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FIERCELY LOCAL NEWS... FIERCELY LOYAL READERS

RESIDENTNEWS.NET

JULY 2021 VOL. 14, ISSUE 07



## CSI HELPS STUDENTS, RAISES FUNDS FOR YOUTH

CSI Companies Chief Executive Officer Chris Flakus and his wife Jennifer were among the many proud supporters that believe in a brighter future for youth on the First Coast.

The CSI Companies and their fundraising initiative hosted the annual CSI Gives Back Gala to celebrate with friends and co-workers to raise awareness as well as resources for students in need.

READ MORE ON PAGE 18



## BACK TO BUSINESS, MERCHANTS GATHER FOR MIXER

Jeannie Smith and Maria Poole of Odyssey Travel were among the many business leaders and networking enthusiasts who were happy to be back in action, socializing and mingling the night away. The mixers, brought to patrons by the San Marco Merchant Association, have become highly anticipated opportunities to meet, greet and make connections for business owners and other San Marco enthusiasts. The pandemic had sidelined the functions for over a year, but the return to good company, great libations, and a swanky local watering hole delivered a phenomenal turnout.

READ MORE ON PAGE 19

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## FIS CELEBRATES TOPPING OFF AT GLOBAL HQ

Secretary of Commerce, Enterprise Florida Jamal Sowell, representing FIS were Ellyn Raftery, Bruce Lowthers, Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry, Ido Gileadi, Chairman and CEO Gary Norcross, Denise Williams, Woody Woodall, John Eagle, Amy Mergen, Greg Montana and Marc Mayo.

### LEED CERTIFIED BUILDING BECOMES SKYLINE FIXTURE

It was a big day for Fidelity Information Services (FIS) and an even bigger day for the city of Jacksonville, as leaders of the Fortune 200 company hoisted the final beam to highest point of the 12-story, global headquarters June 7. The state-of-the-art Platinum LEED Certified and WELL

Building Standard® accredited building will be one of the most energy and environmentally friendly buildings in the city when completed.

Kicking off the ceremonies, FIS CEO Gary Norcross talked about the leadership of Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry, praising the administration for making the deal happen, it could not have come together without him, he said.

"We operate in more than 100 countries around the world to

deliver leading edge financial technology innovations and it all starts right here in Jacksonville," said Norcross. "So, there is no question that this new building will be busy and well used, and when those employees step into this building when it's completed in June of 2022, it will feature 12-stories, 25,000 square-feet of state-of-the-art client engagement and innovation centers, a workout facility, an on-site dining hall, all with expansive views of the St. Johns River."

For Jacksonville, having the presence of Fidelity's global operations is a big step in the forward progress for the city, which was echoed by Mayor Curry.

"My administration and I were proud to work with Gary [Norcross] and his team on an agreement for this new headquarters, which is also bringing more jobs and an expanding company presence in our community," he said. "Our city has a strong and growing reputation as a leader in Fintech, due in large part to the presence of FIS."

## Winn-Dixie chooses Miramar for its first stand-alone liquor store

BY KAREN J. RIELEY  
Resident Community News

Southeastern Grocers, the parent company of Winn-Dixie supermarkets, is planning to open its first free-standing Winn-Dixie liquor store at 4472 Hendricks Ave., in Miramar Center, just south

of San Marco. The 8,640-square-foot liquor store will stock beer, wine and distilled spirits. While the projected opening date hasn't been finalized, SEG representatives have indicated that it will be before the winter holidays.

The liquor store will be at the south end of the shopping center that includes Players Grille sports bar, Toscana Little Italy, Open

Road Bicycles, The UPS Store and CareSpot Express Healthcare, owner Sleiman Enterprises has reported.

Currently, there are 10 Winn-Dixie Wine and Spirits stores in the Jacksonville area including five in the city. All are adjacent to company supermarkets.

In addition to Winn-Dixies, Southeastern Grocers is the parent

company of Fresco y Más, and Harveys Supermarket. The company is among the largest conventional supermarkets in the United States, according to its website.

Southeastern has grocery stores, liquor stores and in-store pharmacies throughout seven states: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina and South Carolina.



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# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

It is interesting to see Council Member Cumber breaking ground at the 'River's Edge - Life on the St Johns'. Speak highly of the project and how good it will be for Downtown. She then talked about private/public partnerships and how this project is a good example of such a partnership.

Yet just a few days later she did everything in her power to block a project which would tie the River's Edge's 950 housing units, office space, hotel and planned retail into the rest of Jacksonville's 3.2 square mile Downtown. She fought tooth and nail against the Ultimate Urban Circulator (U2C).

It seems CM Cumber has determined to fight a project before seeing whether or not it synergistically fits into a new vibrant Downtown area. She seems to miss that the U2C will be a major backbone for the Bay Street Innovative Corridor. That project will tie the booming Brooklyn Neighborhood to the rest of Downtown and the River's Edge of which she spoke so highly of in the June Resident.

CM Cumber also should study the map which shows the U2C route and how the line running over to the River's Edge will tie it into the businesses Downtown as well as the Publix being built in San Marco. This will also tie the 200 room hotel to a new convention center regardless of it being an expanded Prime Osborn Center at the transportation hub and new Amtrak station or a new

convention center built along the Bay Street Corridor.

In fact, by tying both the major full service and boutique hotels into the U2C and thus into a convention center, we will make Jacksonville much more attractive as a medium sized convention hub.

There is a question of whether the U2C will be too slow or can handle capacity. The initial speeds may slow but as safety features and restrictive lanes are added, the U2C can operate at higher speeds. Also the vehicles can train and therefore increase capacity for high volume events like sporting events, concerts, conventions and festivals.

Also unlike the Skyway, the U2C can readily add and repair as they are currently being manufactured as are spare parts. At cost of \$500,000 per vehicle the addition of rolling stock to meet increasing demand would be a simple process.

Hopefully as we move forward in the future with Downtown development CM's Becton, Cumber, DeFoor, Diamond and Ferraro will support the expansion of the U2C within the 3.2 square mile Central Business District and the inclusion of nearby areas such as Riverside, Springfield, San Marco (including the northern Phillips Avenue corridor), LaVilla, the Railroad District and Durkeeville.

The U2C is a good idea and should have the support of the Jacksonville City Council.

Bruce A Fouraker

*Come  
What  
May*

BY C.C. SNOWDEN  
Resident Community News

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# REBOOT UNVEILS DESIGN CONCEPTS FOR FORMER JACKSONVILLE LANDING SITE, PARK SPACE

BY KEVIN J. MEERSCHAERT  
Resident Community News

Three plans to renovate Riverfront Plaza, the former home of the Jacksonville Landing, were presented to the city's Personal Services Evaluation Committee June 24th.

The planners were tasked with designing a space that would be a great place for people to gather and enjoy the river and still allow successful private development.

Agency Landscape + Planning from Cambridge, Mass. presented a proposal that included park space, docks, play areas and river inspired canopies for shade. It also includes a fountain that would allow children and others to run under the falling waters.

Naming their project "A Love Story" Principal Landscape Architect Gina Ford told the committee the St. Johns is a unique river and that should be a focal point of any park development. She said they spoke to many locals in Jacksonville, many who said the river isn't being utilized properly. Ford said they want to balance the forces of nature with the river's ecosystem and the forces of the city's culture.

"We let the plan be inspired by the form of the river as a flowing system. We imagine the architecture here will enforce that," she said.

The Agency Landscape plan leaves the northeast corner of the site for a possible mixed-use private development including shops, a hotel and residential spaces. An underground parking garage would be built under the hotel space. All three proposals include space for a mixed-use site and similar parking.

The proposal's cost was estimated to come at or near the \$15 million guideline proposed by the PSEC, but the groups were told they could go beyond those dollars if they believed



it was necessary. It will be part of the determining factors regarding which group gets the committee's recommended approval.

The other two did just that. Philadelphia-based Olin Partnership Ltd. presented a \$27.4 million plan that includes beer gardens, a skate park, a quarter-mile loop walking trail and a theatre for outdoor events.

Landscape Architect Trevor Lee said Jax Park will be a celebration of the city and the river and would be worth any additional costs.

"Jax Park as a catalyst will spark economic development," he said. "The park's imageability will draw people locally and regionally as an exciting new urban park destination."

All the proposals include artistic portions which was a requirement from the committee.

The art is the main feature of the proposal from Chicago-based Perkins and Will. The 151-foot polished stainless steel by artist Jefferé would be a long tube that twists around to spell "Jax." It would also cost an estimated \$11-\$18 million. The artist said the cost could be offset to the city by donations and corporate funding.

The overall cost of the Perkins and Will proposal is estimated at \$25 million. The committee will now evaluate the proposals and rank them with the results to be revealed likely by the end of July.

Downtown Investment Authority CEO Lori Boyer said they will welcome any public input on the proposals beforehand and those comments will be a factor in the decision.

 For more information and renderings visit [residentnews.net](http://residentnews.net)

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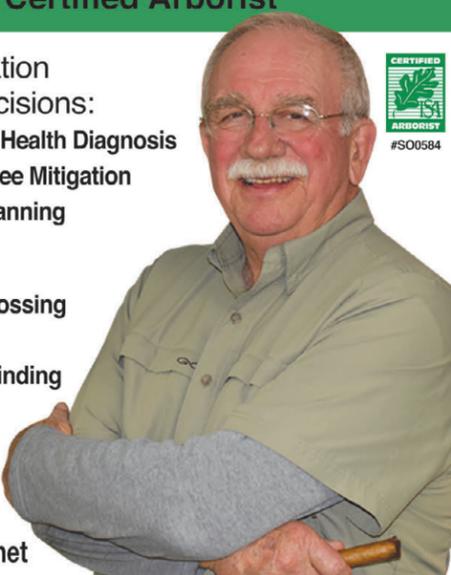
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# Council approves package for former site of River City Brewing



BY KAREN J. RIELEY  
Resident Community News

The \$99.16 million proposed Southbank apartment development to be called RD River City Brewery made significant progress on June 8 when the Jacksonville City Council unanimously approved Related Group of Miami's redesign of the project. The redevelopment agreement includes \$18.27 million in taxpayer incentives. The eight-story building with 327 multifamily units, an attached 535-space parking garage, and a restaurant and bar with 3,200 square feet of outdoor dining space and a 914-square-foot indoor dining area will replace the River City Brewing Company next to Friendship Fountain on Downtown Jacksonville's Southbank. The developer plans to buy Maritime Concepts' interest in the city-owned property and buy out the remaining 77 years of the company's long-term land lease. Maritime owns the existing restaurant. The 19-0 vote awarded Related Group a 75%, 20-year Recapture Enhanced Value

Grant, which could refund up to \$12.99 million of the parcel's property tax growth. The remaining public incentives package has \$5.277 million in completion grants for the restaurant and site infrastructure work; improvements to the 29-slip public marina; increased maintenance on the adjacent park; and city lease revenue loss. In January, Related Group of Miami submitted conceptual plans for the \$92 million project to the Downtown Development Review Board. The Downtown Development Review Board deferred conceptual approval or Related Group of Miami's redesign to give the developer a chance to make changes. The changed plans include pocket parks worked into the exterior, varying architectural design features in the windows and elevations, and resident lounge terraces. On March 17, the Downtown Investment Authority released a report that called the latest design "modern in style with clean lines, smooth textures, and minimal ornamentation." On March 23, the Downtown Development Review Board granted conceptual approval for the latest design for RD River City Brewery apartments.

# CONCERNS GROW ABOUT TOXIC COAL ASH SPILL

BY KAREN J. RIELEY  
Resident Community News

In March, a Moran tugboat pushing the 7,025-ton, 416-foot barge named Bridgeport from Puerto Rico lost control near the mouth of the St. Johns River, causing the barge to crash into the jetties. It was loaded with 14,000 tons of coal ash. Now, four months later, at least 9,300 tons of coal ash has spilled into the surrounding waters, and coal ash is sitting on the ocean floor. Several local agencies, such as St. Johns Riverkeeper and the Surfrider Foundation's First Coast Chapter, as well as biologists, environmental and maritime experts have expressed grave concerns over the ash. "While we don't anticipate significant impacts to water quality within the St. Johns River from the spill, we do have concerns about ash contaminants entering the aquatic food chain, including fish that use the river," said Lisa Rinaman with the St. Johns Riverkeeper. "Studies have documented high levels of chemicals, such as selenium, in the tissues of fish where coal ash has been discharged into waterways. "In addition, as the ash sinks to the bottom, it smothers aquatic organisms and plants essential to the health of the ecosystem," she said. The accident happened just off the coast of Hanna Park. The First Coast Chapter of the Surfrider Foundation is concerned about how the spill could negatively impact the health and safety of its members and others who regularly surf and enjoy outdoor recreation near the accident site.

"Despite our repeated calls to officials the last few months, testing information and transparency of the situation have been hard to come by," said Nicole de Venoge, chair of the Surfrider's First Coast Chapter. "We were told in May that the barge would be moved within the week and its still here. Surfers and swimmers are unknowingly recreating in untested waters after a known spill." A unified response team has been working to satisfy the Coast Guard that the barge can be moved into a safe berth without affecting the health and safety of the community, responders or the environment, according to News4Jax's I-Team. On June 23, the salvage team conducted a test tow. Coal ash is a waste product from the burning of coal in coal-fired power plants that contains toxic contaminants like mercury, cadmium, lead, selenium and arsenic. It can pollute waterways and drinking water and endanger wildlife and human health, if not managed properly, according to St. Johns Riverkeeper. In 2017 and 2020, the Puerto Rico legislature passed laws banning the disposal of coal ash in its landfills and the onsite storage of ash for more than six months. In response, the power company AES now ships its coal ash on barges into the port at Jacksonville, before the toxic waste is transported to a Folkston, Ga., landfill. "Pollution doesn't just go away when it leaves the property of a coal-fired power plant or a wastewater treatment facility," Rinaman said. "Polluters must be required to take responsibility for their own waste." Water quality tests are being conducted near the barge, and the results are imminent.

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# A Powerful Pair

NEWLY MINTED COUNCIL LEADERSHIP ILLUSTRATES PROGRESS, HISTORY IN THE MAKING



BY KEVIN J. MEERSCHAERT  
Resident Community News

A large group of local dignitaries gathered at Jacksonville City Hall Thursday, June 24 to swear-in new City Council President Sam Newby. Fellow at-large Councilman Terrance Freeman is the new Vice-President. It's the first time in the city's history that two African-Americans will lead the Council.

Newby recognized the two former African-American Council Presidents Warren Jones and the late Earl Johnson. Newby also said some of his major goals for the next 12 months include working to eliminate Jacksonville's problem of food deserts where residents have too far to travel to reach a grocery store. He is also establishing a special committee to be led by Vice-President Freeman to improve Jacksonville's parks and community centers. Newby also wants to establish programs to help at-risk youth find employment.

Next up for the City Council will be the annual budget presentation by Mayor Lenny Curry. The presentation will occur July 20, at 9 am in Council Chambers. The budget will then be reviewed by the Finance Committee chaired by Councilman Ron Salem beginning in August. The new budget must be approved before October 1.

# PHILANTHROPY AT ITS FINEST

PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS ILLUSTRATE EXCELLENCE IN ACTION



MaliVai Washington, Founder-MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation; Kevin Gay, Founder/CEO Operation New Hope; Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry; Cindy Funkhouser, Sulzbacher President and CEO; Alesia Scott Ford, Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Jacksonville Field Office Director; Dawn Lockhart, Director of Strategic Services - City of Jacksonville.

BY KEVIN J. MEERSCHAERT  
Resident Community News

Three of Jacksonville's major nonprofit organizations were honored June 22 by the city and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The inaugural COJ/HUD Public-Philanthropic Initiative Award is to be given out annually to recognize outstanding public-private partnerships in the community. Jacksonville is the first city in the nation to replicate the H.U.D. Secretary's Award for Public-Philanthropic Partnerships.

HONORED AT THE CEREMONY WERE;

**The MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation - Club 904 Teen Center.**  
The Center in Durkeeville helps teens develop the skills needed to excel in school and find work to break the cycle of poverty.

**Operation News Hope - Ready4Work.**  
The program assists people returning from incarceration with housing, transportation and employment.

**Sulzbacher - Homeless COVID-19 Response.**  
The Center was awarded due to its multi-approach response to tackling the dangers of COVID in the homeless community.

Jacksonville Mayor Lenny Curry presented the awards at City Hall. Curry said the government should be a great collaborator with great people and great organizations to accomplish goals for the public good.

"This award...is about recognizing excellent organizations that have worked in partnership with the community," Curry said. "These organizations demonstrate what can be accomplished when we work together as one city toward a common goal."

The awardees were selected by an independent panel of community leaders.

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## AIA Jacksonville Has A Riverfront Vision



The Jacksonville chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA Jacksonville) has a riverfront vision for the city. A chapter team has been developing the vision since 2015. Leading this initiative is a 48-year San Marco resident, Dave Engdahl, AIA Emeritus.

The AIA Jacksonville vision consists of a series of activity nodes developed at key points along the Riverwalks with pedestrian links connecting from the river into the city. Each activity node is envisioned to be based on a theme relating to Jacksonville’s history and culture and centered around a 15-20-foot-tall icon relating to the respective theme.

Each activity node will be anchored by a 100-foot-tall waveform marker visible from one node to another. Lasers on the markers will connect across the river and provide for light shows along the banks.

Today, the AIA vision is strictly that, a vision, not a plan or masterplan that mandates specific locations for the activity nodes, nor the specific story of Jacksonville history or culture to be featured at each respective node. The AIA vision provides a broad framework for projects that would feature Jacksonville’s story and engage residents and visitors alike.

To watch the two-and-a-half-minute video entitled “A Vision for Jacksonville” that summarizes and showcases the vision, visit [www.aiajacksonville.org](http://www.aiajacksonville.org).

## Episcopal School of Jacksonville renames Historic Acosta House



Head of School, Adam Greene, Bobby Schmidt (graduate 1978), Kent Schmidt, Jack Schmidt (class of 1970), Bill Schmidt

BY PEGGY HARRELL JENNINGS  
Resident Community News

Following a capital campaign called “Lead the Way,” the renovation of the historic building named for St. Elmo W. Acosta on the campus of Episcopal High School was celebrated and renamed to honor a founder and Director Emeritus in 1964 Gert H.W. Schmidt.

“The Acosta-Schmidt House is a significant building on the Episcopal campus. The school named its Advancement and Alumni office in memory of Schmidt who was instrumental in establishing the school’s endowment and who had been a faithful supporter of the school for more than 40 years. His son, Jack Schmidt ’70 is a Member of the Board of Trustees and Gert’s sons Bobby and Kent have been supportive of the school as donors and fundraisers. The long association of the Schmidt family made honoring their patriarch a fitting tribute,” stated Missy Ketchum, Director of Institutional Advancement. Gert Schmidt passed on in 2003.

Jack Schmidt, one of the first graduates of EHS, who attended the ceremony along with his brothers, spoke to the attendees which included past and present board members, faculty/ staff, family members and guests.

Headmaster Adam Greene greeted the attendees and recounted the school’s history, achievements, successes and standing. “On behalf of my brothers and myself, the dedication of the Acosta-Schmidt House to honor our father is very special. It is indelible in my mind what my father always said. ‘The two things that your mother and I can give you is a good name and a good education.’”, said Bill Schmidt, who was proud to see the turnout for the dedication.

“It was wonderful to have all four of Gert’s sons present at the dedication. We celebrate the leadership and legacy of Gert Schmidt as well as the relationship between Episcopal and the Schmidts,” shared Ketchum.

“It was wonderful to have all four of Gert’s sons present at the dedication. We celebrate the leadership and legacy of Gert Schmidt as well as the relationship between Episcopal and the Schmidts.”

- Missy Ketchum  
Director of  
Institutional Advancement

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## Wolfson Children's Hospital names Pediatric Trauma Center

### PORTER FAMILY RECOGNIZED FOR COMMITMENT TO PEDIATRICS



Peyton Sutton, Jesse Urbaitis and Phil Jr. with Phil and Roxanne Porter

Leaders of Wolfson Children's Hospital, the Wolfson Children's Emergency and Trauma Center teams, Kids Kare Critical Care and Trauma Transport team recognized the Porter family and Subaru of Jacksonville's generous commitment to support the Pediatric Trauma Program. A ribbon cutting and dedication of the Porter Family Children's Trauma Center at Wolfson Children's Hospital took place on June 18, 2021.

The Porters and Subaru of Jacksonville began supporting Wolfson Children's Hospital in 2016 with a five-year agreement to help fund Pediatric Trauma services and child passenger safety initiatives through THE PLAYERS Center for Child Health at Wolfson Children's Hospital. They have since extended that commitment through 2024 and will continue supporting Pediatric Trauma services, child passenger safety and other programs, including Child Life through their presenting sponsorship of the Christmas in July Toy and Donation Drive.

## AGENCY TURNS 25, DONATES FUNDS



Agency Owner Marme Kopp is surrounded by her staff as she holds the President's Award and the Spherion Administrative Office of the Year Award. From left to right are Stephanie Hesterlee, Travis Roth, Olivia Darcangelo, Laura Sylverston and Shelly Price, not pictured, Teresa Cameron and Ashley Mullis.

Spherion Jacksonville owner, Marme Kopp, is celebrating 25 years of connecting job seekers with employers by giving back to the community. Her staffing and recruiting agency will be donating \$2,500 to each of two local charities, the two that get the most votes.

The Spherion team has identified eight charities for the public to choose from: Feeding Northeast Florida, Hubbard House, Sulzbacher Center, The Tom Coughlin Jay Fund, Alex's Dragonfly Endowment, The MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation, Friends of Jacksonville Animals, and K9s For Warriors.

To participate in The Spherion Jacksonville Marme Money Giveback, visit [www.spherion.com/spherion-jacksonville-anniversary-giveback/](http://www.spherion.com/spherion-jacksonville-anniversary-giveback/) to learn more about each charitable organization and elect one from the list. Votes may be cast through July 2. Winners will be announced on July 9.

There will be no losers in the Anniversary Giveback. The six organizations that will not receive the funds will receive volunteer hours. For the past quarter century, Kopp's team has supported the community by offering time and expertise to local organizations gratis. They will continue to do so.

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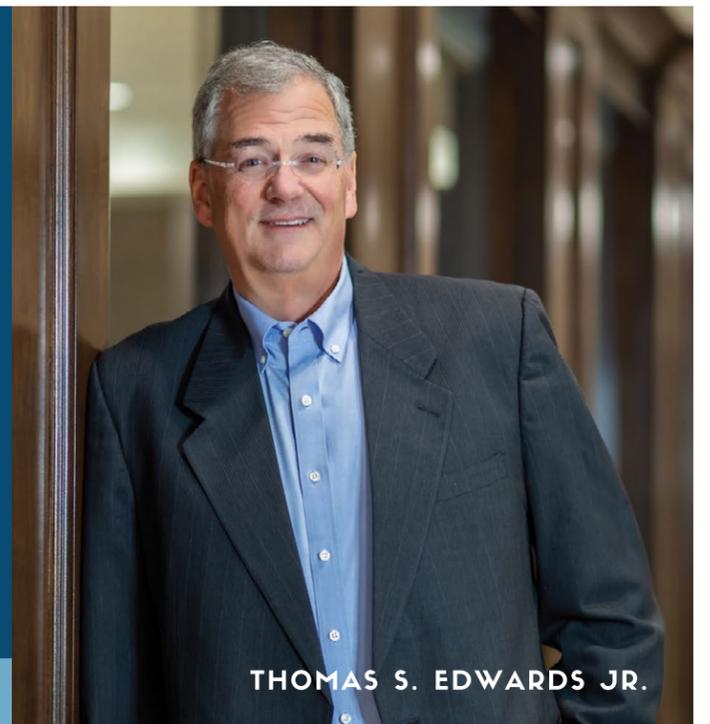
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# Coker Law Congratulates 14 Attorneys



Rufus Pennington, Daniel Iracki, Stefano Portigliatti, Chelsea Harris, David Thompson, Matthew Posgay, Howard Coker, Charles Sorenson, John "Jake" Schickel, Lindsay Tygart, Fraz Ahmed, Joel Harris, Steve Watrel and Chase Sorenson.

Coker Law announced that 14 of its attorneys have been selected to the exclusive Florida Super Lawyers and Florida Rising Stars lists this year. Annually, only a small percentage of lawyers in the state are selected by the Super Lawyers research team to receive such honors.

"It is a great honor to receive the Florida Super Lawyers and Florida Rising Stars recognition. This means the lawyers

throughout the state of Florida recognize the commitment Coker Law's attorneys have for the fight for justice for our clients and our experience in obtaining great results," said Matthew Posgay, a Coker Law shareholder.

The following named attorneys from Coker Law were chosen for the 2021 lists due to their high degree of peer recognition and professional achievement.

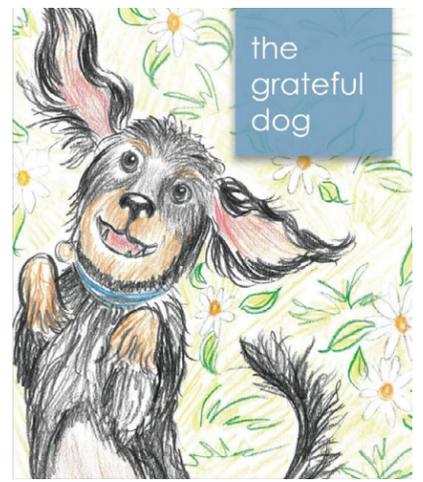
### Florida Super Lawyers

Howard C. Coker, Daniel A. Iracki, Rufus Pennington, Matthew N. Posgay, John "Jake" Schickel, Charles A. Sorenson, Chelsea Harris, Fraz Ahmed, Lindsay L. Tygart, Steve Watrel

### Florida Rising Stars

Joel Harris, Stefano Portigliatti, David Thompson

# NEW BOOK TO BENEFIT LOCAL DOGS



The Grateful Dog, by c.c. Snowden

Jacksonville native Carolyn Cantrell Snowden, who is the writer known as c.c. Snowden, and local artist Amy Stump have teamed up to create *The Grateful Dog*, a children's book that will benefit Jacksonville dogs needing homes.

Bo is the canine narrator, a very grateful dog. His identity was borrowed by Snowden from Stump's beloved pet who recently passed away. Bo's story is about having gratitude for the simple pleasures in life. Bo reminds humans that when they are grateful for what they already have, everything changes.

When asked about her writing process, Snowden claims that, sometimes, words come to her in phrases at 3 a.m. Sometimes, it's a particular event or situation that inspires her writing. This work came to her while thinking about the loss of Stump's dog.

Snowden is a freelance writer and a published poet. She began writing poetry in the fifth grade, and her personal collection now spans more than 35 years. Over that time, she became wife to Andrew and mother to Robin and Hallie. *The Grateful Dog* is Snowden's poem turned book, her first one.

A portion of all book sales will benefit adoptable dogs of Jacksonville and The Jacksonville Dog Café, which is Snowden's nonprofit. The organization's specialty is connecting people with adoptable dogs over free cups of coffee. Potential owners sip coffee while meeting dogs from a variety of local rescue organizations and shelters.

Paperback copies of *The Grateful Dog* may be purchased now through the author's website [www.CCSnowden.com](http://www.CCSnowden.com) and through the non-profit's website [www.JaxDogCafe.com](http://www.JaxDogCafe.com). Soon, the books will be available at select businesses throughout Jacksonville.

# Wolfson Children's launches movement for mental health

To address the growing children's mental health crisis by promoting wellness and early intervention, Wolfson Children's is bringing On Our Sleeves, a national movement for children's mental health, to the Northeast Florida/Southeast Georgia area.

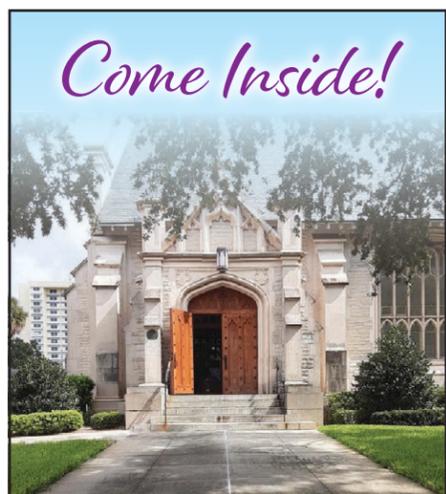
On Our Sleeves is based upon a simple concept: children don't wear their thoughts on their sleeves. It can be hard to tell when they are struggling with mental health. On Our Sleeves provides free, easy-to-use educational

tools and resources to help parents and caregivers start conversations, boost mental well-being and break stigmas associated with children's mental health. Each of the icons featured in On Our Sleeves' materials represents a thought or feeling that can spark a conversation.

"We have seen a significant increase in children admitted to Wolfson Children's Hospital for mental health crises since the pandemic began, but unfortunately this problem existed long before COVID-19," said

clinical psychologist Terrie Andrews, PhD, administrator for Baptist and Wolfson Children's Behavioral Health. "The key is to intervene before it becomes an emergency, but adults often don't know how to check in on a child's mental health. On Our Sleeves helps facilitate those vitally important conversations."

Wolfson Children's On Our Sleeves has been generously supported by the J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund and Robert and Margaret Hill.

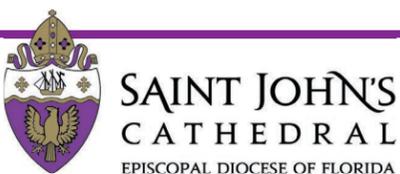


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## Two join JHS Board of Directors

At its May Board of Directors meeting, the Jacksonville Historical Society welcomed Venetia resident Jeff Thompson and Charles “Chip” Storey of St. Augustine as new members of its Board of Directors.

“The Jacksonville Historical Society is very pleased to welcome Mr. Storey and Mr. Thompson to its Board of Directors and look forward to engaging with each gentleman in areas that tap into their expertise and experience on behalf of the Society,” said Alan Bliss, Jacksonville Historical Society CEO.

Thompson has been in the construction industry for more than 40 years, as owner and president of Jeff Thompson Construction Company, with an interest in historic structures. He has served on the Florida Yacht Club’s Board of Governors for three terms, and holds a bachelor’s degree in management and marketing from Jacksonville University. Thompson has been engaged with the JHS on the renovation of the Florida Casket Company building in preparation for the future Jacksonville Area Music Museum, and will serve on the historical society’s property management committee.

Storey is a principal with Normal>Next, a network of seasoned executives, entrepreneurs, and young leaders from diverse backgrounds dedicated to helping the world thrive through profound economic, social, and environmental turbulence. He specializes in the planning and management of large-scale complex organizations including foundations, government agencies, universities, and nongovernment organizations (NGOs).



JEFF THOMPSON



CHARLES “CHIP” STOREY

Prior to his appointment to the Board, Storey has most recently been working with the JHS as a member of the music history museum task force, leading teams on the conducting and transcribing of oral histories taken from individuals in the Jacksonville music community.

Fluent in Spanish and Portuguese, Storey holds an A.B. from Harvard University and a J.D. from Stanford University. A volunteer in the research library at the St. Augustine Historical Society, he translates colonial documents from Spanish to English and conducts research on the two Spanish colonial periods.

“History is a family passion. My dad is currently writing a history of the 19th century US., and my mother co-authored one history textbook and was a contributor to another. My siblings and I all studied the history and literature of different world regions,” said Storey. “We have loved Northeast Florida for 30 years. Serving the Historical Society is a great way to meld the two passions.”

For more information about this topic, call (904) 665-0064 or email communications@jaxhistory.org.

## San Jose Episcopal Day School thanks teachers, celebrates



San Jose Episcopal Day School ended this school year celebrating all faculty and staff especially during this unprecedented year. Special milestone celebrations included Head of School Lori Menger who has been an employee of SJEDS for 20 years, 11 years as Head of School.

Other noteworthy milestones include 25 years of service for Mrs. Dawn Encarnacion (Mrs. E) and Mrs. Sarah Stanley. Mrs. E taught Pre K 4

for 14 years and then started the PK 3 program that has grown to capacity over the past 11 years. Mrs. Stanley has served as assistant teacher in the Extended Day program, Pre K 4 and currently kindergarten.

SJEDS takes pride in school history and has many time honored traditions that Mrs. E and Mrs. Stanley have carried on over the last 25 years. Each year students and parents look forward to grade level traditions including Mrs. E’s Mothers Day tea, silhouette’s and Christmas mistletoe keepsake. Mrs. Stanley’s current and former students will remember the Italian feast, Christmas Around the World and the Western Round Up.

## Bishop Kenny Alum heeds the call



It was during his junior year of college at the University of Florida that Fr. Mac began to hear a call from God to become a priest. This came after a year of being involved with the Catholic Gators. Fr. Mac describes a thought he had during the final blessing of Mass one Sunday, “I can do that.”

He quickly brushed it off, ignoring the thoughts that only continued to get louder over the next 8 months. Finally, after seeking counsel from several priests and praying specifically for the grace to desire what God wants, he felt more open to hear what God had in store for him. During adoration at a retreat with the Catholic Gators in 2014, Fr. Mac experienced an overwhelming sense of peace and clarity, this time answering God’s call with, “I’m ready.”

Fr. Mac Hill entered St. John Vianney College Seminary in the fall of 2014. In 2016, he entered the major seminary, St. Vincent de Paul, and graduated with his Masters of Divinity in May 2021. During his time in the seminary, Fr. Mac completed his pastoral year at San Juan del Rio under the direction of Fr. John Tetlow. He has been appointed to continue to work alongside Fr. Tetlow as a parochial vicar at the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine.

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## Lisska honored with award for commitment to history, culture and education

The National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution presented its Women in American History award to Emily Retherford Lisska.

From 1996 to 2018, Emily was executive director of the Jacksonville Historical Society. Since 2019, she has served as president of Florida Historical Society, a state-wide organization with a national impact. In submitting her nomination to the National DAR, Molly Knight, past regent Fort San Nicholas DAR, wrote: "Emily Lisska is an outstanding community trustee whose influence and accomplishments have made positive improvements to Jacksonville's cultural, historical and educational realms."



Emily R. Lisska wins local award from DAR

National DAR sponsors the award program to recognize women, past and present, in American history. According to the National Society's website, the honor is bestowed upon women who have made a contribution or a difference in their communities. Those chosen are those who are, or have been, intellectual, educational, social, religious, political, scientific, or cultural innovators.

While executive director of the Jacksonville Historical Society, Emily led a million-dollar restoration of the society's headquarters; restored the society's archival repository containing tens of thousands of documents and photographs. She oversaw all book publications of the society and was also curator of the Merrill House Museum.

In presenting the award, Ft. San Nicholas past president, Brenda Onur, said, "Our DAR chapter is especially proud to present this award to a woman who made such a significant impact on American history. Emily is a notable Florida woman with national status and is always willing to share her vast knowledge of history."

## MILLER FAMILY LEADS BY EXAMPLE, TEACHES FUTURE PHILANTHROPISTS



Families assemble hygiene kits to benefit locals in need



Miller Family Volunteer Day, May 23



More than 100 hygiene kits to be distributed

On May 23, Miller brothers David and Michael, founders of Brightway Insurance, saw their first ever Miller Family Volunteer Day come to life.

The Millers gathered with their families and many other volunteers from the Jacksonville area to assemble more than 100 hygiene kits. The supplies will be disbursed to the families and foster children who receive assistance from the Jewish Family and Community Services organization, hosts of the event at their Baycenter Road facility. Students at George Washington Carver Elementary School will also benefit.

In early May, Brightway collected supplies for the hygiene kits during a two-week drive at its corporate office on University Boulevard West. Residents donated necessary products like toothpaste and dental floss, soap and deodorant. "It's so great to be part of a community that enjoys working together to make our neighbors' lives better!" David Miller said.

"We are thrilled with the success of the event, which we plan to be the first of many. It was truly inspiring to see our vision of bringing families together in service come to life, building relationships while strengthening our community," he concluded.

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# Angels for Allison honors local teens, announces scholarship and awards

The Allison Brundick Haramis Foundation, Angels for Allison, a non-profit organization that provides financial assistance for expenses associated with the death of a child, announces the recipients of their annual Angels for Allison Service Award and Allison Brundick Haramis Scholarship. Angels for Allison works with more than 100 local high school students annually and selected two outstanding students to receive these awards.

The Angels for Allison Service Award honors high school students that best represent the spirit of service and volunteerism with Angels for Allison and inspire their peers to give back to the Jacksonville community. The recipient of this year's award is Paxson School for Advanced Studies high school senior Dawson Stickler (pictured). Dawson was recognized for his outstanding service and passion for the organization.



The Allison Brundick Haramis Scholarship from Angels for Allison provides financial assistance to a rising college freshman. The winner of this year's scholarship is The Bolles School high school senior Caitlyn Boyer. Throughout her many years of participation with the Foundation, she exhibited exemplary service, leadership, and commitment in helping others. She will continue on your studies at Wake Forest University

A small award ceremony given by the Foundation's Board of Directors took place on May 3, 2021 at the Blue Fish Restaurant in Avondale.

# MENINAK CLUB AWARDS LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS



LEFT TO RIGHT: Corey Udall, Garrison Washington, Caroline Guiler, Elie Haddad, Jim Love – President of Meninak Club, Deyona Burton, Neha Sonthi, and Kennedy Hill

On June 7, Meninak Club awarded each of 10 students with a Meninak Leadership Grant. The scholarships are to be used toward attendance at accredited four-year colleges or universities of the students' choosing. It's the Meninak Club's way of encouraging further educational development of tomorrow's potential leaders.

Awards were presented to the following graduates who are heading to specific schools with intended majors.

1. Deyona Burton – Robert E. Lee / Florida State University / Human Ecology
2. Ayanna-Rose Gray – Douglas Anderson / Louisiana State University / Communications
3. Caroline Guiler – Douglas Anderson / Air Force Academy / Aerospace Engineering
4. Elie Haddad – Mandarin High School / University of Florida / Chemistry
5. Kennedy Hill – William M. Raines / Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University / Mathematics
6. Donald Kohla – Episcopal / Princeton University / Ethics, Politics, & Economics
7. Ellie Rosenau – St. Johns Country Day / Berry College / Early Childhood Education
8. Neha Sonthi – Stanton College Preparatory / Georgia Tech / Biology & Biomedical Sciences
9. Corey Udell – Ponte Vedra High / University of North Carolina / Data Science & Biostatistics
10. Garrison Washington – Episcopal / Florida State University / Biomedical Engineering

These students were selected by the Meninak Club's Scholarship Committee based on leadership qualities, financial need, and academic potential. To qualify for a grant, each student must participate in the Youth Leadership Jacksonville Program, be a senior at a local accredited secondary school, aspire to attend an accredited higher learning institution, fill out an application, and meet for an individual interview.

"I so love the fact of sitting on the Committee and seeing these bright young people from our community be able to go to school and make a difference when they come back," said Tanya Guydos, Vice President and Banking Center Manager at Iberia Bank on West Bay Street.

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## St. Johns Country Day School welcomes new basketball coach

St. Johns Country Day School announced the appointment of Ian Gibson as the new Head Coach of the Spartans Boys Basketball program. Ian brings more than ten years of coaching experience to St. Johns including broad experience in the collegiate ranks.

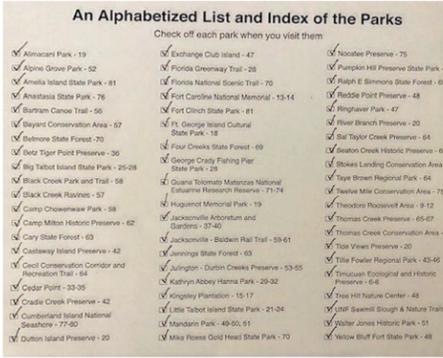
Ian began his coaching career at Virginia Commonwealth University, where the team earned a trip to the final four, and he currently serves as Director of Basketball Operations and assistant coach at the University of North Florida, where the team finished as ASUN Regular Season champions.

Ian is an accomplished leader who uses basketball to teach life lessons and emphasizes being a student-athlete. In addition to his coaching duties, Ian will serve as St. Johns' Director of Student Life, working closely with division heads to establish club programs, community service, and build Sparty Sports, St. Johns' youth development program.



IAN GIBSON

## Principal completes parks challenge



At a chance encounter at the Riverside Arts Market Lori Menger, Head of School, at San Jose Episcopal Day School met Ortega artist, Kathy Stark. Kathy was selling her beautifully illustrated book, *The Wilderness of North Florida's Parks*. The book is a treasure of places to visit in and around Jacksonville. When Lori discovered a checklist in the back of the book listing all 60 places the challenge started. Lori decided to make this her pandemic challenge and in March of 2020 started her visits. In June of 2021, the checklist was completed.

## Baptist Health President and CEO promoted from within, steps up and steps in to lead

The Board of Directors of Baptist Health selected Michael A. Mayo, DHA, FACHE, as the new President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Baptist Health in Northeast Florida.

Mayo is currently the interim CEO for five hospitals: Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, Baptist Medical Center South, Baptist Medical Center Beaches, Baptist Medical Center Nassau and Wolfson Children's Hospital and four satellite Emergency Centers, 55 primary care offices, more than 13,000 team members and 1,762 physicians.

Mayo has more than 32 years of health executive experience, including his most recent role as Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville hospital president.

Baptist Health Board Chair Richard Sisisky said, "We commend Michael for the thoughtful, decisive, and effective manner in which he has led Baptist Health as interim CEO. We unanimously chose to forgo our search process because we realized the right leader was already with us."

"Michael is a high energy leader with experience in both not-for-profit and for-profit health systems. He believes in a culture of trust and collaboration. His vision for the future along with his successful and effective track record of evaluating, restructuring, building and improving operational processes make him a perfect fit as the new CEO for Baptist," said Sisisky.

The Board is confident he has the vision and passion for taking Baptist Health to the next level in delivering the best patient care," Sisisky said.

"It is a rare privilege to lead the only faith-based, mission-driven, locally governed, non-profit health system in our region. These characteristics have set Baptist apart, and this opportunity energizes me. We have an amazing team, and I see an exciting future for our community, patients, physicians, and team members," said Mayo.

Vice-Chair Joe Louis Barrow, Jr. stated, "What's most important is finding the person with the exemplary character, cultural fit, and commitment to our mission. Michael is someone who will continue a legacy of thought leadership in Northeast Florida and throughout health care nationally."

Mayo and his wife Jennifer live in the Granada/San Marco area and they have two daughters and four grandchildren.



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# A Couple in Love with San Marco: Frank Wise and Janet Wylie

BY MARY WANSEER  
Resident Community News

Frank Wise and Janet Wylie are the husband-and-wife team who, last month, were presented with the annual Beautification Award by the San Marco Preservation Society for the residential renovation of their home on San Marco Boulevard. For the couple, the project became a labor of love rather than the investment task they had intended it to be.

They moved to Jacksonville in 2005 from Raleigh, North Carolina “looking for the next new thing,” Janet said. She is an engineer by training and holds a general contractor’s license. Frank had done a lot of building. They started a business, Wise Choice Properties (WCP). Over the past 16 years, the couple has had their hands in nearly 600 projects—remodeling to flip, building new to rent out, and renovating for clients.



Frank Wise and Janet Wylie

“

**“WE WERE NOT GOING TO MOVE INTO THIS HOUSE, BUT WE FELL IN LOVE WITH THE NEIGHBORS, AND WE FELL IN LOVE WITH THE NEIGHBORHOOD”**

—Janet Wylie

”

In 2018, the couple bought 1898 San Marco Boulevard, just down from the square. “It was a scary house! It was foreclosed and abandoned. It was a mess,” Janet said. They bought the house to renovate and flip it. As they were working on the house, people would knock on the door and thank them for buying it. Now that the work is complete, people ring the doorbell and request to tour the inside. “We were not going to move into this house, but we fell in love with the neighbors, and we fell in love with the neighborhood,” Janet said.

“I never knew San Marco from Arlington when I came here in 2005,” Frank admitted.

But today, he sings a different song. “The greatest people, in all the years I’ve been in Florida, are right here in San Marco,” he says now.

Frank was born in Boston, but he spent most of his young life in Cincinnati, Ohio. He worked for General Electric Company (GE) for 23 years in PA, MA, and OH. He’s now retired from there, but even while still employed by the company, he’d renovate and flip houses.

Frank’s first wife had passed away in Raleigh, North Carolina, and that’s where he met Janet in 2002. Janet had just sold a condominium that she had owned and, together, she and Frank began building houses on the gains—14 of them in North Carolina as rentals.

Janet grew up in the Westside area of Jacksonville. She moved away to attend college, Georgia Tech, and then pursued a career in the technology industry. She owned and sold her own company.

In 2003, Janet purchased a triplex residential building near family members by the beach in Jacksonville as an investment property with plans to eventually turn it into a single-family home for when she and Frank were ready to move down, which came two years later. That would become the couple’s first renovation experience in Florida.

They liked the eclectic nature of the people at the beach, but no group is more down-to-earth than those from San Marco, in Frank’s opinion. “We love it here. I’m not moving,” declared Janet.



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Roger and Kristin Beale with Tatiana Aponte and Ramon Quevedo



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## CSI Gives Back Gala funds student needs, dreams

The CSI Companies hosted *An Evening in Rio* at Epping Forest Yacht and Country Club on a beautiful Friday evening, June 25. Gala-goers were treated to an outstanding spread of food and spirits as well as music and entertainment as they mingled with like-minded friends. The riverfront oasis and gardens of the private club were on full display, as rains parted just in time for sunset strolls.

The fundraising initiative and philanthropic arm of the company has been enhancing quality of life and providing resources for youth in Northeast Florida. By providing essentials like food, shelter, and clothing, the organization helps to make dreams come true and raises quality of life for countless young people. The goal is to fortify resources to enable more students on the First Coast to live a more fruitful existence.

## K9's for Warriors to expand, gets help from local patrons

It was a morning full of inspiration and strong testimony, as a team of leaders from K9's for Warriors welcomed guests to Brunch and Bubbly, a gathering that engaged patrons and friends of Mike and Gayle Balanky high atop the San Marco skyline in late May.

The St. Johns County-based nonprofit is on a mission to educate and grow donor support for a new mega-kennel, an expansion that will be equipped with over 200 kennels to increase the number of dogs the nonprofit can save and pair with veterans.

The organization helps struggling vets gain companions of the K9 kind and has a track record of successful recovery and therapies for veterans seeking help with PTSD and other related anxiety issues. The list for help is long, and the wait is even longer due to an overwhelming demand, an aggressive fundraising campaign was announced to raise awareness shrink wait times for those in need.



Bonnie Hayflick with Lindsay Snyder, Donor Relationship Manager with K9's for Warriors



Billie Tucker Volpe w



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San Marco Merchant Association President Scott Wohlers with Jeannie Smith and Maria Poole of Odyssey Travel



Mike and Gayle Balanky



Robin Wahby with Dean Friloux and Wai Lai Chan

# SMMA mixer helps build rapport, grow connections



Hampton, Margeaux and Kristanna Barnes



Missy Cady-Kampmeyer with Tasha Brooks and Chad Backer



San Marco Preservation Society President Desiree Bailey with Candace Singleton

Local support was strong for San Marco Merchants (SMMA) and other community partners, including San Marco Preservation Society, as a return to social gatherings delivered a successful mixer June 3. The Parlour speakeasy cocktail lounge, located in the rear portion of San Marco Square's Grape and Grain Exchange played host to the gathering, which saw a healthy crowd of guests make way through the function.

"We are glad that we were able to bring back this highly popular and well attended event to reconnect the local residents with the local merchants. It turned out to be a huge success," shared Scott Wohlers, San Marco Merchant Association president.

COVID had sidelined many of the opportunities for socializing, therefore hampering the ability the organization had to create a sense of community solidarity. The group of enthusiastic patrons made the best of a fine evening, fortified many connections, and thanks to the sponsorship and organizing ability of the SMMA, will look forward to another mixer in the coming months ahead. For more information or if you are looking to join the merchants or learn of the next mixer, send an email to [SMMA@mySanMarco.com](mailto:SMMA@mySanMarco.com).



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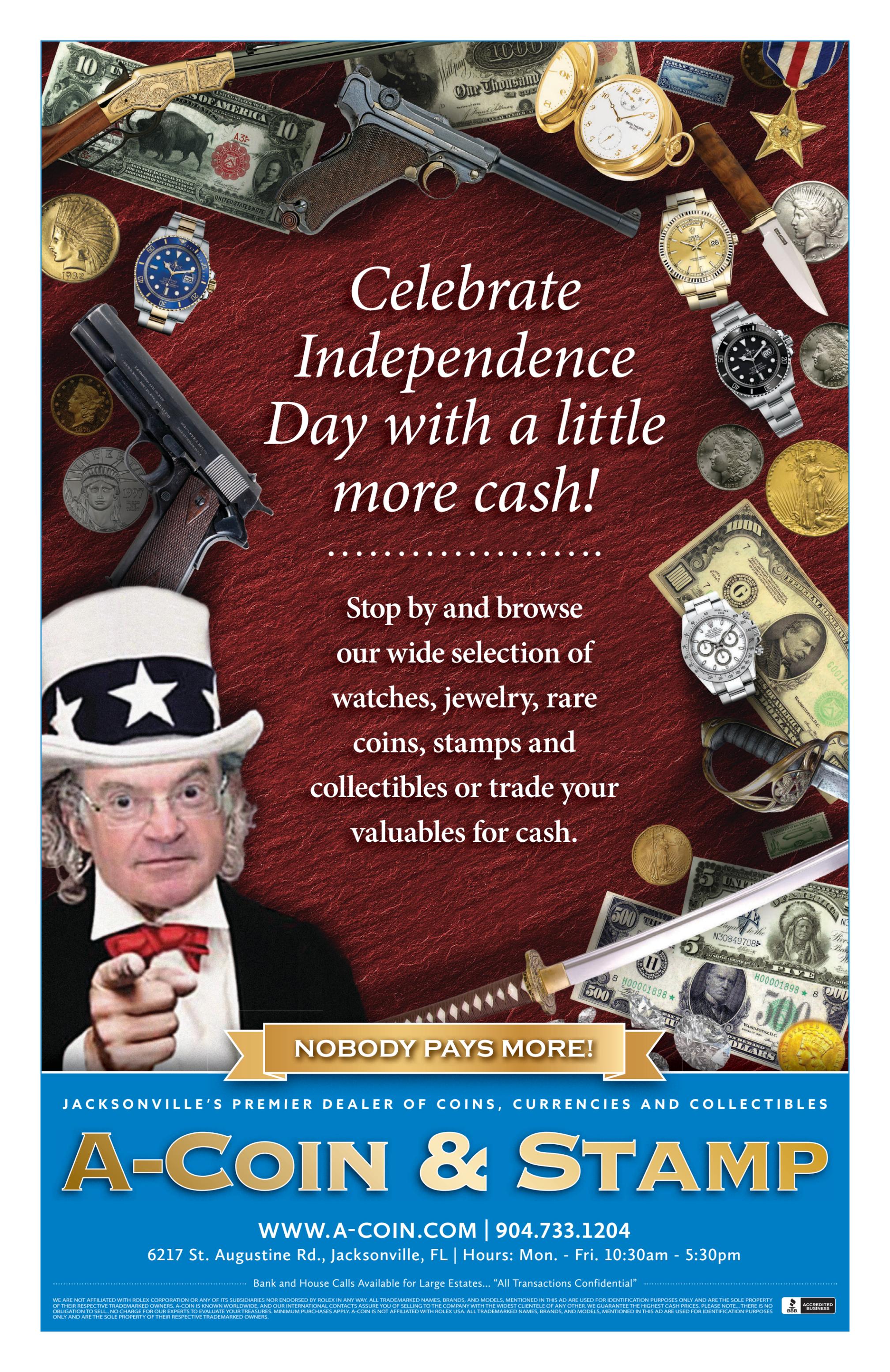
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# RALLY FOR ISRAEL GROWS INTERFAITH BONDS

BY MARY WANSEER  
Resident Community News

A rally to support Israel was held on May 30 on the front lawn of Christ the Messiah Church on San Jose Boulevard. More than 100 Christians and Jews attended as a testament to their shared core values.

“Our common love of Israel and the Jewish people brought the two groups together in total unity,” said Isabel Balotin, founding member of the newly formed Northeast Florida chapter of StandWithUs/Southeast, an international non-partisan and nonprofit organization that supports Israel and combats antisemitism.

The rally was the first event of the new chapter. It was organized by Balotin with the assistance of a steering committee. The church’s Pastor Bez and his wife, Rachel, led their congregation in hosting the event.

The rally opened with the sounding of three shofars. In attendance were synagogue members, church congregants, local Israelis, Holocaust survivors, and others. Songs were sung and flags were waved. Passersby honked their car horns. Various speakers addressed the crowd. Folks were encouraged to report any local antisemitic incidents to the new chapter for proper handling by StandWithUs/Southeast.

The event closed with the appearance of two rainbows in the clouds despite the absence of recent rain.



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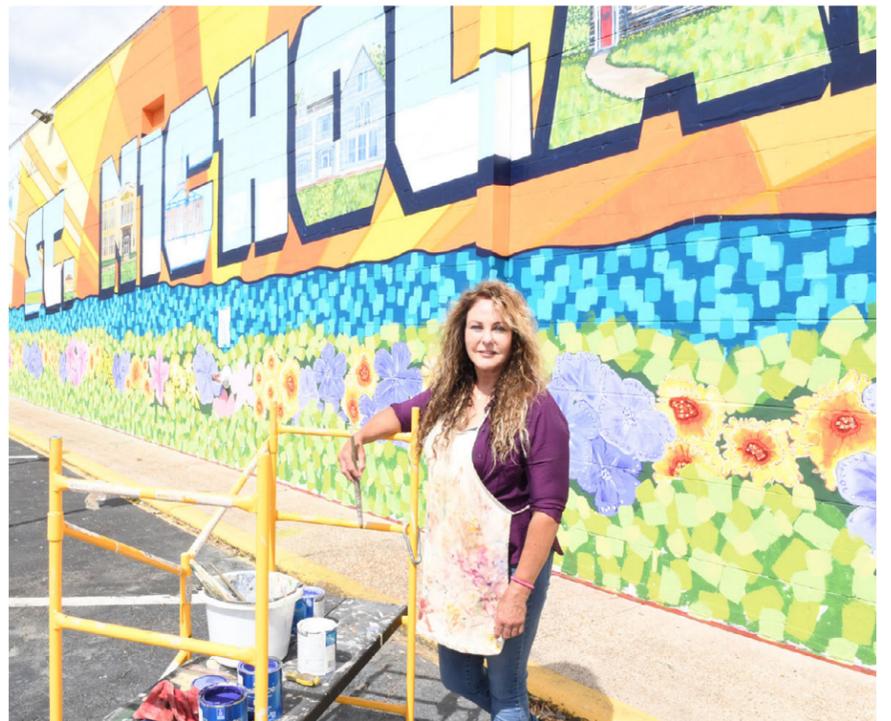
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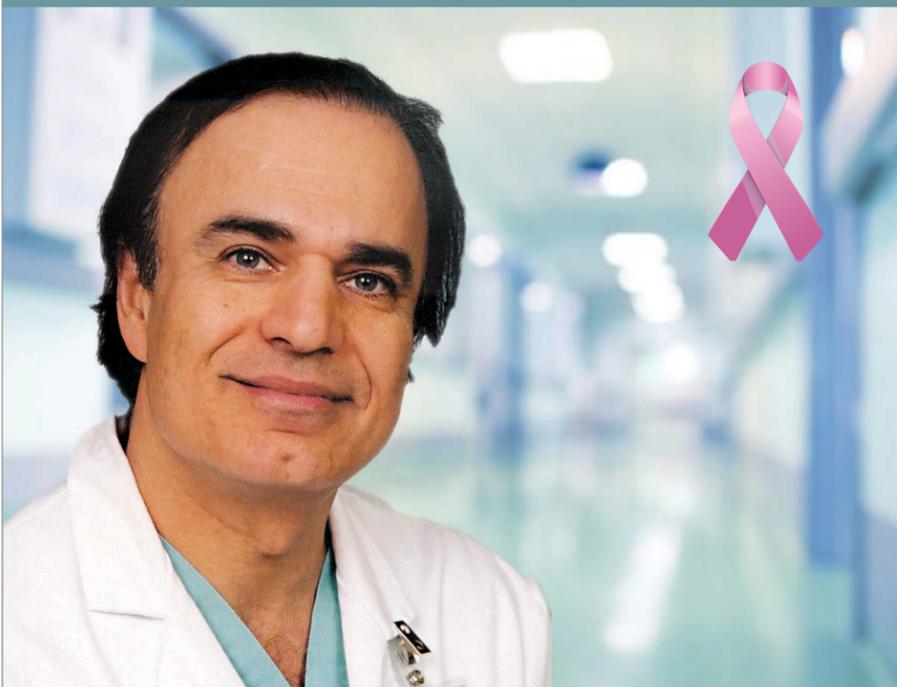


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Baptist Medical Center

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St. Vincent's Medical Center Southside

BY MARY WANSER  
Resident Community News

A large, colorful, inviting mural now graces Atlantic Boulevard, celebrating St. Nicholas pride.

Dr. Rene Pulido is the owner of the building in which his medical practice, E-Med Clinic, is housed. For the past year, he's noticed polarity in the community. "I wanted to do something to bring the neighborhood together," he said. So, he launched a website proposing that a new mural be painted on the side wall of his building.

He asked for suggestions and took votes as to what type of mural residents wanted to see because "It's not my mural; it's the community's mural," he said. The consensus called for one that displayed the name of their city, not only a picture.

The doctor had the wall prepped and primed and invited artists to submit their design ideas. Mary Joan Hinson, a former educator in the art department at Florida State College, entered the contest. Her inspiration was a turn-of-the-century postcard look. "When I put her concept on social media, people went nuts. They loved it," Dr. Pulido said of Hinson's submission.

Hinson contacted Dr. Pulido several times during the ongoing contest to ask when the official winner would be announced. If she were awarded the project, she wanted to begin as soon as possible, knowing that the approaching summer heat would be almost unbearable up on a lift.

On Friday, April 30, Dr. Pulido informed Hinson, "You got it!" On Saturday, May 1, Hinson ordered paint. On Monday, May 3, she began what she estimated to be a five-week project.

First was the sunburst. That alone attracted onlookers. "Every day I had people coming by," she said. Then, the lettering, each 4 feet by 6 feet, spelling out St. Nicholas.

"It's been a nice way of bringing the neighborhood together. People, for the most part, have been extremely happy with it," Dr. Pulido said.

"This is a great addition to St. Nicholas to celebrate its history. It's inspiring! It's beautiful! It's bringing happiness to the neighborhood," said Carlos Bouvier, a nearby resident and a friend of Dr. Pulido.

There was a day in the process when Hinson invited residents to come by and participate in her painting of the mural. "The community's better when it's together," Dr. Pulido said.

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# LOCAL FOLKS

## THE TUCCI FAMILY

BY MARY WANSEER  
Resident Community News

Matt Tucci is the Jacksonville Market Director of Hardage-Giddens Funeral Homes and Cemeteries. Employed in an industry considered “first responders,” never able to shut its doors during the pandemic, Tucci has been working almost nonstop. “It keeps me pretty busy,” he said. But when asked what he and his family do outside of business hours, he said, “We boat a lot!”

Tucci and his wife, Tammy, grew up in a little city called Lexington in South Carolina where they spent much time boating on a



Tucci family boating

nearby lake. Today, they own a vacation home there. “Boating has been a part of our lives since we met,” Tucci said.

They came to Jacksonville nearly four years ago when Tucci was promoted to his current position. They lived in Avondale for a brief time before buying their home on the Ortega River where they enjoy sunset cruises most evenings.

The Tuccis have three children—Matthew (17), Bella (15), and Lola (11). Matthew is a junior at Bishop Kenny High School where Bella is a freshman. Lola is in fifth grade at Assumption Catholic.

Though much of their time on the water is spent on the Ortega River, a Tucci family favorite is tying up in the St. John River to watch on jumbo screen the Jaguars play home games while listening to the play-by-play on the boat’s radio.

Another favorite is meeting with friends on their respective boats at Whitey’s Fish Camp Restaurant on Doctor’s Lake in Fleming Island where they can listen to live



Matt and Tammy Tucci



Matthew, Lola, and Bella Tucci



Lola and Matt Tucci

Though he used to enjoy fishing, Tucci says he hardly has time for it anymore. When he’s not working or boating, he’s attending the kids’ sporting events. Both of his girls are involved with competitive cheer. They are each on a travel team, and both teams have won bids to compete nationally in this year’s annual championship round.

Regarding his son, “He’s just smart,” Tucci said. Matthew used to play a lot of sports but now spends more time volunteering and studying. Soon, he will be heading north to the University of South Carolina for a pre-dental program.

As Matthew makes plans to move north, his dad considers what he likes about being south. “There’s a heck of a lot of things to do in Jacksonville—the river, the beach, major sporting events,” he said. Coming from a smaller state to a larger city has served Tucci well!

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# THE WAY WE WERE

## THE OETJENS

BY MARY WANSEER  
Resident Community News

So close, and yet so far is how Jo and John Oetjen could have been described. But they were destined eventually to meet.

Both were born at St. Vincent's Hospital, John four years after WWII, two years before Jo. Both were raised in Jacksonville as the youngest sibling in the birth order. Both attended grammar school at Assumption Catholic and would ride the same bus to and from. Their mothers played bridge together. But it would be many years before Jo and John would meet.

They grew up two blocks away from each other in San Marco. Josephine (Jo) Pierce lived on Alexandria Place by what is now called Whatley Park. She had been named after her mother's brother, Joe Davin, a major developer of San Marco with Stockton, Whatley, Davin Real Estate. John Henry Oetjen III lived in a white house just north of Jo, at the corner of Hendricks Avenue

and San Marco Place; the structure still stands today near Southside Baptist Church.

John's father, John Henry Oetjen Jr., though he died at a young age in 1954, had made a name for himself in the community. After serving as a major in the Army Medical Corps, he returned home to Jacksonville and opened a dental practice in the upper part of the family home. He was president of the local dental society. The bulk of his patients were Assumption's nuns and priests.

Jo and John, still not knowing each other, nearly every Saturday enjoyed double features at San Marco Theatre. Both recall the 99¢ admission and the 6¢ Jujubes. Both remember San Marco's Times Square train that would



John Oetjen with Santa, circa 1950. Jacksonville

stop in what was then called Florida East Coast Railway Park (FEC). Circus elephants would emerge from the railway cars and be walked downtown by trainers.

"In those days, we took the bus downtown, and we could do anything we wanted with friends. That wasn't a scary thing in the 50s to early 60s," Jo said. Again, neither knew the other; but they likely saw each other often, just as another face in the crowd. In fact, John would admit many years later that it was Mimi Pierce, Jo's elder sister, whom he had noticed and would have wanted to meet, but Mimi was three years his senior, so he didn't even try.

The farthest apart Jo and John had been, and they didn't even know it, was when they attended different high schools—she at Bishop Kenny and he at Landon for two years before what Jo calls "Bad Boy School." John was sent, not for misbehavior but for struggling in academics, to Gordon Military in Barnesville, Georgia, which seemed farther away than it actually was because, as John pointed out, there was no interstate to get there, just as there was no expressway in Jacksonville yet, only local roads. "I clearly remember the buses having to be rerouted as they were building it," John said. After Gordon, which was at the height of the Vietnam War, John enrolled in St. Johns River Junior College in Palatka and then, a year-and-a-half later, Jacksonville University where he graduated with a degree in history, which John admitted with a chuckle was "the shortest route to the door."

It wasn't until 1970, while John was at JU and Jo was a student of radiological technology in a two-year program at St. Vincent's School of Radiology, that the couple met. Jo's classmate, Barbara Jean (Cookie) Ashby, had been dating John. Over time, Jo and John became friends, seeing each other at various social events. It wasn't until after Cookie and John had broken up that Jo asked John, as a friend, to escort her to a wedding at Assumption Church because her boyfriend couldn't make it. "That was the beginning of the end," Jo said, chuckling. That was January 1971, and by March, at a Mardi Gras celebration, John proposed. "She had a lot of requirements," John recalled. "I had to graduate and pay off my credit cards first." He did both quickly, and they were married in October of the same year, while Jo was working as a technician for Dr.



Pierce Family circa 1955  
Mimi Sherman Pearce, Jay Sherman, Ann Pierce, and Josephine Pierce Oetjen

Floyd Hurt, Radiologist. They began their married life in Lakewood but then moved to various locations throughout San Jose as their family grew.

Their first child was Amy. Sadly, she died just days after her birth of the same disease that took President Kennedy's youngest son, hyaline membrane disease (HMD) of the lungs. "It was our faith that brought us through the worst thing that ever happened to us in our lives, when we lost our baby girl," Jo said. "We agonized afterwards. Would we ever have kids?" John wondered. Over the next seven years they had five—four boys and one more girl in the middle—Christopher, Davin, Katy, Rocky, and Andrew.

Because their children were so close in age, "People thought we ran a daycare center," Jo said. Being a mom "was my job in life. I was fortunate enough that I got to stay home with the children," she said. All five attended San Jose Catholic School and Bishop Kenny High School.

To support their large family, John was employed by Blue Cross Blue Shield. "I started out as a grunt, as a junior sales rep when I began working for the Blues," he said. Over time, he worked his way up to the executive level and, along the way in the mid-1980s, earned a master's degree in healthcare administration. "I used to worry a lot about being able to support a large family. But again, through miraculous circumstances, we ended up doing better than we would've ever expected," John said. After 30 years, he'd end up retiring at the age of 55 with the title Vice President of Operations.



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Oetjen Family Christmas  
 FRONT ROW FROM LEFT: Reagan Hendley, Skylar Oetjen, Andrew Oetjen, Jack Oetjen, Eleanor Oetjen, Christopher Oetjen, Lilly Oetjen, Stan Hendley, and Jake Hendley. BACK ROW FROM LEFT: Joey Oetjen, Davin Oetjen, Piper Hendley, Hayes Hendley, Katy Hendley, Rocky Oetjen, Jackie Oetjen, Jo Oetjen, and John Oetjen

Their family vehicle, as one might guess, was a big station wagon, one that had previously been the mail car of Blue Cross Blue Shield. The Oetjens were happy to purchase it used after having to smooch family members into their former sedan. “We’re big beach people,” Jo said, and that’s where they’d drive to most every weekend. “The kids were all big swimmers,” she said.

John shared with their children his love of history. He’d take them to an area along the river near Fort Caroline where they’d dig up Native American Indian pottery and large sharks’ teeth. “It was a great place for the kids to play, and it cost nothing. It’s not available anymore, unfortunately,” John pointed out.

The Oetjens have nine grandchildren, whom Jo describes as “the icing on the cake,” and five of them live in the Jacksonville area. “Grandparenting is my biggest role here now,” Jo said. Often, the grandkids will come for homework help after school. Their only daughter and her four children live far, in Washington state, but visit Florida three times per year. One of their sons, Andrew, is now part owner of the San Marco Theatre his parents used to attend on weekends before they ever met. “It’s the coolest thing how the circle comes around,” Jo said.

When not spending time with family, the Oetjens maintain ties with friends from elementary school. They enjoy outings with Annette Solomon Krestalude and her cousin Ferris Solomon, both from Jo’s first grade class. John’s buddy, Peter Brown, who used to live on Hendricks Avenue, also remains a prominent figure in their lives. As boys, they attended the same grammar school and were members of the same scout troop, but they lost touch when John went off to military school. They met up again at JU, and Brown served as best man at the Oetjens’ wedding.

“Growing up in San Marco was like growing up in a small town. You knew the people around you,” John said, and you stay in touch. Yet he didn’t know Jo until adulthood; it’s a paradox. All four of Jo and John’s parents had lived in San Marco for over fifty years. “It was a well-loved, didn’t-want-to-leave place,” Jo said. Perhaps it’s from them that Jo and



Oetjen Wedding October 1971

John get their sense of neighborhood connection.

The Oetjens have contributed countless volunteer hours to the community. For seven years after his retirement, John was involved with Pine Castle, a school and a residence for adults with intellectual and developmental differences. John served on their Board of Directors for two of those years and led a building campaign, too. John also served for ten years at Catholic Charities, helping with business analyses and serving on their Board. Today, he still volunteers at their life-saving food pantry. Jo’s ministry work at San José Catholic Church is currently on hold due to the pandemic.

Recently, John made a list of all the things he never thought would happen to him. Then, he checked off all the ones that did. “It’s almost a perfect match,” he said, and then added, “If you want to make God laugh, tell Him what your plans are. We’ve been so blessed! While we were taking care of the little stuff, things just worked out extremely well,” he said.

Since 1998, Jo and John have lived in the same house in a section of San Jose that used to be the horse stables for Epping Forest. They will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary in October of this year. For them, it has been all about “family, faith, and friends,” Jo said.



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# IN MEMORIAM

## MARNELLE JONES ISAAC

NOVEMBER 15, 1951 - JUNE 9, 2021

*He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.*

*Psalm 147:3*

Marnelle Jones Isaac was born November 15, 1951 in Folkston, Georgia to Edith and Asa Arnold "Sonny" Jones. She grew up on a farm Callahan, Florida, was raised as a "country girl", and was an active member of the 4-H club. She took great pride in participating in the county fair with her award winning cow, Bessy.

After graduating from West Nassau High School where she was a cheerleader, majorette, and a clarinetist, she continued her education at Palm Beach Junior College, earning a degree in dental hygiene. Thereafter she worked for James Tyson and Charles Prizzia DDS in Jacksonville, Florida. Marnelle married the love of her life, Fred C. Isaac, on April 15, 1978 after meeting on a blind date several years earlier. Fred and Marnelle moved to Ponte Vedra Beach, Florida in 1981 and moved into the home they constructed along with their brand new baby girl, Kori Cameron "Cami". A couple of years later, the couple gave birth to a son, Rodgers Cromwell. Marnelle quickly determined that Christ Episcopal Church Ponte Vedra Beach was a central focal point of the community

both theologically and secularly. She immediately became involved with the church becoming a Lay Eucharistic Minister, completing the four year course for Education for Ministry, chaired the Shared Treasures outreach program for many years, and developed and installed the church's first Newcomer's Program, which was implemented by many other Episcopal churches in the state of Florida.

Marnelle began exhibiting the signs of Alzheimer's 14½ years ago and on June 9, 2021 she succumbed to the ravages of that disease. She fought a courageous battle and donated her brain to Mayo Clinic to further the advancement to combat Alzheimer's disease. Marnelle and her family are grateful for the compassionate staff and volunteers at Mayo Clinic, Ponte Vedra Gardens, and Community Hospice, and especially thankful for Leila Saoud, her faithful friend and caregiver. Marnelle is survived by her loving husband of 43 years, Fred C. Isaac, her beloved children, Cameron Stoddard (Wesley) of Nashville, TN, and Rodgers Isaac (Jessica) of Yalaha, FL, and her cherished grandchildren Aysa Cromwell Isaac (age 10), Jones Wesley Stoddard (age 9), Sophie Frances Stoddard (age 7), and Elias

Michael Isaac (age 6), and her brother Asa Arnold Jones, Jr. (Eydie) of Titusville, FL.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to The Mayo Clinic Alzheimer's Disease Research Center, 4500 San Pablo Road, Jacksonville, Florida 32224 or Community Hospice and Palliative Care Foundation of North Florida, 4266 Sunbeam Road, Jacksonville, Florida 32277.



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*Jody Brandenburg, President  
Matt Tucci, Director of Operations*

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# New Endowment Remembers Son, Funds Behavioral Health Services

BY KAREN J. RIELEY  
Resident Community News

An endowment named after a dragonfly may seem nonsensical, but for one Jacksonville family it holds special meaning and for young adults struggling with behavioral health issues and their families it may become the hope and answers they desperately need.

Lakewood couple Sheryl and Todd Johnson know that feeling of desperation and helplessness all too well. Their son, Alex, died at 22 as the result of anxiety and depression. They turned their grief into a mission to help other young adults by founding the Hearts 4 Minds nonprofit and establishing the Alex's Dragonfly Endowment for Young Adult Behavioral Health through the Baptist Health Foundation.



The Johnson family, Carey, Craig, Sheryl, Todd and Matt

The foundation has launched a fundraising campaign to enable the endowment to finance a care coordinator at Baptist Behavioral Health. In December 2020, the Jim Moran Foundation provided a match grant of \$750,000. About one-third of the matching \$750,000 has been raised so far.

"The care coordinator wraps the entire family into the system of care and helps provide guidance and connectivity to ongoing resources," Sheryl Johnson said. "The role was filled on March 1 and has already helped 50 families."

"We have until Sept. 30 to raise the balance," Johnson said. "If we are able to match it in full, this key [care coordinator] position will be endowed for life."

To raise awareness of the need for an endowment, the Johnsons have contracted with the City of Jacksonville to create and launch a three-year long mental health awareness campaign. On May 30, they launched one aspect of that campaign at the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp Stadium – the first in a series of murals entitled "The Power to Change in the Palm of Your Hand," that uses the unique handprint dragonfly art that is part of the logo for the endowment.

The murals use art and a QR code that will take residents to a specially designed webpage. The goal is to have additional murals created that are specially designed for each site throughout Jacksonville from the Northside to the Beaches.

"These murals can present opportunities for organizations or even individuals to sponsor and/or donate," Johnson said.

"Dragons have special meaning for us," she said. "We were inspired to use a dragonfly as our symbol based on a picture of our son at age five after a dragonfly landed on his nose. We love to remember him in nature and capture his sweet disposition. But dragonflies are also used to illustrate the power to change and remind us of all the incredible possibilities we have to grow."

Ron Salem, At-Large – Group 2, City Council member, joined Andrea Williams from the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp, and Johnson in speaking at the stadium event. The mural design was created by artist and architect Ryan Janes and painted by artist David Nackashi.

To sponsor a mural, contact Sheryl Johnson at (904) 625-2770. You can donate online at [www.Hearts4Minds.org](http://www.Hearts4Minds.org) or mail a check.



This photo of Alex with a dragonfly on his nose when he was young was the inspiration for the name his parents, Sheryl and Todd Johnson, have given the endowment they created in his memory to help other young adults struggling with behavioral health issues.



The first in a series of murals entitled "The Power to Change in the Palm of Your Hand" that uses the unique handprint dragonfly logo for the endowment, unveiled at the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp Stadium.



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# Jacksonville woman undertaking 140.6-mile Ironman to help families affected by dementia



Melissa Dorsch, April 2021



Melissa Dorsch competing in a Half Ironman



Melissa Dorsch after a 1.2-mile swim



Jon Dorsch, Sr. and granddaughter Melissa



Melissa Dorsch of Avondale will compete in an Ironman triathlon, a total 140.6 miles. The funds raised will go to the Alzheimer's Foundation of America (AFA) to help families affected by the disease.

Dorsch will dedicate the challenge to her two decorated U.S. Navy veteran grandfathers, Larry Keith Crawford and Jon Eric Dorsch,

Sr. They were the "Ironmen" in her life who had passed away after battling dementia, and she wrote on her AFA fundraising page, "My family, through the years, taught me that service and community are so important. I want to raise money for the Alzheimer's Foundation of America during my training process, with hopes that in the coming years, research for dementia will be funded more heavily. Patients and their families deserve support, and for brilliant scientists to keep researching for a cure." Dorsch has raised more than \$3,100 for AFA's programs, services, and research efforts.

The Ironman event will take place in Coeur D'Alene, Idaho. There, 26-year-old Dorsch will attempt the 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike, and 26.2-mile run. To prepare, the former NCAA Division I swimmer and CrossFit enthusiast trains regularly in addition to holding a full-time job and pursuing an MBA.

"Love is what drives Melissa to undertake this challenge, and strength, endurance, and perseverance will get her through it. These are the same things Alzheimer's family caregivers rely on every single day, and she knows that firsthand from her own family's experiences," said AFA President & CEO Charles J. Fuschillo, Jr.

In April of this year, in Haines City, Florida, Dorsch participated in a Half Ironman, a



Larry Crawford and family

70.3-mile triathlon race. Dorsch completed a 1.2-mile swim, a 56-mile bike ride, and a 13.1-mile run in just over 7 hours and 20 minutes.

"Melissa's drive to make a difference is truly inspirational. We are grateful to her for all she is doing to help families affected by dementia," Fuschillo, Jr. of AFA said.

AFA is a nonprofit organization that has earned Charity Navigator's top 4-star rating for six consecutive years. Its many services include a national toll-free helpline at 866-232-8484 that is staffed by licensed social workers. For more information, visit [www.alzfdn.org](http://www.alzfdn.org).

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## Summer volunteer opportunities at local parks

The Timucuan Parks Foundation (TPF) along with JaxParks is hosting volunteer events this summer at local parks and preserves.

### SCHEDULE OF REMAINING PROJECTS (9 a.m. – 12 noon)

**July 7** - trail maintenance on a rough-cut trail off the Jacksonville-Baldwin Rail Trail

**July 21** - maintenance of the trails and pollinator garden at Castaway Island Preserve

**August 4** - shoreline cleanup at Reddie Point Preserve

No registration is required, but please obtain a waiver to sign at [TimucuanParks.com/volunteer/](http://TimucuanParks.com/volunteer/). Utilize the events to earn community service hours. Volunteers of all ages are welcome.\*

Please wear closed-toe shoes and clothes that can get dirty. Bring work gloves, sunscreen, insect repellent, a hat, sunglasses, and a reusable water bottle. TPF will provide additional equipment and supplies along with snacks and water.

Help is needed to clean and maintain the natural spaces that provide access to all residents, offer ecosystem benefits to the entire area, and give protection from disasters. The parks and preserves act as buffers to control urban sprawl and form a “ring of parks” to define Jacksonville.

\*Volunteers under 18 must bring a waiver signed by a parent or guardian. Volunteers under 16 must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or scout leader.

TPF is a nonprofit organization that preserves, promotes, and enhances Jacksonville’s natural areas through community engagement, education, and enjoyment. TPF works with its partners to promote environmental stewardship, the health benefits of the parks and preserves, and an appreciation for Jacksonville’s special outdoor spaces. For more information, visit [www.TimucuanParks.org](http://www.TimucuanParks.org), follow @timucuanparks, email [Info@TimucuanParks.org](mailto:Info@TimucuanParks.org), or call (904) 374-1107.

## Assumption Catholic School’s Class of 2021



A memorable graduation full of emotions, unity, and a sense of accomplishment. It was a year like no other, a year to remember. COVID-19 changed the landscape worldwide and tested everyone’s resilience in unimaginable ways. Assumption’s Class of 2021 proved that even during challenging times they would still come together strong to overcome what would have seemed an impossible obstacle and to continue their journey toward graduation day.

“It is truly hard to believe that we are at the end of another school year. In August of last year, the idea of bringing everyone back to campus

was exciting, but also overwhelming. However, due to the strength and perseverance of this community, we have triumphantly made it through an amazing year. The

students have worked extremely hard, and I could not be prouder of their resilience!” said Mrs. Jimenez, Principal at Assumption Catholic School.



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# DEBUTANTE SEASON OPENS WITH MAGNOLIA BALL



The 2021 Debutante Coterie season opened on June 11 as 14 young ladies were introduced to society during the Magnolia Ball at Timuquana Country Club. The debutantes will take their final bow on December 21 at the annual Christmas Ball held at the Florida Yacht Club.

The coterie includes (front) Margaret Ellen Commander, Elizabeth Cecelia Grich, Kathryn Hope Cofran, Courtney Jane Kurlas, Lilly Finlayson Whitner, Mary Elizabeth Miller; (back) Diane Gordon Milne, Anne Elizabeth Auchter, Mary Preston Singletary, Phoebe Jesswick Mori, Julia Elizabeth Preuss, Olivia Miles Schueth, Christine Mattingly Schmidt. Not available: Margaret Ann Gibbs.

## From Camper To Instructor To College Student, Morrison Pursues Cycling Passion

Avondale/Riverside resident Samantha (Sam) Morrison will continue her cycling career by joining Cycle 4 Life bike camps in Banner Elk, N.C., this summer as a ride instructor. It's been a five-year journey for Morrison from attending the camp to working as an instructor.

A conversation with a collegiate coach at the 2015 USA Cycling Professional Road National Championships led to Morrison attending the bike camps run by Multi Time Collegiate National Championship Coach Doug Owen. Her experience was so rewarding that she returned in 2017, 2018 and 2019 with members of her Velobrew junior team. Velobrew provides youth cyclists in North Florida with the opportunity to grow and develop through the sport of cycling.

"Cycling is an individual sport and generally not a team atmosphere," Morrison said. "The Cycle 4 Life bike camps were the first time where I saw that biking could be supportive. The staff is here to build the confidence of each camper."

"Certain obstacles seem really scary at first, but once you tackle them, they're not as hard as you thought. You find out you are strong enough to conquer anything."

Morrison's love of cycling was inspired by her parents, Jackie and John Morrison,

who are avid cyclists and who first met at Open Road Bicycles in Avondale. Jackie Morrison is the only LCI (League Cycling Instructor) in Jacksonville for League of American Bicyclists.

"I've been interested in biking since I was little," said Morrison. "For me, it was a very organic translation from swimming to triathlon to road and mountain biking."

Morrison has dominated cycling in Florida in the past five years as four-time Cyclocross State Champion and a State Criterium Champion on the road. In addition to being part of the VeloBrew racing team and the 904 Duval Devils National Interscholastic Cycling Association (NICA) team, Morrison is a Girls Riding Together (GRiT) ambassador and was also named Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Student of the Year.

"I primarily road race," Morrison said. "I'm best at endurance. Now that I'm mountain racing, I've fallen in love with cross-country mountain bikes."

"I absolutely love cycling because it is different and is so freeing with the breeze in your hair and the opportunity to see your environment from a whole different perspective."

Morrison plans to turn her passion for biking into a career in advocacy. After



Bishop Kenny senior Sam Morrison races in National Interscholastic Cycling Association high school leagues and is a GRiT ambassador for NICA.

graduating from Bishop Kenny as an honor roll student this spring, she will pursue a minor in cycling this fall as a member of the Lees-McRae College cycling team.

"I hope to advocate for better road infrastructure for cyclists and educate more drivers about the rules of the road," she said.

Lees-McRae, also in Banner Elk, N.C., was named a Gold Bicycle Friendly University by The League of American Bicyclists and top U.S. college for mountain bikers by SingleTracks. The Lees-McRae Division I Men's and Women's Cycling Team holds 10 team national titles in various disciplines as well as 59 individual national titles.

## READ USA BOOK FAIRS PROVIDE FREE BOOKS TO STUDENTS AT 102 DUVAL COUNTY SCHOOLS



BY SUSAN D. BRANDENBURG  
Resident Community News

READ USA is a non-profit organization that has provided a quarter of a million free books to more than 73,000 children in Duval County since 2011. This month, in partnership with Scholastic Books, Duval County Public Schools and many generous donors in the community, READ USA will hold book fairs in every Duval County Elementary School.

"This is our tenth year of holding free book fairs," said READ USA Chair and Co-founder Ellen Wiss, "and we've grown from serving one school to serving 102 schools in just one decade... strong evidence that literacy is a top priority here."

This month, children in elementary schools throughout Duval County will have the opportunity to attend READ USA Book Fairs and choose three free books each, along with a READ USA Student Activity Packet and Parent Activity Packet to take home and enjoy this summer. "We hope this will help them avoid the summer reading slide," said Karen Sawyer, READ USA's Program Manager, noting that roughly 161,000 new books will be in Duval County homes by the end of the month.



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# KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS HONOR VETERANS



St. Nicholas residents, Knights of Columbus members and Boy Scouts honor veterans interred in the Historic St. Nicholas Cemetery.

**BY KAREN J. RIELEY**  
Resident Community News

For the second year, The Knights of Columbus, St. Bernadette Assembly, hosted a Memorial Day Ceremony honoring the 19 veterans who are interred in the Historic St. Nicholas Cemetery. The cemetery is located at Olive and Linden streets. About 35 people, including St. Nicholas residents, joined The Knights and Boy Scout Troop 106 which meets at Assumption Catholic Church.

Fr. Jason Trull, pastor at Assumption Church and a fellow Knight, offered a prayer. The Boy Scouts retired the American flag that flies continuously over the cemetery and raised a new one. The Knights then led a procession through the cemetery placing flags at the graves while a brief bio was read for each veteran.

“One interesting grave site is that of Dr. Mary Brunson, who was a nurse for the Union Army during the Civil War,” Dick Collins, Past Grand Knight for the Bishop Kenny Council 1951, said.

The ceremony concluded with a member of the Knights of Columbus playing taps.

# 50 Nifty



Students in Ms. Jones' 1st grade class before 50 Nifty Jeopardy

Students at San Jose Episcopal Day school have an amazing tradition of studying the 50 states in their entirety during their first-grade year. They start with Alabama and end with Wyoming, learning about each state's capital, bird, landmarks, and special features. Through this program, the students have crossed the Golden Gate Bridge, hiked through the Grand Canyon, swam in the Great Lakes, and waved at Lady Liberty. They take great pride in knowing facts about each state and quizzing their families. They ended the 50 Nifty program this year by hosting 50 Nifty Jeopardy! Students donned their best USA clothing and accessories and invited families and teachers to watch the first graders play Jeopardy, all about the 50 states.

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# Bolles 2021 Graduates Pursue excellence



The Bolles School Class of 2021

The Bolles School Class of 2021 graduates were offered or qualified for more than \$3 million in merit-based scholarships for their first year of college – more than \$12 million for their four-year college careers. The 195 students are attending 93 colleges and universities in 27 different states, the District of Columbia, Canada, Scotland and Spain and were accepted to 209 different colleges and universities. Five students are undecided and two students are taking gap years. 28 student-athletes committed to a particular college or university to continue their academic and athletic careers and 31 graduates are “Lifers,” meaning they attended Bolles since Pre-Kindergarten or Kindergarten. A group of 24 graduates have parents who graduated from Bolles or Bartram, including one student who has an alumni grandparent and one student who has an alumni parent and grandparent.

# Bishop Kenny Cadets Receive Basic Leadership Training

The Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Area-12 held its annual Basic Leadership Training (BLT) Course at Camp Blanding, 8-12 June. NJROTC Area-12 is comprised of 63 units spread out over NE Florida (Metro Jacksonville) and the State of Georgia. BLT Training and activities included Naval Science Studies, Drill, Uniform Prep and Inspection, the Leadership Reaction Course, an Obstacle Course, a Marksmanship Familiarization Fire Course, Canoeing, Orienteering, and a tour of the Camp Blanding Museum. Three of Bishop Kenny’s NJROTC Students completed the Course: Cadets Jaybriel Alindada, Ryan Soroka and Kate Capra. Also attending as Cadre (senior NJROTC Cadets who lead, conduct training, and mentor the participants) were Cadets Tommy Jackson and Kristina Hoy.

Bishop Kenny’s NJROTC program was established in 1973 and has produced thousands of upstanding citizens in its 48-year history. Graduates have attended the U.S. Naval Academy (Annapolis), the U.S. Military Academy (West Point), the U.S. Air Force Academy, the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (Kings Point), and ROTC universities such as UF, JU, UCF, USF, The Citadel, Georgia Tech, Ole Miss, Notre Dame, and Savannah State. The Unit fields competitive teams in Academics, CyberPatriot, Drone, Athletics, Drill, and Marksmanship to name a few. BK’s NJROTC program has achieved “Distinguished Unit w/Honors” status 12 consecutive years and is currently ranked second of 63 in Area 12.



Jaybriel Alindada, Tommy Jackson, Ryan Soroka, Kristina Hoy and Kate Capra

# ALL SAINTS EARN VOICE FOR LIFE CHOIR TRAINING MEDALS



Carly Distin, Cora Nancy Anderson, Anna McManus, Madeleine Jackson, and Michael Mastronicola



Official medal of the Royal School of Church Music

May was a month to celebrate for three young singers from San Marco who completed all five levels of the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM) Voice for Life Choir Training Program at All Saints Episcopal Church. “This is an impressive accomplishment,” said Michael Mastronicola, DMA, the music director there.

Cora Nancy Anderson, Anna McManus, and Madeleine Jackson are 12 years old and rising seventh graders. The three successfully completed their training under Mastronicola’s direction with Carly Distin assisting.

The Program involves learning proper singing techniques and music theory, understanding the role of choirs in the community, serving as worship leaders, and developing skills to work in groups—all of which help to develop self-confidence. “I have learned many things about music, including many different songs, singing in different languages, music theory. I have enjoyed being a chorister and had a great time learning music,” Jackson wrote in one of her final RSCM assignments.

The girls received official medals of the RSCM in America, adorned with St. Nicholas, the patron saint of musicians, and a yellow ribbon, reflecting successful completion of the highest level in the Voice for Life curriculum.

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## Sew Sew much fun

San Jose Episcopal Day School is working to keep a lost skill alive. Two sessions of Sew Sew Fun were offered at SJ EDS earlier this month for elementary age kids. The small groups tackled the basics of hand stitching and machine sewing. Smiles on faces showed feelings of accomplishment as students took home several uniquely made keepsakes.

## ST. JOHNS ROBOTICS SCORES WIN TRIO



St. Johns Country Day School's Robotics team members Adrian Heinrichs, Ian Johnson, Luke Mooneyham, Colin Pierce, Harbi Saleh, and Blake Sheftall

## HENDRICKS AVENUE STUDENT RECEIVES DAR AWARD



Madeline Katsikas, fifth-grade graduate of Hendricks Avenue Elementary School, was awarded last month with the Youth Citizenship Medal by the Fort San Nicholas chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR).

It was Katsikas's qualities of honor, service, courage, leadership, and patriotism that won the favor of the faculty members who chose her as the recipient. The Medal came with an official certificate as well.

DAR is a nonprofit, nonpolitical volunteer women's service organization dedicated to promoting historic preservation, education, and patriotism. According to the

DAR website, this particular medal was established to foster among schoolchildren a greater appreciation for the qualities of citizenship that Americans must possess for the country to remain sovereign and independent.

Spartan Robotics scored a triad of wins at their tournaments this spring against teams from all over Northeast Florida.

The first tournament was on April 23 and Spartan Robotics received the Breakthrough Award, which "celebrates a team that made significant progress in their confidence and capability in both the Robot Game and Innovation Project and are a shining example of excellent Core Values. They demonstrate that they understand that what they discover is more important than what they win."

At the second tournament on May 18, the team compounded their success by earning two awards: The Highest Score on the Robot Performance Award, which celebrates a team that scores the most points during the Robot Game) as well as an award for Robot Design, which recognizes outstanding programming principles and solid engineering practices in the development of a robot that is mechanically sound, durable, efficient and highly capable of performing challenge missions.

"A majority of the team was new this year," said team sponsor Mrs. Jennifer Wagstaff, "so winning these awards represents a significant accomplishment."



# ST. JOHNS COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

## Congratulations GRADUATES!

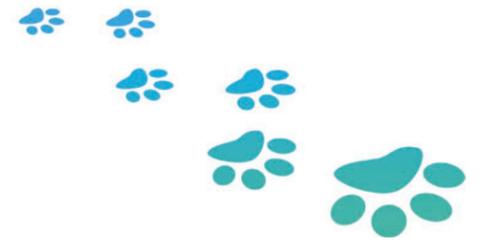
SJCDS.NET

*Members of the Class of 2021 were accepted to the following colleges and universities:*



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>American Musical and Dramatic Academy</li> <li>American University</li> <li>Appalachian State University</li> <li>Arizona State University</li> <li>Arizona State University (West)</li> <li>Auburn University</li> <li>Berry College</li> <li>Boston University</li> <li>Bowdoin College</li> <li>Brewton-Parker College</li> <li>Butler University</li> <li>California Polytechnic State University (San Luis Obispo)</li> <li>California State University (Long Beach)</li> <li>Carnegie Mellon University</li> <li>Chipola College</li> <li>Christopher Newport University</li> <li>Clemson University</li> <li>Coastal Carolina University</li> <li>Colby College</li> <li>College of Charleston</li> <li>Colorado State University</li> <li>Columbia University</li> <li>Cornell University</li> <li>Davidson College</li> <li>DePaul University</li> <li>Drexel University</li> <li>Duke University</li> <li>Eckerd College</li> <li>Eton University</li> <li>Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University</li> <li>Five Towns College</li> <li>Flagler College</li> <li>Florida Atlantic University</li> <li>Florida Gulf Coast University</li> <li>Florida Institute of Technology</li> <li>Florida Polytechnic University</li> <li>Florida Southern College</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Florida State College at Jacksonville</li> <li>Florida State University</li> <li>Furman University</li> <li>Georgia Military College</li> <li>Georgia Southern University</li> <li>Hofstra University</li> <li>Indiana State University</li> <li>Jacksonville University</li> <li>Kansas State University</li> <li>Kenyon College</li> <li>Lafayette College</li> <li>Lander University</li> <li>Louisiana State University</li> <li>Massachusetts College of Art and Design</li> <li>Mercer University</li> <li>Montserrat College of Art</li> <li>New College of Florida</li> <li>North Carolina State University</li> <li>Northwestern University</li> <li>Palm Beach Atlantic University</li> <li>Pennsylvania State University</li> <li>Pensacola Christian College</li> <li>Pensacola State College</li> <li>Presbyterian College</li> <li>Rhode Island School of Design</li> <li>Rhodes College</li> <li>Rice University</li> <li>Ringling College of Art and Design</li> <li>Rollins College</li> <li>Samford University</li> <li>San Diego State University</li> <li>Savannah College of Art and Design</li> <li>School of the Art Institute of Chicago</li> <li>Sewanee: The University of the South</li> <li>Southern Methodist University</li> <li>Stetson University</li> <li>Syracuse University</li> <li>Tallahassee Community College</li> <li>Texas Christian University</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The University of Alabama</li> <li>The University of Tampa</li> <li>The University of Tennessee</li> <li>The University of West Florida</li> <li>Trinity College Dublin</li> <li>Troy University</li> <li>Tufts University</li> <li>Tulane University of Louisiana</li> <li>University of Arizona</li> <li>University of California (Berkeley)</li> <li>University of California (Davis)</li> <li>University of California (Irvine)</li> <li>University of California (San Diego)</li> <li>University of California (Santa Barbara)</li> <li>University of California (Santa Cruz)</li> <li>University of Central Florida</li> <li>University of Colorado Boulder</li> <li>University of Florida</li> <li>University of Georgia</li> <li>University of Kansas</li> <li>University of Kentucky</li> <li>University of Maryland</li> <li>University of Miami</li> <li>University of Michigan</li> <li>University of Mississippi</li> <li>University of North Carolina</li> <li>University of North Carolina at Charlotte</li> <li>University of North Florida</li> <li>University of Pennsylvania</li> <li>University of Pittsburgh</li> <li>University of Richmond</li> <li>University of South Carolina</li> <li>University of South Florida</li> <li>University of Southern Mississippi</li> <li>University of Virginia</li> <li>Valdosta State University</li> <li>Vanderbilt University</li> <li>Virginia Tech</li> <li>Wagner College</li> <li>Winthrop University</li> </ul>
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# ANIMAL HOUSE



## PET DOMESTIC RABBITS

### INSPIRED BY THE STORY OF LUKE'S SUGAR BUNNY

BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA  
Resident Community News

“There’s something out in the yard!” an excited four-year-old announced to family members gathered for a cookout. With so much food and conversation, it was pure luck that anyone noticed the small, mostly white and chocolate-spotted animal lounging in full view of resident hawks.

It was a young, extremely lucky domestic rabbit. When the rabbit saw people slowly and quietly approach, it did not bolt into nearby woods. Instead, the little furball hopped straight to the smallest of them all - a little boy named Luke. It stretched both front paws upwards onto his legs, ready to be picked up.

The rabbit’s feet were snow-white, its fur completely clean, without a speck of dirt. Once contentedly nestled in Luke’s lap, the rabbit wiggled its velvety nose and politely sniffed everyone who wanted to pet her. She soon fell asleep with a whispery sigh, exhausted from her wilderness adventure.

It had to be an accidental escape. Owners must be frantically searching everywhere for the little adventurer. In a compact community with one entrance-exit, bordered by a lake and forested nature preserve, reuniting the rabbit with its family would be easy.

A neighborhood door-to-door campaign yielded nothing. Posted flyers with photographs of the rambunctious explorer covered street signs and the neighborhood entrance. Lost pet internet sites were alerted. No one had lost the rabbit. No one had ever seen it.

As night fell, the need to feed the rabbit led to internet research and a crash course regarding domestic rabbit dietary needs and precautions. A grocery trip for approved fresh vegetables followed another expedition to find Timothy hay. A safe, temporary enclosure was erected.

Day one turned into a week, then a month. Luke soon named the wanderer - Luke’s Sugar Bunny - and declared that, “Sugar Bunny needs a real rabbit house”. Sugar wiggled into everyone’s heart and befriended the resident pets.

Domestic rabbits are popular exotic pets, whether house rabbits ( litter box trained), or outdoors in secure, weather and predator-proofed enclosures. Easily frightened prey



4-H Rabbeeter Club Member Katie Ross with Oreo

animals, they require frequent handling, gentle interaction, and specific care. They are intelligent with distinct personalities, respond to their names, and exhibit affectionate companionship. Curious and playful, they bond with owners of all ages including other pets. Pet rabbits are only recommended for children six years or older, with supervision, depending upon the child’s maturity and temperament.

Dangers to domestic rabbits include early forced weaning and sale before they are mature enough to survive, and owners or breeders who deliberately release unwanted or unsold rabbits into woods or public places. Mass releases of domestic rabbits periodically occur, including one widely reported local incident when employees arrived at work to

find tame, white rabbits everywhere in a huge shopping center parking lot.

Just like cats, kittens, dogs and puppies, defenseless, abandoned pet rabbits fall prey to weather, traffic, snakes, hawks, owls, feral or free-roaming pet cats and dogs. It is a false belief that domestic rabbits can survive on their own by eating grass; rodent bait, chemically-treated grass or plants are deadly.

Bobbi Nelson and her husband Joe, of B’s Furry Friends Rescue, founded their local rabbit rescue in 2009 when another rescue closed and offered them a large rabbit hutch. Nelson has rescued domestic, exotic and wild animals since age six. An army brat who lived worldwide, she has unique experience with many animal species.

Nelson said that Northeast Florida has few rabbit rescuers, who stay overwhelmed with continuous calls about abandoned or unwanted rabbits. She said they network to save and adopt out as many as possible; she has adoptable rabbits available year-round. Within one recent week alone, Nelson received six calls about unwanted rabbits. She said it is heartbreaking, but impossible to accept or place them all. Neither the Jacksonville Humane Society nor Duval County Animal Care & Protective Services accepts rabbits.



Rabbeeter Club Leader Leslie Hettick & her son Andrew with their rabbits



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Katie & Oreo

enclosure for pet rabbits has a hiding place and provides at least six feet, with space to stand, turn and run for exercise and good health. Susceptible to extreme temperatures, especially heat, rabbits require weather protection.

Some rabbit owners enjoy participation in or attending shows hosted by the American Rabbit Breeders Association, or the North Florida Rabbit & Cavy (guinea pig) Association. Children interested in learning more or showing their rabbits may join the Duval County 4-H Rabbiteers Club. The club is part of the youth development program, University of Florida Institute of Food & Agricultural Sciences Cooperative Extension (UF/IFAS).

Kelsey Haupt, 4-H Youth Development Extension Agent I, said clubs enroll boys and girls ages 5 – 18. Clubs are led by background-screened, adult volunteers who provide a planned program during the school year.

“There are 4-H Clubs and projects on many topics, including rabbits and other animal species. 4-H offers a community for kids with focus on informal learning, discovering new interests, projects, hands-on opportunities, life skills and preparing to become good humans and active members of the community,” Haupt said. “Club membership is free for ages 5-7 and \$20 for ages 8-18 annually. Scholarships are available. 4-H July and August summer camps are also open to non-members.”

Leslie Hettick, leader of the 4-H Rabbiteers Club, said club members will show and exhibit their rabbits at the Greater Jacksonville Fair, November 4-14, 2021. Her son Andrew, 17, saw a 4-H club booth at a 2019 community event and discovered the Rabbiteers Club. “The rabbits are so sweet and make wonderful pets. We’ve all learned so much



Andrew Hettick with Rene, his Flemish Giant, Blue Ribbon Winner for Best in Breed.

about animals. Andrew has also learned about many other subjects and community service. He was shy, but club activities brought him out of his shell and boosted his confidence. He’s made lifelong friends in 4-H and it’s a great organization for kids,” Hettick said.

The House Rabbit Society is the national nonprofit rabbit rescue and education organization, with one Florida chapter in Miami. They network with other Florida rabbit rescue groups, including Gainesville Rabbit Rescue/Daytona, which usually has 100 adoptable pet rabbits available.

A local opportunity to see many rabbit breeds will take place at the North Florida Rabbit & Cavy Breeders Association Show, September 4, 2021, 7:00 a.m. – 3:45 p.m., Clay County Fairgrounds, Green Cove Springs. Free admission.



Luke with Sugar Bunny

## NEWS ALERT:

Rabbit Hemorrhagic Disease Virus (RHDV2) is a fatal, highly contagious disease, first detected in the western U.S., and confirmed to have infected one Central Florida rabbitry. It is believed to be contained and no further Florida cases have been reported as of mid-June 2021, according to Dana M. Krempels, Ph.D., University of Miami Biology Senior Lecturer, Florida RHDV2 Focus Group Member and president of H.A.R.E. Inc. (House Rabbit Adoption, Rescue & Education/Miami chapter - National House Rabbit Society). RHDV2 poses no threat to humans. Owners should prevent any contact between domestic and wild rabbits, which can transmit the virus. Sanitize and wash hands frequently before and after handling pets, including food and supplies.

People give many reasons for re-homing pet rabbits: a move, allergies, a new baby. Sometimes it was an impulse buy, for Easter or a birthday and what was tiny and adorable, grows fast, requires daily care, cleaning, specific food and shelter space. Most people are unaware that veterinary care, spay and neutering for exotic pets costs more than other pets.

Many unwanted rabbits come from accidental litters. Pet stores discover a litter born overnight, because rabbits mature quickly and breed continuously from the age of three months. Gestation takes 28 – 31 days, with an average of six in a litter, but possibly from one to fourteen born.

“Rabbits must be separated by sex from an early age... spayed/neutered at four to six months. Males may begin to spray urine to mark territory, just like male cats, if not neutered,” Nelson said. “Live animals should not be sold in pet stores, because they often don’t separate the sexes and provide no vet care. Most rabbits sold by pet stores or some breeders, are removed from their mothers much too early because buyers want tiny babies. These immature babies should still be nursing to fully develop and should not be handled because of germ exposure and stress. Many sicken and die as a result. Rabbits should be naturally weaned and at least nine weeks old before sale.”

If considering a pet rabbit, first learn about rabbit care requirements. Pet rabbits live approximately eight to fifteen years. They are herbivores, basically small cows who must continuously graze on coarse hay, plus fibrous vegetables for proper digestive health. The constant grazing keeps their teeth from overgrowth. The best

## Resources

### Bff Rabbit Rescue :

[www.Bffrescue.webs.com](http://www.Bffrescue.webs.com),  
[Facebook.com/Bffrescue](https://www.facebook.com/Bffrescue),  
[Bffrescuejax@gmail.com](mailto:Bffrescuejax@gmail.com) or  
donate through Paypal at  
[mmjax2@aol.com](mailto:mmjax2@aol.com).

### The House Rabbit Society:

[www.rabbit.org](http://www.rabbit.org)

### Gainesville Rabbit Rescue/ Daytona Branch:

[www.gainesvillerabbitrescue.org](http://www.gainesvillerabbitrescue.org)

### American Rabbit Breeders Assn.:

[www.arba.net](http://www.arba.net). Full color photos  
of all fifty recognized rabbit  
breeds & show calendar.

### Adoptable rabbits:

[www.adoptapet.com](http://www.adoptapet.com),  
[www.rescueme.org](http://www.rescueme.org),  
[www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com).

[khaupt@ufl.edu](mailto:khaupt@ufl.edu) – Kelsey Haupt,  
Rabiteers 4-H Club & summer  
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[www.wabbitwiki.com](http://www.wabbitwiki.com)

[www.rabbit.com](http://www.rabbit.com)

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