'm not sure whether I will do a mail-in ballot. I am going to vote. Usually I vote in person, but I did do absentee a couple of years when I was in college, but most of the time I vote in person. — RONNIE POOLE, SAN MARCO



Yes, I would say I do have faith in the Post Office. I don't see why not. The Post Office has been around for a long time and will be around a long time after I'm gone so I have faith in it. I've had no trouble with delays through the U.S. Postal Service, but through Amazon I have had some delays. As far as I know, we have had no problems with the Postal Service. — JONAH VROGINDEWEY, SAN MARCO



Oh gosh, my mind is going blank. I've not been having any trouble with my mail. I can see how people might think it could be a problem, but personally I don't think it will be. They handle so many pieces of mail on a daily basis, I have faith that the U.S. Post Office can get it done well. Whether it is the most efficient thing possible, I can't say whether I know one way or the other. — ERIN WEINBURG, SAN MARCO



I never have trouble with my own mail. I don't think there will be a problem with the ballots unless it's a timely problem but within a week or two weeks it should all be there. I think socially distancing is no reason not to vote in person. If you are wearing a mask and standing six feet away, there is no reason not to go to the voting place and vote. There is nothing going on right now that would preclude you from going and voting in a voting booth, and that's the only thing that we do in person these days. Everything else is online, and it's online, not through the mail. — ELLEN COTTRILL, SAN MARCO



I don't think we should do mail-in voting. I think as long as we can, we should vote in person. It depends on what is going on in the world, but normally I have no problems or delays with my mail. This makes me question why we are trying to push this if obviously everybody is okay with being around each other, distancing and wearing a mask and living life that way. — LIBI HALPERIN, SAN MARCO



I don't really have an opinion. I guess there is a little bit of concern. I probably won't do a mail-in ballot because it might not go to the right place. As far as my own mail goes, no typically, but occasionally there is a mix-up. Sometimes, we have delayed packages, or we get our neighbor's mail. Fortunately, we know our neighbors so we can walk it right over to them. — NATE LABAGH, SAN MARCO



I believe the Post Office can do it, but I believe it leaves a lot of questions that can potentially be asked after the fact – not because of the Post Office but because of how many hands its going to go through. I think the Post Office is doing just fine, but I think the process and the idea of it is a little scary. I've had no trouble personally with my mail. — CHRISSEY HENRY, SAN MARCO



I do. I think they can handle the task if nobody gets in their way and nobody impedes the normal flow of mail. I think they can handle it. I personally have not had any trouble with my mail. — DAVID ENGDAHL, SAN MARCO



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Community Foundation grants support to vulnerable elders

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida made six grants totaling \$100,000 to support Aging Adults in the North Florida community in September. It also made a \$7,800 grant to JASMYN from the Esther Pope Memorial Endowment for persons diagnosed with or affected by HIV/AIDS.

The funds to support the seniors come from the Foundation's Aging Adults Field of Interest, which is provided by the I.R. Bowen Fund, the Grace H. Osbourne Endowment, the Grady C. and Rebecca T. Parker Endowment as well as the Giving Forward Community Fund.

"The Aging Adults grants we made this year span the breadth of services seniors need, with a special focus on improving the quality of life for under-served and under-resourced seniors in Duval, Clay, Baker, St. John's and Nassau Counties," said Emmanuel Fortune, program director for The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. "This population is particularly vulnerable right now, and we are delighted to be able to provide resources to make a difference in their lives."

Receiving a \$20,000 grant to implement its As We Gather program was 2nd Mile Ministries. The funds will help address social isolation for senior residents in the Brentwood neighborhood, and activities include half-day socialization gatherings for seniors in a socially distanced manner as well as inter-generational service projects with youth and monthly virtual storytelling sessions to capture community history and wisdom.



Emmanuel Fortune

The Alzheimer's Association of Central and Northeast Florida received a \$7,151 grant to improve the knowledge and skills of caregivers supporting clients with Alzheimer's in rural Putnam County.

Beaches Habitat received \$20,000 to reduce unsafe living conditions for low-income seniors at the beach. Beaches Habitat, in partnership with BEAM, will identify minor repairs and home modifications and use the expertise of its construction manager and building staff as well as community expertise to make improvements.

Also receiving a \$20,000 grant with a focus on Alzheimer's disease was the Mayo Clinic, which is working to increase awareness

and knowledge of pre-screening, diagnosis, and treatment services for Alzheimer's and related dementias within the African American community. Based on best practice research, Mayo plans to train members of the clergy within the AME church, and in partnership with AARP will conduct educational workshops so clergy can sustainably continue workshops going forward.

The Way Free Medical Clinic, Inc., also received a \$20,000 grant to educate seniors who are aging out of The Way Clinic's free services and to assist in enrolling them into Medicare. In addition, The Way plans to expand case management services beyond benefits enrollment to provide supplemental payments for seniors who cannot afford prescriptions and other needs that their Medicare does not cover.

Jewish Family Community Services received a \$10,000 to provide reliable and affordable transportation to seniors via the GoGo Grandparent ride-share service. This new ride-share program will provide age appropriate and culturally friendly rides.

The grant to JASMYN was to develop a referral network with mental health clinics to provide mental health screening and short-term therapy to marginalized youth who are LGBTQ+ and HIV+. Based on survey data from JASMYN over the past five years, 100% of clients surveyed had experienced poverty and 76% experienced sexual assault with few resources available to help young people with HIV manage or heal from trauma.

Feeding Northeast Florida receives support from Publix



Chris Norberg, community relations manager, Publix, with Chimerre Nieves, senior manager of retail partnerships, Feeding Northeast Florida

Feeding Northeast Florida, Northeast Florida's largest nonprofit food bank, received a \$125,000 donation from Publix Super Markets Charities to support its ongoing work to meet the increased need for food assistance in the region due to the effects of the pandemic.

Feeding Northeast Florida serves the more than 257,000 people facing food insecurity in their eight-county operating area. With the rising numbers of newly unemployed neighbors, Feeding Northeast Florida has seen a greatly increased demand for food. The \$125,000 donation from Publix Charities to Feeding Northeast Florida is one of several donations made this year to help provide food and other essential support to residents hit hard by the pandemic.

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Local residents capture Teacher of the Year honors



Ashley Halil



Brandi Benga



Mathew Schemer

Ashley Halil, Mathew Schmer, and Brandi Benga, all three residents from the San Marco area, were named Teachers of the Year at their respective public schools in September.

Halil, a longtime San Marco resident, was voted Teacher of the Year for Hendricks Avenue Elementary School (HAE). She began teaching at HAE five years ago as a part-time media specialist dividing her time also between RV Brown and Lone Star Elementary Schools. While at RV Brown, Halil organized Hendrick's parents to help supply and organize the library at that school. For the past two years, Halil has taught fifth grade fulltime at Hendricks.

"Some people dread going to work each day, but I can honestly say I am excited every time I walk into my classroom or log into my virtual classroom—which I am doing this year," said Halil. "I am teaching all of the fifth grade Duval Homeroom students at Hendricks."

Halil says the best part of teaching is "knowing that for one year, [she] gets to share in [the students] joy, cheer them on, watch them grow, and shower them with love." For her, "sending them to middle school" is the worst part of her job, she said. "I would keep them with me year after year if I could."

Before teaching, Halil didn't expect to be as protective of her students as their parents, but she says, "the urge to protect them and see them succeed is tremendous." The Hendrick's Avenue Parents' Association described Halil as "a dynamic, caring, and incredibly effective teacher," and her colleague Jessica Duva said she is "a beautiful example of what a teacher should be."

Halil and her husband, Don, have lived in San Marco for 23 years. All four of their children have attended Hendricks Avenue Elementary.

Mathew Schemer

Schemer, a teacher at Julia Landon College Preparatory School, has been named the school's 2020-2021 Teacher of the Year. "I'm extremely grateful and honored to have been selected. Landon has some of the most dedicated and hardworking teachers I've ever worked with, so it's truly an honor to be recognized among them," he said.

Born and raised in San Jose, Schemer is a 2004 graduate of Douglas Anderson School of the Arts. A seventh-grade civics teacher,

he has taught at Landon for 10 years, and this is the first time he has been selected as Teacher of the Year.

Being a public school educator runs in his family, Schemer said, adding his grandfather, Mitchell Schemer, was a teacher/coach at Kirby Smith Middle School and Andrew Jackson High School for 30 years while his mother, Dale Schemer, was an ESE teacher and preschool director. "I'm very proud to carry on my family's tradition of education in the Jacksonville area," he said.

"I was lucky enough to start my teaching career at Landon in 2010 as an ESE teacher and transitioned into civics the following year. Since then I have had the privilege of educating students on the importance of understanding their rights and duties as citizens and preparing them to become proactive members of society."

In a Facebook posting by the school, dozens of Landon Middle School parents congratulated him on the recognition and mentioned what a popular teacher he is with their children. "He makes learning fun," said one parent. "My son is proud to be a citizen of Schemerica," said another. "My kids love to study for his class," wrote a third. The comments: "He's a memorable teacher," and "This is well deserved," seemed comprise most of the kudos left on the page by appreciative parents.

Brandi Benga

At Samuel Wolfson School for Advanced Studies, Benga, a former history teacher, has been named Teacher of the Year. Benga, who has worked at Wolfson for 14 years, currently serves as IB Coordinator. She also teaches Gifted and Inquiry Skills. In the past she has taught AP World History.

"Ms. Benga is the perfect example of what a teacher should be," said Christopher Begley, principal of Wolfson High. "She not only teaches in the classroom, but she sponsors the Interact Club (partnered with the Deerwood Country Club), she is the sophomore class sponsor, she assistant coaches the Wolfpack swim team, and she is the IB Coordinator and AP Magnet Lead. Ms. Benga goes far above and beyond the call of duty. She loves her students, and they love her. She deserves this recognition. We are proud to call her our Teacher of the Year."

Three from historic districts win Cultural Council Arts Awards



Basma Alawee



Mark Krancer



Mr. Al Pete



Shawanna Brooks and Roosevelt Watson III



Rebecca Levy



Ulysses Owens Jr.



VyStarCreditUnion



Word Revolt Gallery

Three with ties to the city's historic districts were among the nine winners of the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville's 44th Annual Arts Awards, which was held virtually on Sept. 2. The live-streamed event brought together more than 150 viewers on Facebook Live and other platforms.

Mark Krancer, a familiar face in the Riverside area, won the Art of Giving Award, while Avondale resident Ulysses Owens, Jr., was awarded Robert Arleigh White Advocacy honors and Rebecca Levy of Avondale received the Art Educator award.

Other winners included Shawana Brooks & Roosevelt Watson III, Helen Lane Founders Award; Basma Alawee, Community

Impact Award; Word Revolt Gallery, Peoples' Choice Award; Mr. Al Pete, Art Innovator Award; and VyStar Credit Union, Corporate Business Award.

The virtual event was hosted by Tenikka Hughes, anchor of Action News Jax, and Al Emerick, founder of ValueMapping, and provided a combination of awards, presentations, and performances by violinist Phillip Pan and spoken words by Don't Miss a Beat student Christian Scott.

Despite technical difficulties the night of the event, the Cultural Council has since released a complete version of the evening on-line without issues at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BYV3kWzLfwM>.

Greenscape receives \$10,000 donation from TD Bank

TD Bank has awarded Greenscape of Jacksonville one of five \$10,000 donations to environmental organizations within their national footprint. TD Bank employees all across Florida voted on the nominees and Greenscape was the winner. The grant is in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Earth Day this past April.

As a longtime advocate for tree planting and as an example of corporate stewardship, TD Bank has sponsored numerous local tree plantings in partnership with Greenscape. These plantings typically take place in public parks located in underserved areas of the community and are executed by their employees.

"We look forward each year to join the enthusiastic TD Bank volunteers for their day of service in Jacksonville. They don't mind getting their hands dirty and enjoy the camaraderie, while improving outdoor spaces for many citizens" said Anna Dooley, executive director Greenscape. "We are very thankful that TD Bank employees



Greenscape Executive Director Anna Dooley receives a check for \$10,000 from Cindy Stover of TD Bank.

voted for us to receive the donation so we can continue to green our city."

Greenscape is celebrating 45 years as the not-for-profit tree organization in Jacksonville. The organization continues to fulfill its mission to plant, protect and promote trees and is credited with over 350,000 trees added to the local tree canopy.



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Wolf and Tonic brings nostalgia to San Marco Square

A new tenant has arrived in San Marco Square and locals are already discovering the throwback approach and hail to the barber shops of yesteryear. At Wolf and Tonic, owner Jonathan Rodriguez has worked hard to deliver the atmosphere of a bygone era with tonics, always changing essential oils and aromas, unique barber chairs complete with steer horns and animal hides; an inviting ambiance reminiscent of the Prohibition-era.

Take a trip back in time with classics from the 1920s Jazz Age, the big bands of the 1930s and up to the Motown era-music enhances the charm, while professionals get busy with straight razors, steamed towels, shampoos and fine aromatics during the various treatments offered.

Wolf and Tonic opened its doors during the early months of the pandemic, yet they are poised and ready to help local men get the grooming experience they deserve now that things are opening back up at a steady clip. Taking a break from



Jonathan Rodriguez

the day to day means no distractions, no children's haircuts and no interruptions while relaxing in the shop.

"This area has been good to me, they're patronizing [the shop] and appreciating the ambiance we've created," said Rodriguez, who takes immense pride in his new barber shop, while opening safely for locals to enjoy their visit with peace of mind, PPE included.

Wolf and Tonic is located at 1958 San Marco Blvd. in the San Marco Square, they can be reached at 954-881-3260, check them out on Instagram at @jvrbbr or on Facebook at Wolf+Tonic Barbershop.

Juicebox opens in San Marco, offers extensive options for optimal health

For brothers Firas and Hassan Kabak, their business model was born out of necessity, it was not the entrepreneurial spirit alone that lit their fire for juicing and healthful foods. After their father was diagnosed with Stage 3 cancer in his kidneys, liver, and lungs, the news had them springing into action for solutions when he refused chemotherapy and options were running out.

With the juicing and cleansing routines prescribed for their father, the options seemed bleak and flavors ran their course quickly. They simply didn't taste good. The idea was to design food offerings that alleviate ailments - from inflammation to sickness - and boost healthy cell production. Making tasty combinations of smoothies and juices, alongside Acai bowls and homemade granolas, the brothers created a menu, one that helped to bolster a solid business venture. Out of the scary cancer diagnosis, Juicebox was born, and their father was on his way to remission as well.

The family opened the first location on the Southside at 4479 Deerwood Lake Pkwy, Unit 4, then a second location was brought to fruition at 1510 King Street in Riverside, and now, a third location is open for business at 1962 San Marco Blvd. in San Marco Square.



Hassan Kabak

"This community has been great, the support and love is unmeasurable, the locals and our regulars have helped us through this tough time," said Hassan Kabak, who manages the San Marco location currently. "The day we opened, we had a steady stream of more than 100 visitors," he shared. Kabak is excited for the future in San Marco and appreciates the loyal following of the brand.

Juicebox can be found online at www.juiceboxjax.com, on Instagram at @juicebox_jax, you can call the San Marco store at 904-527-8242, online ordering is also available for convenience at all three locations.

Sock give-away is 'step in the right direction'

Family Promise of Jacksonville received 2,750 pairs of Bombas socks valued at \$33,000, sharing 1,750 pairs with four partner agencies. Bombas Socks had donated 50,000 pairs of socks to 25 Family Promise affiliates across the nation as part of its policy to donate a pair for every sock purchased by the public.



Jennifer Smith

"We want the socks to be out in the community, on people's feet and not sitting in a storeroom," said Beth Mixson, development director for Family Promise of Jacksonville and an Ortega resident. "When your feet are warm and dry, you feel better."

Family Promise of Jacksonville collaborates with 17 local congregations, multiple social service organizations, and 900 volunteers to help families experiencing homelessness return to stability. It provides intensive case management focusing on affordable housing, gainful employment, financial literacy, medical needs, childcare, and education. It offers three programs focusing on diversion, prevention, and shelter.

Taking part in the giveaway were the nonprofits Catholic Charities, Changing Homelessness, The Giving Closet Project, and the United Community Outreach Ministry (UCOM) Jacksonville. At the giveaway, the agencies, which serve a cross section of the community - homeless, elderly, students, job seekers and families - shared their plans for the socks.

Catholic Charities provided socks to participants in its workforce development

program as well as others it serves. The workforce development program is a free program to help low-income, unemployed, or underemployed adults find work. The help it provides comes through its job readiness training program, interview coaching, and job referrals.

Changing Homelessness, a Riverside-based nonprofit with the mission to prevent and end homelessness, included one pair of socks in each of the 500 hygiene packets it distributed during the annual Point In Time Count. Formed in 1974 by a group of concerned social service agencies and religious leaders, Changing Homelessness manages \$7 million in local, state, and federal funds. The nonprofit works by advocating, convening, and educating the community through the Northeast Florida Continuum of Care and initiatives like Built for Zero.

The Giving Closet Project, a Southside-based organization which provides clothing, hygiene products, and school supplies to K-12 students facing situational poverty, provided socks to Duval County Public School students. Through its unique referral process, it allows educators, counselors,



Sara Mitchell

and social workers to utilize its services throughout the school year.

Located in San Marco, UCOM Jacksonville provided the socks to elderly clients in its Meals on Wheels program as well as to individuals experiencing homelessness. The nonprofit works to stabilize families in crisis by providing food to the hungry through its food pantry, emergency services to prevent homelessness, scholarship programs and job referrals to raise the earning potential of its clients.

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Skinner buries hole-in-one in City Rescue Mission golf tourney



Wade Skinner at Sawgrass

It may have taken 12 years, but a hole-in-one was finally accomplished during the City Rescue Missions Annual Champions Challenge Golf Tournament, and it came on the signature 17th hole at Sawgrass TPC course no less.

During the City Rescue Mission's 12th Annual Champion's Challenge Golf Tournament Aug. 31, golfer Wade Skinner of Skinner Moving & Storage made a hole-in-one on the iconic Hole 17 sponsored by the Nimnicht Family of Dealerships at TPC Sawgrass. This is Skinner's first year participating in the annual golf tournament. As a result of his hole-in-one, Skinner has won a 2020 Chevrolet Blazer provided by the Nimnicht Family of Dealerships.

"I am thrilled that for the first time in 12 years, we have a hole-in-one winner," says Penny Kievet, executive director of City Rescue Mission. "Congratulations Wade and thank you so much to Nimnicht Family of Dealerships for supporting City Rescue Mission in transforming the lives of the homeless, needy and addicted in Jacksonville."

This year's CRM golf tournament chair Nelson Bruton echoed Kievet's excitement, "What a great year to have a hole-in-one winner. The committee and golfers are all so excited!"

New teen center opens for leaders of tomorrow

MALIVAI WASHINGTON YOUTH FOUNDATION UNVEILS CLUB 904

Despite setbacks to many projects during the COVID-19 pandemic, the MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation persevered and made significant strides in building its new teen center, Club 904. The nonprofit unveiled the new center with a ribbon cutting and tour, Sept. 9, as Mayor Lenny Curry joined Founder MaliVai Washington and several Jacksonville City Council members, in addition to a handful of high school students who currently attend the program.

Just shy of three years ago, the MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation announced its vision for the center. Since that time, over \$5.5 million was raised by the community as the MWYF partnered with the City of Jacksonville to construct the 14,000-square-foot facility. Club 904 features a high school lounge and study hall, teaching kitchen, game, theatre, and music rooms and general classrooms. The center will offer services including academic assistance, college preparation, job and leadership training, a variety of life skills and elective courses and social activities.



City leaders joined students and other dignitaries, to include Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry and founder MaliVai Washington, as they cut the ribbon on the new youth center.

At the ribbon cutting, Curry delivered remarks alongside other leaders and praised the efforts of the Foundation as well as those of students and leaders of tomorrow.

"I want every child in every zip code to have the tools and resources they need to be successful. This Foundation played a critical role – a VERY critical role in that mission," said Curry. "The work you're doing is important, it's important to the children, to the families, the neighborhood and the entire city of Jacksonville."

The Foundation will be able to triple the number of students served by utilizing this new space. The club will also provide a safe,

supportive space for teens to spend their afterschool hours and summer break, as they grow into future leaders and successful members of the community. By working to educate, enlighten and create a safe haven, the goal is to break the cycle of poverty in communities where these children and teens are growing up.

The MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation is an after-school and summer youth development program in Jacksonville's Urban Core that promotes academic achievement and positive life skills. To discover more information about MWYF, please visit <https://www.malwashington.com>.

Medical, legal, and business leaders to co-chair Freed to Run 4.0

Having raised more than \$1 million in its first three years, Jacksonville Area Legal Aid's largest fundraiser, Freed to Run, is going the distance toward its \$2.25 million goal under the leadership of four newly appointed event co-chairs: Dr. Nayla Osman-Chahlavi, pediatrician at Village Pediatrics; Dr. Ali Chahlavi, neurosurgeon at St. Vincent's Medical Center; Richard Fannin, financial advisor with Wells Fargo advisors; and retired Fourth Judicial Circuit Judge Hugh Carithers.

The group will work to attract more sponsors and relay teams, with the Chahlavis focusing on the health-care community, Fannin on the business community, and Carithers on the legal community and related industries.

Nemours has already kicked off the 2020 fundraising with a \$10,000 lead gift.

The Freed to Run 4.0 road event will be held November 16-21. All proceeds from the Capitol-to-Coast six-marathon relay series will go toward an endowment for the Northeast Florida Medical Legal Partnership (NFMLP) and will be matched at 125% by Baptist Health.

The NFMLP provides civil legal aid to pediatric patients and their families to ensure they have access to safe housing, health care, educational accommodations, and other services critical to the children's health. Nemours and Baptist Health/Wolfson Children's Hospital are among the NFMLP partner institutions.



Judge Hugh Carithers



Dr. Ali Chahlavi and Dr. Nayla Osman-Chahlavi



Richard Fannin

The Freed to Run 4.0 co-chairs explained their reasons for joining the cause:

"During our 12 years in Jacksonville, we have been active members of our community, having co-chaired St. Vincent's Red Rose Ball in 2013 and St. Vincent's Mary Award in 2017. We watched our friend Mike Freed, along with multiple local teams, run and collect money for JALA, helping families obtain free legal aid in our city. As physicians and concerned citizens, we strongly support organizations that provide any type of aid to underserved families. We are honored to be serving as health care chairs this year."

For information about sponsoring Freed to Run, registering a team or donating, visit <https://www.jaxlegallaid.org/freedtorun/>.



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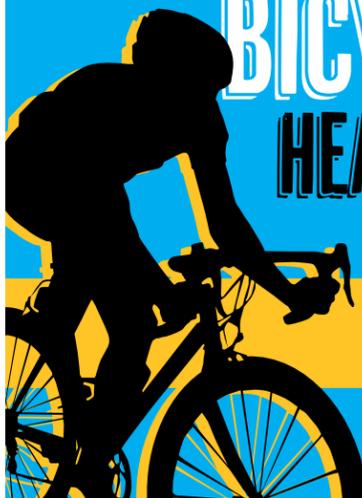
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Jewish Federation awards grants

The Jewish Federation & Foundation of Northeast Florida awarded grants through a grant-making fund of the Jewish Community Foundation to seven Northeast Florida Jewish nonprofits on Sept. 4.

The grants will provide funding for the following initiatives: Elementary Jewish afterschool programming in St. Johns County public schools through the GROW program in partnership with Chabad of St. Johns; Tradition boxes and Shabbat kits to Jewish people in need through Jewish Family and Community Services; innovating the Mitzvah Program at Martin J. Gottlieb Day School to be pandemic friendly and able to do more for those in need throughout Northeast Florida; new technology for River Garden Senior Services that will help residents engage and feel more connected to the community; post Bar/Bat Mitzvah teen programming geared towards Social Justice and current events through the Temple, Congregation Ahavath Chesed; supporting professional development and education through the Jewish Community Alliance's Educator Support Network for early education teachers to continue their training and better themselves for the entire community; and increasing teen programming and combatting antisemitism in public



Charlie DuBow, marketing & communications intern; Kellie Ann Kelleher Smith, director of the Jewish Foundation; Sanford Zimmerman, facilitator, Grant Review Committee; Steve Neihaus, Rebecca Cooper, Rachel Davis, Brandon Sugg, Sarah Jacobs, Emma Pulley, Rachel Mizrahi Morgenthal and Gigi Ackerman

schools throughout Northeast Florida with the Jewish Student Union/JSU.

The RFP was open to all Jewish nonprofit organizations in Northeast Florida. A grant review committee comprised of nine individuals discussed via Zoom calls the intent and purpose of the Jewish Grant Fund and engaged in thoughtful dialogue around maximizing dollars to create impact and drive change.

"We are honored to be working in a community with so many incredible Jewish nonprofit organizations and to be a part of awarding grants to engage and strengthen our Jewish Community," said Sanford Zimmerman, past president of the Jewish Federation and grant review committee facilitator.

Cathedral dean celebrates birthday with grocery parade

The Very Rev. Kate Moorehead, dean of St. John's Episcopal Cathedral, had a birthday and folks who are food insecure in Jacksonville reaped the benefit.

To celebrate their priest's special day, parishioners from the Cathedral organized a "grocery drop-off birthday parade" around the church campus.

"Who knew it would be so fun to turn 50," said Moorehead, who couldn't think of a better way to celebrate than to help her community.

More than 100 bags of groceries were dropped off that evening, and the bags were taken to the food pantry at St. Mary's Episcopal Church in Springfield the next day. In addition, parishioners contributed gifts of cash and grocery cards. St. Mary's rector, Rev. Beth Tjoflat, joined in the fun at the Cathedral to celebrate Moorehead's special day and thank the donors.



The Very Rev. Kate Moorehead with Christine Whitney and Claude Moulton

Throughout the pandemic, the number of people visiting St. Mary's food pantry has doubled with many coming for help for the first time ever. Help from the pantry is so necessary to the community that it has been designated by the United Way as a resource for the area.

Republican women honor 9/11 heroes

The Republican Women's Club of Duval Federated hosted a special tribute to the heroes of 9/11 during its monthly luncheon at the Southbank Hotel Sept. 11. Honored guests at the festivities were several members of the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department including Division Fire Chief Keith Powers, Lt. Alex Kimmel, Engineer Seth Blackstone, Firefighter Samuel Meek and Steve Riska, division chief of operations. During the luncheon, a special "missing man" table was set aside to honor the firefighters and first responders who lost their lives during the tragedy at the Twin Towers in New York City. From left: Keith Powers, Lt. Alex Kimmel, Sharon Light,



president of the Republican Women's Club of Duval Federated, Samuel Meek and Steve Riska. Also pictured is the "missing man" table and an explanation of its significance. Photo courtesy of Sandy McCorvey

Six from San Marco selected for Leadership Jax



Alvin Kennedy Jr. Diana Donovan Pat Gillum Sams Laura Lambert Tim Page Joe Carlucci

Six from the San Marco area were selected from among 54 community leaders to participate in Leadership Jacksonville's flagship program in the class of 2021.

Leadership Jacksonville educates, connects, and inspires diverse leaders to build and strengthen their communities. Since the first class in 1976-77, over 2200 alumni have completed the yearlong program exploring dynamics of urban society, analyzing major areas of community concern, facilitating development of leadership capacity and promoting a network of community trustees.

"Outstanding community leaders are always needed, and this new class will build on the knowledge and talents that they

bring to make a positive difference in our community" said Leadership Jacksonville Chief Executive Officer Jill Langford Dame.

Representing the class from the San Marco Area are Diana Donovan, consultant; Joe Carlucci, co-owner, The Carlucci Insurance Agency LLC; Alvin Kennedy Jr., co-founder/business manager, Total Foot Care & Wellness Clinic; Laura Lambert, director, State Attorney's Office; Tim Page, vice president and comptroller, RS&H, Inc.; and Pat Gillum Sams, manager, emerging workforce strategies, JEA.

To learn more about Leadership Jacksonville and becoming a program sponsor, visit www.leadershipjax.org or contact Jill Langford Dame at jill@leadershipjax.org.



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Restaurant owner donates eggs to Feeding Northeast Florida



Jacques Klemps with the driver from Cal-Maine Foods

In honor of Hunger Action Month, Jacques Klemps, owner of Cowford Chophouse, joined with Cal-Maine Foods to donate 350,000 eggs to Feeding Northeast Florida Sept. 18. The donation took place at Feeding Northeast Florida's warehouse at 1814 Industrial Blvd.

The donation assisted the nonprofit in providing vital protein to Jacksonville residents who are suffering from food insecurity. The donation was the fifth that the Cowford restaurant owner and Cal-Maine Foods have given and brought the total number of eggs donated by Klemps and Cal-Maine to 1.5 million. According to Feeding Northeast Florida, meals distributed in our community have jumped from 5.9 million to 10.8 million from 2019 to 2020. The nonprofit estimates that in 2020, 54 million people may be food insecure, including 18 million children.

DAR celebrates Constitution Week

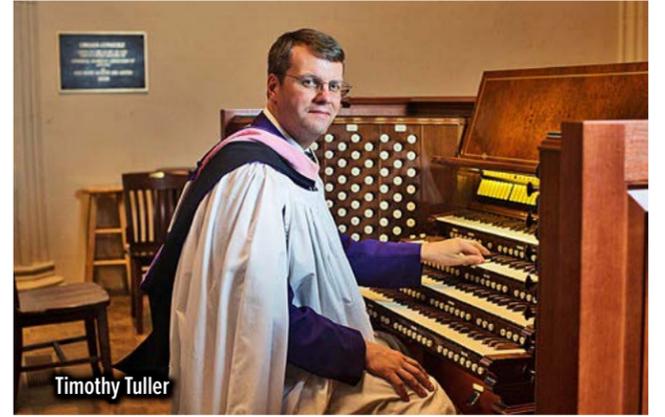
The Northeast Florida Regents Council of the Daughters of the American Revolution celebrated Constitution Week, Sept. 17-23, as a chance to observe the annual commemoration of the United States Constitution.

"Constitution Week 2020 is the 65th anniversary," said Toni Weatherford, Regents Council president. "The DAR initiated the observance in 1955, when the service organization petitioned the U.S. Congress to dedicate September 17-23 of each year as Constitution Week. On August 2, 1956, President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed it into law."

The Regents Council advocated three goals for the week: educating to encourage the study of historical events that led to framing the Constitution in September 1787; honoring the Constitution by reminding the public that the Constitution is the basis of America's great heritage and the foundation for its way of life; and celebrating U.S. citizens' responsibility to protect, defend and preserve the U.S. Constitution.

"In the past, members of the DAR have observed Constitution Week by ringing bells at 4 p.m. EST on September 17, obtaining proclamations, creating displays in schools, libraries and other public areas, distributing copies of the Constitution, hosting keynote speakers at lunches and other efforts to educate our communities about the Constitution and its immense impact on our nation," Weatherford said. "Sadly, the pandemic has disrupted many of our plans. As a council, the eight Northeast Florida regents recommend that all commit to personal goals to educate, honor and celebrate. By reading, listening, viewing or going to one of the many websites to seek Constitution facts, stories, quizzes and other amazing information, each citizen can renew one's knowledge and appreciation for our living document that upholds and protects our freedoms."

The eight Northeast Florida chapters are part of one of the largest patriotic women's organizations in the world. DAR has more than one million members in 3,000 chapters across the United States and in countries abroad. DAR members promote historic preservation, education and patriotism through a variety of commemorative events, scholarships, education and service.



Timothy Tuller

Cathedral to hold organ concerts to celebrate composer's birth

In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the birth of French organist and composer Louis Vierne (October 8, 1870 – June 2, 1937), St. John's Cathedral and the Jacksonville Chapter of the American Guild of Organists will present a truly historic concert series beginning Sunday, Oct. 11.

Among his many works, Louis Vierne composed six symphonies for solo organ. They were written between 1899 and 1930. For the first time in Jacksonville, all six of these symphonies will be performed over the course of three Sunday afternoon recitals by Timothy Tuller, Canon for Music at St. John's Cathedral. Tuller will play all six symphonies in sequential order. The first recital will be Sunday, October 11 at 5 p.m. and will feature Symphonies 1 and 2. The second recital will follow two weeks later, on Sunday, Oct. 25 at 5 p.m. with Symphonies 3 and 4. The final concert will be held on Sunday, Nov. 8 at 5 p.m. presenting Symphonies 5 and 6. All concerts will take place at St. John's Cathedral, 256 E. Church Street.

Seating will be limited due to the social distancing protocols and masks must be worn. These concerts will also be live streamed on the Cathedral's website: jaxcathedral.org.

Baptist hospitals receive 'LGBTQ Health Care Equality Leader' designation

All Baptist Health hospitals, including Wolfson Children's Hospital, received the "LGBTQ Health Care Equality Leader" status for the first time, demonstrating the health system's continued commitment to fostering an environment that prioritizes inclusion for team members, patients and families.

The designation was awarded by the Human Rights Campaign Foundation (HRC) in its annual Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) survey. The HRC is the education arm of America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people.

The HEI is the national LGBTQ benchmarking tool that evaluates hospitals and health care facilities on policies and best practices in LGBTQ patient-centered care in four

key areas: non-discrimination and staff training; patient services and support; employee benefits and practices; and patient and community engagement.

HRC's "LGBTQ Health Care Equality Leader" is designated to hospitals that receive the maximum score in all four categories, earning an overall score of 100.

"LGBT+ patients continue to face significant challenges in health care. While we have achieved top scores from HRC, we know there is always room to improve in health care equity," said Brett McClung, FACHE, president and CEO of Baptist Health. "At the same time, we are incredibly proud of the progress made possible by our team members who are leading this important work in our organization."

For the past three years, Baptist Health hospitals were designated "Top Performers." In just the past year, Baptist Health has implemented new policies and practices to lead the way in the Jacksonville community for inclusion. These changes include ongoing training in LGBT+ competency implemented for team members in annual education and all incoming nurse residents; internal task force created to address collection of sexual orientation and gender identity in the medical record; commitment to inclusive language used in patient materials; behavioral health providers with an expertise in LGBT+ care identified and available by request; peer-to-peer LGBT+ support groups provided to Baptist Health team members, physicians and the community.



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Longtime shop owner celebrates 43rd anniversary



Hooshang Harvesf, Ph.D.

In what has often appeared to be a revolving door of merchants at The Shoppes of Avondale, there is one shop owner who has stood the test of time.

Hooshang Harvesf, Ph.D., owner of Hooshang Oriental Rugs and Gallery, is celebrating his 43rd year on the popular Avondale commercial strip.

Affectionately known as the “Mayor of Avondale,” Harvesf opened his store on September 15, 1977, and is the longest running business in the Avondale Shoppes that has remained under the same owner, name, and location.

“What I like is that the area has always been maintained,” said Harvesf, noting that when he first arrived in the Avondale shopping area retailers far outnumbered the restaurants and ladies often came to shop all day.

All the rugs in Hooshang’s store are painstakingly made by hand, he said, adding that he does business locally, nationally, and internationally. “What we have here you will not find anywhere else in the country,” he said. Also, of note is his arrangement of unusual and unique nutcrackers, which are featured at Christmas time in what is one of the most visited window-displays in Jacksonville.

“I can’t say enough how much I love Avondale and its people,” Harvesf said. “I love what I do. My dad always told his children to get an education first and then do whatever it is that you want to wake up in the morning and go to it. To this day, I can always say, I love to do what I’m doing.”

Kievet to hand over reins to Stasi at City Rescue Mission

City Rescue Mission Executive Director Penny Kievet is retiring. Kievet, who has served the mission since 2013, will hand over the reins to her successor, Paul Stasi, who is currently serving as director of social enterprise. The transition will take place on December 31, 2020.



Penny Kievet

Kievet has a long history of service having spent her entire professional career as a teacher, principal, college professor, and senior executive prior to her role as executive director of the City Rescue Mission (CRM).

She has served on 36 for-profit and nonprofit boards as director and board chair and has also held local, state, and national offices in numerous professional organizations. She currently serves on the boards of Feeding Northeast Florida, Safe to Hope, Inc., and the Citygate Network national board. Some of her recent awards include: The Marilyn Farmer Outstanding Women in Leadership Award, The Top Women Igniting Success, Girls, Inc., Women of Vision, The Jacksonville Business Journal Women of Influence Award, 2000 Most Notable Women in the United

States, Who’s Who VIP Professional, National President of Pi Kappa Delta, 100 Top Female Executives in the Southeast, National President Cross Examination Debate Association, Outstanding Women in the Mid-west, Who’s Who in Executives and Professionals, and numerous sales achievement awards.

During her tenure as both executive director and director of resource development at CRM, she has focused on the transformation of those who are served by the nonprofit to bring them from a state of human suffering to human flourishing.

“I often tell people that I have loved every job I have ever hand, and God saved the best for last,” she said. “Being at City Rescue Mission these past 11 years has been an amazing journey. I have loved this community, staff, and those we get to serve every day. I am so excited for Paul as he leads this great ship into new waters. There is no doubt that he will lead well, and I am so excited to watch that happen.”

Stasi has been with CRM for more than five years and previously served as director of resource development. During his time with the nonprofit, he has worked closely with Kievet in securing the mission and evolving its services. Prior to his time at the mission, Stasi served as director of social services for the Northeast Florida Area Command with the Salvation Army.

“I am honored and energized by the opportunity to assume leadership of this great organization that plays such a vital role in our community by helping people in desperate situations go through a life transformation,” said Stasi. “I am so thankful to Penny Kievet for the leadership and accomplishments she has contributed to the mission. This will leave us strong and prepared for whatever lies ahead. And I look forward to working with her during this transition. City Rescue Mission has a robust future continuing to reach out to some of Jacksonville’s most needy citizens, and I am excited to see how God will work through us.”

CRM Chairman Kendall Spencer shared their sentiments. “The City Rescue Mission has experienced seven wonderful years of growth in all of its core programs and has expanded into multiple new services and programs through the insightful and visionary leadership of Penny. Her energetic personality and extensive network have helped broaden the reach of the Mission in our community and have further raised the awareness of the critical work the Mission provides to our students and guests,” he said. “With Penny’s planned and impending retirement, City Rescue Mission is fortunate to have an internal, qualified and deeply experienced person like Paul Stasi to become our next executive director.”

Cultural Council appoints Diana Donovan interim executive director

Executive Director Joy Young is leaving the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville and Diana Donovan has been appointed as interim executive director while a nationwide search is underway.

The Council’s board of directors made the announcement of Young’s departure Sept. 11 saying she is leaving to “pursue other opportunities.” In the meantime, the board unanimously appointed Donovan to fill in until permanent replacement is hired.

“We thank Joy for her service to the Cultural Council and wish her the best as she embarks on a new chapter,” said Jannet Walker-Ford, board chair. “The Cultural Council is in good shape financially and operationally.”

Young joined the Cultural Council in December 2018 after serving 14 years as director of administration, human resources and operations for the South Carolina Arts Commission in Columbia, S.C. Under her leadership, the Cultural Council most recently scored well in its grant application to the Florida Department of State Division of Cultural Affairs. The organization’s Cultural



Diana Donovan

Service Grant program and Art in Public Places program are both in strong positions.

Donovan is very familiar with the Cultural Council through her service as a past board member who was appointed by Mayor Lenny Curry. For the past six years, she has served in successive leadership roles at Jacksonville University, most recently as executive director of the Office of the President and Community Relations. She is a member of Leadership Jacksonville and JAXChamber’s inaugural Hightower Fellowship. She is also a past member of the citizen editorial board at the Florida

Times-Union. Donovan currently serves on the board of the Women’s Center of Jacksonville and is a Delores Barr Weaver Fellow at the Women’s Giving Alliance.

To select the Cultural Council’s next executive director, the directors established a board search committee that includes Lisa V. Johnson as chair, Kirsten Doolittle, Ari Jolly, Kemel Jasper, and City Council liaison Michael Boylan.

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Celebrating Social Season

Nonprofits regained some semblance of normalcy by successfully holding their annual fundraising events virtually in September.



David Barksdale, president of Sanctuary on 8th joins Rick Cartlidge, executive director during the virtual Swingin' Shindig Sept. 17.



Rick Cartlidge, executive director of Sanctuary on 8th, greeted viewers, thanked supporters and encouraged donations through the Swingin' Shindig.

Concert broadcast pays off for Sanctuary on 8th

Broadcasting a free live concert by the House Cats, a jazz quartet, as part of its first virtual Swingin' Shindig proved to be quite lucrative for the Sanctuary on 8th. Forced to cancel its live gala for a Sept. 17 virtual event this year, the nonprofit outdid itself by raising more than \$60,000 to help children in Springfield rise out of poverty and reach their full potential through afterschool programs.

Held on a weekday this year, the event comprised a live broadcast of the free jazz concert and an online raffle for a four-hour, catered river cruise for six in place of the traditional silent auction. Virtual participants got in the spirit of New Orleans by heading to the Sanctuary's website for some Cajun recipes to whip up in their homes during the virtual event.

"We are grateful to the Delores Barr Weaver Forever Event Fund for awarding the annual grant in spite of our inability to host a live party," said Rick Cartlidge, executive director for The Sanctuary on 8th. Sponsorships were also available to help pay for various aspects of the evening and support programs into the future. Major sponsors included Marina at Ortega Landing, Curtis Stokes & Associates, and J. David Tax Law.



Tenikka Hughes and Dr. Gary Josephson, chief medical officer for Nemours Children's Specialty Care

Virtual Evening of Promise raises more than \$100,000 for Nemours

Tenikka Hughes, anchor of Action News Jax, joined Dr. Gary Josephson, chief medical officer for Nemours Children's Specialty Care in greeting donors during the clinic's first virtual Evening of Promise fundraiser Sept. 17. At least 350 people tuned for the hour-long presentation enabling Nemours to raise \$105,000 from the virtual event, which is normally its annual gala. Hughes served as emcee, and the event was streamed through the television station's Facebook Live page. During the event, entertainment was provided by The Royals band. Viewers also heard impactful patient stories, shout outs from grateful patients expressing thanks to their healthcare heroes, messages from Nemours leadership as well as special celebrity guest Phil Mickelson, a professional golfer, and more. Funds raised through the event will support both Nemours healthcare workers, patients and their families who have been directly impacted by COVID-19.



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Rethreaded celebrates 9 years with virtual birthday party

Rethreaded celebrated nine years with a first-ever virtual birthday party Aug. 6, which exceeded its fundraising goal of \$30,000. The proceeds went towards the nonprofit's newest group of seven sex trafficking survivor employees. Community First Credit Union sponsored the birthday event, and Riverside Homes graciously provided a \$30,000 matching donation that helped the Rethreaded birthday celebration surpass its fundraising goal. During Rethreaded's birthday week celebration, the nonprofit released a new line of leather products including a men's wallet, business card holder, and padfolio.



Rethreaded celebrated its 9th birthday Aug. 6.

A leather padfolio and leather business card holder (top) are some of the new items Rethreaded is offering in honor of its birthday celebration

Cocktail Party hosts Al Emerick, founder of Value Mapping, with Ellen Cottrill, coordinator of communications and public engagement for the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville.



Signature cocktails and violin concert

More than 50 party goers tuned in to the Cultural Council's virtual Pre-Awards Cocktail Party Sept. 2. The event included a fun cocktail class presented by Chef's Garden Catering and Events, which was streamed live from Manifest Distilling. Guests were able to order their own complete cocktail kit online for the 44th Annual Arts Awards signature cocktail and mix along. Included in the event was online "mingle" time, and a chance to watch highlights from Jacksonville Dance Theater, as well as recent public art installations. The party ended with a video of Philip Pan on violin playing in his Mariachi band with Goliath Flores. Pan was the main entertainment for the arts award event with his compilation of "Bohemian Rhapsody" on violin.

OneJax marks 50th anniversary with virtual awards ceremony

Four honorees who have demonstrated the highest level of personal and professional integrity and have given generously to the community were honored by OneJax, an institute of the University of North Florida, during its virtual 2020 Humanitarian Awards Sept. 10. The event also celebrates the 50th anniversary of the OneJax organization.

Honored at the event were Dr. Jeffrey Levenson, co-developer and coordinator of Jacksonville's Gift of Sight, president of Vision is Priceless and chief medical officer of SEE International; MaliVai Washington and Terri Florio of the MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation; Melanie Patz and Lynn Sherman, co-chairs of the Jacksonville Community Remembrance Project and leaders of 904Ward; and Michael Ward, retired CEO of CSX and co-founder of the Michael Ward and Jennifer Glock Foundation.

All of the honorees have been dedicated to the improvement of human relations among diverse groups and were awarded the organization's Silver Medallion. "This year's honorees reflect the longstanding efforts of OneJax to achieve civility, understanding, and respect for all through education, dialogue, and community building," said Connie Hodges, chairman of the OneJax board.

The 2020 OneJax Humanitarian honorees included: back row, MaliVai Washington and Terri Florio of the MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation, Dr. Jeffrey Levenson of Gift of Sight and Vision is Priceless, Michael Ward of the Michael Ward and Jennifer Glock Foundation. Front row: Lynn Sherman and Melanie Patz of the Jacksonville Community Remembrance Project.



The 2020 OneJax Humanitarian honorees included: back row, MaliVai Washington and Terri Florio of the MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation, Dr. Jeffrey Levenson of Gift of Sight and Vision is Priceless, Michael Ward of the Michael Ward and Jennifer Glock Foundation. Front row: Lynn Sherman and Melanie Patz of the Jacksonville Community Remembrance Project.

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Sulzbacher holds virtual 'feel good event of the year'

Sulzbacher celebrated its 25th anniversary Sept. 30 with Transformations, its annual "feel good event of the year," which was livestreamed on the nonprofit's website. The virtual show, which brought needed attention to Sulzbacher's mission, raised funds to assist in ending homelessness in Jacksonville.

Hosted by Darnell Smith, market president of the North Florida region of Florida Blue and Ginny Myrick, president and CEO of Cathedral District-Jax, Inc., the program celebrated Sulzbacher's services of housing, healthcare, and hope for the homeless. One highlight was the story of a homeless man who, with the help of Sulzbacher, went from living under a bridge to working on top of one as an operator of Jacksonville's Main Street Bridge.

Other highlights included an update on how Sulzbacher has managed to remain open

throughout the COVID-10 pandemic; messages from Sulzbacher's former CEOs and founders; and a celebration and thank you to the dedicated volunteer groups who have served in Sulzbacher's kitchen, with some of them working for 25 years! A walk-through of some of Sulzbacher's new programs including the Pediatric Health Center at Sulzbacher Village and the Sulzbacher Healthmobile were hosted by Keitha Nelson from First Coast News. There was also special musical performance by the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra.

Finally, a video history was shown charting the agency's history and its impact on the Jacksonville community. An online silent auction was held, and Sulzbacher's goal of raising \$425,000 was surpassed when \$20,597 was donated during the 45 minute event and more was pouring in as the emcees signed off.



Sulzbacher President and CEO Cindy Funkhouser addresses the audience while photos of donors flash across the screen during the nonprofit's 25th annual celebration.



Ginny Myrick and Darnell Smith served as emcees during Sulzbacher's annual Traditions fundraiser Sept. 30

Pitel honored at JALA Bridges for Justice virtual event

Dr. Paul Pitel, who is retiring as longtime chair of the Department of Pediatrics at Nemours Children's Specialty Care, was honored by the Jacksonville Area Legal Aid (JALA) during its Bridges to Justice for Children's Health virtual event Sept. 15. The event was shown on JALA's Facebook page.

Pitel was given the award by Megan Denk, executive director of THE PLAYERS Center for Child Health at Wolfson Children's Hospital and his son, Stephen Pitel, a staff attorney at JALA who serves as director of the Northeast Florida Medical Legal Partnership (NFMLP).

The event also served as a kickoff event for Freed to Run, which is JALA's largest fundraiser and is

dedicated to creating a \$2.25 million endowment for NFMLP.

The Facebook Live video had more than 230 views raising about \$3,000 through Facebook or through www.jaxlegalaid.org/bridgestojustice. JALA's Chief Development Officer Dennis Harrison expected some last-minute donations to raise the total to \$5,000. Because the Baptist Health Foundation matches all donations to the endowment at 125% up to \$1.25 million, including donations made via Bridges to Justice for Children's Health, the total from the Facebook Live event could surpass \$10,000.



Stephen Pitel awards his father, Dr. Paul Pitel, longtime chair of the Department of Pediatrics at Nemours Children's Specialty Care, with an award from Jacksonville Area Legal Aid.


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Elections, Markets, and Uncertainty

By Caleb Cronic
Raymond James & Associates, Inc.

Famed Prussian General, Carl von Clausewitz said, "Although our intellect always longs for clarity and certainty, our nature often finds uncertainty fascinating." Election fascination often causes distress among investors but research shows that your holiday ham can calmly remain in your tummy. The market likes certainty and election days provide just that.

There is always fervent fascination during presidential election years among investors. For markets however, midterm elections typically make more of an impact as Congressional responsibilities affect the

economy to a greater degree. While president incumbents and nominees have a larger, national mouth piece, the majority of their proposals must get Congressional approval, hence the reason markets focus more on midterm elections.

This focus on midterms would lead you to believe there are large market swings based on who wins but this is a false notion. Certainty, above all else, provides the environment for stock market gains and election outcomes provide certainty. Steven McBride's research published on MarketWatch.com found that stocks were higher 12 months after every single midterm election since 1946. 18 of 18. On the flip side, markets averaged around a 1% decline during the



10 months leading up to midterm elections. Prior to an election, there is increased uncertainty of the future and the market discounts nearly every possible scenario leading up to voting day causing pre-election choppiness. Once the election occurs, the future becomes clearer and markets quickly adjust accordingly.

This is echoed by Anne Smith, Executive Editor of Kiplingesque, whose 2016 research found very little correlation between market

performance and election results since 1900. While the fascination may be on who wins on Election Day, the market seems to find solace in knowing that there is a winner more than who it is. While there are plenty of reasons to be proudly preoccupied with our democratic process, the affect it has on your investments shouldn't be one of them.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

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Caleb Cronic

Caleb joined the Otterson-Allison Wealth Management Group of Raymond James in 2017, bringing with him the lessons he learned from serving as a lieutenant in the United States Navy. Caleb served as a commissioned officer in the Navy for six years, completing multiple deployments to the Middle East. He first served onboard USS JAMES E WILLIAMS, a destroyer out of Norfolk, VA and later served as the Anti-Terrorism Officer onboard USS NEW YORK in Mayport, FL before finishing his service as an Operations Officer and Intelligence Oversight Officer at COMLCSRON TWO.

Caleb holds a Bachelor's degree in International Relations from the United States Naval Academy. In

addition, he has a Master's degree in Public Policy from Liberty University as well as the Accredited Asset Management Specialist accreditation.

Caleb's wife, Kristin, also a Naval Academy graduate, is a local artist. Caleb is currently the United States Naval Academy Alumni Association Jacksonville Chapter President, USNA National Trustee and a trustee at his local church. Outside of work, Caleb enjoys baking, travel, and spending time with his creative wife, Kristin, and their two children, Eleanor and Bode. What energy is left over is devoted to reading and an inconsistent game of fetch with the family dog, Herschel.

Patricia Otterson

In 1982, Patty left her career as a CPA to pursue her fascination with the equity markets. And for more than 31 years since, she has had the pleasure of working in a truly dynamic industry and the privilege of serving truly wonderful people.

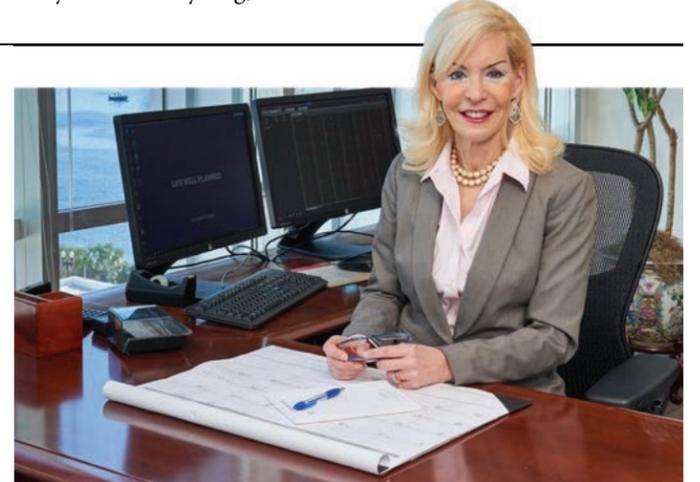
Patty got her start with the accounting firm of Ernst and Whinney (the precursor to Ernst & Young). After spending several years as a CPA and tax accountant, she left to begin her investment services career at Dean Witter Reynolds (now Morgan Stanley Smith Barney). She also held positions with Prudential Securities, where she began her partnership with Norm Allison in 1994, and Alexander Key (a division of SunTrust Investment Services) before joining Raymond James in 2009.

A graduate of Grove City College, Patty holds a Bachelor of Arts in accounting. In addition, she has earned the Certified Investment Management

AnalystSM designation and her Investment Strategist Certificate from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

Patty's commitment to community is evident in her involvement with several local organizations. She is currently serving as co-chair of the DePaul Society council of Ascension St. Vincents Foundation. She is also actively involved with St. Johns Presbyterian Church, where she previously served on the board of deacons and also as an elder. Previously she served on other boards in the community that serve the needs of children in underprivileged areas.

Patty Otterson was among the Raymond James-affiliated advisors named to the *Forbes* list of America's Top Women Advisors. The list, which recognizes advisors from national, regional and independent firms, was released online April 21, 2020.



Check out the Forbes 2020 Top Women Wealth Advisors <https://www.forbes.com/top-women-advisors/#28abc5bd51f4>

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Patricia Otterson, CIMA® of the Otterson Allison Wealth Management Group of Raymond James was named to the Forbes 2020 Top 1,000 Women Wealth Advisors list. Check out the Forbes 2020 Top 1,000 Women Wealth Advisors www.forbes.com/top-women-advisors/#28abc5bd51f4

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Obi Plastic Surgery welcomes new surgeon, new patient consults

A new surgeon has arrived in town, one that was hand-picked by Jacksonville's most sought-after and highly qualified surgeon, Dr. Lewis J. Obi. Dr. Hani Rayess, a California native, has made his way to Jacksonville and he is quickly building a roster of satisfied patients. His kind, gentle bedside manner is further complemented by his skills as a talented reconstructive and aesthetic facial plastic surgeon, to include an aptitude for non-invasive procedures.

Rayess joins the Obi Plastic Surgery practice after spending years in medical school at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, and residency at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan. His last stop was training at the University of Tennessee in Memphis, where he spent a year honing his skills in facial plastic and reconstructive surgery with one of America's top facial aesthetic surgeons. While in Memphis, he learned state-of-the-art procedures in both

aesthetic and reconstructive surgery of the face and neck and worked at one of the nation's busiest trauma centers.

Dr. Rayess is excited to have the opportunity to work with Dr. Obi and has already begun booking patients and putting his skills to work. He is also making friends due to his outstanding bedside manner and approachable nature.

"I'm really enjoying this city and what it has to offer; not just for my career, but for the recreation and sunshine that Florida has to offer. I'm also poised and ready to help patients discover their best looks."

For the past decade Rayess has been training and earning qualifications to take his career to the next level. Working under the tutelage of veteran surgeon and innovator, Lewis Obi, will help to propel his capabilities to a new level, all while enhancing services at the Obi Plastic Surgery practice. With the introduction and affiliation of Dr. Rayess, practice expansion is now possible for the duo as they offer patients, both new and established, an opportunity to better their image or increase their youthful appearance.

"We are so fortunate to have Hani in our practice. His skill set perfectly complements our practice," said Obi. "He's an excellent surgeon, a great guy, and he has the skills to change lives and satisfy patients with his state-of-the-art surgical techniques and skilled hands in the operating room."

Over the last several years, Dr. Obi has been breaking the mold, with the use of fat-derived stem cells. They increase healing time, lessen scarring and offer age-defying treatments by applying innovations in stem cell use to plastic surgery processes. Not only has Dr. Obi been increasing access to these technologies, but he's been consistently outperforming other surgeons in town with his methods in breast augmentations, the signature LJO (Lewis J. Obi - Opera Lift) brow lift and upper eyelid procedures, as well as his body contouring by way of the SlimLipo, (LifeSculpt) laser liposuction procedure, which he helped develop. Fat derived from this procedure led to his pioneering work with adult stem cells, which he is now using to enhance the results of many plastic surgery procedures.

Many patients ultimately choose Dr. Obi for the most advanced abdominoplasty, breast surgery and "Mommy Make Over" procedures because of his innovative work with 3D imaging, lasers, Velashape and fat derived stem cells.



Dr. Lewis J. Obi with Dr. Hani Rayess



"We are so fortunate to have Hani in our practice. His skill set perfectly complements our practice."

— Dr. Lewis J. Obi

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Executive secretary celebrates 35 years at Southside Baptist Church

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

Southside Baptist Senior Pastor Dr. Gary Webber calls her “literally the central nervous system” of his church, and for more than three decades his secretary, Cindy Graves, who celebrated her 35th work anniversary on Sept. 16, has proved herself to be one of Southside Baptist’s most essential employees.

“Cindy’s knowledge of the families in this church and community is tremendous! She serves on the front line through the week, responding to everything from prayer requests to benevolence needs. She not only works here, but she has served in our children’s ministry, music ministry, and just about every other area you could imagine. Her love for her church family is only eclipsed by her love for Jesus and His Kingdom,” Webber said.

Graves had spent 14 years in Tallahassee before she arrived in San Marco in 1985 as kind of a “package deal,” along with Rev. Mark Wilbanks, who had been hired as senior pastor.



Sheri Webber, Cindy Graves and Southside Baptist Senior Pastor Dr. Gary Webber

Graves, who worked for Wilbanks a total of 25 years, first met him when she was a Florida State University undergraduate studying to become a Latin high school teacher. While she was at FSU, Wilbanks was a youth minister at First Baptist Church in Tallahassee, and she applied to be his part-time secretary. After her college graduation, she stayed on part-time, working at the church in the afternoons while serving as an itinerant high school teacher at both Lincoln and Rickards High Schools in Tallahassee for two years.

“All of my life I wanted to be a school teacher, and when I got into high school and studied Latin, I decided I was going to be a Latin teacher,” Graves said, noting she decided her calling was with the church when Wilbanks became associate pastor and the church offered her a full-time secretarial job. “When he was made associate pastor and could hire a full-time secretary, at that time I felt I was called into church work,” she said.

When Wilbanks was offered the job as senior pastor at Southside Baptist, he made it a condition of his employment that the San Marco church hire her, too, Graves said.



Cindy Graves has been the senior pastor’s secretary at Southside Baptist Church for 35 years

“We always joked it was a package deal,” Graves laughed. “When the church called Mark, he said I have an administrative assistant I want to come with me. I was hired really without any interviews. Oh, technically I had an interview, but really, I was hired because of Mark. They really didn’t even know if I could type much less be a pastor’s secretary when I arrived,” she said.

Seventeen years later, when Wilbanks decided leave Southside Baptist to serve again in Tallahassee, he offered to take Graves with him. “But at that time my heart was firmly planted at Southside, so I said no,” Graves recalled. “Over 35 years I’ve never ever regretted one of those decisions. Just as a pastor is called, this is my calling to ministry. I think that is what has kept me going all of these years. I’ve certainly loved the people I have worked for, and as a single person who has never married or had kids, this church really has become my family.”

After Wilbanks left, Graves worked for Senior Pastor Wayne Stacy for three years before Webber was finally hired as senior pastor in 2005. Graves said she never envisioned she would be working for a man who she knew as a young teen when she arrived in San Marco in 1985.

“He was a gangly teenager with a beautiful voice. When he went off to seminary everybody thought he would become a music minister, but low and behold he became a senior pastor,” Graves said, noting Webber had only been 14 years old when she came to the church. She said she had qualms when she learned the search committee was seriously considering him as Stacy’s replacement, but, at that time, she kept her reservations to herself.

“I thought, oh my goodness, what are they doing? Because in my mind, Gary was still a teenager and a music minister. He wasn’t a pastor. Thank goodness I was not in charge of that situation, God was, because Gary is exactly who we needed and still is. I’ve told him many times he has to promise me he will stay until I retire or die, whichever comes first.”

Webber said he is grateful Graves did not return with Wilbanks to her beloved Tallahassee. “She is so much more than her title would lead you to believe,” he said. “She is Aunt Cindy to my kids, the fount of all knowledge, my copy editor, ministry partner, and my very dear friend,” he wrote in a Facebook posting commemorating her work anniversary. “Her ministry often goes unseen but is never unappreciated. We love you Cindy!”

New murals to reflect city’s identity



Feeling that the City of Jacksonville has been struggling to define its identity for decades, ArtRepublic, a nonprofit run by Jessica Santiago and George Georgallis, sponsored 13 new public art installations, performances, and films in August, to help the community thrive by reflecting the identity of the people within it.

With the theme “Lift Every Voice,” and under the creative direction of Malc Jax, Christopher Parsons, and Ennis Davis, ArtRepublic produced the city’s first large-scale project comprised of 15 new murals, curated specifically to reflect the city’s authentic multicultural identity and history.

Artists from throughout the world began to arrive Aug. 9. During their first two days in Jacksonville, they sought to experience the community and worked to get to know the people and the city’s history. From Aug. 11 to Aug. 22, they decorated city buildings with murals, while the community was encouraged to watch the streetscapes go up and engage with the artists.

Street performances that were directed by Parsons took place at the mural sites between Aug. 19 and 22, while footage was captured

to create short films that will tell the stories of the figures who inspired each mural.

“Jacksonville’s long history of achievement through African Americans and people of color has been kept underground for years and now it’s time to teach our communities. This project is just a snapshot of this reawakening going on in the United States right now,” said Jax.

Santiago agreed. “There has never been a more important time to bring empowerment, compassion and empathy to the people of our community,” she said. “We are calling upon our artists to be conduits for social change, to make the community identity more visible and to develop positive social networks to unify in a time of polarization.”

Artists that were included in ArtRepublic’s line-up were Momo, Louisiana, Toni Smallmagic, Juan Travieso, Urban Ruben, Chris Clark, Steven Teller, Spencer Guilburt, Hiero Veiga, and Anthony Rooney.

Helping sponsor the installations were the Jacksonville Transit Authority, VyStar Credit Union, Breeze Homes Simpler, Corner Lot Development Group, Haskell, JWB, and the Jacksonville Jaguars.



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Community born of tragedy

OCTOBER IS NATIONAL PREGNANCY AND INFANT LOSS AWARENESS MONTH

By Mary Wanser
Resident Community News

Ten years ago, Laura Kelly experienced a tragedy that still affects her greatly. She joined the club that nobody ever wants to join. She lost her twin baby girls.

October is National Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month. Every year, in cities nationwide, folks gather to recognize the many pregnancies that end in miscarriage, stillbirth, or the newborn's death. This year, Kelly will have her own private Remembrance Day gathering in honor of what would have



9th birthday celebration

been her daughters' tenth birthday. She will surround herself with a small group of family and close friends at her parents' house in Venetia, and they will remember what happened.

In mid-2010, Kelly, a Jacksonville native, was 30 years old, single, and teaching high school in Central Florida. She would regularly return home to Jacksonville for family visits, and always came back for several weeks in summer when she would schedule all annual medical check-ups. In July, her doctor confirmed that she was pregnant, already in her second trimester. The news was unexpected because the previous month, during a routine annual exam, she had tested negative, though she hadn't been feeling her usual self since March.

Friday, August 13, 2010 was a significant day for Kelly. Not only was it her 31st birthday and she was 18 weeks pregnant, but also it was the day she found out that she was carrying identical twins. Kelly was assigned

to a high-risk specialist due to her asthma and because baby B, cramped for space in the uterus, hadn't been growing at the same rate as baby A. That doctor confirmed that both were girls.

Into her sixth month of pregnancy, Kelly had been showing signs of early labor. Her cervix had begun to dilate, though she didn't feel any contractions. She underwent a cerclage procedure to prevent premature labor. Daily bed rest, frequent obstetric visits, and weekly counting became the norm—the goal was to stave off the girls' birth to 30 weeks, 32, as close to 40 as possible.

By week 33, both babies had grown, and Kelly had a hard time breathing. At her next ultrasound appointment, the doctor did not have to say a word; Kelly read it on his face. "There are no heartbeats." A moment froze in time. She remembers the lab coat he had on. She can tell you what she was wearing. Her mom walked in the room alongside a technician, Kelly caught her eye, shook her head from side to side and said, "They're gone."

Kelly chose the latter of two options. She wanted a day to take care of her two long-time companions, her dogs, the only children she knew she'd ever have. So, she spent a day at home before being admitted to the hospital to proceed with the induction of labor on November 18. Three weeks later, Britton and Rylan were buried in a family plot at Riverside Memorial Park.

"Nearly a year later, I was still in complete and total shock," Kelly said. "I read all of the what-to-expect-when-you're-expecting books. There wasn't a section in there that talks about stillbirth," she said.

Kelly learned from a family friend about Tear Catchers, the support group run through Baptist Hospital for parents suffering the effects of perinatal mortality. She attended the weekly meetings for years and today is considered a veteran member. She has spoken in front of hundreds of doctors, nurses, and chaplains. She is called upon to speak on parents' panels about the loss of multiples, which adds a different dynamic to the grief of losing a singleton. She tells her story because she wants women to know, "You are not alone. You did nothing wrong. Babies die. It's not a stigma," Kelly said.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in the United States, a miscarriage is the loss of a baby before the 20th week of pregnancy, and a stillbirth is the loss after 20 weeks. According to the CDC website, stillbirth affects nearly 1 in 160 births, approximately 24,000 babies per year nationally.

"Most women feel very alone and think they're the only person who has ever lost a baby. They just don't know of the resources



Celebrating the girls' 5th birthday



Day of Remembrance

available," said Linda Rosengren, lead chaplain for Bereavement Services at Baptist Health.

Kelly pointed out some insensitive comments that people make to these families who are grieving in silence. Most loved ones cannot relate to this type of loss. They don't know what to say, what not to say, what to do, what not to do to show support for bereaved parents. It's a unique kind of grief. "People will say things to you, and you want to just scream and yell at them," she acknowledged.

"You don't have to be afraid to talk about it," Kelly said. She urges parents to allow the grief, and she said that Tear Catchers meetings with Chaplain Rosengren are a great place to start.

Rosengren is the current coordinator of Tear Catchers. She leads the perinatal support group twice monthly on the first and third Monday evenings. For now, they meet virtually on Zoom while COVID-19 remains an issue. The group is open to bereaved parents, both women and men, whether their loss was recent or years ago. "We do offer other support for people who have experienced the loss of an older child or an adult loved one. We hope to provide community for those who long for and need it," Rosengren said.

In addition to Tear Catchers, our local community's support includes an annual Walk to Remember, a tradition since 1990. The first of these perinatal awareness month walks began at Friendship Fountain and ended at the School Board where a balloon release took place. Over the ensuing years, the crowd grew, the number of walkers increased, so the starting point was moved to underneath the Fuller Warren Bridge where the Riverside Arts Market meets. The ending point was at the YMCA down by the river, which culminated with a butterfly release.

The event grew even bigger and was changed from a walk to a ceremonial gathering on the lawn behind the One Call building at 841 Prudential Drive. Last year drew the largest crowd yet; nearly 350 attended. Every year has brought a variety of commemorative activities, from a daisy garden to a memory book, all to honor the babies. Each year, families make keepsakes

that always include their babies' names. Grandparents and siblings take part. This year will mark the event's 30th year, and due to the coronavirus pandemic, it will be held virtually via Zoom on Sunday, Oct. 25.

October was set aside for such ceremonies by President Ronald Reagan when he signed Proclamation 5890 on Oct. 25, 1988. This type of tragedy was not foreign to him. He and his wife Jane Wyman had lost their third child, Christine Reagan, in 1947. She died hours after her birth. Some believe it was the grief over this loss that contributed to the couple's divorce



A sibling releases a butterfly

two years later. Their family's calamity, unfortunately, is not unique.

People still ask Kelly how she gets out of bed every day. She tells them, "Because of two little girls named Britton and Rylan."

If you are a parent grieving over a perinatal loss, know that you are not alone. There is help available. For an understanding and compassionate connection, feel free to contact Laura Kelly directly at LauraKelly813@gmail.com. For information about the Tear Catchers support group or October's Walk to Remember, including registration details and login credentials, call (904) 202-2240 or email Linda.Rosengren@BMCJAX.com.



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Keeping the neighborhood clean, one street at a time

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

If the streets of San Marco and San Jose sparkle more since the Coronavirus pandemic began, you can thank Mel and Hilda Case.

Dubbed as “Neighborhood Angels” by some in the San Marco community, the couple spend two to three hours a day, six days a week, picking up trash as they walk for miles along Hendricks Avenue/San Jose Boulevard, University Boulevard and St. Augustine Road.

“It’s amazing how much trash is thrown out,” said Hilda. Her husband agreed. “Even when we go back over the area a couple of days later, there are still bags full of trash that we pick up,” he said.

The Cases, who live in a riverfront condo in San Jose, began their quest to clean their neighborhood’s streets in March, at the start of the pandemic, when Hilda, who works as an insurance agent for WellCare, was asked to work from home. To get exercise during the lockdown, the couple decided to take up walking, but the daily constitutional became something more after a shopping trip to Wal-Mart.

“When we got locked up with the virus we started walking because the fitness centers

were closed,” said Mel. “We made our way down University [Boulevard] dodging all the trash. It’s a way to get good exercise, fresh air, and do a little bit for the community.”

“Mel said he was going to get himself a grabber to pick up all the trash that’s along San Jose Boulevard, and so he did,” Hilda recalled. “At first I was his spotter and would say, ‘there’s one, here’s one; get this, get that.’ Then I got jealous – he was having all the fun picking up that trash, so I decided I was going to get me a grabber, too.”

Now the couple embarks on separate routes each day with Hilda, who is 80, walking between two to three miles, while Mel, who is 78 and retired from the military, walking six to seven miles. “We cover about a 12 square mile area,” said Mel, noting he walks as far as the Jewish Community Center on San Jose Boulevard to the south and as far as San Marco Square to the north. The couple also strides down University Boulevard to Powers Avenue and travels down St. Augustine Road and Philips Highway, two streets that are exceptionally filthy, they said.

A typical jaunt around the neighborhood can yield between three to six full bags of trash that they dispose of in dumpsters they have discovered along the way. Hilda said

the most noteworthy and perhaps disgusting item of trash she has picked up is a diaper full of poop from the parking lot at Calico Corners on San Jose Boulevard. She also once found a \$20 bill in that area that she gave to a lawn service man mowing Oaklawn Cemetery nearby. Meanwhile, Mel said his bags are usually full of liquor bottles, beer cans, cigarette butts, silverware, plastic utensils, take-out food containers, clothes, baby bottles, pacifiers, men’s underwear, used sanitary napkins, ladies tampons, condoms and once even a pair of ladies panties with a corn cob in them.

“It’s kind of a shame how trashy people are. Around the bus stops is the worst. A trash can is there, yet the stop is littered with trash,” said Hilda. “But I must say I don’t find as many cigarette butts as I did when we first started. It was just amazing how many cigarette butts are out there. I used to just go along and pick all of them up, but now there don’t seem to be as many. I don’t know if people have quit smoking or what?”

Hilda said both she and her husband are fairly fastidious people, and she attributes her desire to keep the streets clean to her upbringing in Bloomington, Illinois. “I grew up living in a small town. My parents swept the sidewalk in front of their house. People there cleaned the gutters and the curbs, but that was back in the day. I haven’t been back there in a long while. Heaven only knows what it is like now.”

The couple said they appreciate all the horn beeps and “attaboys,” they receive from motorists passing by. “People pull over and thank us for what we do. One day a lady pulled over and asked if she could give us some trash bags so we wouldn’t have to use



Mel and Hilda Case

our own. That was really nice of her,” she said, noting there is one thing people in the community could do to help.

“The thing I really wish is when drivers come up to a stop sign where they are going to turn either left or right, especially on San Jose Boulevard, that they would stop and look to see if a pedestrian is trying to cross the street. I have almost been hit three or four times because no one looks except for the way the traffic is coming,” she said.

And she also wishes that some residents would take more pride in their properties. “In some areas I wish people would get out and police their own yards. You walk along and see a nice green, mowed yard but then there are three or four cigarette butts there or wadded up paper wrappers from Wendy’s or McDonalds. I just walk up into the yard and pick those up,” she said. “But I wish I didn’t have to.”

“It’s amazing how much trash is thrown out. Even when we go back over the area a couple of days later, there are still bags full of trash that we pick up.”

— Hilda Case

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THE WAY WE WERE: SISSY BARKER

BY MARY WANSE
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

It's quite the paradox, but amid multiple moves across state lines, Sissy Barker has maintained throughout Jacksonville a consistency in friendships and family, which marks the theme of her life.

Born to Sara and Paul Hattaway on Thanksgiving Day 1936 in Augusta, Georgia, Sissy Barker's real name was Cynthann. She was named for her father's late sister, Cynthia Ann, and nicknamed Sissy because her only sibling, her older sister Jean, couldn't pronounce her given name. When Barker was 2, the family moved to Valdosta, Georgia where she began school three years later, but only for a brief time. She ended up changing schools eight times in 12 years.

In October 1942, Barker's father took a job as superintendent at Gibbs Corporation Shipyards in Jacksonville on the south bank of the river where the hotels are now. Her family rented an upstairs apartment in a house located on the southside of San Marco behind the shopping area, and Barker continued first grade at Southside Grammar School Number 7, even when the family moved to another apartment on Larue Avenue. When her family bought a house in St. Nicholas, Barker transferred to Spring Park Elementary School where, annually, students would dance around in the ribbons of the maypole.



Sissy's first day of school

She made it through the second grade at Spring Park before her father took another job in Birmingham, Alabama, but only for a brief time; George Gibbs called him back to head shipbuilding before Barker could finish the third grade. She transferred to Alfred I. duPont Elementary School and remained there to complete her elementary school education.

Barker was in the fourth grade, living on Peachtree Circle in Miramar, when her mother told her that if she didn't learn to ride the old bicycle that her sister had outgrown, she was going to give it away. Barker walked that bike down to Oaklawn Cemetery and stood on gravestones to mount back up after each fall as she taught herself to handle the two-wheeler. It took all day, but she rode it back home with a big smile on her face, exclaiming for all to hear, "I learned to ride the bike!"

In the two-story building, known as San Marco One today, across the street to the south of the fountain in San Marco was the Town Pump. "It was a bar. My doctor as a child, Dr. Tyler, was upstairs. He was a fine man. I have fond memories of him," Barker said.

As a young girl, Barker went to many Georgia vs. Florida football games because Georgia's coach, Wally Butts, was a former classmate of her mom's, and he sent them admission tickets. Most women, including her mother, wore hats, gloves, and furs to the games if they had them. Back then, Georgia usually won. As an adult, Barker would host a party for her friends on the night before a game.

Barker's family spent time at Jacksonville Beach, too, when she was young. She remembers two things: One, a German submarine came too close to shore as it targeted an American ship and, for a time afterwards, there were piles of tar littering the beach. And two, because several soldiers had come ashore, cars were inspected for hiding Germans. She also remembers air raids at that time. Her family had to turn off every light in the house to avoid being spotted. "My sister and I thought that was pretty neat because we would get under the bed with a flashlight and play cards," Barker said.

It was in school at duPont that Barker met Ivy Carey. They were classmates and friends, and as Girl Scouts, they together attended Camp Chowenwaw at the mouth of Black Creek.

San Marco Theatre admission was nine cents when Barker and Carey would go on Saturdays. A quarter was enough for entry, Coke, popcorn, and the dime needed to call one of their moms from the pay phone at Lane's Drugstore across the street to come pick them up. They'd let the phone ring one time only as a code message, hang up, and get the dime back. There were boys who didn't have the nine cents so "one would pay to go in, then open the exit door inside and let his friends in," Barker reported. The theatre showed serials, preceded by news reels about the war. Few, if any, households



Sissy Barker teaches herself to ride a bike



1st grade class, Southside Grammar School, 1941



Sissy at Camp Chowenwaw, Green Cove Springs

had television sets then. Barker would be a junior in high school before her family's living room would see a black-and-white set.

There was also the Florida Theatre downtown and two drive-in-movies, one on Philips Highway and one on Beach Boulevard, that Barker's parents would take her to sometimes. Barker remembers her mom shopping for groceries at the A&P near the bowling alley across from San Marco Theatre. She recalls, too, Haney's Gas Station that stood at the fork of San Marco Boulevard and Hendricks Avenue across from where South Jacksonville Presbyterian church now stands.

In the sixth grade, Barker and Carey doubled for their first date—Barker with Ernest Guthrie, and her friend with Billy Turney. The four went to Howard Biser's Restaurant on Philips Highway for seafood, the Florida Theatre for a show and popcorn afterwards, and then to Lane's for a dessert of milkshakes and sundaes. Carey slept at

the Barkers that night, and both girls were sick for the duration. All four would eventually graduate from Landon together, but the guys have since died while the girls remain close friends, though they've never as adults lived in the same town.

Barker began seventh grade at Landon High School, which was technically a junior and senior high for seventh through 12th graders. Tired of wearing pigtails, Barker got her first haircut at Cohen Brothers Department Store where City Hall is now. Afterwards, she had lunch in their tearoom. She made it halfway through seventh grade at Landon before her dad took a job in Columbus, Georgia where she finished seventh, eighth, and ninth grades and began her sophomore year. Her family moved back to Florida at Mr. Gibbs's beckoning in time for Barker to finish her sophomore and junior years at Landon High School.

At the end of Barker's junior year, her father wanted to pursue his passion, peanut shelling, and start his own business back in Columbus, Georgia; he even had developed machinery for the separating and storing. Barker, though usually a respectful and obedient daughter, refused to relocate and change schools again. By then, despite her many moves, she had already made lifelong friendships at Landon, some having been with her since Southside Grammar and Spring Park Elementary. For her entire senior year, her father would leave Florida on Sunday afternoons and come back on Friday nights after working all week in Georgia, just so that his daughter could graduate from Landon as she had longed

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31

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Sissy in Lionette uniform, 1953

to do. “That was a sacrifice on my parents’ part, and until the day he died, I told him how much I appreciated it,” she said.

At Landon, there was a senior English teacher, Mrs. Perkins. “She was the best! She had us memorizing poetry all the time and would give us sample SAT tests,” Barker said. And there was Miss Katheen Turner, the girls’ gym teacher who created the Lionettes, the drill team that marched at halftime during football games; Barker was a member. “Boy, was she ever strict! But we still loved her, and the Lionettes were well known all over the state,” Barker said.

Hayrides, bonfires, and roasting hotdogs were popular summer pastimes at a place on the beach called Hill 13, somewhere in the Ponte Vedra area. At least once a month on a Monday night, Barker and three of her friends—Dot Cohn, Jean Rush, and Betty Douglas—would go to Patti’s Italian Restaurant on Beach Boulevard. It’s no longer there.

On Saturdays and on Sundays after church, a favorite activity was lying out on the beach—Atlantic Boulevard being the only road that led to the beach back then, before Beach Boulevard and then, much later, J. Turner Butler Boulevard. Barker loved lathering her skin with baby oil and iodine, but she could never tan, only burn and peel.

It was during high school that Barker learned to drive her dad’s Mercury and later acquired a used one of her own. She’d drive anywhere except over the Mathews Bridge that was constructed in 1953 because “I was always scared to drive over it. It just seemed so high,” she said. Years later, she’d be fortunate enough to get her first new car—a black and white Vauxhall with red leather interior.



Vauxhall, Sissy Barker’s first new car

Barker was on the Landonian committee, helping to put together their annual yearbook. Many of the photos had been taken at Oriental Gardens where her mother’s best friend, Grace Leunig, worked at the gift shop.

Barker graduated from Landon in 1954. “I graduated in the best class ever,” she said. And many of those students still live in Jacksonville.

To reunite with her father in Columbus, Barker moved back north and went to the University of Georgia, majoring in education and pledging to the Kappa Kappa Gamma sorority. Her college roommate, ironically, happened to be a girl she had met at camp years earlier, Millie Parks.

Barker left the university after two years, married, and had a daughter, Sally Parsons, who today is the executive director of The Women’s Board at Wolfson Children’s Hospital. They lived in Marietta, Georgia, and Barker would commute to Atlanta to teach special education classes at a private school for those with learning disabilities.

When her 24-year-old husband died of a blood clot, Barker moved back to Jacksonville with her daughter and married

Bill Richardson, a graduate of The Bolles School, whom she had dated in high school. They had three sons together—Bill, Charles, and John—before divorcing.

Barker raised her four children on Mapleton Road in the Colonial Manor subdivision of Miramar. Eventually, her eldest son Bill bought that house from her. “I’m so happy that it’s still in the family because we have so many memories there,” Barker said. She is proud that all four of her children attended Hendricks, Pine Forest, Landon, and Wolfson.

She remembers the five of them often stopping for takeout at Beach Road Fish House & Chicken Dinners on their way home from the beach on weekends. After church on Sundays, they would stop in the Old South Restaurant on Atlantic Boulevard in St. Nicholas.

When her boys became active in the youth group at All Saints Episcopal Church where another high school friend, Jack Banks, was a priest, Barker decided to join as a member. She and Eleanor Coalson took charge of fundraising for the youth group. They arranged a seafood dinner and auction, which today, more than four decades later, is still an annual event bigger than ever. Barker attends every year to show support, though she is no longer a church member.

After graduating from the University of North Florida in 1975 with a degree in education, Barker began teaching at Hendricks Avenue Elementary School in San Marco in 1976 and earned her master’s degree in 1994 in the midst of her 24-year teaching stint. She taught third, fourth, and fifth grades. Fourth was her favorite grade to teach because, at that age, “They still love the teacher,” Sissy said. “In fifth grade, they start growing up, and the girls start noticing the boys.” To this day, Sissy occasionally meets with former students for lunch.



Sissy carrying Olympic torch with escort Scott Blinkhorn

In 1996, Barker carried the Olympic torch. “I will forever be grateful to Matt Carlucci for suggesting to the Olympic committee that I run it in front of Hendricks Avenue Elementary where I was teaching.” All of the summer school students sat along the road holding signs and torches made of construction paper, cheering her on. The school’s marquee read, “Run, Mrs. Barker, Run.” In her relay running group were Alex Trebek (of Jeopardy), Bob Hayes (the Olympic sprinter), Tim Deegan (the local news meteorologist), and Jay Stein (president of Stein Mart, Inc.). Her side-by-side running escort was Scott Blinkhorn, the son of a fellow teacher. Afterwards, Barker and her sister were fortunate to have tickets to the opening ceremonies in Atlanta.

For the past 38 years, Barker has been married to Jim Barker of the former James M. Barker Construction Company, whom she refers to as “the love of my life.” They have traveled the world together. They have lived on the same block in the same small house on a gorgeous piece of property on the river throughout their entire marriage. At first, their neighborhood was called Green Cove Springs, then Jacksonville. For a time, it was called Fruit Cove or Switzerland. Now, the area is known as Saint Johns. But the zip code never changed. “It’s crazy!” Barker said.

She considers it a blessing that all four of her children and most of her eight grandchildren live close by. She also has five great-grandchildren whom she enjoys playing



Jim and Sissy Barker

with. There’s Jim’s two children and three grandchildren, too. “We call all of them ‘ours,’” Barker said. She keeps close contact with her 90-year-old sister who lives half the year in Miami when she’s not in the North Carolina mountains. When Barker’s not occupied with family, she reads avidly.

Barker remains active in the Landon Alumni Association on the Reunions Committee and helps plan formal gatherings every five years. Last spring marked their 65th reunion. People come from all over to attend. She credits Bill Burton, Reed Tillis, and Carolyn Graham for holding them together and keeping them informed via a monthly newsletter. In addition, twice per year, seven couples—10 of whom were former classmates and have remained close since Landon and earlier—get together for house parties. They also had a Medicare party when they turned 65 and another party when they turned 80. “I’ve been blessed with many, many friends,” Barker said.

Although she is 83 years old now, that did not stop Barker from ziplining during a recent trip to Montana. “She’s one amazing lady that I am proud to call my mom!” said her daughter, Sally Parsons.



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Safely tucked away on 40 acres in Mandarin is a special place that many people call home, including June & Steve Meinstein. After 32 years trekking from Upstate NY to Jacksonville each year, these snowbirds traded in their tire chains for bike pumps. Their 30-year history with River Garden has culminated in an active lifestyle at The Coves for nearly four years.



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Cultural Council installs fifth sculpture in urban core

By Marcia Hodgson
Resident Community News

It was with great excitement that downtown arts benefactor Preston Haskell of Ortega joined sculptor David Engdahl of San Marco, artist Cecilia Lueza, and Glenn Weiss, director of public art for the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville to watch the fifth sculptural masterpiece within the city's Art in Public Places program take its place on Sept. 12.

The Cultural Council, in collaboration with VyStar Credit Union, installed the sculpture "NOVA" in the plaza on Hogan Street near the VyStar parking garage. Fifth in a series of six works of art, the metal creation was made by Lueza and is part of a more than \$400,000 Downtown Sculpture Initiative that partners with private companies to enhance the city.

A sixth and final sculpture will be placed at the corner of Laura Street and Forsyth Street on Saturday, Oct. 31. The title of the sixth sculpture is "Laura's Flower" and it was created by Gus and Lina Ocamposilva of Oldsmar, Florida. Although the sixth

sculpture will be placed on public land, its installation is in partnership with Farah and Farah Law Firm.

"NOVA," is the second artwork to be on display downtown by Lueza. In 2017, she painted colorful shapes on the JTA Skyway columns on Hogan Street that are in view of her latest work. Her sculpture transforms those same shapes into a 3D painted steel sculpture. The sculpture continues Lueza's pattern along Hogan Street and complements the murals on the VyStar parking garage, which were painted by internationally renowned streetscape artist Remi Rough of London, England in 2019.

Lueza, an Argentine American artist and sculptor, is well known for creating vibrant public art pieces in a range of mixed media. From painting and sculpture to monumental installations and street murals, she explores the visual effects of color and incorporates elements of nature and geometry. In addition to Jacksonville, her sculptures and murals can be seen at the Facebook Data Center in Alabama, as well as in public spaces in Missouri, Arizona,



Glenn Weiss, director of public art, Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville with artist Cecilia Lueza and San Marco sculptor David Engdahl.

Washington D.C. and many Florida cities such as Tampa, Orlando and Fort Lauderdale.

VyStar Credit Union was recently recognized as Corporate Business of the Year by the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville for its commitment to promoting art and culture in the community through various initiatives such as supporting the Jacksonville Arts & Music School, ArtRepublic, the Cathedral Arts Project and more.

"At VyStar Credit Union, we believe that art and culture are important in building a vibrant community, and this sculpture installation is one more way we are working to provide the necessary resources to do just that," said Brian Wolfburg, VyStar's

President/CEO. "We are proud to support talented local artists such as Cecilia Lueza and remain committed to supporting organizations and programs that bring creative ideas like this to life."

The Downtown Sculpture Initiative was spearheaded by Haskell nearly five years ago, and the first sculpture to be placed was "Harmonious Ascent," by Jacksonville artist Aisling Millar. It is located in a plaza on the east side of the JAXChamber building.

The second sculpture, "Opposing Forces," by Hanna Jubran, a sculptor from North Carolina, adorns the corner of newly named James Weldon Johnson Park (formerly Hemming Park) near City Hall at the corner of Monroe and Laura Streets.

David Engdahl, a sculptor from San Marco, has facilitated, coordinated, and managed the balance of the sculpture projects in the Cultural Council's initiative as a volunteer. He has overseen the installation of the remaining four works of art. The third sculpture, located at One Enterprise Center is entitled, "Entwined Line," and was created by C.J. Rench, an artist from Oregon. The fourth in the series, Jubran's "Baladee," stands at the corner of Adams and Main Streets and was a collaboration with Farah and Farah.

"We targeted locations where we might find landowners who are willing to participate and collaborate," Engdahl said. "For this fifth work of art, we contacted Brian Wolfburg of VyStar, who was all for it."

Engdahl said the Downtown Sculpture Initiative initially planned to install 10 works of art throughout Jacksonville's urban core. "The original concept is to have 10, but we don't have any more in the pipeline at this point," he said.



"NOVA" a sculpture created by Cecilia Lueza of south Florida is placed on its pedestal near the VyStar parking garage on Hogan Street.

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- Are experiencing symptoms of depression, anxiety, or grief
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Claudio Ventura, LCSW
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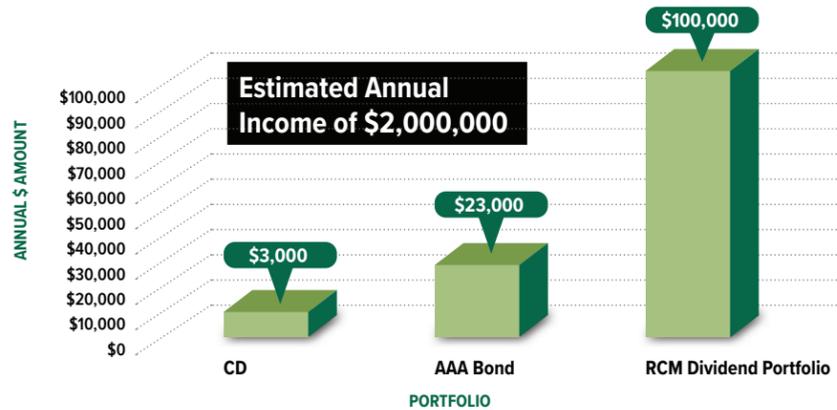
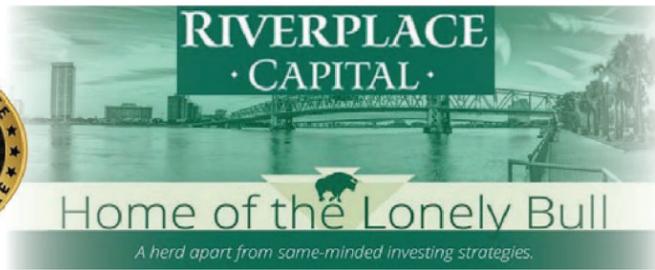
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How to Earn More in Retirement

By Scott Wohlers, Vice President
Riverplace Capital

There has been an enormous problem facing retirees since the Great Recession of 2008, and that is how to generate income while retired. This problem just got exacerbated by the recent global pandemic caused by Covid-19. The Federal Reserve cut rates to zero percent and will hold rates at zero until the end of 2023. This caused the 10-year US Treasury to sink to around 0.70%. This has thrown a curve ball to those who were retired or have been contemplating retirement. At present, one year bank offered Certificates of Deposit (CDs) are paying around 0.15%. For example, if you had \$2,000,000 and invested that in a one-year CD you would earn just \$3,000 a year! So, what are retirees to do and how do they overcome this predicament to make sure they do not outlive their money?

Some retirees have looked to alternative investments such as fixed annuities offered by insurance companies that pay a little higher rate than CDs, still their return is well short of what is required to live on. These contracts are typically either five or seven-year contracts that often have huge



Take advantage of stock appreciation while earning dividend income.

surrender charges if you try to take your money out early. Corporate AAA rated bonds, deemed riskier than Treasuries and CDs, have also been a vehicle used in the past to provide investors with a good return. However, the corporate bond rates for AAA corporate ten-year bonds are around 1.15%. If interest rates rise over the next ten years, you may face challenges re-selling the bond to liquidate your position.

With all these low yield investments that seem to have different levels of risk and fees,

what are retirees to do? **One strategy that stands out is investing in dividend paying stocks.** Corporations declare a fixed dollar amount per share they will offer as a dividend. The dividend yield is then calculated by dividing the fixed dividend amount by the share price. For example, if ABC Corp pays a \$5.00 dividend per share and the stock price is \$100, the dividend yield is 5%, the dividend yield moves up or down as the stock moves. If the stock goes up to \$110 or drops to \$90, you still receive \$5.00 per

individual stock share that you own. One thing to keep in mind when putting together this strategy is to not just search for the highest yielding stocks. They may offer a high yield; however, they may have no growth and may move downward in share price more than the market itself, or the company may reduce its dividend.

At Riverplace Capital, we research and identify stocks that pay a good dividend and have growth or appreciation potential. We target stocks where the average yield will be around 5 percent. For example, referring to our initial example of a \$2,000,000 portfolio, if you invested in a dividend portfolio that yielded 5%, that would provide an annual income of \$100,000 regardless of appreciation or depreciation of the stock itself! This gives you the opportunity to take advantage of appreciation of the stocks in your portfolio while also getting the returns from the dividends. Just like with any investment, there is risk involved, dividends are not guaranteed. That is why we believe it is important to work with a team that is actively monitoring and updating your dividend portfolio to help you navigate through your retirement. Our team of seasoned professionals has proven experience helping retirees maximize their retirement. We welcome the opportunity to work with you! To learn more, contact us at (904)346-3460 or info@riverplacecapital.com. **Sign up for our weekly blog and market updates by visiting www.riverplacecapital.com, or check us out on Facebook Live every Thursday at 12:45 pm.**

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As part of our commitment to enhance breast health education, UF Health Pathology and Laboratory Medicine – Jacksonville is hosting a free online forum about the latest information on breast cancer.



Directed by Shahla Masood, MD
Professor and Chair,
Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine
University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville
Medical Director, UF Health Breast Center – Jacksonville
Chief of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine,
UF Health Jacksonville

2020 Panel of Experts

from the University of Florida College of Medicine

Julie A. Bradley, MD
Associate Professor
Radiation Oncology

Shahla Masood, MD
Professor and Chair
Pathology

Leigh A. Neumayer, MD
Professor and Chair
Surgery

Bharti Jasra, MD
Assistant Professor
Surgery

Nancy P. Mendenhall, MD
Professor and Associate Chair
Radiation Oncology

Smita Sharma, MD
Assistant Professor
Radiology

Sarah Khan, MS, CGC
Certified Genetic Counselor
Hematology/Oncology

John D. Murray, MD
Associate Professor
Plastic Surgery

Lara Zuberi, MD
Assistant Professor
Hematology and Oncology



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Animal House

Caring for world wildlife one exotic animal at a time

By Julie Kerns Garmendia Resident Community News

ZOO VETS DEDICATE THEIR LIVES TO SERVING ENDANGERED SPECIES AND GLOBAL CONSERVATION

Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens veterinarians, Dr. Meredith Persky of San Marco, and Dr. Youssef Jafarey of Riverside, may live 10 miles from their place of employment, but through their job they experience a little piece of nearly every corner of the world. Inside the 115-acre botanical gardens located on the Trout River, they care for rare and exotic animals from every continent except Antarctica, and both are committed to their additional roles as veterinarian representatives for the zoo's global conservation missions to save endangered species and threatened ecosystems.

"With 2,000 animals to care for at the zoo, we know each by name and build a relationship just like a parent and child. It's important for us to create trust and rapport," said Persky. "The medical clinic's daily schedule includes surgeries, preventive health care, medications, nutrition or treatment of chronic conditions, illness, injuries and emergencies. Favorite toys, foods, or treats create a positive experience during exams. While some animals require sedation, others learn to participate in or at least tolerate treatment without sedation."

Each animal has a distinctive personality from the largest rhino to the smallest lizard. Both veterinarians enjoy getting to know and care for all of them throughout the year. Most fond of the mischievous Bonobo monkeys, Persky said that when Lorelle, an elderly Bonobo needed a procedure, there was concern.

"At age 48, Lorelle needed a procedure which is extremely risky and difficult at that advanced age. She is a testy one anyway, so for her to come through surgery and recover, it was only possible through the trust relationship we had with her," Persky said.

Then there are the zoo residents who are all-too-frequent visitors to the veterinarian clinic, some as often as three times weekly. One particularly feisty and unfortunately fearless, little black bear named Billy, regularly lands himself into trouble.

"We see Billy all the time because he is constantly getting into something he shouldn't. As soon as we see him, it's 'here we go again, what have you done now Billy!'" Persky said. "With so many active animals on such a large property, we get a lot of limping, cuts, wounds, and swollen faces. It's always a detective case to figure out what happened."



Dr. Youssef Jafarey performs a neonatal exam on a baby gorilla

Persky said she "was born to do this, because I light up just talking about it." She moved to Jacksonville for the zoo veterinarian position in 2016. Although zoological veterinarians typically relocate often during their careers, nationally or internationally, she said she looks forward to continuing her work here.

"There are frequent after-hours emergencies. We work straight through holidays and hurricanes. Regardless of what is going on, the animals still need us," she said. "Additional time goes to record-keeping, meetings and teaching, but I don't even mind. Only at the zoo can the public probably ever see and closely interact with these animals, hear the lions roar, or watch the gorillas. Every ticket sold helps pay for animal care and critical zoo outreach to save endangered wildlife in Florida and elsewhere."

Persky is married to local attorney Jay Silver who cares as much about animals as she does and understands emergency trips to the zoo at all hours. Their ACPS rescue dog, Patch, and rescue cat, Siporra, complete their family.

Meanwhile, Jafarey came to Jacksonville through Persky's recommendation. The two animal physicians met during training and worked together while both were employed at Zoo Miami. Jafarey, who especially enjoys the reptiles, cited several difficult challenges faced by zoological veterinarians.

"It is as tough to be accepted to veterinarian school as it is to medical school. Both educational paths are expensive and require



Dr. Meredith Persky examines a manatee
Photo courtesy of Jeannie Gordon



Dr. Youssef Jafarey examines a baby tiger

extensive post-doctoral training. Then, several years of related work experience are required to become a zoological veterinarian. Unfortunately, there are few of the necessary postgraduate positions available for zoological veterinarians each year. Usually there are only about 12 openings worldwide," he said. "We are the ultimate veterinary generalists, who must be prepared to handle every kind of emergency medicine, including anesthesia. It is a critical responsibility to safely anesthetize anything from a tiny frog that weighs two grams, to a 10,000-pound elephant."

Jafarey also tends to his own wildlife at home; his two pets were both hit by cars. He saved the life of his red-eared slider turtle, Ms. Pacman, and performed successful hip surgery on his rescue pitbull, Thea.

Jafarey and Persky are committed to informing and educating the public about local, regional, national, and international wildlife conservation. They are equally concerned about the closely related issues of deforestation and destruction of habitat, critical ecosystems, and plant species.

"Diverse factors impact wildlife survival, habitat and plant conservation. To protect and aid survival of threatened species, including the habitats and food sources they require, zoologists must support and coordinate efforts with local communities. They provide education, information, and ongoing support regarding conservation issues. They work to identify and develop sustainable livelihoods and food production methods to improve the standard of living for local residents. These efforts discourage poaching, illegal animal trade, deforestation, mining, wildlife and habitat destruction," Jafarey said. "Another way we help is to support park rangers, like those in Sumatra, Indonesia, who actively patrol to prevent poaching of the critically endangered Sumatran Tigers."

The Association of Zoos & Aquariums member organizations work cooperatively to help insure the survival of threatened and endangered wildlife species. They create and manage Species Survival Plans (SSP) of which the Jacksonville Zoo participates in 93. These comprehensive plans maintain captive populations of specific animals for genetic diversity and demographic stability in the U.S. and throughout the world – wherever wildlife faces extinction.

"We travel to a specific animal's location to investigate why that animal population is in decline. It could be threatened by invasive species, loss of habitat, food sources or other threats. We identify the threats and find



Dr. Meredith Persky holds two infant Eastern Pygmy Possums during a trip to Australia

solutions to save that animal, improve its breeding, overall health and ultimate survival however possible," Jafarey said. "An example would be local amphibian conservation efforts. There are only a few surviving populations of the aquatic striped newt salamander, once found throughout the southeastern U.S. Loss of habitat has decimated the population, but breeding, release, and monitor programs are underway."

The Jacksonville Zoo's extensive local, regional, and worldwide conservation programs support more than 45 global initiatives. A few include: Manatee Rescue & Rehabilitation Center at the zoo; Jacksonville Wood Stork Rookery Project at the zoo; Striped Newt Project-Apalachicola National Forest; Central American River Turtle Project - Belize; Gorilla Rehabilitation & Conservation Education Center (GRACE), near Tayna Nature Reserve, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC); Lola ya Bonobo - Kinshasha, DRC; International Rhino Foundation Project - Sumatra, Indonesia; Okapi Conservation Project - DRC; Rupununi Wildlife Research Unit - Guyana, South America; wild orchids - Jacksonville Zoo in coordination with Atlanta Botanical Garden's Southeastern Center for Conservation.

Persky and Jafarey both said that a portion of every zoo entrance ticket goes to fund local and global conservation. They encourage awareness of human impact on wildlife and the environment and suggest ways to conserve both.

"We share the world with these incredible animals. Unfortunately, without successful conservation efforts now, there may be a time when we cannot see a polar bear or a tiger," Persky said. "There are many small ways to take action in our daily lives. Recycle and purchase reusable items. Avoid plastic and discard it properly, not into waterways or the environment, where it can injure or kill wildlife. Choose sustainable fish and palm oil products. The expansion of non-sustainable palm oil plantations is among the leading causes of deforestation and loss of irreplaceable forest and jungle ecosystems."

The 33rd Annual Jacksonville Zoo SPOOKTACULAR will be held every night at the zoo from October 23 - 31st, 2020. For tickets and details go to www.jacksonvillezoo.org. Support the zoo and its conservation work through the purchase of tickets, become a member or patron, donate, volunteer and see events on their website. The zoo is located at 370 Zoo Parkway. Call (904) 757-4463 or email for more information: info@jacksonvillezoo.org.

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Students celebrate with cool reward

Students at Julia Landon College Preparatory School celebrated making it “halfway through the first nine weeks” of school when members of the Landon Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) handed out popsicles during lunch on Sept. 23.

Wolfson High students complete Eagle Scout projects

Christian Cosper and Andrew Pearson, students at Samuel Wolfson School for Advanced Studies have completed their projects toward becoming an Eagle Scout.

Cosper, a senior who plays football, soccer, and baseball, constructed a gaga ball pit for The Sanctuary on 8th Street, a nonprofit that helps children build productive futures and break the cycle of poverty.

Pearson, a junior who plays baseball, built 12 benches for the Wolfson High School tennis courts.

Eagle Scout is a distinction that roughly 2% of Boy Scouts achieve. It involves progressing through rank advancement, earning badges, taking leadership positions, community service, and completing a large project for a community organization.

For the Eagle project, Scouts must research, plan, communicate, budget, supervise and deliver an approved project to a community organization. This process can take 3-6 months.



Andrew Pearson and Wolfson High School Principal Christopher Begley with the new benches at Wolfson High School's tennis courts.



Henry Cosper's gaga ball construction crew built a game pit at Sanctuary on 8th Street. From left, Jacob Couch, Henry Cosper, Will Davis, and Christian Cosper

Cosper said he chose to “help give back to Sanctuary that gives so much back to the community. My Eagle project was the perfect opportunity to put this in action.”

Meanwhile, Pearson chose to build benches for the Wolfson courts after hearing about a need from the tennis coach. “I enjoyed the project because I got to do some

woodworking skills. I'm glad that I was able to do something to help my school,” he said.

Once Cosper and Pearson complete the Eagle Scout process, they will join five other Wolfson students who have earned Eagle Scout status—Will Brandler, Will Davis, Sam Davis, Mason Hicks, and Aakash Thornton.



Students study outer space at Jacksonville Country Day

Fourth graders from Jacksonville Country Day have been studying a science unit that is out of this world.

The students have been examining outer space exploration and what it might be like to live aboard the International Space Station. They have discovered the benefits and

disadvantages of the station's microgravity versus Earth's gravity on the human body. As part of their science curriculum during the past four weeks, the students have made up lists of problems faced by astronauts when spending long periods of time in space. They were also challenged to design an

innovation that would help solve one of the problems identified by their team using design thinking to empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test their ideas.

Each classroom presented their project to their classmates on Sept. 24 during an event called Makerspace Expo.

JCDS students work both on campus and at home by using the same supplies to create their solution. From left: Eden Sussman, Izzy Conmy and Kate Bowman



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Merit Scholar semifinalists announced

Officials with the National Merit Scholarship Corporation announced the names of 16,000 semifinalists in the 66th Annual National Merit Scholarship Program and several students from Jacksonville's historic neighborhoods were on the list.

This year five students hailed from The Bolles School, five from Episcopal School of Jacksonville, two from Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, one from Bishop Kenny High School and 19 from Stanton College Preparatory School including three for the San Marco area.

In all only 24 students from Duval County Public Schools were among the semifinalists.

This year's semifinalists from Bolles Class of 2021 are Yash Gupta, Lara Morello, Devi Priya Patcha, Edward Sun and Jessica Zeng.

The five Episcopal students on the semifinalist list were Braden Witkovich, Donald Kohla of Ortega, Jameson Gatewood, Paul Fouts, and Sally Barksdale of Avondale. Episcopal had six commended students as well including Jack Adams of Ortega, Grant Himes, Rohil Kanaparti, Ariel Largen, Reinhardt Peek, and Alston Rachels. Three Episcopal students – Ariel Largen, Ilana Simmons, and Garrison Washington – were invited to participate in the College Board National Recognition Programs for scoring in the top 2.5% of student who identify as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color).

Hallie Knight was Bishop Kenny's only semifinalist although two of her classmates, Jose Gallo and Yousif Shakoury were named as commended students.

At Douglas Anderson Brianna Borberly and Caroline Guiler were named to the semifinalist list.

A long list of students from Stanton were honored with semifinalist status, however John Blake Caven, Audrey Plauche, and Artin Rezaei are students from the San Marco area. Also, on the list from Stanton were Kanna Isabel Agnila, Saipraneeth Alchuri, Vireli Anbarasu, Aneesh Chatrathi, Aaron Dantzler, Ryan Diaz, Hayden Higginbotham, Freeman Kellam, Catherine Menker, Vikas Patel, Aileen Rajaei, Anya Reddy, Panita Ruangkanit, Taylor Schnorbus, Abhi Vishwanath and Martin Wall.

Rounding out the semifinalists from Duval's public schools were Marissa A. Norton and Jacob H. Scarborough from Paxon School for Advanced Studies. Jaabir A. Syed of Mandarin High School also achieved semifinalist status.

The students will continue in the competition for 7,600 National Merit Scholarships worth more than \$30 million, which will be offered in the spring. More than 1.5 million high school juniors from 21,000 high schools around the country entered the 2021 scholarship program by taking the 2019 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, also known as the PSAT/NMSQT. That test served as an initial screen for program entrants. The semifinalists represent less than 1% of high school seniors in the United States.

To become a finalist, semifinalists must submit a detailed scholarship application, in which they provide information about their academic record, participation in school and community activities, demonstrated leadership abilities, employment, honors and awards received. They must have an outstanding academic record through high school, be endorsed and recommended by a high school official, and write an essay. More than 90% of semifinalists are expected to attain finalist standing.



Hallie Knight



Jose Gallo



Yousif Shakoury



Devi Priya Patcha



Edward Sun



Jessica Zeng



Lara Morello



Yash Gupta



Brianna Borberly



Caroline Guiler



Braden Witkovich



Donald Kohla



Jameson Gatewood



Paul Fouts



Sally Barksdale



Artin Rezaei



Audrey Plauche



John Blake Caven



Alston Rachels



Ariel Largen



Jack Adams



Grant Himes



Reinhardt Peek



Rohil Kanaparti



Ilana Simmons



Garrison Washington

St. John's Country Day students honor 9/11 survivors

Students at St. Johns Country Day School took a few minutes during their daily morning flag ceremony on Sept. 11 to remember the first responders and 2,977 Americans who lost their lives when the Twin Towers in New York were destroyed in a terrorist attack on 9/11. J.D. Lewis and Callum Steiner, raised the flag and then lowered it to half mast as St. John's lower school music teacher, Liz Brink, sang the "Star Spangled Banner."

Students throughout the school of all ages also did various activities (such as making posters and read the book, "Fireboat" to help them understand the day and why it's important for a nation to remember its history.



J.D. Lewis and Callum Steiner raise the flag at St. Johns Country Day.



Two St. Johns Country Day students stand by a poster they made to commemorate Sept. 11.

Episcopal conducts training so that all are welcome on campus

Faculty and staff on the Episcopal School of Jacksonville's Munnerlyn Campus participated in Cultural Competency and Civil Discourse training during professional development days just before the start of school. Presenters from the University of North Florida's Department of Diversity Initiatives hosted small group discussions on cultural competency for faculty and staff, covering such topics as the difference between diversity and inclusion, equality, and equity.

The discussion groups had a chance to reflect on and share the extent to which the Episcopal community has embraced both diversity and inclusion in its effort to "respect the dignity of every human being." Similarly, participants explored affirming language and completed a "What Next?" activity.

Facilitators for the discussion were Sheila Spivey, senior director of the Department of Diversity Initiatives (DDI) at the UNF, and Brandi Winfrey, associate director of the DDI at UNF, who leads the Intercultural Center for Peace and the Student Alliance for Inclusion and Diversity.

Also last week, faculty and staff participated in civil discourse training provided by Kyle Reese and Nancy Broner from OneJax, an interfaith organization on the UNF campus. A small group of ESJ teachers were trained in advance to act as facilitators of discussion small groups for all faculty and staff. As part of this community-wide education, participants learned how to best engage in a conversation or dialogue to better understand another person, as well as how to actively listen to someone with different opinions. The Civil Discourse Team put together some community norms to serve as a toolbox for healthy, productive, civil conversations in and out of the classroom.

"In order to better facilitate healthy and productive conversations, we must practice these conversations ourselves so that conversations don't evolve into personal attacks or commonly used tropes," said Emily Farmer, AIR Steering Committee member and ESJ history teacher. "Every classroom, as well as some common areas, will receive a poster to serve as a reminder to all about the best ways to engage with each other."



Emily Farmer and the Civil Discourse team as they prepare for the training.

"We look forward to continuing our partnership with UNF's Department of Diversity Initiatives as well as OneJax," said Amy Burrows Perkins, director of Student Services and chair of the AIR Steering Committee. "I felt the training provided us with concrete examples of ways to understand these very emotional and extremely important topics and helped us to find a common language to communicate with so that all can feel welcome on campus."

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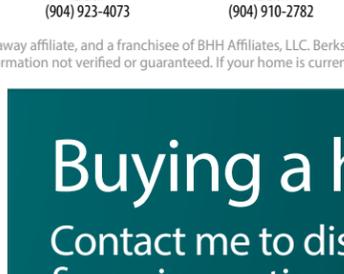
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