



# Jolly Good Fellows

United Way of Northeast Florida, celebrating its 100th anniversary next year, recently announced its Stein Fellowship Class of 2024. Founded by philanthropists David and Linda Stein, the Stein Fellowship is a unique yearlong immersive leadership and mentorship experience for young professionals ages 21 to 40. Recipients were selected based on demonstrated commitment to philanthropy, love for Northeast Florida and passion for community progress.

The Stein Fellowship Class of 2024, pictured above, includes: Front row: Shaneta Oliver, Brandie Stallings, Alexandra Reinhardt and Jessica Nguyen-Smith; second row: Dominique Moore, Hannah Oberholtzer, Chanice Howard and Sutton Fisher; third row: Eustachius Roberts, Will Clancy, Daniela Fletes and Rodericka Johnson; and back row: Lawrence Luksha, Conrad Jennings and Griffin McDowell.

“When David and I founded the Stein Fellowship in 2007, it was with the hope of building a multi-generational program of leadership and mentorship. I look forward to seeing our Class of 2024 continue to grow and thrive on their journey in serving others.” —Linda Stein

## 5 Points Merchants STEP UP, STEP IN

Area leaders help formulate ideas for cohesion, strength and beautification  
BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Jacksonville’s 5 Points District is known for its close-knit community of shopkeepers and its eclectic, bohemian collection of restaurants, bars, boutiques and other businesses. In recent months, however, it has also garnered a reputation as the go-to spot for late-night partiers leaving trash and other waste in their wake.

Frustrated with this and other problems facing their community, the shopkeepers of 5 Points have revived the 5 Points Merchants Association to address these issues and work towards solutions.

At a merchants’ breakfast hosted by Riverside Presbyterian Church on Monday, Aug. 20, the new leadership for the association emerged with Stephen Ezell of Raindogs as

president. Joining him as vice president is Dori Thomsen of Saluna Yoga + Spa. Nancy Darlow from the Margaret Street UPS Store will serve as secretary, and Mixed Fillings Pie Shop’s Natasha Burton will be treasurer.

Matthew Clark, senior vice president at Colliers International Jacksonville, spearheaded efforts to revive the merchants association, which has gone through several iterations spanning decades. This new version will involve both business owners and property owners.

Clark called last month’s merchants’ breakfast “ground zero” for the new merchants association.

The merchants discussed various paths they’d like to explore to restore their community, from beautification plans to designing and installing neighborhood banners – a collaborative project with Wingard Design + Communications and Riverside

Avondale Preservation – to establishing and hosting regular community events.

District 7 Council Member Jimmy Peluso was also in attendance at the breakfast and shared news about two requests he’d put in for the city’s upcoming budget, both for the maximum allowable amount of \$100,000. One request was \$100,000 for trash cans in commercial corridors. The second, he said, could be used as a “microgrant program” available to neighborhood and merchant associations throughout the city.

“My goal is to use some of that money specifically for landscaping, security and maintenance of the area,” he said.

Pending approval by the city council, the new budget will take effect Oct. 1.

*The Resident News* will provide a more in-depth look at some of the problems the 5 Points Merchants Association hopes to resolve in the coming issue.

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COMMUNITY NEWS

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CLASS REUNION

SEP 23

The **Lee High School Class of 1954** will be celebrating its 69th class reunion with a luncheon at Timuquana Country Club at 11:30 a.m. on Sept. 23. Fellow 1954 classmates interested in attending the luncheon or requesting additional information should contact Marlene Goodwin at (904) 384-1001.

SEPTEMBER 2023 VOL. 16, ISSUE 09



## The Start of Something Great

The motivational man Zig Ziglar once said, “You don’t have to be great to start, but you have to start to be great.” We’ve captured a glimpse of Jacksonville’s future greatness through these fabulous first-day-of-school photos.

READ MORE ON PAGE 32



## SOARING Support

Will and Suzanne Burke, along with Dorothy Flack and Irene Farwell, earned their wings as supporters of Angelwood’s Aug. 19 Soaring Possibilities fundraiser.

READ MORE ON PAGE 24

## No Phones, No Problems



A new campaign is driving people to ditch cell phones for children under 13. Find out why, along with other tips for shaping good digital citizens.

READ MORE ON PAGE 36



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# Behind the Headlines

You trust the team at *The Resident News* brings you the latest on what's impacting and improving our community. But we've been working behind the headlines, too, to improve *The Resident News* experience for our readers and advertisers, with a new website, new perks and the newest edition of Circles Social Datebook & Charity Register.

## NEW WEBSITE ON THE HORIZON

*The Resident News* is excited to announce plans for a newly designed, mobile-friendly version of our website, [residentnews.net](https://residentnews.net). With our updated design, you will more easily be able to search your favorite stories and quickly keep up to date on the most important news stories for your neighborhood. Keep an eye out for the upcoming launch later this year! If you have ideas on additional features you'd love to see incorporated in our new site, let us know at [editor@residentnews.net](mailto:editor@residentnews.net).

## ATTENTION ALL NONPROFITS

Collection is underway for information for the 2024 Circles Social Datebook and Charity Register. As the only magazine dedicated to serving our local nonprofit sector in Northeast Florida, we are the go-to resource for thousands of readers, year-round, in print and online. Be sure to submit your nonprofit's updated event and contact information at [circlescharityregister.com/contact](https://circlescharityregister.com/contact) to be included and get your organization in front of Northeast Florida's fundraisers, philanthropists and difference-makers. General listings are free, and premier upgrades are still available. Deadline is Sept. 15.

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# Letters TO THE EDITOR

The views and opinions expressed in the Letters to the Editor belong solely to the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of this publication or its editorial team.

Here is a wonderful example from our neighborhood of what happens when there is no one caring about how our city looks. I'm sure the planning department gave them permission to build this storage monster and do whatever they wanted on this corner. It is on the corner of San Juan and Roosevelt, and tucked in the arms of this monster – and dwarfed by it – is a strip bar called SOS Lounge which you can see if you zoom in. Really classy, drive by it sometime!



How did this get approved? I'd love to see some stories about how Jacksonville allows our public spaces to look the way they do. (Maybe an ugly photo contest?!) Thanks for your paper, it is a great community builder, and we need it!

-Barbara B. Ketchum

*These Letters to the Editor are in regard to the article "Closures Ahead for Walgreens" in the August issue of the Riverside edition of The Resident News, which you can read in our online archives at [residentnews.net](https://residentnews.net).*

## SHOPLIFTING AT MARSHALLS ON NORMANDY

I read your article tonight about shoplifters at Walgreens on Park and am responding to your request for feedback. I was in Marshalls on Normandy a few weeks back and there was a lady who was talking loudly, seemingly to herself, as I didn't see a phone. She had a large handbag with a tag on it – so not hers. She was jamming all kinds of clothing and other items into the bag. She was in the area that has workout gear. After a while, she walked right up front, still talking loudly, and she walked right out the door. They were fully staffed at the checkout, so maybe four attendants, and no one seemed to blink an eye. I did see one lady go to the wall behind the counter to do something and I figured it was to switch off any door alarm.

When I checked out, the lady told me about a survey on my receipt where I could let them know how my shopping experience was. I told her it was great, everyone was helpful and friendly, but the only negative was seeing a shoplifter blatantly walk out with a bunch of merchandise with zero repercussions. She said she knew, and it was frustrating, but store policy. I stated it was wrong; and basically, I could walk out with my stuff, so why should I pay? Again, she was apologetic. I thought in Florida that didn't fly. I was so upset by it that I felt like emailing DeSantis. This madness has got to stop!

-Vickie from Riverside

## SHOPLIFTING AT WALGREENS

I'm a resident of the Beau Rivage, so the Park and King Walgreens is the nearest and most convenient drugstore. I was in the store checking out about six weeks ago. The very nice cashier mentioned that he just hated his job. When I asked him why, he said it's all of the shoplifting. Just then, a large, black man walked straight out the front door with a case of beer. The cashier said, "There you go...he's stealing." He said that the police just can't get there in time. It's a very sad situation.

I don't think I will ever feel safe shopping there again.

Thank your alerting your readers to this problem.

-G.B. from Avondale



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# Wayne’s World: A Different Idea

## Repurposing JEA Headquarters into UF’s Downtown Campus

BY: **GUEST CONTRIBUTOR SHERRY MAGILL**

Ever wonder what it takes to restore and repurpose an architectural gem in Jacksonville’s historic downtown?

Wayne Wood thinks about it all the time.

A founder of Riverside Avondale Preservation, Wood has been involved in saving Jacksonville’s under-appreciated architectural gems since the 1970s. His latest book, “Jacksonville’s Architectural Heritage: Landmarks for the Future,” documents 860 such sites.

Now that JEA has vacated its former headquarters at 21 West Church Street, Wood is concerned that the City of Jacksonville will yet again demolish an historic downtown architectural gem. And with good reason. Jacksonville has a penchant for tearing down historic downtown. Albeit all with good intention, in the spirit of building something shiny and new. Seems we’re not happy with distinctive architecture and aspire to look something like south Florida.

The Landing, courthouse, and city hall; the Greyhound bus station, a city block across from the Omni Hotel, the entire LaVilla neighborhood, and the Ford Motor Assembly Plant are among a long list of downtown properties the City has demolished during my brief 30-plus years in Jacksonville. Most of the land on which these structures stood either became parking lots or stood vacant for years. Some remain so.

It’s as if we embrace a bizarre ethic: “If we demolish it, they will come.”

### An Opportunity: UF’s Future Jacksonville Campus

In February, former mayor Lenny Curry proposed using approximately 18 acres near downtown FSCJ for a to-be-established University of Florida-Jacksonville campus, an effort whose cost is presently undetermined but enjoys a state legislative \$75 million appropriation together with a City Council \$20 million commitment.

While the actual location, according to Representative Wyman Duggan, will be up to the University of Florida, talk of a central downtown location seems to have evaporated in the wake of Jaguars owner Shad Khan’s pitching his \$2 billion stadium development dream, which includes a \$5 million pledge *if* the University of Florida locates its campus on property he owns near the stadium.

The stadium district is located at the east end of the Northbank, a good mile on foot from city hall, with no shade to speak of from one point to the other.

Wood dislikes both locations.

Converting acreage near FSCJ’s downtown campus doesn’t work well, says Wood. In fact, his analysis of developing the acreage identified in Curry’s slide deck presentations is too costly and will require removing 50% of college parking, a JEA water processing facility, the Mary L. Singleton Senior Center, the City’s Engineer’s Building, and six Waterworks Park historic structures.

And developing a new campus on Fairgrounds property, Wood argues, is too far removed from the urban core which boasts museums, small shops, walkable streets, and outdoor parks. It’s where people are already concentrated.



The JEA Building, originally known as the Universal Marion. The Jacksonville Historical Society lists this 1963 mid-century modern, 19-story skyscraper among its list of locally endangered historic structures.

### Wood’s Proposal: Reimagine JEA’s Church Street Complex

“It’s the perfect location for the University of Florida downtown campus,” says Wood, referring to JEA’s Church Street complex which he describes as “nationally significant.”

It’s big, at 360,000 square feet.

Completed in 1963 during a decade of explosive building expansion in Jacksonville’s urban core, JEA’s former headquarters tower is part of an architecturally significant “Downtown Center” retail complex, according to *The Jaxson*’s Ennis Davis. It includes three buildings—the 19-story office tower, a 25,000 square foot ground level store, a six-story former department store—and a six-story parking garage.

Originally known as the Universal Marion, the tower has what Wood calls a “quirky yet iconic facade,” and according to Davis, “may be the largest Mid-Century Modern building in Jacksonville.”

After JEA announced plans to vacate the complex, Ennis and *The Jaxson* called for “City Council, Downtown Investment Authority, and JEA work together to proactively craft a plan and strategy for the adaptive reuse of the entire Downtown Center complex.”

There’s no evidence they have done so.

But Wayne Wood has.

He says the downtown complex “doesn’t lend itself easily to corporate headquarter development,” what with its size and location far from St. Johns’ river views. Consequently, Wood is concerned that JEA won’t be able to sell the building, resulting ultimately in the City’s deciding to blow it to smithereens, creating yet again another hollowed out section of historic downtown.

### Wood’s Idea Deserves a Hearing

Wood’s proposal that the former JEA Church Street complex be repurposed into UF’s Jacksonville downtown campus has merit and seems to be a win-win-win: we preserve part of Jacksonville’s architectural history, increase our intellectual capital downtown, support surrounding businesses, and save precious public resources in the process.

Every deal city government “incentivizes” includes a trade-off. We ought to know the cost of converting and building near FSCJ, or constructing a brand-new campus located a good, hot, non-walkable mile from the historic urban core *versus* repurposing an architectural gem, which already includes ample parking and is surrounded by existing small shops, museums, restaurants, parks and walkable streets.

Wood’s idea deserves a proper hearing.

You can help. Use the City Council link, [coj.net/city-council.aspx](https://coj.net/city-council.aspx), to find your City Council member.

This story was adapted and reprinted with permission. For the original Substack story and more by JaxLookout Redux and Sherry Magill, visit [sherrymagill.substack.com](https://sherrymagill.substack.com).



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# Oak Street PUD Returning to Land, Use and Zoning Committee

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

It's been seven years since city council approved the Planned Unit Development (PUD) in a 13-to-5 vote – despite significant community opposition – but movement on the planned restaurant at the former site of the Deluxe Laundry and Dry Cleaners and Deluxe Launderette on Oak Street in Riverside is stirring.

In July, Ted Stein and J.C. Demetree, founders of Roost Restaurants LLC and the developers for what was once called The Roost but has since been rebranded as the third location of their restaurant The Local, participated in a community meeting to discuss the restaurant and changes they're requesting to the approved 2016 PUD and listened to community feedback and concerns.

In May, Ordinance 2023-0365 was introduced to the city council regarding

those changes. Most recently it went before the Land, Use and Zoning (LUZ) Committee on Aug. 15, which deferred it to the Sept. 6 committee meeting. A previous LUZ meeting on Aug. 1 had already continued the public hearing on the legislation to that same September meeting.

Verbiage in the original bill for 2023-0365 describes it as a request to rezone and reclassify the properties therein “from Planned Unit Development (PUD) District (2016-55-E) to Planned Unit Development (PUD) District. This new PUD district shall generally permit commercial and multi-family residential uses.”

The properties encompassed in the PUD include the now-condemned buildings once housing the launderette



The buildings in the PUD include the surface lot and distant building on the far right, formerly known as KT's Alteration and Embroidery.

and dry cleaners, as well as a third building separated from the other two by a dirt parking lot. Stein and Demetree are not involved in the plans for that third building.

At the July community meeting, Stein, Demetree and attorney Jason Gabriel, representing property owner, explained they will be seeking some

changes to the 15 conditions originally established in the approval of the 2016 PUD, including a change to the restaurant's operating hours and the allowance of televisions in the restaurant, as well as minor changes to the site plan for a larger kitchen.

The LUZ Committee will meet at 5 p.m. on Wednesday, Sept. 6.

# Peluso Discusses Priorities, Concerns with Murray Hill Residents

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

District 7 Council Member Jimmy Peluso stopped by the Murray Hill Preservation Association's (MHPA) meeting on Monday, Aug. 7, to speak with community members, hear their concerns and learn what some of the neighborhood's priorities are for the future.

Like Jacksonville as a whole, infrastructure and safety emerged as

top priorities from Murray Hill residents who attended the meeting.

Following the meeting, MHPA President Kate Truslow said sidewalks and stop signs are at the top of her list for infrastructural improvements.

She said she'd like to see “the city putting in new sidewalks, improving the sidewalks that we do have here – there are a lot of sidewalks in disrepair that are not safe to walk on – and more stop signs.”

Truslow said the association appreciates their new council member's area speed limits to 20 mph, as well as the ongoing Florida Department

“This is the best way for me to get a feel for what the community wants...”  
– Jimmy Peluso, District 7 Council Member

outreach efforts, which began prior to the election and have continued since he took office.

“We knew right off the bat he was going to be very one-on-one with us, which is incredible for [us]. We are basically a small association for a big community,” she said. “So, it's absolutely wonderful to have that relationship with him.”

Additional topics discussed at the meeting ranged from traffic calming efforts to reducing speeding drivers, including the process and associated costs for installing speed humps, stop signs or lowering the residential

of Transportation construction along Edgewood Avenue.

Peluso said attending and participating in these types of neighborhood or association meetings are a “must-have” for him, particularly in the new and growing communities.

“This is the best way for me to get a feel for what the community wants, what the community needs and what the community's been asking for – in some cases for years,” he said.

MHPA holds monthly meetings on the first Monday of each month at rotating community locations.

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# Inventory, Interest and Investment

## The state of Jacksonville’s rental real estate market is In flux

BY JENNIFER JENSEN

The traditional saying in real estate has been, “Location. Location. Location.” But recently, the three magic words seem instead to be “supply and demand.”

In Jacksonville, a lack of inventory has had a direct effect on home sales, and by extension, the rental market.

“With only 2.3 months’ worth of inventory, we are still seeing a strong seller’s market where demand far exceeds supply,” said Heather Buckman, broker and owner of Cowford Realty and Design. “Particularly in the sweet spot of \$350,000-\$650,000, we just cannot supply enough homes to meet the demand.”

Couple that lack of inventory with the high mortgage rates – averaging 6.9%, up two percentage points over last year – and homeowners are even less incentivized to move.

“People are less likely to sell and upgrade if they secured a home with a very low interest rate in the past few years,” said Missy Kampmeyer, owner and broker at Cady at Compass. This has created somewhat of a gridlock with sellers not selling, but buyers wanting to buy, Buckman added.

While the median price of homes in Riverside, Avondale and Ortega neighborhoods rose 15% from May to June this year, Buckman said for smaller areas, it’s more important to look at long-term data. Year-over-year, area prices have instead settled about 3%.

“This is likely due to the bidding wars slowing down and buyers being more discerning with how high they are willing to go over list price,” Buckman said. “That being said, more than a quarter of all homes in the Riverside/Avondale/Ortega area are selling for over list price.

“In the last iteration of our market, buyers were a bit more forgiving. In this version, they are understandably wanting more of their wish list items checked off, and they are expecting for homes to be maintained and in solid condition.”

These feelings are causing many homebuyers to lean toward newer construction and turnkey homes, especially in light of the lingering labor and supply chain issues.

“The demand for move-in ready homes is always strong, but we are seeing it even higher right now, where the cost to renovate and improve a home is often expensive and timely,” Buckman said. “If buyers can find what they want, in the condition that they want to buy it in, they are jumping in with both feet. But the lack of inventory has been the biggest struggle.”

These myriad conditions have caused many buyers to hit pause on making a purchase and look toward renting instead. Sacha Higham with Traditions Realty LLC

is seeing more people who are relocating to Jacksonville lean toward the rental market due to lack of inventory and “not being able to find what they are looking for.”

While realtors believe Jacksonville rental prices are starting to stabilize, the city – much like many other areas – has experienced a huge spike in rental prices in recent years. From 2020 to 2022, tenants experienced rent increases between \$370-\$470 per month, according to a report from the JAX Rental Housing Project, a University of North Florida (UNF) research project aimed at collecting and analyzing data on the state of Jacksonville’s rental market.

The study also reported a pattern of private investor consolidation, in that “rental properties are now an asset class investment for the wealthy. Private investors turned corporate landlords have, and are, buying up thousands of homes in Jacksonville and converting them into rentals as investment vehicles for their clients.” UNF sociology professor David Jaffee, who compiled the report, said both private equity companies and big investors have altered the local housing market.

Justin Garrett, Watson Realty Corp. Broker and Executive Vice President of Property Management Division, said rental prices have started to calm down.

“With the dramatic shift in housing need in our area, this gap between market and actual price became undeniable and many landlords are reassessing,” said Garrett. “I’m seeing either rental price reductions or more conservative initial pricing for rentals as days on the market creep up. The free market is working and the prices are stabilizing.”

“With only 2.3 months’ worth of inventory, we are still seeing a strong seller’s market where demand far exceeds supply. Particularly in the sweet spot of \$350,000-\$650,000, we just cannot supply enough homes to meet the demand.”

– Heather Buckman  
Broker and owner of Cowford Realty and Design

Currently, the average rent for an apartment in Jacksonville is \$1,522, according to RentCafe. That number can jump in certain areas, especially in historic neighborhoods like Riverside and San Marco.

“There are so many new developments popping up and the demand is still continuing to grow,” said Rachael Simms, Director of Marketing and Development for GMC Properties, which manages The Hendricks at San Marco. The Hendricks at San Marco opened in June and is already at 50% capacity with only one-bedroom units left available.

Historic districts like San Marco, Riverside and Brooklyn offer something many places in Jacksonville can’t — a walkability factor. Rental properties and apartment complexes in these areas allow people to live in these historic neighborhoods and be a part of the community even if they can’t afford to purchase a home here.

“There is so much going on in the historic areas; they’re beautiful, full of energy and extremely walkable,” Higham said. “People see that and are willing to pay more to be in areas that have lots to offer.”

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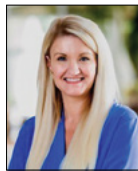
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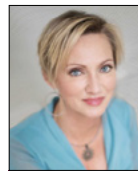
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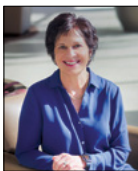
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# Urban Odor Study Report Released

## An update on the Jacksonville Urban Odor Study

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Months after the year-long Urban Odor Study concluded, the report and its results are now available to the public to review.

The Jacksonville Environmental Protection Board heard a presentation on the nearly 200-page report at its board meeting on Monday, Aug. 21 that discussed some highlights of the report, which included data collected by the 11 sensors and six weather monitoring instruments were installed throughout the city from April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023.

Mike Williams, manager of the Air Quality branch for Jacksonville's Environmental Quality Division, gave the presentation.

The City hired Envirosuite to conduct the study, which cost just over \$125,000, after odor complaints rose dramatically beginning in September 2020.

Envirosuite installed 11 sensors – eNoses – each of which was equipped with three sensors to detect hydrogen sulfide, ammonia and VOCs, or volatile organic compounds. The VOCs were what the city was primarily trying to detect and track with the eNoses; the sensors for hydrogen sulfide and ammonia were included in the “standard package” from Envirosuite. Additionally, Envirosuite provided two weather monitoring instruments, which the City supplemented with instruments from its own air monitoring network to bring the total to six.

It turned out the VOC sensors were “not very reliable,” however.

“Really, the VOC data was good at the beginning of the study; about halfway through it was almost unusable,” he said. “It got to the point where I just stopped looking at it.”

He cited two possible reasons why the VOC sensors didn’t work properly during the study: One, he explained, was that the sensors were “measuring at the lower end of the spectrum for VOC...We were at the lower end of the capabilities.”

Additionally, he added, the recommended monthly calibrations for the sensors were not done or provided by Envirosuite.

Despite the faulty sensors, however, the study is still considered a success because of the data Envirosuite was able to collect in terms of how “weather affects the odors and the odor complaints,” Williams explained.

In addition to aiding in the prediction of future odor events, the study was also able to help determine where and when the majority of the odor complaints were focused.

The Resident News will be doing a more in-depth look at the report findings and what the next steps will be for the City, if any, for future odor complaints, now that the Urban Odor Study is over and its report complete.



Building permits have been issued and work is underway for the restaurant slated for where the Wells Fargo Bank branch once stood.

# Building Permits Issued for New Restaurant on Lomax Street

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

A building permit has been issued for a new restaurant coming to the 5 Points District.

Roost Restaurants LLC, the same entity that brought The Local concept to Miramar and Neptune Beach, is planning a new concept, listed as the Lomax Restaurant on the building permit, for the former Wells Fargo bank branch located at 803 Lomax Street.

Issued on Aug. 3, the permit details a two-story building addition for the new restaurant at the cost of just over \$2.2 million. Toney Construction Co., Inc. is listed as the contractor on the permit. Permit details for the two-story addition outlined a 6,579-square-foot building that’s just over 30 feet high with an occupancy of 400 people.

According to county records, City Limits LLC purchased the property in October 2020 for \$1.25 million. A deed restriction prohibits any financial services business from being rendered on the property by any institution other than the grantor, Wells Fargo, or an affiliated entity.

Restauranters and developers Ted Stein and J.C. Demetree, founders of Roost Restaurants, are also planning to build a third location of The Local on Oak Street, where Deluxe Laundry and Dry Cleaners and Deluxe Launderette once stood. Stein and Demetree met with the community in July to discuss the plans for that restaurant, which has been in flux for several years.

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Terrie Andrews and Jill Garrett gave a media tour of the new space in the Baptist Healthy Living Center at the Winston Family YMCA on Wednesday, Aug. 23.



The Motherhood Space Day Program offers several amenities for its participants, from no-cost childcare to relaxation spaces with massage chairs and private lactation rooms.

# A Safe Space for Maternal Health

## Baptist Health launches The Motherhood Space Day Program

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Last month, Baptist Health Jacksonville officially opened the doors to The Motherhood Space Day Program, which will provide support for anyone battling perinatal mood and anxiety disorders (PMADs).

PMADs is commonly referred to as postpartum depression.

The Motherhood Space Day Program is a continuation of Baptist Health’s “commitment to supporting the behavioral health needs” of its community, according to a Baptist Health press release announcing the new program. Eligible patients can participate in the program for up to three weeks on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. to noon. The program is located at the Winston Family YMCA, in the Baptist Healthy Living Center, and it is led by a team of psychologists specializing in perinatal mental health.

The Motherhood Space Day Program is an extension of Baptist Health’s Maternal Mental Health Service Line, said Jill Garrett, licensed psychologist and director of The Motherhood Space Day Program.

“After I had my own daughter, about eight years ago, I kind of recognized that we didn’t really have as much emotional support that could be necessary for helping moms and family,” she said.

Garret said they worked to address and eliminate any barriers that might prevent someone from participating in the program. This includes offering complimentary childcare through the YMCA’s KidZone, providing free transportation through JTA and scholarship money for those on Medicaid.

The program accepts most insurance plans.

Baptist Behavioral Health Vice President Dr. Terrie Andrews said child and maternal health consistently rank in the top three for Baptist Health’s regular community health needs assessments.

“What we realized is that there is not a lot of resources

in the community to provide support to expecting and postpartum moms within the first year,” Andrews said. “There’s not a lot of psychologists in the area who have dedicated training and certification to be able to work with these moms.”

The Motherhood Space Day Program provides a holistic approach for participants, including a wellness component for each session like yoga or walking therapy.

An outpatient program like The Motherhood Space helps “break down the stigma of seeking help,” Andrews said.

“Parents and moms, in particular, need to take care of themselves in order to take care of their families, so it’s not a luxury, it’s a requirement,” Garrett said. “And we also know the numbers are there: As many as one in five moms, and as many as one in three moms of color, will experience what are called [PMADs]: That’s any emotional challenge – depression, anxiety, PTSD, bipolar – that occur during pregnancy and postpartum.”

Baptist Health Jacksonville has also posted 40 educational videos The Motherhood Space YouTube channel that addresses a series of topic from “strategies for support”, “PMADs 101,” “baby blues” and “self-screening tips.” These videos are the second in a three-tiered approach Baptist Health has taken to addressing maternal mental health.

Tier 1 provides education and resources to the providers throughout the community, Andrews explained. Since January, Garrett has trained “well over 300 providers” on what PMADs are, signs to look out for and how to refer patients into the program.

Tier 3 is the day program itself.

The Winston Family YMCA is located at 221 Riverside Avenue. More information about The Motherhood Space Day Program can be found at [baptistjax.com/motherhoodspace](https://baptistjax.com/motherhoodspace).



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MotherhoodSpace\_Photo: Terrie Andrews and Jill Garrett gave a media tour of the new space in the Baptist Healthy Living Center at the Winston Family YMCA on Wednesday, Aug. 23.



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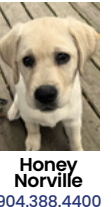
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A rendering of the Home2 Suites hotel coming to Brooklyn.

## Brooklyn’s Home2 Suites Nearing Final Phases of Construction

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Interior construction has begun on the Home2 Suites hotel coming to Downtown’s Brooklyn neighborhood.

Located at 600 Park Street, the new hotel will feature six stories, 100 guest rooms and an associated surface parking lot. It will be 10,720 square feet with an on-site, street-level restaurant facing Rosselle Street.

This is a joint project between Kelco Management and Development, Inc. and Corner Lot Development Group. The general contractor is Pinkerton & Laws General Contractor with Kasper Architects + Associates as the architects.

In July, Corner Lot shared an announcement on its website stating the on-site restaurant will be a Players Grille.

According to Corner Lot Development Group Commercial Development Manager Andre Green, it is “on pace” to open in January. He explained that the exterior and structural build has been completed and workers are currently in the final stages of completing drywall before moving on to flooring installations.

Green added that sitework for the parking lot is expected to reconvene in September or October.

The estimated total cost for this project is between \$23.7 to \$24 million.

## Downtown Development Review Board Taps the Brakes for New JTA Facility for Autonomous Vehicles

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Plans for the proposed Jacksonville Transit Authority (JTA) Autonomous Vehicle Operations and Maintenance Facility on Bay Street will have to wait a bit longer to advance through the planning process after the Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB) deferred conceptual approval at its Aug. 10 meeting.

These autonomous vehicles are part of JTA’s Ultimate Urban Circulator (U2C), the “comprehensive program to modernize and expand the Skyway and introduce autonomous vehicles (AVs) into JTA’s transportation system.” Currently, the Skyway covers a 2.5-mile system of stops between downtown and the Southbank. U2C plans to extend that to 10 miles.

The site selected for the proposed facility covers the entire block bordered by Jefferson, Broad, Bay and Water streets in LaVilla, just south of the future site of the proposed Daily’s mixed-use project. The 1.11 acres of land is currently a paved parking lot.

According to the DDRB application, construction on the project is expected to start on Dec. 1 and end in February 2025. The design team for this project includes Vision 2 Reality, a partnership between Balfour Beatty and WGI, which will provide survey, engineering and architectural services.

A 2021 WGI press release explained that Balfour Beatty will partner with Superior Construction Company Southeast; Beep, Inc.; Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.; and Miller Electric to deliver the project.

While the building itself wouldn’t be open to the public, site plans do detail a “pocket park” for the community, though during the DDRB meeting, Eric Luttmann, Director of Architecture for WGI, stated the park would be a “future project by JTA.”



The proposed operations and maintenance facility on Bay Street will serve the autonomous vehicles in JTA’s Ultimate Urban Circulator project.

Several board members were not impressed with the designs presented for the proposed project. DDRB Chairman Matt Brockelman said, “I’m not super comfortable with the project. I think it needs work.”

A staff report presented to the board recommended conceptual approval for the application, with seven conditions, including one to meet with the LaVilla community and/or the LaVilla Heritage Trail Committee in “an effort to align the design of the site and structure with the community’s goals.”

DDRB Vice Chair Linzee Ott expressed support of that condition, among the six others, stating that “community input and involvement is going to be the key for me to get to final [approval].”

That being said, and with the understanding that discussions will continue on the project, she added she would be in favor of conceptual approval. Board Member Trevor Lee also voiced support for conceptual approval with board members Christian Harden and Gary Monahan in favor of deferral.

Ultimately, Brockelman deferred the project using his authority as chair. It will be revisited for conceptual approval at a future meeting.

JTA’s U2C is a project several years in the making, consisting of three phases: Bay Street Innovation Corridor, Skyway Conversion and Neighborhood Extensions. The first two phases are currently active.

On Aug. 30 and 31, JTA hosted its two-day Strategic Board Retreat, during which an update presentation was given about the U2C project.

The Resident News will continue coverage of the U2C project, including any updates provided at the JTA retreat.

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## Case Named Cybersecurity Leader

“Becker’s Hospital Review” has included James Case, vice president and chief information security officer (CISO) at Baptist Health, in its 60-strong list of “Hospital and health system CISOs and CPOs to know” for 2023. The list is comprised of individuals who have leveraged years of experience in IT cybersecurity to safeguard information, launch new initiatives, establish novel technologies and build talented IT teams.

“Cyber threats are a very real concern for many industries, and health care is no exception,” said Aaron Miri, senior vice president and chief digital and information officer at Baptist Health.

Case has worked in IT within the health care industry for nearly 30 years. His tenure at Baptist Health began in 2005 when he served as a senior product manager for two years. In 2021, he assumed his current senior leadership position, where his responsibilities include vulnerability management and the protection of patients’ confidential data.

## CEO Fafard to Retire from MOSH

Bruce Fafard, CEO for The Museum of Science & History (MOSH), announced his retirement from the position, effective February 2024.

“I first approached the museum to volunteer my services at the start of the pandemic. It was clear to me then — and remains clear to me now — that this museum is an essential cultural institution of this community. It has been a true honor to dedicate my full attention to MOSH’s mission over the past several years,” said Fafard.

After his volunteer consultant position, Fafard’s roles with MOSH progressed to COO and interim CEO before he was appointed CEO in October 2020.

“Bruce has been an exceptional leader for MOSH. With every decision, he has prioritized the museum’s best interests – which is evidenced by his thoughtfulness in working with us to plan his well-deserved retirement. As a result of his leadership, MOSH is in a prime position to build upon its 80-plus years of service to this community,” said William Magevney, chair of the MOSH board of trustees.

Planning for Fafard’s replacement began in early 2023, and the board of trustees retained Kittleman to start a national search in summer 2023.



Bruce Fafard spoke with a high school class at The Bolles School about Museum operations.



Bruce Fafard welcomed MOSH Discovery Camp participants as part of an experience called “If I Ran the MOSH.”



Bruce and Gina Fafard dancing together at the GALAXY fundraiser in April 2022.



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Ashley Kendrick opened Malachi's Ice Cream Bar in April.

## A New Kind of Bar Bringing booze to ice cream

Ashley Kendrick always knew she wanted to open an ice cream parlor.

Over the years, the idea for the shop went through several iterations, including the initial “Malachi’s Frozen Palace,” before a kitchen experiment inspired the shop as it is today.

Kendrick, a Riverside resident, describes the moment she was experimenting with ice cream flavors, pulling in other elements as well. When she poured in some champagne, she realized what she had was “legendary.”

“That’s when it changed to Malachi’s Ice Cream Bar,” Kendrick said. “I still want to have the family environment where I can still bring my son in to have ice cream, but yet have options for adults as well.”

Malachi’s Ice Cream Bar opened on Riverside Avenue, just across the street from Memorial Park, in April of this year. It offers 16 flavors including customer favorites Cookie Monster, Cookie Butter and Gator Trail. Her dairy-free options include sorbets like strawberry, watermelon and mango, which are featured in her Sorbetmosas: champagne mimosas with scoops of sorbet.

Kendrick said she loves being both a resident and, now, a small business owner in Riverside and has loved the support her community has shown her since opening.

“One thing that’s unique to Jacksonville is that they love their small businesses,” she said. They love to support new business owners and watch you from the beginning.”

Malachi’s Ice Cream Bar is located at 1661 Riverside Avenue, Suite 128. It is open Tuesday through Thursday, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 5-10 p.m.; Friday, 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. and 5-11 p.m.; Saturday, 1:30-9 p.m.; and Sunday, 2:30-9 p.m.



The women behind Riverside’s Happy Medium Books Café: Daisy Caez, Annie Pagett and Callista Harding-Pagett.

Pagett runs the store with her mother, Daisy Caez, and her daughter, Callista Harding-Pagett.

Happy Medium Books Café’s inventory is roughly 80% used books and 20% new, with an initial focus on underrepresented authors for its new book inventory. Pagett will also be launching three book clubs: a youth book club for children and young readers, a general book club and a wine book club, for which she will collaborate with her upstairs neighbor, Kathryn’s Wines. The three clubs will be open to everyone, though participants interested in the wine book club must be 21 or over.

Pagett provides regular updates on the store’s events and other goings-on through its Instagram account, [@happy\\_medium\\_books](#).

“I’m really excited, and I really hope that the community embraces us and they continue to follow along,” she said.

Happy Medium Books Café is located at 2724 Park Street. Its hours are Tuesday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 4 p.m.



Ashley Helmick

## New Director for Women’s Board

Ashley Helmick has been named the new director of The Women’s Board of Wolfson Children’s Hospital. The Jacksonville native and Episcopal School of Jacksonville alumnus will start her new role Aug. 28. As director, Helmick will help lead the all-volunteer organization, whose mission is to further community awareness and raise funds for the children who come through Wolfson Children’s Hospital.

“As a Women’s Board member and volunteer, Ashley brings a heartfelt enthusiasm for our mission with a direct understanding of our organization. She is a collaborative leader committed to our community. Ashley’s knowledge and experience in volunteer and event management, donor relations and community engagement align strongly with our strategic goals as we move forward,” said Kendra McCrary, president of The Women’s Board of Wolfson Children’s Hospital.

A frontline fundraiser with a focus on community, service and partnership opportunities, Helmick has served on the Episcopal School of Jacksonville Alumni Board since 2016. She has previously served on the board of the Ronald McDonald House Charities Red Shoe Crew and was a member of The Women’s Board for eight years.

“It is an incredible honor to serve as the next director of The Women’s Board and I look forward to continuing the amazing work done through this organization for the children of our community. I am thankful for the leadership in the hospital and volunteers that will allow us to work together to further our mission,” said Helmick.



Jasmine Butler

## Butler Joins Fishweir Elementary

Jasmine Butler has joined Fishweir Elementary School as its new assistant principal. The Florida native grew up in Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) and is a two-time graduate of the University of North Florida (UNF). She has been teaching for 13 years, across all ages, from kindergarten through college. She most recently served as a math and reading interventionist and instructional coach for DCPS, while simultaneously holding a position as an adjunct professor at the College of Education and Human Services at UNF. She was named Teacher of the Year while at Tiger Academy for the 2020-21 school year. Butler is also a clinical fellow for the National Association of Professional Development Schools – Association of Teacher Educators.

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# 5K to Benefit Groundwork Jacksonville

The 4th Annual VyStar Emerald 5K/10K presented by JTC Running and 1st Place Sports is headed to downtown's riverfront on Sept. 30, 2023. The 5K and 10K Run/Walk begin at 7:30 a.m. and the 5K/10K ride follows at 9 a.m. JTC running covers all race costs so that 100% of proceeds benefit Groundwork Jacksonville, the city's nonprofit partner in building the Emerald Trail and restoring McCoys Creek and Hogans Creek.

The route begins at the Duval County Courthouse and visits Northbank Riverwalk and Riverside Arts Market; 10K participants will continue over the new Shared Use Path (SuP) to San Marco.

Registration for the event is underway at [1stplacesports.com/races/emeraldtrail/](https://1stplacesports.com/races/emeraldtrail/). Members of Groundwork Jacksonville, VyStar Credit Union, JTC Running and North Florida Bicycle Club receive \$5 off.



Jim Love opened his State Farm agency on Aug. 1, 1983.

# Jim Love Celebrates 40 Years at State Farm

On Aug. 1, Jim Love celebrated 40 years at his State Farm Insurance agency in historic Riverside, where he's served more than 2,300 families and has been selected as the "Small Business Leader of the Year" for the Downtown Council of the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce twice.

A Navy veteran and former city council member, Love has continued to serve his community through various community organizations. He's a founding board member and president of the Park and King Area Association.

A July 28 post on his Jime Love – State Farm Agent Facebook page read, in part, "I have had the privilege to serve so many of you through these last four decades. I am so grateful to be associated with such a solid company through both the good weather times and hurricanes...I can't wait to help the people of Jacksonville for another 20 years."

Love had cupcakes on-hand to celebrate with employees, clients, friends and neighbors who stopped by to mark the occasion.

Love's agency is located at 2730 College Street.

# Tindol Williams Group Joins Berkshire Hathaway

The Tindol Williams Group, comprised of Tony Tindol and Kyle Williams, has joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty. The Tindol Williams Group has a mission to provide top-tier solutions to clients' real estate needs and has established a reputation for delivering outstanding results in the industry.

“I’m thrilled that the Tindol Williams group has joined us and look forward to celebrating their success here with us.”

– Josh Cohen,  
Broker/Manager

Beyond their professional achievements, Tindol and Williams are actively involved in the community. Tindol participates and volunteers with Stonewall Sports Jax; Williams volunteers for Riverside Avondale Preservation and the annual Tour of Homes.

“I’m thrilled that the Tindol Williams group has joined us and look forward to celebrating their success here with us,” said Josh Cohen, Broker/Manager of the Metropolitan office of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty with locations in Avondale and San Marco.



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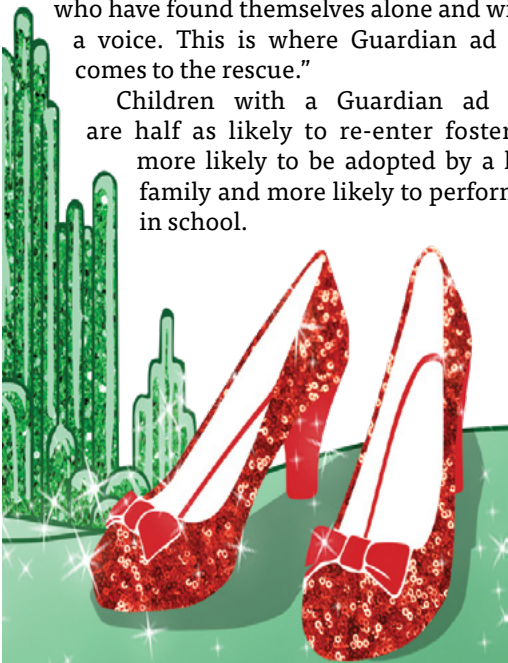
# No Place Like Home Returns

The Guardian ad Litem Foundation's (GALF) annual fundraiser There's No Place Like Home (NPLH) returns Saturday, November 4, at the Garden Club of Jacksonville in Riverside from 6-10 p.m. The Emerald City-worthy event will feature food from Chef's Garden, spirits, live and silent auctions, and music from Bold City Classics. **Tickets are \$150 per person and are available at [www.galfoundation.org](http://www.galfoundation.org).**

GALF has been serving children in Duval, Clay and Nassau counties since 1991. They help abused, abandoned, and neglected children who have been removed from their home as they navigate the dependency system.

"It is difficult to fathom that there are 1,200 abandoned, neglected and abused children going through our court system right here in our own community," said Avondale resident Chavet Constable, NPLH committee chair and GALF board vice chair. "These are innocent young children who have found themselves alone and without a voice. This is where Guardian ad Litem comes to the rescue."

Children with a Guardian ad Litem are half as likely to re-enter foster care, more likely to be adopted by a loving family and more likely to perform well in school.



# A Scoop of Nostalgia

Something sweet has come to the Historic 5 Points District. Opened this past April, Waffle Cone offers a "nostalgic ice cream experience" with a broad menu of flavors that offers something for everyone. The ice cream parlor is owned by Riverside locals Seth and Cassidy Darmata. It offers 36 flavors, including 12 dairy-free and three sugar-free. It was a deliberate decision, Cassidy Darmata said, to create as diverse a menu as possible to create something everyone could enjoy.

"We really, when looking at what we wanted to offer, wanted to be some place that welcomed all types of families, whether half your family's vegan, half your family's not. We wanted everyone to feel welcomed and accepted and that they had a place here, so that was something that we really thought about when creating our menu," she said.

Cassidy Darmata added the support she and her husband have received from the community has been "amazing." Now, as small business owners, she said they look forward to returning that support to 5 Points.

"Obviously there are a lot of things within 5 Points that we're really passionate about making better, and it's been amazing as business owners to now be able to think on a higher level about how can we really make changes in our community and what can me and my husband personally do to help make this community better, and how can we benefit the people here," she said.

Waffle Cone is located at 822 Post Street. It is open from noon to 9:30 p.m. daily.



Seth and Cassidy Darmata.

# Hiaasen to Keynote Equal Justice Awards

Bestselling novelist and former Miami Herald columnist Carl Hiaasen will deliver the keynote address at Jacksonville Area Legal Aid's (JALA) 21st Equal Justice Awards Sept. 20 at the Marriott Jacksonville Downtown. The Florida native is known for his irreverent humor, colorful characters and fiercely pointed tales about Florida, environmental issues, modern culture and corruption.



Carl Hiaasen

The event features the presentation of the Robert J. Beckham Equal Justice Award, which is bestowed on a person or organization who has notably promoted the cause of equal justice for low-income residents of Northeast Florida. The 2023 honorees are Gunster Shareholder Mike Freed and former Florida Times-Union Executive Editor Mary Kelli Palka, who now serves as strategic communications director at the University of North Florida.

"We are thrilled to be able to bring the Equal Justice Awards back so that we can honor these two individuals who have done so much for the Northeast Florida community," said JALA CEO Jim Kowalski.

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Rooftop “backyards” take in beautiful views of downtown Jacksonville at Terraces at San Marco.

# Urban Luxe

## New Toll Brothers development marries urban and outdoor living

Location, location, location has met its match.

It is an undeniable truth in the real estate market that location is everything, and it’s a familiar checklist item that drives many Jacksonville home buyers to the convenience of the San Marco area. But one of the challenges of urban dwelling is that homeowners must often sacrifice those other wish list items like outdoor spaces, new construction and open floorplans. Toll Brothers has eliminated that sacrifice, artfully blending a masterful balance of urban charm, spacious plans and outdoor living in its new luxurious townhome community, Terraces at San Marco.

The Terraces at San Marco, located on Atlantic Boulevard, halfway between I-95 and San Marco Boulevard, is home to 27 spacious townhomes nestled deep in the



Fletcher Park is directly across the street, just steps away from Terraces at San Marco.

heart of San Marco. These contemporary, low-maintenance homes are just a five-minute walk from San Marco Square, with gorgeous rooftop-terrace “backyards” that boast a five-star view of downtown Jacksonville. The airy greenspaces of Fletcher Park are right across the street, and



Toll Brothers includes tens of thousands of dollars in customizable option upgrades from their Design Studio.

residents’ banking, grocery and pharmacy needs are within a one-minute walk.

Garry Adams, Sales Consultant for Terraces at San Marco said it is indeed all about the location, estimating that there are probably 20 restaurants, including Taverna, Bar Molino and Good Dough, within walking distance of the property.

“With the amount of new restaurants coming in, and the existing ones, it’s gourmet paradise. It’s just the best we have in urban living,” he said.

The Terraces at San Marco are priced from the mid-\$700s to just over \$1 million. Interior homes average 1,844 square feet, with approximately 396-square-foot rooftop terraces, and there is limited availability for corner homes, which average 2,085 square feet with approximately 469 square feet of rooftop terrace space. The true luxury of these homes comes in the tastefully appointed details like waterfall-edge quartz countertops, all-weather decking on the rooftops and Shark-brand coating on the floors of the attached 2-car garages. Each home also comes with \$80,000-\$120,000 in customizable Design Studio upgrades. Additional designer-appointed features include gas cooktops, tankless gas water heaters and gas piping on the rooftop terraces to allow for a fully integrated outdoor kitchen or grill.

Terraces at San Marco has defied traditional urban standards by working with the San Marco Preservation Society to enhance the exterior architecture, and designing the open-concept floorplans with large, 8-foot doors and 9- to 10-foot ceilings on each floor.

“There’s almost no hallways to speak

of in here, so you really benefit from the openness,” said Adams.

Almost a quarter of the community is already sold out since Terraces at San Marco began selling earlier this summer. They have three move-in-ready homes and five more that will be ready within 90 days.

Toll Brothers, a Fortune 500 company with 52 years’ experience building luxury homes, is offering a promotional rate of 5.49% on select units while funds are still available from TBI Mortgage Company, but Adams explained that Toll Brothers does all it can to help homebuyers get into the home of their dreams. Despite the current interest rates, he said there are better ways to approach the interest rate market that would be better in the long term.

“The idea is to get the biggest bang for your buck. Everyone would have the option of buying the interest rate down and that’s the smartest way to go in this environment because it lasts for your 30-year mortgage.”

More importantly, he stressed, is the ability to own your own space in the urban landscape. Terraces at San Marco are fee-simple ownership, not a condominium, so the buyer owns both the land and the unit. The nominal monthly HOA takes care of irrigation, landscape, lawn care and trash pickup.

“To live in a downtown, walking distance from restaurants, there’s just so few opportunities. There are almost no resales in San Marco either, so the opportunity to have something new like this in this location is what’s driving the people here,” said Adams.

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The Terraces at San Marco are located at 1609 Bridgeton Dr. For more information, visit [tollbrothers.com/SanMarco](https://tollbrothers.com/SanMarco)

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# Groundwork Jacksonville Welcomes New Staff



Janet Reagor      Joni Turner      Julia Ramer      Nancy Schneider

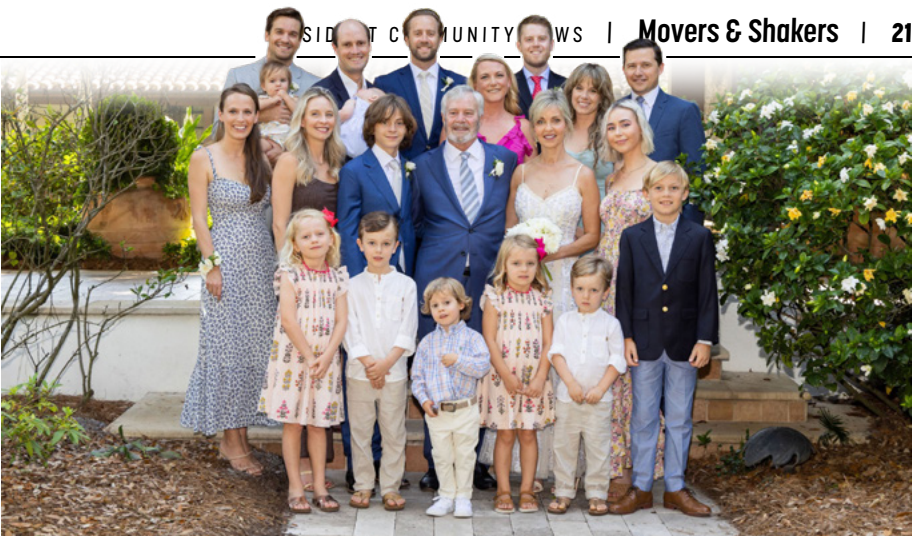
Groundwork Jacksonville, Inc., the City’s nonprofit partner in building the Emerald Trail and restoring Hogans and McCoys creeks, has added new staff to increase capacity for the growing organization.

Janet Reagor was appointed COO, directing day-to-day operations including human resources, facilities and operational policies and procedures that support the growth of Groundwork Jacksonville. Janet is also responsible for the effective development and execution of programs that reflect Groundwork’s mission, values and commitment to the community. She has held leadership positions with LSF Health Systems, Community Hospice & Palliative Care, Sanctuary on 8th Street and Dignity U Wear.

Nancy Schneider, a Jacksonville native, is Groundwork Jacksonville’s new Director of Development & Partnerships. Nancy is responsible for leading and implementing development strategies, donor cultivation and stewardship, and establishing strategic partnerships with businesses and key stakeholders. Her career spans more than 25 years and includes implementation of a program for an Indianapolis private school that was recognized, both locally and nationally, as a model of diversity, community renewal, and academic success for grades Pre-K through 8.

Julia Ramer has joined as a Development & Communications Coordinator, supporting Schneider. She is a University of North Florida (UNF) graduate with more than five years of experience in Jacksonville’s nonprofit sector. Prior to joining Groundwork, she was Community Relations and Volunteer Coordinator for Girls Inc.

Joni Turner, also a UNF graduate, is Groundwork’s new Community Engagement Coordinator, responsible for establishing and maintaining positive relationships with stakeholders of Jacksonville’s urban core neighborhoods. She works to ensure residents and business owners stay informed about —and have a voice in— Groundwork initiatives including the Emerald Trail and creek restoration projects.



The Harden family

# Harden Legacy Lives On in \$1M Donation to MOSH

The Museum of Science & History (MOSH) announced the Harden Family Foundation has donated \$1 million to the MOSH Genesis capital campaign. The gift will be honored through the naming of the River Patio at the museum’s new facility on the Northbank of the St. Johns River in downtown Jacksonville.

Prior to his recent passing, the Harden Family Foundation was led by M.C. “Ceree” Harden III, an accomplished Jacksonville business leader known for his impact in both the local business community and Northeast Florida’s philanthropic sector. He led Harden and Associates Inc. as CEO for over 40 years and served in community leadership roles that included the Chamber of Commerce’s economic development division.

“During my time on the economic development committee, we recommended locating a cultural facility within the sports and entertainment district that could support year-round activity. That was several decades ago. Finally, we are close to seeing that recommendation become a reality through MOSH’s exciting vision for the future. Together with my family, I am proud to contribute to this worthy endeavor,” Harden had previously said about the endeavor.

The MOSH Genesis capital campaign supports plans for MOSH to relocate to a 2.5-acre plot of city-owned land at the Shipyards property, commonly known as Lot X, including designs for a new museum and surrounding park spaces. Plans for the museum comprise approximately 100,000 square feet across three floors – an increase from the old 77,000-square-foot facility on the Southbank – with the option to build a future expansion of an additional 30,000 square feet.

“Every parent hopes their children’s generation will have better opportunities than the ones they knew. This generous contribution from the Harden family will support MOSH’s goal of inspiring the joy of lifelong learning for several generations to come,” said Maureen Mercho, MOSH’s Chief Development Officer.

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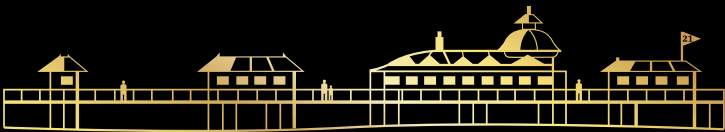
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Florida Secretary of State Cord Byrd is flanked by recipients of the 2023 Florida Trust for Historic Preservation Book of the Year, author Dr. Wayne W. Wood and photographer Mark Krancer.

# Local Book Wins Award for Historic Preservation

The Florida Trust for Historic Preservation honored author Dr. Wayne W. Wood, photographer Mark Krancer and the Jacksonville Historical Society (JHS) with a 2023 Florida Preservation Award for Book of the Year at a July 19 ceremony in Ocala. It recognized the Bicentennial Edition of “Jacksonville’s Architectural Heritage: Landmarks for the Future” for its help in protecting Florida’s history and heritage.

In its application for the award, the Jacksonville Historical Society noted that its goal for the book is to inspire citizens to acquire an appreciation for Jacksonville’s dwindling inventory of historic buildings, educate its citizens about the ethnic diversity of the city’s architecture and instill a passion to ensure these structures’ longevity through restoration, renovation and adaptive re-use.

First released in 1989, the new edition of Wood’s comprehensive look at Jacksonville architecture took nearly two years to complete and was released in December 2022. Wood estimates that he put more than 10,000 hours into the project, and Krancer donated his efforts to shoot approximately 500 sites, of which nearly 400 were new to the book. Newly discovered architectural gems, culturally significant buildings, and an entire section of little-known and highly unusual sites added a new perspective to revised edition.



Korean Association of North Florida Armistice Luncheon attendees

# Korean War Veterans Honored at 70th Armistice Anniversary



Korean War veteran Commander Dr. Henry Moreland spoke at the luncheon about defending Korea in the war.

The Korean Association of North Florida hosted its annual appreciation luncheon at the Fleet Reserve Branch 126 in July, marking the 70th Anniversary of the Korean War Armistice. The luncheon honored Korean War veterans and included appreciation speeches by association President Ohhan Kim and Liaison Jea Y. Lee. Members performed traditional Korean music, songs and dances, and the association presented guests with U.S. and South Korean flags.

The Jacksonville Naval Museum, the Korean War Veterans Chapter 200 and the We Can Be Heroes Foundation had hosted the Armistice Remembrance earlier in the week at Jacksonville’s USS-Orleck DD-886, which had engagements during the Korean War.

Honorary tributes to Korean War veterans included a flag line presented by the American Legion Riders 5th District, escorts by the Mayport Sea Scouts and performances of “Taps” by bugler Jim Steele and the National Anthem by Karim Zabaneh. Colors were presented by Bishop Kenny High School’s Naval Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps Color Guard.

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Korean War veterans Bill Speer, Ted Barber and Gerald Maloney

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# Angelwood Soaring Possibilities

Angelwood held its annual celebration, Soaring Possibilities, on Saturday, Aug. 19, at 6 p.m. at the Sawgrass Marriott. Now in its 30th year, Angelwood announced at the event the opening of the new Angelwood Thrift Store, slated for early November 2023. The event raised more than \$500,000 in support for children, adults and families living with intellectual and developmental differences.



The event was chaired by Kelly and Scott Gramling and Rachel and Kevin Padgett. Robin and Dan Wahby served as honorary chairs.

# Rethreaded Goes Elemental for 12th Birthday

Jacksonville-based Rethreaded celebrated 12 years of empowering survivors of human trafficking at a birthday celebration on Saturday, July 29, at its Delores Barr Weaver Campus of Hope. The event featured games, raffles and refreshments, but the highlight of the celebration was the launch of its new survivor-created product line, Elemental.

"We are so proud of our survivors, and the donors, volunteers, community partners and service providers who have helped them to regain the power of intentional, forward-looking choices that will guide the rest of their lives. This event is our way to say thank you and to get our community excited for what's next for us and for our survivors. We are especially grateful to Riverside Homes for four years of partnership and for providing the matching challenge that helped rally so much additional support," said Kristin Keen, Founder and CEO of Rethreaded.

Riverside Homes pledged a \$40,000 match toward all day-of product purchases, donations and raffle-ticket sales.

"As long as the human trafficking industry persists, we will continue to empower survivors and educate our community on how every one of us has a part to play in restoring more lives," said Keen.



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Matt Roberts, Nancy Hammond, Jason Jones and Carole Bayer exchanging a contribution to Rethreaded from Coldwell Banker Cares toward the \$40,000-match challenge, sponsored by Riverside Homes.



Guests were all smiles at Rethreaded's 12th Annual Birthday Party celebration.



Rethreaded's Hallie Dufresne, center, poses with a group of women showcasing Rethreaded's new product line, Elemental, on the day of its release.

## Sizzling Summer Nights

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida held its annual fundraiser, Summer Nights presented by 121 Financial Credit Union, on Saturday, Aug. 26, at the Glass Factory. Guests enjoyed an evening of premium craft cocktails, a bourbon bar and speakeasy lounge, dancing and live music from The Bold City Classics, auctions and a collection of artwork created by the youth at The Boys & Girls Clubs.

Local fare for the evening included signature dishes from Bono's Pit Bar-B-Q, Ida Clare, Pastiche, and The Boys & Girls Clubs own culinary program.

"Thank you to the attendees, sponsors, restaurants, entertainment, auction bidders and donors who supported our mission to create great futures through Summer Nights presented by 121 Financial Credit Union. Because of you, we can continue helping more than 5,000 local young people reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens," said Paul Martinez, President and CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida.



Rickie and Jessica Simon with Paul Martinez



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Ramiah and Marybeth Martin



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Lorelei Stephens with Darby Stubberfield and David Rountree



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# Christmas in July

## Wolfson Children’s annual toy drive yields \$14,000

From sugarplums to silly putty, holiday cheer spread through the halls Wolfson Children’s Hospital on July 25 when Santa Claus made a special mid-year stop to distribute toys for Christmas in July. The 12th annual toy and donation drive, presented by Subaru of Jacksonville, lasted the entire month of July with community members donating nearly 1,000 toys. Donors gave an additional \$13,960 in financial gifts to be used to purchase toys for Wolfson Children’s patients.

Subaru of Jacksonville collected toys at their showroom on Atlantic Boulevard throughout the month and delivered those with Santa. In addition to bringing thousands of dollars’ worth of toys, the dealership contributed \$25,000 to support the Child Life department.

“We look forward to Christmas in July every year. The dealership, our team members, customers, and even vendors all make it a goal to fill every bin we have to the top. We are grateful to have a small part in bringing a smile to children’s faces that are at Wolfson Children’s Hospital,” said Phil Porter, Jr., executive management with Subaru of Jacksonville.

The toys are used to by Wolfson Children’s Child Life specialists and music therapists to help ease stress and anxiety in children who are in the hospital. The drive allows them to restock their toy shelves and purchase more of their most-needed items.

“Being in the hospital can be frightening for children, but these donations allow us to soothe and entertain patients while positively contributing to their recovery and healing process,” said Susan Kinnebrew, director of Family Support Services at Wolfson Children’s. “Our talented team members use these toys to help children develop cognitively and physically during their hospital stay and to understand what is happening to and around them in an unfamiliar environment. Our whole team is incredibly grateful to the community for continuing to support our patients and our caregiving efforts.”

The hospital maintains an Amazon wish list for those who wish to donate toys year-round.



Military veteran and KIPP Jacksonville Executive Director Jennifer Brown was the keynote speaker for Jacksonville’s Purple Heart Day in August.

# Jacksonville Honors Purple Heart Recipients


On Monday, Aug. 7, the City of Jacksonville’s Military Affairs and Veterans Department and the Military Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 524 hosted a ceremony for Purple Heart Recognition Day at the Veterans Memorial Wall and Purple Heart Trail.

“The Purple Heart is more than just a medal,” said Past National Commander of the Military Order of the Purple Heart and Purple Heart Recipient Christopher Vedvick during the ceremony. “It is a symbol of valor, courage and love of country that binds all who have served.”

The ceremony’s speakers also included Mayor Donna Deegan and keynote Jennifer Brown, who is a veteran and executive director of KIPP Jacksonville. Brown is the first female veteran to serve as the event’s keynote speaker for this annual day of remembrance for our military city.

“To the distinguished Purple Heart recipients, I come with the utmost admiration and gratitude for your unwavering commitment to honor, duty and valor,” Brown said. “Your sacrifices in the line of duty, your unwavering bravery in the face of adversity and your unyielding spirit in the pursuit of justice exemplify the very essence of what it means to be a hero.”

To date, nearly two million servicemembers have been awarded the Purple Heart.



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Scenes from Amplified Avondale Art Walk's soft launch in July.

# Amplified Avondale Elevates with New Art Walk

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

On the last Friday evening of each month, the sidewalks of the Shoppes at Avondale transform into Amplified Avondale.

This monthly “micro music art festival” is a time for friends and family to unwind on a Friday night with some food and drinks and enjoy live music performed by local bands and musicians. As of this past July, attendees will also be able to enjoy the works of local artists as Amplified Avondale launched its new Art Walk.

The Amplified Avondale Art Walk provides a platform for local artists to showcase and sell their work while having the opportunity to get to know the community and vice versa. July’s soft launch featured six artists, including Cassidy Almy-Ramos, Keith Doles, Emily Tillman, Paula Jo Lentz, Christianna Louise White Fletcher and Olivia Gonzalez.

With the soft launch complete, August’s Art Walk expanded to 12 artists, including returning artists Gonzalez, Lentz and White Fletcher, with new artists Michele Lee, Teresa Cook, Sam Nelson, Priyanka Pryadarshini, Lisa Lofton, Lauren Danson, Jose Louis Alonso Jr., Erin Meyers and Katie Barber.

Lentz is also Amplified Avondale’s art director and is responsible for reviewing the submissions artists must complete for consideration in order to participate in this invite-only event.

“We had an overwhelmingly positive response from both the artists and the community that they would love to see the Art Walk flourish and they are excited to see it moving forward at each Amplified Avondale event, each month, from here on out,” she added.

August’s Amplified Avondale had three separate art activation areas: A pop-up gallery was located inside Southern Grounds & Co. coffee shop with wine and tapas. A second activation area was on the Southern Grounds covered patio, while the third one was located across the street on the sidewalk between Josephine and The Brick, which featured a DJ and wine tasting.

“This is a unique, art-centric event where both the artists and the attendees recognize that this is the place where people can meet to enjoy fine art and to purchase if they so choose, as this is centered around the arts,” Lentz added.

Amplified Avondale Co-founder Zach Piester said the opportunity to showcase artists and musicians in a monthly event that focuses on community is “huge.”

“It’s really important for us to be able to create and foster this sense of inclusion, and there’s no better way to do that than through music, art and food,” he said. “We’re really fortunate to have the backdrop of Historic Avondale and have the support of the Historic Avondale Merchants Association and the merchants that allow us to kind of take over their businesses and the sidewalks and bring a couple thousand people out to each of our events on Fridays.”

Elevating the Amplified Avondale experience further is the recent addition of Josephine’s after-party event. Josephine announced the launch of the “Lounge Series at Josephine,” a “listening room” ticketed event featuring a two-hour session of live music beginning at 9 p.m.

An Instagram post by Josephine announcing the series stated, in part, “So much of what we are is based on our travels and music is oftentimes at the center of those travels. Those intimate little spots where you escape to a different time or different place...This is an adventure you won’t have to travel far for and we can’t wait to have you.”

**Amplified Avondale is held on the last Friday of every month at the Shoppes of Avondale on Saint Johns Avenue from 6-9 p.m.**

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Davis and Meyer

# BORROWING FROM THE PAST, CREATING A FARM-TOPIA IN THE PRESENT

Lifestyle satiates appetite for connectivity, community

There's a place that exists in the world where life slows down, time stands still and a unique community has blossomed into existence. About an hour from town, up in Folkston, Georgia, outside of the bustle of our modern cityscapes, a community is transforming from timber lands into a dreamscape of intentional, abundant living.

A utopian village of limited, low-impact, phased development has been propagated within the landscape, where distractions melt away and life as we know it takes on a different tempo...and that's the point. This place has been coined as The Farm at Okefenokee, and its founding and subsequent metamorphosis is drawing quite a bit of attention from those seeking a break from the ordinary, where the term "cookie-cutter" is akin to a dirty, unthinkable phrase.

"The Farm", as it is often referred to by its founders, is located on 700-plus acres of land adjacent to the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge. The transformed lands of today are every bit as mystical as they are spellbinding with an abundance of wildlife intermingled with man-made gardens of both wild and native flowers, catfish ponds, roaming cattle, hogs, and hybrid draft mules alongside vegetation. From fruit trees to olive groves, sugar cane, turmeric root and a greenhouse full of micro greens, the place is teeming with life.

## Regeneration of the spirit, living in abundance

The pinnacle of the project is the premise of regenerative farming, where all things thrive on the goal to return the soil to a state of healthy, biodiverse elements that provide energy, nutrition and abundant crop growth. Void of herbicides and pesticides, the cultivation of crops for the community to thrive upon are the backbone of the farm, not to mention, things simply taste better and offer more nutrient value than anything you'll find in a grocery store.

The Farm's incorporation of a breeding program will also celebrate heritage species of hogs, sheep, cattle, turkeys, catfish and other non-GMO animals and aquatic species. Many of those chosen for the project thrive in Southern climates and are intentionally selected to protect the future genetic stock of forgotten breeds that were originally brought to the new world by French and Spanish explorers.

## Getting there, head to the headwaters of the Suwanee and St. Mary's

The entrance to the property sits just off the main artery, Doc Rider Road, of the 400,000-plus acres of the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge, where coincidentally, 400,000 annual visitors from around the world flock to visit one of the nation's largest wetland preserves. Decades in



Continued on page 31

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Directed by Shahla Masood, MD  
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Department of Pathology and Laboratory Medicine  
University of Florida College of Medicine – Jacksonville  
Medical Director, UF Health Breast Center – Jacksonville  
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the making, the refuge has been proposed as a UNESCO World Heritage site and is a year away from the moniker. The Okefenokee or “Land of the Trembling Earth” was given the name by the Swift Creek and Weeden Island tribes, due to its shifting peat and silted wetland “prairies”, cypress forests, scrub-shrub vegetation, upland islands and open lakes.

future development due to his level of expertise in the field and knowledge of the dynamics of water, landscapes and resiliency. “My dream is to implement the best practices of development, while procuring a lifestyle second to none. As far as we know, this has never been done before and we’re enjoying the ride.”  
“The goal all along was to find folks that enjoy the idea of farming, without the



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Good things come to those who wait

This rare community has been developing over the course of the last several years and is quickly taking shape. Visionaries and partners in the venture, Jeff Meyer and Doug Davis, have been pouring their lives into this dream; one that has been consciously master-planned and executed by a unique team of talented gardeners, farmers, illustrators, photographers, carpenters, and builders of men alike.

Ahead of their time, Meyer and Davis are entrenched in the belief that a return to nature and simplicity will energize lessons as old as creation. The Native American proverb teaches: *Tell me and I’ll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I’ll understand.*

“I’ve been developing low-impact, sustainable communities for many years, it’s my passion,” said Davis. Davis has testified before Congress about sustainable,

hassle of owning and working a farm,” said Meyer. “We [the Farm] offer a product that affords a lifestyle that you can’t find anywhere in the country, better yet, in the world,” he said with a smile. Meyer believes that by creating a place where healthy food is abundant, heritage animals roam and the nectar of life is provided by the experience – not simply by flowers and honeybees – the community will thrive.

With the spirit of the outdoors running wild and a twist of elegance in its offerings, its amenities cater to a life well lived. The founding pair, both of whom are rugged individualists, would rather be likened to inventors, family men and thought leaders who are simply harnessing the power of regeneration, rebirth and hearkening back to the ancient practices that call to us from our ancestors. ● ● ●



For more information, visit [Okefarm.com](https://okefarm.com) or scan the QR Code to gain a bird’s eye view of the project.

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Mrs. Whitcomb's 4th grade class on the first day at Assumption Catholic School.



The start of Assumption Catholic School's school year was a "blast" thanks to 7th and 8th grade science teacher, Mr. Hawthorn. Hawthorn, along with the help of student Anthony Davis, demonstrated the scientific reaction caused by extreme temperatures. Hawthorn first filled a container with liquid nitrogen. Then, as warm water was added to the container, the resulting rapid condensation caused a billowing, fog-like vapor that created a stunning visual effect to get students excited for the upcoming school year. (Editor's note: This was a safe, supervised experiment, and no students were harmed.)



# RESIDENTS

Junior

## PUPIL PAPARAZZI: The Back-to-School Edition

Our vibrant community comes together in this heartwarming collection of photos celebrating the excitement of the 2023-24 school year. From the eager faces of our backpacked babies to the bittersweet smiles of their parents seeing them off to school, these snapshots embody the spirit of growth and learning. Let us remember that with each passing year, we work together as a community educate those who will lead us in the future and celebrate those who encourage and shape the next generation.



Baton Webb gears up for fourth grade at Fishweir Elementary.



Madeline Webb's first day of kindergarten was even more exciting since she got to join her oldest brother at Fishweir Elementary.



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STEAM teacher Maggie Young jumps right into creating with her Pre-K 3 students on the first day at Riverside Presbyterian Day School.

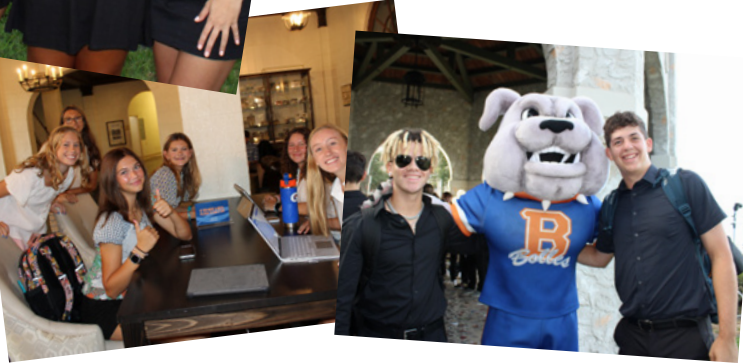


Heidi got a little help from her furry friend, Finn, on her first day of school.

A multi-generational first-day family picture in Assumption Catholic School's courtyard, including alumni grandmother and mothers, as well as four attending cousins, spanning Class of 1970 to Class of 2034.



The Kruegers marked their seasoned return to the first day of school at Episcopal School of Jacksonville: Eighth grade for Stella, 10th grade for Reed, and 24 years of teaching for Michelle.



## Bolles Summer Cheer Program Anything But Routine

The Bolles varsity cheerleading team launched a new summer program for lower school students called Cheerleader for a Day. This week-long camp, held Aug. 7-11, invited students from both Bolles and the outside community to work with the upper school cheerleaders.



Captains Eva Lantzy and Emily Suvoski led the charge in conceptualizing the program and coaching the campers who learned cheers, performed dance routines and practiced tumbling with captain Kayla Sterling and teammates Addison Trovato, Evelyn Martin, Taylor Grace Clark and Kyla Bullock.

"It's important for us to serve as role models for these younger students and inspire confidence, school spirit and teamwork," Lantzy said.



The campers cheered alongside their upper school mentors during the first quarter of the first home varsity football game against St. Augustine High School on Aug. 25.

"All the coaches and I are so proud of the planning and hard work the varsity squad invested in making this camp a reality this summer," Bolles varsity cheer assistant coach Julia Kalinski said. "We also could not have done it without support from our awesome parent volunteers."

All camp staff were volunteers, and the proceeds from the camp will go toward enhancing the Bolles cheer program.



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Teamwork makes the dream work: Dreams Come True Executive Director Sheri Criswell and fellow Dreamer Makenna help Dream Team Member Tyler during the Signing Day ceremony.



TaxSlayer Gator Bowl Chairman's Club Member Kimberly Patterson chats with members of the 2023 Dream Team.

## A New 2023 TaxSlayer Gator Bowl Dream Team on the Scene

On Monday, Aug. 7, the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl and Dreams Come True came together to hold a Signing Day ceremony for the 2023 TaxSlayer Gator Bowl Dream Team.

The 13 Dreamers selected for the Dream Team will serve as TaxSlayer Gator Bowl ambassadors and representatives throughout the college football season. The Dream Team is a key program for Gator Bowl Charities and provides its members with a "unique experience" throughout the season.

The 2023 Dream Team includes: Willie B. (10), James C. (9), Jack C. (15), Savannah G. (8), Blake H. (9), Makenna J. (17), Sammy M. (16), Chase S. (10), Jaxon T. (6), Mary T. (16), Shane T. (7), Jasel W. (17) and Tyler W. (8).

During the college football season, these 13 Dreamers will be able to scout a game, participate in monthly Gator Bowl Sports membership events and distribute their own set of rookie-year player cards throughout Jacksonville, among other events. At the end of the regular season, the Dreamers will graduate from their blue Dream Team jerseys and receive TaxSlayer Gator Bowl green jackets, which will transition them to honorary Dream Team members of the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl committee.

Their Dream Team experience will include a meet and greet with participating team players and cheerleaders at EverBank Stadium in late December and conclude with being honored on-field during the 79th annual TaxSlayer Gator Bowl on December 29, 2023.

Weekly updates on the Dream Team will be provided via social media accounts for both TaxSlayer Gator Bowl and Dreams Come True.



The 13 members of the 2023 TaxSlayer Gator Bowl Dream Team took to the field at EverBank Field following their Signing Day ceremony on Monday, Aug. 7 with (left to right) Dreams Come True Board Member and Gator Bowl Sports Chairman's Club Member Donnie Smith of Miller Electric Company, Dreams Come True Board President Geoff Neilson of Graybar, Gator Bowl Sports Chairman and Dreams Come True Past-President Alan Worley of Money Pages and 3D Digital, and Gator Bowl Charities Advisory Board Chair Kevin Craig of AT&T.

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Members of St. Mark's Episcopal Youth for Christ group helped green up Columbus Park in July.

# Youth and Greenscape Team Up for Columbus Park

In July, Greenscape hosted a service project for St. Mark's Episcopal Youth for Christ youth group. Rising 5th and 6th graders braved the summer's heat to provide care and maintenance for trees in Columbus Park, a pocket park on Iroquois Avenue in Ortega.

The park has been stewarded by Ortega Forest resident Harrison Conyers and was created to honor his grandparents, George and Hazel Ulsey. In recent years, Greenscape has donated 28 trees to provide the next-generation canopy as the current trees begin to age out. The youth group provided water, fertilizer, weeding, mulch and trash pick-up.

Greenscape's new program manager, Shanell Davis-Bryant, also gave a talk on the importance of the urban forest, the contribution trees make to the environmental health of an area and to the well-being of a community.

"We sure didn't need to sell the importance of shade that July day," said Executive Director Lisa Grubba. "If it weren't for the shade, we would've had to cancel the project. It was that hot. But the kids were great sports, and we appreciated their help. As they grow up, we hope they'll keep an eye on the trees they cared for and feel a sense of pride from contributing to their community in such a tangible way."

To help Greenscape plant and maintain trees, send an email to [info@greenscapeofjax.org](mailto:info@greenscapeofjax.org).



On the first day of school, the Bolles Class of 2024 gathered on the Upper School San Jose Campus to enjoy the annual senior breakfast and take their first senior group photo of the school year. Per tradition, the students wore black dresses, tiaras and all-black shirts, ties and pants. The seniors were treated to Chick-fil-A, fruit-and-yogurt cups and custom cookies to kick off their milestone year.

# A Blessing for Freshmen

Bishop Kenny High School held its annual Freshman Mass, this time for the Class of 2027, on Aug. 12, 2023, at Assumption Catholic Church. The Mass was led by Father Clay Ludwig as the celebrant, Father Jason Trull as the concelebrant and Scott Conway, Superintendent of Schools, who participated as the Deacon. Alumni engagement added to the sense of tradition with alumni Ramzy Bakkar reading the Liturgy of the Word and Cristina Mussallem Haddad delivering words of wisdom and encouragement. Two members of the Class of 2027, Joseph Farhat and Jenna Driver, presented the gifts for the Mass.



Ramzy Bakkar, Soren Bakkar, Alex Haddad, Michael Haddad, Elizabeth Haddad, Cristina Haddad, Andrew Haddad, Drew Sutter, Collen Sutter, Jack Sutter, Caroline Sutter and Todd Orlando gathered for Freshman Mass.

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Students at Jacksonville Country Day School



# New School Year Presents Opportunity for Good Digital Habits

BY WINDY TAYLOR

Each year, as summer draws to a close, families regroup and begin the transition to a school-year schedule. This transition usually involves re-commitment to, or establishment of, healthy family habits.

A quick perusal of the internet reveals dozens of lists of back-to-school tips that promise to make your household efficient, stress-free and harmonious. While there is no magic formula for school-year success, there is a lot of overlap in these suggestions.

The American Academy of Pediatrics released a list of 12 back-to-school pointers for 2023. In addition to the usual suspects - plenty of sleep, eating a nutritious breakfast and minimizing TV time - there is also guidance on healthy habits regarding technology and social media.

According to the list, “Starting school again is a good time to engage in conversations with your child about if and how they use social media, which can be beneficial but also problematic for some. We are still learning about the ways social media can affect human health, especially among children and teens.”

Schools, parents and other organizations that serve Jacksonville’s student population are working hard to integrate emerging data into their policies, as well as into the advice they give to parents. At Jacksonville Country Day School (JCDS), which serves students in pre-K through sixth grade, they refer to this process as “shaping good digital citizens.” JCDS does not allow cell phones or internet-connected devices on campus, and each student is provided an iPad that is monitored by school personnel.

“As kids become more reliant on technology, our goal is that they learn how to find a good balance and how to use it as a tool and not a crutch,” said Cristina Knodel,

Computer Science & Technology Integration Specialist at JCDS. “We talk about focusing on your friendships, going outside, picking up a hobby, doing something creative, having dinner without any phones, not using screens right before bed.”

Making sure that children and youth are not being harmed by their social media and technology use is a group project. In addition to school personnel, parents and other adult leaders play a role in the conversation.

“I’m planning a sabbath vocational discernment and mental health retreat for juniors and seniors,” said Lauren Scott, Associate Pastor for Youth and Families at Riverside Presbyterian Church. “When I was talking to them about what I was planning, I said there will be parts of the trip where there will be no phones, and they were actually very excited about that, as high schoolers.”

By working with both youth and their families, Scott sees the issue from both sides.

“I think we all recognize how difficult life would be without phones, especially in safety aspects. I appreciate that I can immediately get in contact with youth (when on trips),” Scott said. “I’m hopeful that by giving them a little bit of a break, they, and myself too, might recognize the importance of it and be able to establish healthier technology patterns on their own time. I think there’s a longing for that.”

Because digital childhoods are a new phenomenon, comprehensive studies on the impacts of technology and social media are few and far between. The Centers for Disease Control released its Youth Risk Behavior Survey data in February 2023. This massive study covers trends in various behaviors between 2011 and 2021, and the findings were sobering.

“The data tell a distressing story about the health and wellbeing of our nation’s young people,” wrote Dr. Kathleen Ethier, lead researcher. Almost every category of youth, all races and genders, experienced an increase in anxiety, depression and suicidal ideation. Commentators from across the cultural and political spectrum immediately pointed to social media use, especially among teenage girls, as being strongly correlated to the rise in mental health problems.

Correlation is not causation, but some parents would rather be safe than sorry. Several grassroots organizations have sprung up over the last few years to encourage parents to keep smartphones out of kids’ hands for as long as possible.

Wait Until 8th (waituntil8th.org) is an advocacy group out of Texas that offers parents a pledge to keep smartphones away from their children until eighth grade. HGTV stars Erin and Ben Napier recently launched Osprey (ospreykids.com), which goes a step further, creating a network of parents who will keep their kids smartphone-free until high school graduation.

Scott noted that, for families with engaged and attentive parents, pledges like this may work well but no one solution will work across the variety of situations faced by youth today, especially those in unsafe or unstable homes.

Ultimately, the most persuasive argument for limiting social media does not come from the American Academy of Pediatrics, but from observed behavior.

“My advice to parents is to just be present with their youth,” Scott said. “Practice what you want your youth to do and show them how to live out their lives. If they see you not always on social media and doomscrolling and being fully present in what’s happening in the home, at the game, at the show, at the gallery, they’ll recognize that they can do that too. We model so much more to children and youth than we will ever be able to comprehend.”

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**Life** has become quite interesting for one local tech entrepreneur as he works to disrupt traditional business models. As a teenager, Lyman Starmer was developing software in high school, now, he has an investment idea that might lead to a billion-dollar payday via the residential real estate industry. Originally setting his sights on a new social media platform for 55-plus communities, Starmer and a team of developers went forward with a venture dubbed PeerLyfe, kicking off the startup 18 months ago. The idea took off and led to the build out of a networking app

that connected the social lives and activity groups at some of Florida's top lifestyle communities. Residents and community managers were intrigued by the prospect of having simplified, collective management of their own closed network; they were ready to ditch the rest. The leaders stopped, looked and listened, at the same time, more influential change agents joined the board of PeerLyfe.

**Tell me something good**

After several meetings with The Villages, On Top of the World and other 55-plus communities, one thing became clear. These communities needed and wanted this service, but they also needed other metrics to help their residents find the amenities that made life comfortable and desirable both before, and after they arrived.

As the venture took off, it was decided that they would add a feature to the product that would share pertinent community based information to interested home buyers. There were millions of data points being harvested in these community spaces, yet those tabulations and details were underutilized by those collecting them.

**Details matter: capitalizing on metrics, quality of life**

As people settled into their 55-plus communities, they began to reveal metrics and resulting data by following the information about hobbies, group and club formations, as well as events and other volunteer activities that people were participating in. They had the data, but the missing part was blending that data with the larger-scale information scraped [gathered by search and scans of internet traffic] from servers, search engines and landing pages throughout the web. This is where the big breakthrough occurred.

**A swift pivot: PeerLyfe becomes CommUnify**

By creating a sliding scale of important lifestyle factors such as: distance to hospital and health care facilities; recreation from golf courses, beaches

and parks; shopping malls; climate preferences; transportation options; and crime statistics, the score helped narrow down home-buyer preferences. PeerLyfe pivoted to becoming a power player in the field of data, delivering calculations of their findings to the behemoths of the real estate, mortgage and home building industries. A new name was created for the evolving venture: CommUnify, along with a new demand for additional 'angel' investors.

**Data to drive real estate purchases**

CommUnify realized the value of this system to the real estate industry; real estate services want to know how to market to consumers with greater accuracy. It is now helping score towns, cities and communities to reduce destination ambiguity and provide a more

accurate framework of needs and wants. Every borough delivers a different quality of life and a unique blend of demands, wants and desires to be fulfilled. CommUnify eliminated the guesswork, helping prevent misguided decisions when things matter most.

CommUnify's plan now is to deliver and formulate partnerships, or to be purchased outright by a major player like Zillow, Realtor.com, Redfin or other firms in the tech/real estate space.

**Now is the time to become an investor or business partner; reach out to Lyman Starmer to talk about the prospectus at (904) 610-0929, or email [lyman@communify.dev](mailto:lyman@communify.dev).**

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# ANIMAL HOUSE



BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA

The first time I saved Sammy was in June 2017. She came to me as a foster. Sammy had made news among rescuers in Jacksonville that summer when she was frantically dashing back and forth across Beach Boulevard, terrified during thunderstorms. She had been surviving in thick woods next to Sam's Club. Mistakenly thought to be a large male, the stunning black and red German Shepherd was initially dubbed "Sam" by countless people trying to help. Unfortunately, there were also the usual miserable humans throwing things and revving their vehicles at Sammy as she tried to eat food left for her in the parking lot. These incidents made her fear people and retreat into the woods if approached.



Dr. Katie Stender and her cat, Skippy.

The Friends of Jacksonville Animals (FOJA) purchased a safe-trap large enough for Sammy. FOJA volunteers Carolyn Edwards, Jill Mero and Dawn Anderson placed it in the woods and monitored it around-the-clock. Finally, she could no longer resist the chicken bait, and Sammy walked inside to safety and her new life. Sammy had several potential adopters eager to meet her the minute she was rescued. She, however, had other plans. After apparently deciding that she was

adopting me, Sammy proceeded to behave horribly for every meet and greet; she was an Oscar-winning actress. It was too late, anyway. We had fallen in love

**Saving Sammy: The Second Time**  
Sammy, now somewhere around 14 to 15 years old, tried to hide her body's progressive weakening from me. She stopped running for the sheer joy of movement and retired from the daily, dead-serious policing of menacing squirrels. She was restless, unable to find a comfortable position. Her stiffness worsened; her movement slowed. Raising her large body up, lying down or negotiating steps required effort and sapped her energy. While her annual veterinarian exam resulted in no medications or specific diagnosis – other than advanced age – I knew our days were numbered. I considered each one a gift.

Traditionally awake, alert and watching everything, Sammy began to nap longer and more frequently. Food, once pure enjoyment, became an option often untouched despite my wracking my brain to provide a wildly tempting, creative menu. Her polite, small bites were for my benefit only. My constant companion, whose preferred place in the world was beside me regardless of the activity, was simply tired. Often physically uncomfortable, she could no longer fake her daily routine. Yet she did it, heroically, for a while. The one who had always been eager to see where we were going or scout for danger from intruders, began to do no more than lay in positions that allowed her to watch my every move – instead of accompanying me. I believe she sensed something was happening to her that she could not communicate. She would drape half of her body across my lap, her heavy,

gorgeous head pushed against my hip within easy reach of my hand's touch. It felt like she could not get close enough to me. We both hoped for more time that did not come. Sammy suffered a stroke earlier this year that left her barely able to stand or walk. She remained alert, but confused and frightened. I could tell the pain and suffering was too much for my girl and I couldn't let it continue. I called my veterinarian, Dr. Howard Acree, and his team at Cedar Hills Animal Hospital. They agreed, that based on Sammy's condition, I should contact Dr. Katie Stender. So, in 2023, I made the agonizing decision to save Sammy for a second time.

**Meeting Dr. Katie Stender**  
Dr. Katie Stender, referred to as Dr. Katie, is a Florida native who completed her undergraduate and PhD in Veterinary Medical Sciences at University of Florida. Originally uncertain of her career choice, she became a veterinarian at a friend's behest because of her love for animals. That insight put her on the path she considers her life's calling: a hospice veterinarian. She provides in-home services for dogs, cats, and some small pets, including evaluation, consultation for hospice care, or if necessary, euthanasia services. "From the first in-home hospice visits I did, I knew this was what I was meant to do. Life and death are sacred. I feel privileged to spend time with a family, helping them and their pet through this transition in the comfort of home," Dr. Katie said. Talking to Dr. Katie's assistant, I was rocked by unbearable waves of heartache, emotion and memories. I do not know how I even spoke or how the assistant understood my tear-choked, whispered explanation of Sammy's condition and Dr. Acree's recommendations, but she did. Her empathetic help and advice got me through scheduling the home appointment, including the calm explanation of immediate care I could provide for Sammy until then. She had to patiently repeat herself several times while comforting me during the long silences when I was unable to speak at all. Despite extremely short notice, she found an opening for us.

**Crossing the Rainbow Bridge**  
I stayed with Sammy, pouring my love onto her and talking to her about our seven years together. When Dr. Katie arrived, Sammy was in a favorite spot on the porch, surveying her huge backyard, where she was happiest. For the first time ever, she showed no reaction to a stranger, but stretched out beside me as if she were exhausted from a long run. She then let out such a long, deep breath like I had never heard from her. I thought she had passed. Although she did not lift her head, her eyes were open looking up at me with complete trust and such love. As it was so many times in her life, I felt overwhelmed by Sammy's extraordinary intelligence, sensitivity and awareness.



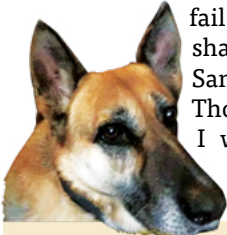
Julie Kerns Garmendia and Sammy.

I believe that she knew that this stranger softly and gently talking to her – Dr. Katie – was somehow bringing relief. The atmosphere was calm and peaceful. Sammy allowed Dr. Katie to examine her without moving. As I petted my beautiful girl, I could only be thankful beyond words for in-home euthanasia services from someone like Dr. Katie, who made it possible for Sammy's passing to be as gentle as drifting to sleep in my arms. It is also impossible to describe how compassionately she cared for Sammy. She quietly informed me about the process each step of the way and comforted me before, during and after. "It's not just the pet affected, but the entire family. I know the spectrum of emotions we go through when this time comes for a pet we love. It's one of the hardest goodbyes," said Dr. Katie.

**Forever Saving Sammy**  
Dr. Katie asked if I would like a lock of Sammy's hair to keep in a special memory pouch and a permanent print of her paw. Those suggestions were surprises for which I remain deeply grateful. Both are cherished keepsakes, placed with Sammy's photo. As days go by, I catch myself still looking for Sammy or reaching down to pet her head and grab an ear. I deeply miss walking out of my bedroom in the morning to find her waiting and watching for me. I miss her companionship and the urgent way she searched for me if I moved out of her sight, until she knew that I was safely back in view. Sammy preferred her bed or igloo on the porch outdoors, but sleeping on my clothing inside was the next-best thing. If nothing was within her reach, she would go straight into my closet and pull down whatever she wanted to curl up on. That is how I would find her, upon my clothes – washable or otherwise – happily snoring. I even miss that extra laundry and dry cleaning. Although she is gone, I will always be thankful for the biggest foster-fail ever, the years we shared, and the joy Sammy brought me. Those are the memories I will forever save of Sammy.



Dr. Katie Stender making a print of Sammy's paw



## RESOURCES:

Katie Stender, D.V.M.  
Hospice Vet In-Home Pet Euthanasia  
(904) 521-3440  
[drkatiehospicevet.com](http://drkatiehospicevet.com)  
Howard Acree, D.V.M.  
Cedar Hills Animal Hospital  
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LOCAL FOLKS

NANCY BEECHER

Riverside resident Nancy Beecher has been a professional photographer for the past 35 years, impressively snapping shots for two Super Bowls, the Orlando Magic, the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, the Tampa Bay Lightning and our own Jacksonville Jaguars (since their first game in 1995). She's covered local college games – football, baseball and basketball – for the University of Florida, Florida State University and Jacksonville University. While she may be a freelance sports photographer by trade, she spends most of her free time turning her professional passion into acts of kindness for the community.

Beecher donates her time and talent taking publicity shots of local student athletes in action on the field at Atlantic Coast High School. This is her third year offering her services at no charge to individual students or to the school.

"Parents are so excited to get pictures of their children," she said.

For roughly a decade prior, Beecher had taken photos for Ruth N. Upson Elementary School's events, donating the pictures to the school for their annual yearbooks and for press release use. She first got involved with Upson when her grandchildren were students there, even doing a stint as a PTA member. Beecher has served in the classrooms, reading books to students, making pages come to life and joining them in dressing up as their favorite characters.



Nancy Beecher reads to costumed Upson students.

Florida Christian Center and for the Young at Heart group at the Murray Hill United Methodist Church.

When she's not staring through the lens of a camera, Beecher has her sights set on a finish line.

"I run. I do 5Ks," she said.

Beecher had been a walker for a long time. She and her cousin Betsy Speed Clark began walking the Riverwalk after deciding that they needed to be doing something physical to counteract the tick-tock of age. After realizing that they were already able to walk five miles, they agreed it was time to pick up the pace and sign up for an official 5K. Naturally, she picked one to help children – specifically those at the Sanctuary on 8th Street.

"The very first one we ran was the Avondale 5K Classic," Beecher said.

Beecher admitted that she and Clark did a mix of walking and running.



“Parents are so excited to get pictures of their children.”

– Nancy Beecher  
Photographer

Nancy Beecher as Fancy Nancy from Jane O'Connor's picture book series.



Nancy Beecher at the ReliaQuest Bowl, Mississippi vs. Illinois, January 2023.



Nancy Beecher at a Jaguar practice game.

"We're old," she said, laughing. But old age didn't prevent them from earning medals. Beecher was also presented a plaque for coming in second in her age group. She was impressed, at first.

"Come to find out, there were only two people in my age group," she said.

Beecher's done virtual runs from home, run the Great Fire Run to benefit the Jacksonville Historical Society and trekked through the Bubble Run in May 2023 to benefit families battling childhood cancer and terminal illness. That one she even ran with her daughter, Cheryl Massey. She's not yet decided to tackle Jacksonville's iconic Gate River Run.

"Too many bridges," she said.



Nancy Beecher, Amelia Speed and Betsy Speed Clark at the Great Fire Run.

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# JOURNEYS IN AN RV

## Retirement on the Road

### Part 3 of 3: Have Food? Will Travel.

BY FAITH JONES

If you missed Parts 1 and 2, you can read them at [www.residentnews.net](http://www.residentnews.net)

Traveling can be even more fun when you get to discover something new along the way, especially if it's tasty.

Before starting our exploration trip of the Western United States, my brother-in-law, Paul, sent us a list of Food and Wine Magazine's 2021 Best Sandwiches in every state. We thought it would be fun to try the recommended sandwiches if we were passing through the proprietor's location.

It happened that we cruised through Boise during lunch time and located Idaho's entry, Cobby's Sandwich Shops, in a little strip mall in the 'burbs with plenty of parking for our RV.

The store's dark-wood-paneled walls were graced with numerous plaques commemorating the public's vote for Cobby's as the No. 1 sandwich shop through the years. The build-your-own sandwich menu was loaded with your choice of Italian meats, various cheeses and toppings. Stepping up to the five-foot-tall counter gave me just two inches to peek over the top and shout my order to the sandwich artisans on the other side of the barrier. The sandwiches were stuffed with flavorful meats and the right proportion of toppings. The bread was soft, chewy, and we could taste why they were popular.

Kansas took us to a two-story grouping of repurposed freight containers in search of Bierock, the sandwich. Prost Biergarten in Wichita is known for the best buns in the state. Inside, one of its walls was lined with German beer steins in locked cases. Patrons can buy a stein for a year. Then, every time you come to the restaurant you can fill it for a discount and enjoy it with brats and Bierock, a heavenly yeast roll filled with meat, cabbage, onions and spices. Delicious. The owner immigrated from Germany years ago and brought the flagship German cuisine with her.



The Crown Burger from Salt Lake City, Utah, boasts a cheeseburger with pastrami and a special sauce for french fries.



Spongy, fresh-baked bread steals the show at the family-owned Cobby's Sandwich Shops, with two restaurants in Boise, Idaho.

The most unique sandwich was at Crown Burger in Salt Lake City, Utah. This family-owned restaurant serves up the biggest double-patty cheeseburger topped with expertly-seasoned pastrami, all bursting out of the paper wrapping. If the mega-burger is not enough to awaken your taste buds, the french fry condiment will have you licking your fingers clean. Come hungry, as you will leave not wanting to eat for a day or two.

We scoped out Pike's Place Market in Seattle, Washington, and the legendary Market Grill for their Blackened Salmon Sandwich, served on a baguette with herbed aioli and grilled veggies. We sat outside under an umbrella table while a light drizzle fell on the Saturday shoppers and enjoyed the crunchy baguette with the pillow-soft inside containing a large piece of perfectly-cooked salmon topped with lettuce.

Leave it to the locals to steer you toward great food. We struck up a conversation with a guy in Arkansas while at a AAA baseball game. He travels the world for his job and mentioned that we needed to try an onion burger, as it was the best burger he had ever eaten. So, while in Tulsa, Oklahoma, we did just that. We located Society Restaurant



The Market Grill, near the shore of Elliott Bay in Seattle, offers the "World Famous Blackened Salmon Sandwich."



The classic Onion Burger at Society Restaurant in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

and tried their famous Onion Burger. Strings of grilled onions were worked into the patty before grilling the meat, similar to a smash burger with onions. It may not have made Food and Wine's Best Sandwiches list, but we felt it worthy of an Honorable Mention.



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## Jacksonville Fall RV Show

### Oct. 5-8

The Jacksonville Fall RV Show returns to Northeast Florida Oct. 5-8 at the Jacksonville Equestrian Center, located at 13611 Normandy Blvd. Show hours are 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Thursday through Saturday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday. Regular admission is \$10 for adults. Children 12 and under are free. On Oct. 5, seniors will receive half-price admission. All active and retired military and first responders will receive half off the regular admission price throughout the show. Tickets are sold at the gate.

More than 300 RVs will be on display from dealers like Campers Inn of Jacksonville, Dana Drake's Countryside RV, D&H Truck Emporium, General RV Center and Blue Compass RV. In addition to booths from RV suppliers, campground owners and other vendors, the show offers a family-friendly atmosphere with music, concessions and giveaways. Leashed pets are allowed. For more information, visit [nefirvdealers.com/fall-rv-show](http://nefirvdealers.com/fall-rv-show).

# THE WAY WE WERE

## Marsha and Ronnie Pollock

BY MARY WANSEER

Marsha Leibo Pollock is a second-generation Jacksonville native, born at St. Vincent's in Riverside to a retail family. She spent her toddler years in St. Nicholas, where her father had built one of the first houses in a subdivision off Beach Boulevard. When she was 4, Marsha's family moved from there to Holly Lane in the Colonial Manor section of San Marco. That was her home for many years.

Marsha attended Southside Grammar School Number 7 before Landon High School.

"Everybody went to the neighborhood school then. It's different now. The same kids I went to elementary school with, I went to high school with. It's just the way Jacksonville was then," she said.

Marsha grew up with one sibling, a younger brother named Meyer. They spent quite a bit of time together in their backyard pool.

"We had a lot of parties. Everybody was always over at our house," she said.

Every weekend found Marsha at the San Marco Theater via the Colonial Manor bus. Birthdays were spent at The George Washington Hotel, with its music and dancing. Cruising to Lou Bono's on Beach Boulevard was quite the fad.

"We used to play our football games at the Gator Bowl. It wasn't like it is now," she said.

No matter the event, a group would often be found hanging out at Marsha's house afterwards.

Upon her 1960 graduation from Landon, Marsha went off to the University of Georgia (UGA).

"I didn't want to stay home. I wanted to go away,"



Pollock family celebration, 2022.

she said.

Fate must have been calling her, because that's where she met Ronnie Pollock, who would become her husband.

"It was a blind date," he said, that brought them together.

They wed in August 1962 at the Jacksonville Jewish Center, where Marsha had been bat mitvahed. The couple lived in Atlanta for 10 years before Ronnie received a job offer that would bring the family close to where the company's main office was located, Jacksonville. That's what brought Marsha back home in 1972, now with three children in tow: Joy, Stacy, and Lee. The children would be raised in San Jose Forest, and Marsha liked that they had their maternal grandparents close by.

"It was home for me, but I'd never lived here married. I had to make a new life here as a couple, so I got involved in my synagogue," Marsha said.

For nearly a decade, Marsha worked as a preschool teacher at Solomon Schechter Day School, housed at the Jacksonville Jewish Center, while her children were students there, before they attended Wolfson and graduated from UGA, their parents' alma mater.

After leaving the school, Marsha filled a variety of positions at Leibo's, a men's shop that her father had owned for 55 years. She was an officer, bookkeeper and cashier from 1984 until 1993. Leibo's occupied various locations throughout the city, beginning at 105 West Bay Street downtown, then moving to Adams Street before ending up on Beach Boulevard.

Over the years, Marsha has volunteered, too. A lot.

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The Pollocks' 42-year family home in San Jose Forest.



Pollock family trip to South Carolina.

Within two years of beginning teaching, she had become president of the Sisterhood at the Center. By 2014, she was board president of River Garden Hebrew Home in the Mandarin area. In 2016, she was dubbed the first female president of the synagogue. The River Garden Auxiliary referred to her as a "volunteer extraordinaire." That title is apt, considering that she has sat in the president's seat of nine different boards.

Ronnie, a chemist, made a career in printing-ink sales and supplies for a company called CPNW Printing. His projects included Lay's potato chip bags, several coffee companies' containers, and some supermarket chains' grocery bags.

"We made ink for packaging, not for ballpoint pens," Ronnie said. "My job when I moved from Atlanta, Georgia, to Jacksonville, Florida, was to begin a research lab."

The lab was located at University Boulevard and St. Augustine Road. He traveled around the country during the week, doing research, visiting clients and giving speeches. When he wasn't traveling, Ronnie always managed to remain active.

"He's a huge, huge tennis player. And he's done River Runs," Marsha said of her husband.

Ronnie would play matches at a few different racquet clubs. There was Baymeadows, where top players from around the country were brought in on center court, and Bigtree, which is now the Williams Family YMCA on San Jose Boulevard.

"I played for 48 years. Ninety percent of those 48 years, I played singles," Ronnie said.

When he did play doubles, Ronnie would play with Wayne Sanderson as his partner. Together, they won a championship match at Bigtree. Ronnie then moved on to Hendricks, where he and his buddy played singles on the soft court, which he called the "best in Jacksonville." He had still been on the court up until three years ago when a fall led to knee replacement surgery.

Since Ronnie's business retirement in 2021, he's been up to "a number of things." For one, he flies recreational airplanes out of The Radio Control Club of Jacksonville. He likes cars, too. He has a 1959 classic Corvette convertible, red with a white cove, which he's used to chauffeur children for Dreams Come True's annual Dreamer parade and for special events at Beauclerc Elementary School. He attends weekly men's luncheons. And once in a while, he still likes to hit a tennis ball against a wall simply because he misses it so badly.

Marsha, too, is still up to a number of things of her own and is an active volunteer within the Jewish community.

"I never have a minute," she said.

For 42 years, the Pollocks called the same house in San Jose Forest "home." But with the kids grown and gone, Ronnie and Marsha moved to The Palazzo at St. Johns on Goodby's Creek, only two miles away. They had been one of the first two couples to move into the Tuscan-inspired condominium community. They enjoy walking the neighborhood together daily.

They frequent local eateries, too, but Marsha still misses what was.

"All the things I grew up on are gone," she said.

Patti's Restaurant had been her favorite, where she ate for every special occasion. Biser's and Sandy's Steer Room were two others. Ronnie holds fond memories of

Sundays at the in-laws' house. Marsha's father would buy several pounds of corned beef and dozens of rolls from the local delicatessen.

The extended Leibo family and many friends would gather near the pool in the backyard and eat sandwiches.

"On weekends, it was all about our family," Marsha said.

The Pollocks' own family has now grown to include five grandchildren. August 19 marked the Pollocks' 61st wedding anniversary.



On a family cruise for the Pollocks' 50th wedding anniversary.



Ronnie Pollock driving for Dreams Come True children.

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# Thank You Notes



## From My Empty Nest Perch

BY SUSANNA BARTON

I am grateful for all the friends I've made over the years in this neighborhood. If there's one thing I've learned in my nearly 30 years here, it's that our "people" – our besties, our go-to ride-or-dies, the people on our life dream team – are the ones who live nearby and complement our family dynamics, careers, schedules and activities. The formula is that simple..

It took me a long, tearful time to figure this out. I did not understand how friends who lived across town enjoyed lives and friendships so out of step with mine. What was I doing wrong? Why weren't we tracking better? Do I smell funny?

What a waste of time and productive brain cells! I soon realized I was doing the exact same thing as my friends in other neighborhoods. My steps, pace and path were wonderful and unique to my experience. Like everyone else, I was just doing life with the people closest to me and my progeny. No harm, no foul; no preference, no exclusion; it was just that simple formula being put to practice.

I'll always treasure the neighborhood friendships that now define me. Let me share some of the highlights of this 25-year stroll.

My earliest interactions with neighborhood peeps were born in a Southbank office building – the old Stein Mart building, to be exact. In this glorious pre-kids era of life, I was a staff writer with the Jacksonville Business Journal and made fast friends and new community with my co-workers. This illustrious list of folks included people who are still doing big things for Jacksonville, including Riverkeeper's Lisa Rowe Rinaman, neighborhood Realtor Kimberly Waterhouse, agency leaders and marketing strategists Renay and John Daigle and Haskell Director of Corporate Marketing Kristilee LaFalce Adler, as well as an array of dedicated journalists, public relations friends and industry executives

who were part of the local media landscape. We worked and socialized together with enthusiasm, enjoying lunches at High Tide and European Street, and happy hour escapades at nearby hotspots like Partners, Crowdaddy's, The Chart House and yes, even Sherwood's.

The arrival of children changed my socializing parameters real quick. Though I continued to work, it was no longer exhilarating to go out after work, drink beer and eat Partners' crockpot meatballs like I had in the past. I realized, with great sadness at the time, that it was time to put myself out there and meet some new friends, some MOM friends. How bleak, I grumbled. Luckily, we lived at the Main-and-Main of all things mommy and stroller-y. Our home on Granada Park and its easy connection to packed stroller sidewalks, was pole position for this new chapter of friend-making. It was there, on one of those packed stroller sidewalks, that my baby boy Ben and I literally bumped strollers with Lindsey Lastinger Riggs and her son, Turner. The Riggs family soon became our closest friends and confidants. They have been such a life gift; thank you, packed stroller sidewalks!

Granada Park, of course, also was ground zero for new mommy relationships. I met many moms there by the big metal slide and I still call them friends today: people like Laura Jane Pittman, Andy Newman, Patti Joyce, Mary Bream Chupp, Jana Soefker and so many others. I soon discovered having children was my passport to a beautiful new world of would-be playmates – for my children AND my negative old crockpot-meatball-loving self. Far from dull, meeting mommy friends was fulfilling in every way. I am grateful for Granada Park and the sweet setting it provided for the development of new friendships.

It was about this time that I started saying YES to social invitations, ones that led to even richer, more meaningful neighborhood relationships. I said YES to playgroup gatherings, supper clubs, mom drinking groups, church Bible studies, church fellowship, poolside playtime at Epping Forest Yacht Club, community volunteer efforts and other social events that sounded like fun. Saying YES expanded my social horizons in the most positive ways.

Granada Park and a YES answer were the perfect pairing for another life friendship milestone, the creation of

a music ensemble that still flourishes today. During a visit to the park nearly 20 years ago, I met violin (and everything!) extraordinaire Kathryn Pearson Peyton who had designs on creating a string trio with another new friend, Avondale violaist/violinist Margaret Dees. What began with a park YES grew into a monthly musical gathering and melodious friendship that continues to this day.

Over time, our children's schools became the new fertile ground for finding new friendships. From Southside United Methodist Preschool to Riverside Presbyterian Day School and The Bolles School, the kids made some wonderful buddies with exceptionally nice parents who eventually became our lifelong friends and carpool partners: the Beavers, the Putnals, the Barakats, the Trednicks and so many more lovely, wonderful humans. For anyone currently in that bullet-sweating, OMG-I-have-to-meet-new-friends-boo stage, please know your children's schools are a close second (if not a first-place tie with) neighborhood parks for meeting new parent people and other families. Oh, and DUH – please add CHURCH or worship community to this first place scramble, it's definitely a three-way tie with parks and schools. Neighborhood prayer palaces offer the same opportunities for success in new friend-making as parks and schools. By nature, churches are welcoming places that promote relationships of all kinds, whether it's with God, or nature or an angel neighbor down the street! In our case, All Saints Episcopal Church helped bring countless friends to our lives. So, if you're concerned about this new chapter of life socializing, be assured a park, school or church near you is teeming with opportunities for new connections and YESes.

As I flash forward to the present state of my local relationship-building, I realize a comfortable lull has settled in. Especially after the kids left the house for college and life beyond. Especially when I retired from full-time work. There were no longer have-tos on the friend-making front. I felt momentary relief, then fear. I began my reckoning with a new kind of social chapter, the one called "I'm in it for Myself and my Spouse." Like the "All Things Mommy and Stroller-y" chapter, this period was a little daunting at first. My first thoughts were these: I don't need or want any more friends; I'm too tired to

make new friends; I don't want to get to know anyone else, it's way too complicated and heavy – and irritating; and best, I have enough friends. Period.

I'm here to tell you that lull is an error in thinking. Our neighborhoods are too closely-knit and radiant to be stagnant in this area of life. You just can't escape the flow.

Not long after I had sworn off new friends, I got a letter from one of those back-in-the-day, mommy, park friends. She was starting a monthly gathering of moms in our stage of life and asked if I might be inclined to join them. Experience has taught me YES is always the best answer. A few months later, a writer friend I adore – but rarely see – texted with a happy hour invitation to meet up with two neighbor moms. My YES response resulted in more fun gatherings than I can count. A YES to trying pickleball has created court camaraderie I never dreamed of enjoying. I was so wrong; the blessing of neighborhood friends has no limit and always adds new dimension to life.

I bet if you take account of the go-to peeps in your life, you'll have the same revelation: the most dependable, relatable, unchanging friends are the ones who live closest to you or are ingrained in some aspect, history or experience of your family's life. I'm so grateful this has been the case for my tribe, even though I wasn't initially sure of it, even when I didn't realize proximity and saying YES is the key to forever friendships in our Resident Community.

Susanna Barton loves spending time with friends but also is perfectly content to be alone – for days, weeks even. She raised her family in Granada and has written professionally for The Jacksonville Business Journal, The Resident, Jacksonville University and The Bolles School. She currently manages an online community called Grand Plans, which addresses geridrama and all things elderly on [www.mygrandplans.com](http://www.mygrandplans.com). Each month, she will share reflections on neighborhood qualities for which she is grateful.

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Dr. Jacqueline West, DMD



I N M E M O R I A M

# Marvin “Ceree” Cecil Harden III

May 4, 1953 - August 14, 2023

Marvin Cecil “Ceree” Harden III passed away peacefully on Monday, August 14, 2023, surrounded by his family, after a private battle with ALS.

Ceree was a deeply beloved father, husband, brother, grandfather, uncle and friend. Not only an immense loss for his family and lifelong friends, Jacksonville lost a prominent business and civic leader and tireless community servant who made an indelible impact on the city he loved.

A native of Jacksonville, Ceree was born on May 4, 1953, to M.C. and Edith Harden. He and his three siblings grew up in the Northside and Arlington neighborhoods of Jacksonville. Born just 17 months apart and spending the majority of their lives living just a few miles from each other, he and his elder brother Paul nurtured a rare and enduring bond. Marv, as he was known in his formative years, graduated from Terry Parker High School where he forged lifelong best friends with whom he walked through all phases and seasons of life. He then made his way to the University of Florida, graduating with a bachelor’s degree in business administration with high honors.

Following his father’s sudden death, Ceree stepped in at 26 and took over Harden Insurance Services, the business founded by his father in 1953. Ceree expanded the company, later known as Harden, from a three-employee personal lines insurance agency to one of the Southeast’s most prominent independent insurance brokerage and consulting firms. Ceree’s guidance and mentorship paved the way for the growth and development of innumerable employees, fostering a deep sense of loyalty that led many to dedicate their entire careers to the firm, transforming Harden into not just a workplace but a second family for many.

A stalwart industry leader for four decades, Ceree recognized the changing tides of globalization and, with a focus on the well-being of his employees and clients, orchestrated the sale of Harden to A.J. Gallagher & Co. in 2020, a pivotal move that marked a new chapter in the firm’s journey. Today, Gallagher’s name remains at the top of a 13-story mixed-use tower that Ceree led efforts to develop in 2007, a testament to his visionary leadership in recognizing potential in the Brooklyn neighborhood adjacent to downtown, now

one of the fastest-growing sub-markets in Jacksonville.

Ceree was proud of his Jacksonville roots, and in the spirit of a true servant leader, he dedicated much of his time and expertise to organizations that support critical needs of the community. His father, a founding board member of Baptist Medical Center, passed along his passion for quality healthcare in our community. During his 20 years of service on the Baptist board, he served as a board chair for Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville as well as secretary and treasurer on the Baptist Health System Board.

When Jacksonville needed a strategic leader to guide its growth and development efforts, they tapped Ceree to chair the Jacksonville Economic Development Commission, where he conducted a reorganization that improved effectiveness and accountability, as well as developing a project evaluation matrix that is still used to evaluate projects seeking incentives today. A member of the Jacksonville Regional Chamber of Commerce throughout his career, he served as Chamber chair in 1999 and chaired numerous committees, including Cornerstone, the economic development arm of the Chamber.

Ceree also chaired the Jacksonville Community Council’s Quality of Life Committee, served as the director and president of the Independent Insurance Agents of Greater Jacksonville, and served as the director and finance chair of the Florida Association of Insurance Agents. His dedication extended to his service on the boards of Jacksonville Port Authority, FPIC Insurance Group, Riverside Presbyterian Day School, Episcopal School of Jacksonville and The River Club.

Ceree’s remarkable journey earned him a place in the First Coast Business Hall of Fame, recognition as a Jacksonville Business Journal Ultimate CEO Award recipient, and leadership honors from the University of North Florida’s Coggin School of Business. He stood as an honorary member of Leadership Jacksonville and was bestowed the prestigious Hope Award, the National Multiple Sclerosis Society’s highest tribute for exceptional civic and community service.

By anyone’s measure, Ceree’s life was one of success and achievement few can match. But for him, family was his ultimate joy and motivation. He was especially proud of his children and would often share with others their successes and express admiration for the people they have become. He doted on his grandchildren and enjoyed his role of “Papa,” especially the hugs and special moments that came along with it. He strived to instill the same values and faith that shaped his childhood in his own children. That ever-present faith was always

a guiding force in his life. In his last couple of years, he found a particularly deep solace beginning each day with scriptures and prayer alongside his wife, companion and caretaker, Shannon.

Ceree’s was a life well lived, just shorter than we wanted. His natural enthusiasm for people was the foundation for the success he found in life. If you had good news, he was the first to celebrate you; if there was a problem, he helped you find a solution; if you knew him well, he was likely to include you on a quail hunt or fishing trip, a Gator or Jaguars game (if you were especially lucky, a FL/GA game), a trip to the Masters or Kentucky Derby or a night of delicious food and exceptional wine in his home. He shared his joy of traveling with his big family – with especially memorable trips to Vancouver, Canada, the Tuscan countryside, and Sea Island, where he and Shannon were married. Fortunately or unfortunately, he also passed along his ability to just barely catch a flight. Although his travels took him far and wide, his treasured home away from home was his condo in Amelia Island where he experienced respite with a cup of coffee watching the sunrise or reading a novel. Ever an early riser, he eagerly greeted the day with a workout, a nourishing shake, a full 32 oz. Nalgene of water and a plan for the day. Hardly, if ever, was there a time when Ceree didn’t have a well-crafted plan.

Ceree’s legacy lives on in the hearts of his family, friends, and the city he so profoundly impacted. He worked to ensure that this city would be an even better place for those he loved to call home; he knew that they, in turn, would continue the family tradition of community stewardship. His legacy is in good hands.

Ceree was preceded in death by his parents, M.C.Harden Jr and Edith Harden Kerlin. He is survived by his wife, Shannon Stoddard Harden; his children, Christian Harden (Stephanie), Ansley Busch (Lawson), Blake Harden, Brooke Michaelis (William) and Maxwell Harden; his stepdaughters Kameron Anderson (Cody) and Jordyn Stoddard; his grandchildren, Miles Harden, Mackenzie Harden, Zoey Harden, Arlen Busch, Barrett Busch, Huntley Michaelis and Wells Michaelis; his step-grandchildren, Haven Anderson and Avery Anderson; his siblings, Paul Harden, Steve Harden and Donna Harden; his nephews Brandon Harden and Alexander Harden; and former spouse Kathy Plath.

*In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the ALS Association in memory of Ceree. You can also honor him by following in his footsteps - where you see a need, get involved. Where you see a problem, be part of the solution. Be an example of servant leadership that he would be proud of.*

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# Understanding Grief and Mourning

by Elainah Ehrlichman

Losing someone you love is always a painful experience. Whether their death was sudden or had been expected for some time, the finality of death is never something you can truly prepare yourself for. When you lose a loved one, we want you to know that every one of your feelings are valid, and we are here to help support and guide you through the grieving and mourning processes.

Many times, the terms “grieving” and “mourning” are used interchangeably. While this is okay, it is still important to understand the differences between the two. According to official Dignity Memorial literature written by Therese A. Rando, grieving is understood as the process of experiencing your reactions to the loved one you have lost, while mourning is understood as the steps you take to cope with that loss. Essentially, grieving is internal, and mourning is the physical expression of that grief. Both grieving and mourning are as unique as the individual themselves, and because of that, no two people will ever experience grief or mourning the exact same way.

You may have heard of the five stages of grieving. Generally, these are known as denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. These stages certainly have their place in helping individuals understand their emotions, but since the grieving process and the experiences that come with it are so complex and unique to each individual, it's hard to categorize it down into a simple number of stages. Beyond anger, sadness, and the other emotions mentioned, you might also experience numbness, confusion, guilt, or notice physical symptoms of your grief. Fortunately, as unpleasant as it may be to experience these things, they are all normal and expected grief responses.

Mourning looks different for everyone too, much like how grieving looks different for everyone. For some, mourning may mean spending more time alone or going through old photographs, while for others, it may mean throwing oneself deeply into work or another hobby as a coping tactic. The combinations of ways people grieve and mourn are endless, and beyond that, they are not linear. These

processes can be compared to weather patterns, as they shift, change, and move. One day it will be sunny, and the next it will be dismal and stormy. These ups and downs are normal parts of the grieving and mourning processes, and going back and forth between these ups and downs does not mean you aren't healing; in fact, it's a sign that you are.

Sometimes, understanding that your grieving process is completely normal is not enough to bring about solace. We'd like to remind you that Hardage-Giddens is here to help you whenever you need it, and if you ever need to reach out for some extra support, we encourage and applaud you for doing so. Asking for help is a difficult feat for many, and we understand that taking this step can be scary and uncomfortable. However, we are here for exactly that reason; to walk alongside you during your grieving and mourning processes. Please reach out to any of our Hardage-Giddens locations for information regarding our incredible grief resources, and remember, you will get through this. Sunny days are always ahead.

**Hardage-Giddens is hosting a charity walk to raise funds for the Dylan's Dream Foundation!**  
**The walk will take place this October 7th at 9 AM at our Hardage-Giddens Oaklawn Cemetery location.**

The Dylan's Dream Foundation is a non-profit organization based out of Jacksonville, FL that supports students with cystic fibrosis (CF) who want to attend college. After losing his son Dylan to CF, founder Bert Ashley Williams Jr. established the Dylan's Dream Foundation to commemorate his son and bring awareness to the disease. Visit the Dylan's Dream website at [www.dylansdream.org](http://www.dylansdream.org) to learn more about their mission and the groundbreaking work they've accomplished.

**We look forward to seeing you on October 7th, and be sure to wear comfortable walking shoes!**

## Join us for a charity walk supporting Dylan's Dream Foundation.

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