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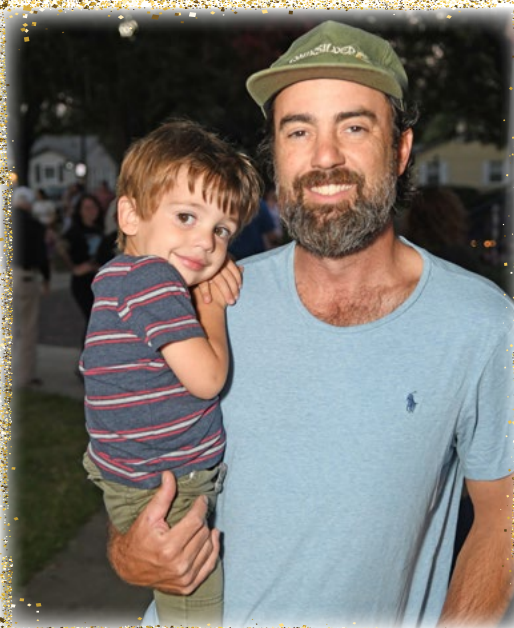
COMMUNITY NEWS

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FIERCELY LOCAL NEWS ... FIERCELY LOYAL READERS | RESIDENTNEWS.NET | NOVEMBER 2023 | VOL. 16, ISSUE 11

An ATTITUDE of GRATITUDE

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Memorandum of Understanding Brings JTA into Emerald Trail Partnership

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

A new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), executed between the City of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) and Groundwork Jacksonville is bringing the Emerald Trail one step closer to completion.

The MOU was announced at a press conference in front of The Cummer Museum of Arts and Gardens on Thursday, Oct. 26. In attendance were Mayor Donna Deegan, District 7 City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso, JTA CEO Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr. and Groundwork Jacksonville CEO Kay Ehas.

“We as a city need to make sure we are remaining competitive with other peer cities,” said Peluso. “We need to make sure we are doing things different than other places while also making sure we are doing things in the best interests of our residents. The Emerald Trail is that project.”

The MOU details a collaboration between Groundwork Jacksonville and the JTA for the Emerald Trail’s five remaining segments: Segment 3 (the southwest connector), Segment 4 (the S-line connector), Segment 6 (the westside connector), Segment 7 (the northwest connector) and Segment 8 (the eastside connector). While Groundwork Jacksonville will oversee community engagement, planning and design of these segments, the JTA will be responsible for approving the final design and then overseeing the construction side of things.

“We at JTA take pride in providing holistic transportation solutions and, you may have heard me say, the better our community moves, the greater it will become,” said Ford. “So this pedestrian, bicycle-friendly trail will help us with that connectivity. It’s not just about the concrete, the asphalt of the project. It’s about moving people and creating a greater quality of life.”

These five segments will be funded, in part, by \$132 million from the local option gas tax.

Currently, 40% of the Emerald Trail is either in design or under construction with its first link – the LaVilla Link, connecting Brooklyn to LaVilla and the S-Line Rail Link – expected to open this January.

Once completed, the 30-mile trail will connect 21 parks, 16 schools, 14 urban neighborhoods, three hospitals, two colleges and the JTA Regional Transportation Center.

Ehas said some of the most important voices to be heard in “planning, designing, activating and maintaining this trail and the park system” are those of the residents



JTA Immediate Past Chair Ari Jolly, JTA CEO Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr., Groundwork Jacksonville CEO Kay Ehas, Mayor Donna Deegan, District 7 City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso.

who live in the neighborhoods the trail will connect.

“Historically, they have had no say in what happens to their neighborhoods,” she said. “That’s not right. Groundwork Jacksonville believes neighborhood organizations and residents should lead neighborhood revitalization efforts and we are committed to working with them to build their capacity to do so.”

In her address, Deegan expanded on the impact a completed Emerald Trail will have on the newly linked communities and Jacksonville as a whole.

“The Emerald Trail will be an incredible catalyst for social and economic opportunity in Jacksonville,” she said. “From encouraging healthy lifestyles, as I said, and promoting public safety, to spurring neighborhood revitalization and economic development.”

The Emerald Trail Master Plan was first announced in 2019. Stakeholders broke ground on the first link in LaVilla in 2021.

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Carlucci Sees Local Progress in City Budget

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

After hours of debate and discussion at its meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 26, the Jacksonville City Council approved the \$1.75 billion budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 – a 14% increase from last year’s.

This new budget went into effect on Oct. 1. Along with the new budget came a new Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) with funding for citywide projects spread across a multi-year plan. These are both new projects and those that have carried over from previous years that are still underway. Included in the CIP is funding for extensive infrastructural work, including sidewalk, drainage and road installations and improvements, as well as traffic calming features, structural improvements, renovations to several public library branches, and new and continued construction on city parks, and more.

District 5 City Councilmember Joe Carlucci was able to advance funding for a park in the currently vacant stretch of land beneath the Fuller Warren Bridge where the

Shared-Use Path (SUP) descends on the San Marco side of the river. Funding for the park’s design was originally slated for fiscal year 2026-27 with construction in 2030. The new CIP has funding in the amount of \$2 million for design scheduled for fiscal year 2024-25 with an additional \$8 million the following year. Though Carlucci estimates the project could ultimately cost around \$12 million, he said its current \$10 million funding is “a really good starting point.”

Carlucci said initial, very conceptualized design mock-ups include areas for rock climbing walls, ninja warrior courses, playground equipment and food truck courts, as well as access for public fishing and flat, green spaces for yoga or general workouts.

“It’s such a large space, you want families to be able to go there, bring their kids, grab some food from the food truck. People are going to be working out, going up and down the SUP, so they’re going to have a nice, cool circuit that they could get a good workout in,” Carlucci said. “That’s just kind of a really cool, big project that I’m excited to see get underway.”

Carlucci said another “heavily anticipated” project with funding scheduled in the CIP is the construction dollars for the Pine Forest Senior Center. Other projects for District 5 are, Carlucci said, in good positions in the CIP.

“What I moved up was appropriate and not too crazy, but then, all of the other projects were already kind of right where they needed to be,” he added.

Carlucci noted that additional funding has been provided for ongoing renovations of Friendship Fountain.

“That will help reignite that project a little bit because costs have just gone up so much. So, we had to put some additional funding in there for it because a lot of these projects have just gone way overbudget, I guess you could say, so that was one that was really a big deal for me,” he said.

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Southeast-view rendering of the RD River City Brewery development. Northwest-view rendering of the RD River City Brewery development.

Designs Approved for RD River City Brewery

Final designs for the RD River City Brewery mixed-use project were approved by the Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB) on Oct. 12. The \$92 million project spans 3.4 acres along the Southbank and includes 410 residential units, a riverfront restaurant and boat ramp. The residential space will be comprised of an eight-story residential block and a 24-story tower with a ground-level swimming pool and courtyard. More than 500 spaces of attached, covered parking accompany the design.

The designs were created by MSA Architects and Carlos Ott Architect, while engineering and landscape architecture was provided by GAI Consultants.

Jacksonville Squashes Predatory Lending

In October, the Jacksonville City Council voted unanimously to declare that Florida PACE Funding Agency’s continued operation in Jacksonville without authorization from the City of Jacksonville is a public health, safety and welfare emergency. The legislation, which was introduced by City Council President Ron Salem and co-sponsored by 14 council members, also authorizes the Office of General Counsel to initiate litigation, as appropriate, to stop Florida PACE Funding Agency from operating in the city.

“Florida PACE operates a business preying on our residents,” said Salem. “Their financing options will end with homeowners paying grossly inflated property tax bills which could end in a tax deed sale should the property owner not be able to pay their property taxes. We cannot put our constituents in these types of situations and must protect them from these predatory practices.”

The long-term loans have high interest rates and are attached to a property’s tax bill, meaning that if the bill goes unpaid, a super lien – which gives the loan priority over other loans such as a mortgage – can be placed on the property. In Duval County, the loan program is being used primarily by homeowners, with the biggest concentration based in parts of the Northside and Northwest Jacksonville.

“I want to thank Council President Salem and the entire City Council for swiftly and unanimously passing this important legislation that will save citizens from financial ruin,” said Mayor Donna Deegan. “I urge everyone in Jacksonville to tell their neighbors about these predatory loans so that another family isn’t hurt by this damaging practice.”

A New Grant for Residential Development

Cathedral District-Jax (CDJ), Inc. has been awarded a \$30,000 grant by the Jacksonville Jaguars Foundation to support efforts to revitalize the 36-block, historic Cathedral District in downtown Jacksonville. This grant award will provide funds to acquire residential land for new housing development. The nonprofit prioritizes mixed-income housing for residents earning at or just below area median income.

Ginny Myrick, president and CEO of CDJ, said the Jaguars Foundation has annually been supportive of CDJ’s mission due to the neighborhood’s proximity to the sports complex now in development and the hundreds of future employees that will be drawn to work in the area.

“[The] donation of \$30,000 is unrestricted and will be used for general revenue to sustain our ongoing

mission to facilitate 2,500 new residential units to be built in the district to add to its existing 1,500 residents,” she said. “In our six years of formation, we have successfully advocated and partnered for the construction of over 650 residential units in the district, which are either in financing, under construction or opened.”

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A rendering of the future Hub Brooklyn.

Hub Brooklyn Tenants Receive Retail Grants

Two businesses planned for the Hub Brooklyn, at Riverside Avenue and Forest Street, were approved for over \$150,000 in grants from the Downtown Investment Authority’s Basic Retail Enhancement Program in October. Alder & Oak restaurant and Southern Grounds coffee shop each received grants for tenant improvements, along with minimum investment requirements.

Alder & Oak received a grant for \$84,200 for tenant improvements to its planned 2,600-square-foot interior dining and 3,200-square-foot courtyard spaces. Its minimum capital contribution requirement is \$532,026.

Southern Grounds Coffee Brooklyn LLC was approved for a \$66,150 grant for tenant improvements for its 3,415-square-foot coffee shop, eatery and 800-square-foot rooftop bar. Southern Grounds must invest a minimum of \$413,000 in improvements or build-out costs to meet the grant requirements.

Both forgivable, no-interest grants require Alder & Oak and Southern Grounds to remain open for three years at the Hub Brooklyn location.

The location’s three-building construction will cost roughly \$2.46 million and will accommodate the two grantees, along with additional retail space and a CD+urban studio loft.

Duval County Postpones Superintendent Search

The Duval County School Board voted Oct. 18 to postpone the search for the district’s next superintendent until early 2024. Current Superintendent Dana Kriznar’s contract was extended through June 2024. Kriznar assumed the role in June 2023 to lead the district while the board conducted the national search following Dr. Diana Greene’s retirement.

“This job is too important to let the calendar force our decision. We are in the very fortunate position to have Dr. Kriznar guiding the district. She continues to do a remarkable job, which gives the board the benefit of time,” said Kelly Coker, school board chairwoman. “Our clear interest is to find a person who has the demonstrated capability to move a district of our size and diversity to a higher level of achievement. Our students, families, teachers, staff, and the whole community deserve nothing less. I am grateful to be on a board that shares this vision and is willing to take the time to get it right.”

Joint Donation Clears Child Hunger Waitlist

Nemours Children’s Health, Jacksonville and the Jim & Tabitha Furyk Foundation have partnered to make a donation that clears a years-long waiting list at existing Blessings in a Backpack schools with a critical need. The expanded support will provide healthy weekend food for 880 children in Northeast Florida during the 2023-24 school year, bringing Blessings in a Backpack First Coast Chapter’s total to 5,300 students.

“Kids can’t be kids when they’re hungry. The consequences of childhood hunger are much more than a growling stomach: fatigue, the inability to concentrate, mood swings and depression,” said Erin Kerr, CEO of Blessings in a Backpack.

“We know that food insecurity has serious implications for childhood development including physical and mental health, cognitive and social development and academic achievement,” said Nemours Children’s Health President and CEO R. Lawrence Moss.

The children added to the Blessings program encompass two counties and seven schools: Andrew Robinson Elementary School, Annie R. Morgan Elementary School, Hyde Grove Elementary School, Mayport Middle School, and San Jose Elementary School in Duval County; and James E. Webster Elementary School and John A. Crookshank Elementary School in St. Johns County.

“Blessings in a Backpack has always been near and dear to our hearts. Having the opportunity to partner with Nemours Children’s Health to add these additional children so that hundreds of kids have hunger-free weekends has been so impactful,” said Jim Furyk.



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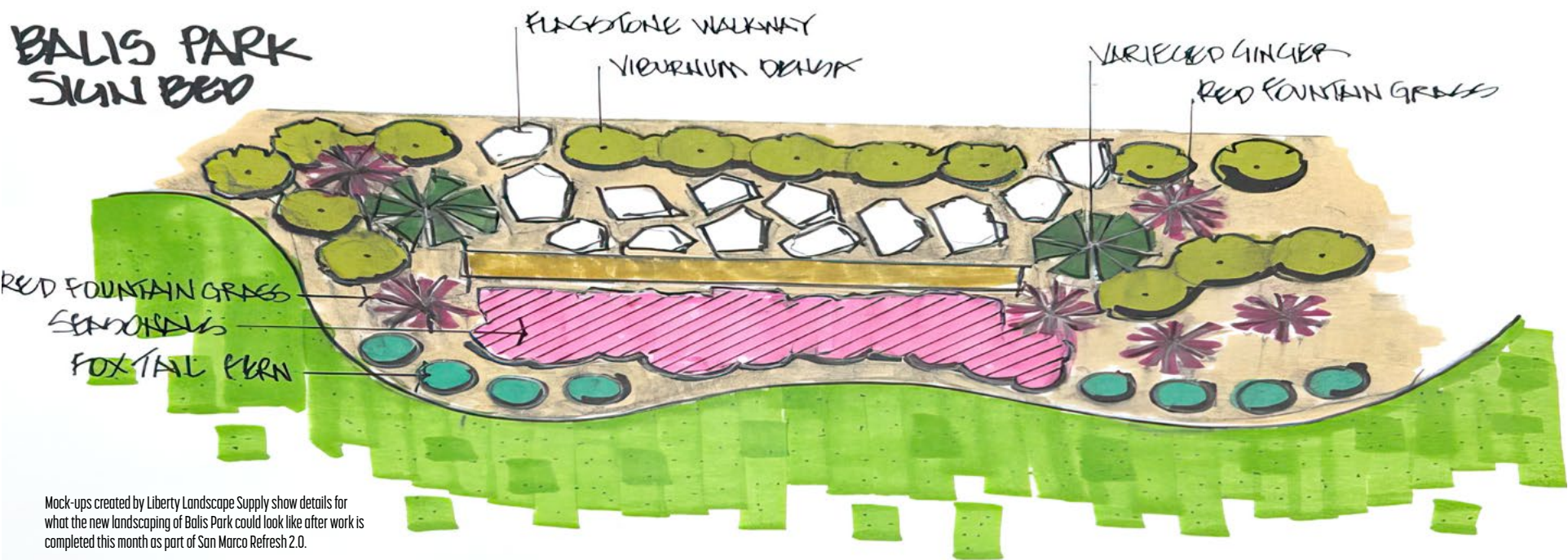


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Mock-ups created by Liberty Landscape Supply show details for what the new landscaping of Balis Park could look like after work is completed this month as part of San Marco Refresh 2.0.

Digging Up Dirt

An update on San Marco Refresh 2.0

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

San Marco residents and visitors will see changes coming to San Marco Square as crews will begin re-landscaping work in Balis Park in the early days of November as part of San Marco Refresh 2.0.

The Resident News reported last month on this collaborative initiative between the San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS), San Marco Merchants Association and the City (via District 5 City Councilmember Joe Carlucci), which will include the installation of new Bigbelly Element trash cans and aesthetic enhancements to the rectangular fountain in Balis Park near the gazebo, along with the new landscaping.

Carlucci said landscape crews are expected to complete Balis Park’s new landscaping by Thanksgiving. He added the additional work scheduled for the Refresh initiative, including the fountain enhancements and fresh paint for the gazebo, will begin in January to avoid interfering with events in the Square during the holiday season.

“We’re very excited to get the work under,” said SMPS President David Paulk. “There are a number of organizations working together to improve the Square. We are working quickly so that the project will be completed by the Christmas shopping season, which is such an important time to area merchants and a busy time in the Square.”

The company contracted to complete the landscaping updates is Liberty Landscape Supply.



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Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center CEO Vicky Basra spoke at JPEF’s EDTalks +Action event on the center’s work to support resiliency in Duval County girls. The work was funded by a grant provided by the Jacksonville Public Education Fund.

A Shift to Student Resiliency

The Jacksonville Public Education Fund (JPEF) has been awarded funding by the Consortium of Florida Education Foundations and Florida Department of Education to develop resiliency skills in our students and help address rising concerns about youth mental health and well-being.

“In response to the growing understanding of the importance of mental health, JPEF will serve as a convening partner to drive local change and improvement,” said JPEF President Rachael Tutwiler Fortune. “As schools and communities continue to recover from the pandemic, it is more important now than ever before to support educators and community providers helping children in crisis, and teach skills to foster student resiliency in the classroom.”

JPEF collaborated with key stakeholders including Duval County Public Schools, Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center, and Elevate Jacksonville to reach more than 20,000 Duval County students. Examples of impact from these partners include teacher training on trust-based relational interventions, creating new and positive experiences for students from Jacksonville’s urban core, and providing girl-centered training.

JPEF is also employing strategies to identify gaps, assess current programs and identify opportunities to build resiliency skills in students. It conducted systematic informational interviews with key stakeholders in the community involved in student well-being; those insights will inform JPEF’s ongoing support of educators and partners in this space.

JPEF’s 4th biennial EDTalks fundraiser raised over \$106,000 to support this work.



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Maintenance crews worked on Konstantin Dimopoulos's "And I Still Rise."

Art Rises Again

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Last month, maintenance crews were spotted outside of Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center providing routine upkeep on Konstantin Dimopoulos's art installation, "And I Still Rise."

Baptist Health Senior Vice President, Chief Consumer Officer Melanie Husk said the routine maintenance is a two-week process, completed as needed. During the maintenance, crews repaint any fading the red carbon fiber rods had suffered from exposure to the elements. Baptist MD Anderson Center collaborated with the artist in the "multi-step" maintenance process.

Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center's healing arts program provides funding, through an endowment, for maintenance and upkeep of the artwork installed throughout the campus.

In 2018, *The Resident News* reported on the installation of Dimopoulos's 26-foot-high sculpture, installed in Hope Park outside of the cancer center campus. It was one of four sculptures donated by Preston and Joan Haskell. The rods create "gentle" sounds when they brush against one another as the wind moves through them.

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.

Neighborhood associations have spent hours negotiating and lobbying for and against rezoning attempts throughout the years. There will always be a push and pull between developers and neighbors, one trying to expand and change the landscape, the other often trying to preserve why they moved there in the first place. The backdrop to these rezoning negotiations is the enduring question of what the city should look like long into the future. Urban planning is critical to addressing the needs of residents as well as developers. A clear understanding of the rules, consistency in applying those rules, and predictability are worth their weight in gold for all. A multi-decade plan supported by stakeholders that demonstrates compromise and a clear vision is critical, because without this, development within the city will be haphazard, incongruous and unsupported by residents. In the meantime, however, some degree of flexibility in the zoning code is necessary as there will be times when a proposed project might not fit neatly within zoning rules but will have an overall positive impact on the city, this is when the Planned Unit Development (PUD) process is helpful.

The PUD process, in practicality, essentially allows a developer to start with a fresh slate and write their own zoning rules within certain state and local legal parameters. But the reality is the process affords a developer broad leeway. The PUD process offers a public benefit in that it allows for negotiation and compromise, unlike rezonings in which there is no availability for compromise. With a PUD, the community has input into the specifics of a project such as setbacks, architecture, landscaping, etc. These issues are often negotiated for months, and compromises are made with the result almost always being approval of the development, with one recent exception: the storage unit proposal in San Marco. This proposal was so outside of what the community, neighbors and city wanted that it failed to reach any consensus. Here, the process worked.

What is critical to the PUD process is that neighbors and community organizations representing neighborhood integrity understand clearly what the rules are and how to leverage them. This means plainly understanding whether the compromises reached and reflected in the PUD document are legally enforceable. For example, if SMPS or RAP provides support for a development after gaining concessions on, for example, landscaping enhancements or architectural features it is critical that they understand whether these concessions are legally enforceable. If it is the case that even after negotiations and compromise neighbors are still reliant on the goodwill of the developer rather than a legally binding document, residents need to know this. I believe it is incumbent on the Deegan Administration to work hard to effectively educate neighborhood groups and citizens on the PUD process and what exactly in the document is legally enforceable, what is ultimately dependent on the goodwill of the developer, and what can be changed unilaterally by the Administration during the final review of the project. Let's be honest, neighbors and neighborhood organizations simply do not have the resources in time and money to hire lobbyists to negotiate every development that is introduced, nor should they have to. Mayor Deegan and the city should offer clear assistance to neighborhood organizations like SMPS and RAP to negotiate with developers fairly and effectively. And frankly, above-board developers should welcome this. Fair is fair. At the end of the day, I believe progress is good, but projects should not be negotiated without both sides of the table having full knowledge of the law and understanding any unintended consequences of agreements made.

-LeAnna Cumber

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First Projects of Pearl Street District Advance Through Conceptual Approval

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Jacksonville's Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB) met on Thursday, Oct. 12. The board reviewed and granted conceptual and final approvals for several projects including the five-block Pearl Street District multi-phase plan included in the proposed Gateway Jax development which was first announced in September.

Ultimately, plans for this expansive development could include up to 22 acres in the North Core area of downtown in a reported \$500 million development.

The Pearl Street District is the first project of this development and includes five buildings along Pearl Street bordered by Union, Church, Clay and Julia streets.

The Pearl Street District returned to the DDRB for final approval last month, which it achieved with a unanimous vote (with board members William Schilling, Jr. and Christian Harden recusing themselves because of voting conflicts).

Following the final approval for the overall Pearl Street District development, board members considered three of the five projects within the Pearl Street District for conceptual approval. These projects are:

Pearl Street N-11

This seven-story mixed-use project consists of approximately 21,000 square feet of ground floor retail space and 205 residential units. This development pad, bordered by Ashley, Church, Clay and Julia streets, currently contains a surface parking lot and the historic Porter House Mansion. Proposed plans for this block introduce two new green spaces for public access on either side of Porter House, intended, according to attorney Cyndy Trimmer, representing the applicant for Pearl Street District project, "to draw the attention and the activity from the city center into this public space."

The southern Porter House Mansion park will be a "serene, intimate gathering place" with a water feature at its center while the northern park will contain an open, "activated lawn."

"This parcel is placemaking. This is what placemaking is," said DDRB Vice Chair Linzee Ott.

The team for this project includes developer Gateway Jax, SK+I Architecture, Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects and England-Thims & Miller, Inc. (ETM).

Pearl Street N-8

Bordered by Beaver, Ashley, Clay and Pearl streets, this lot consists of surface parking and vacant lots. Plans presented to DDRB for this development pad propose a 22-story mixed-use building with 62,000 square feet of ground- and second-floor retail space, 530 residential units and two levels of parking.

This development pad will give the appearance of three buildings of different



A rendering of Pearl Street District's N-8 block.

orientations and heights. The residential units begin on the fourth floor of the structure. Included in those residential units are 23 furnished units all situated on the fourth floor.

"We tried to offer these both to cater to the hospitality audience - we're next to that medical district, we're going to have that UF campus - but we also think Jacksonville is going to be a destination where people will want to come and stay for a period of time and not necessarily haul everything with them. So, it's dual-purpose to cater to all of those audiences," said Trimmer of the furnished units.

Plans for this N8 development pad also pay homage to a significant historical structure that once stood within that block - the Ebenezer Methodist Church. Ian Mills, executive director of the New Orleans office of Morris Adjmi Architects - the architectural firm for the N8 development pad - highlighted an homage included in the designs of this pad to the church in the form of an arched window reminiscent of the one within the church's nave, "very close" to where the original window once was at the church's location there when it stood on the southwest corner of the development pad.

The team for this project includes developer Gateway Jax, Morris Adjmi Architects, Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects and England-Thims & Miller, Inc. (ETM).

Pearl Street N-4

The final development pad presented to the DDRB at its October meeting was the N4 development pad for the Pearl Street District project. Currently vacant - except for an existing development at 716 North Pearl Street, which will not be part of the Pearl Street District - this is the proposed site for a seven-story mixed-use building with 16,000 square feet of ground floor retail space, 270 residential units and two "partial" parking levels.

The team for this project includes developer Gateway Jax, Boston-based Elkus Manfredi Architects, Hoerr Schaudt Landscape Architects and England-Thims & Miller, Inc. (ETM).

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All three development pads – N-11, N-8 and N-4 – will now advance with conceptual approval.

Incentives Still Pending

In an interview with *The Resident News*, Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) CEO Lori Boyer stated the area where the proposed Pearl Street District project will stand is “ripe for a larger-scale impact not just in density, but this is a part of downtown that is significantly underdeveloped, underutilized, undervalued and so the opportunity here is greater than say, in Brooklyn or Southbank, when you’ve already realized a lot of that economic value.”



A rendering of Pearl Street District's N-4 block.

Boyer added the DIA had hoped to present an incentives package to its October board meeting but said “it will probably be several weeks before we have that real information on the incentives.”

Regarding the utility service capacity and infrastructure needed to support a project of this scale, Boyer doesn’t foresee any necessary upgrades or enhancements other than looking to the developer to improve the pedestrian and bicycle experiences within the entire area, not just for the one block.

“The decision by the applicant to improve the sidewalks on the opposite side of their property really shows their dedication to not just their own project but the entire neighborhood that will exist in downtown. I think that was a great decision and we commend you for that,” DDRB Chair Matt Brockelman said

View all renderings at residentnews.net

City Honors Military Community

The City of Jacksonville hosted a Celebration of Valor press conference, along with the Jaguars Foundation, to announce the recipients of the Foundation’s 2023 Community Grants.

The Celebration of Valor honors the service and sacrifice of Jacksonville’s proud military community. It includes a wide variety of educational, patriotic, community and civic activities, all focused on demonstrating Jacksonville’s deep appreciation and respect for service men and women in the United States Armed Forces.

The 2023 Community Grant recipients are Five STAR Veterans Center, K9s For Warriors, Operation

Barnabas, Operation New Uniform, United Way of Northeast Florida, Northeast Florida Women Veterans, Florida National Guard Foundation, Hope4Veterans, Friends of Jacksonville Veterans Treatment Court, Yoga 4 Change and the Jacksonville Humane Society.

The Duval County Veterans Council Grant Recipients for 2023 were also announced at the event: Friends of Veterans Treatment Court of Duval County, Cecil Field POW/MIA Memorial Inc., Marine Corps League Detachment #059 Jacksonville, Patriot Services Group, Helping Through the Arts.

City Open to Open-container

The Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) approved a new regulation in October that would establish an open-container area along the Riverwalk, allowing approved alcoholic beverages to be consumed outside of establishments.

The designated area would be called the Jacksonville Riverwalk Specialty Center and would flank the St. Johns River starting at the Fuller Warren Bridge and running roughly two miles to EverBank Stadium along the Northbank, and 1.25 miles to RiversEdge along the Southbank. The area would not cover the bridges over the St. Johns River, though those pedestrian walkways could be added in the future.

There will be regulations in place, however, as to how alcoholic beverages can be legally consumed. Beverages would be no larger than 16 ounces and need to be in a designated logo-stamped Jacksonville Riverwalk plastic cup sold by licensed vendors and establishments in the specialty center. Special permits could allow alcohol during events in nearby public parks.

The move is intended to increase downtown activity and promote development.

The proposal will now move on to Jacksonville City Council.

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The Three Lions in San Marco Square provided a window into the action in the center of Balis Park, where the community gathered to kick off a weekend of fun during the popular Florida-Georgia weekend.



Classic cars were on display, courtesy of local collectors and considerate contributors to the event in support of San Marco merchants and ASPIRE Church.



Adam Byck and Anna Schatzel were in town to enjoy what San Marco had to offer during Bash in Balis.



St. John's Eye Associates, with a new location in San Marco, made an appearance with staff members Melissa Lewis, Faith Smith and Brian Cammett serving locals treats alongside smiles and warm greetings.

Bash in Balis:

A Pre-kickoff San Marco Tradition

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The time-honored college football game between the University of Florida and the University of Georgia returned to EverBank Stadium on Saturday, Oct. 28, pitting long-standing rivals Gators and Bulldogs against one another for the 91st time in the City of Jacksonville.

But before kickoff on Saturday, families, friends and neighbors gathered in San Marco's Balis Park for the annual Bash in Balis, hosted by the San Marco Merchants Association, held the day before, on Friday, Oct. 27.

Live musical performances provided soundtrack for this family-friendly event offering yard games and food trucks. Classic car aficionados could enjoy a classic car show and local vendors proffered their wares for some light shopping before the day was done.

The event ran from 5-8 p.m., so participants could call it an early night in preparation for the big game the following day.



Dan Harris photography was capturing photographs as part of his annual show of support for the San Marco Merchant Association. Harris prints a keepsake photo for patrons to take home, or those captured can share via their phone on an app he's created for his mobile studio.

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A Trio of Heart Specialists for Wolfson Children’s

Three physicians have joined the C. Herman and Mary Virginia Terry Heart Institute at Wolfson Children’s Hospital. Pediatric electrophysiologist Judy Ashouri, pediatric cardiac intensivist Kaushal Dosani, and pediatric cardiologist and cardiac imaging specialist Umakumaran Ponniah will provide Wolfson Children’s heart services to patients across Northeast Florida and the region.

Dr. Ashouri received her medical degree from the University of Florida College of Medicine in Gainesville, Florida, and completed her pediatrics residency at Children’s National Hospital in Washington, D.C.

Dr. Dosani received his medical degree from Dr. D. Y. Patil Medical College and Research Center in Mumbai, India, and completed his pediatrics residency at the University of Nevada Las Vegas School of Medicine.

Dr. Ponniah received his medical degree from Karnataka Medical College in Hubballi, India, and completed pediatric residencies at Mysore Medical College in Mysore, India, and at Milton Hershey Medical Center in Hershey, Pennsylvania. Dr. Ponniah also serves as the director of non-invasive imaging at Wolfson Children’s Hospital.

Wolfson Children’s Hospital and the Terry Heart Institute are the only providers in Jacksonville that treat a full range of congenital cardiac conditions in children and adults. Physicians providing care at Wolfson Children’s Hospital are not employees nor agents of the hospital, but are employed by Nemours Children’s Health, University of Florida College of Medicine, Baptists Specialty Physicians and Emergency Resources Group.

Srinath, Dinh and Junco Join JTA

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) announced the hiring of three executives to fill key positions: Raj Srinath, as Senior Vice President/Chief Financial Officer; Kiet Dinh as Vice President/Automation and Innovation; and Anthony Junco as Public Information Officer.

Srinath will be responsible for directing the financial planning and analysis, budgeting, revenue and fixed assets programs functions and personnel for the JTA. He has nearly 30 years of financial management experience, including at transit agencies.

Dinh will manage the JTA’s planning, design, procurement, manufacture, installation and construction for the Ultimate Urban Circulator (U2C) program and oversee the JTA Skyway and its maintenance. He previously served as the Project Delivery Manager at the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada, and he comes to the JTA with experience in leading the commercialization of an autonomous vehicle urban circulator service.

Junco will provide strategic communication direction and execute the JTA’s internal and external corporate communication activities. He will also serve as JTA’s spokesperson and manage CEO communication opportunities. He previously served as the Public Affairs Officer at Littoral Combat Ship Squadron 2 in Jacksonville.



Anthony Junco

Kiet Dinh

Raj Srinath

“I am thrilled to have Raj, Kiet and Anthony join the JTA team,” said JTA CEO Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr. “All three of these individuals have proven experience in their fields and will be an invaluable addition to the Authority in each of their departments. I look forward to welcoming them to help us further advance the JTA as both a mobility provider for Northeast Florida, and as one of the top employers in our region.”

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Art Walk Turns 20

Downtown Vision (DVI), the Business Improvement District for downtown Jacksonville, celebrated the 20th anniversary of the First Wednesday Art Walk on Oct. 4, 2023. Downtown Vision launched Art Walk to bring more people downtown and to support local businesses. It has grown into a signature monthly event for downtown Jacksonville where artists and art lovers come together in support of live music and the arts: visual, dance, performing, interactive, fashion and culinary.

“We’re grateful to produce this monthly event for and by Jacksonville and have had so much fun with it over the years,” said Katherine Hardwick, Vice President of Marketing and Research. “What makes it so special and what gives it its staying power is that Art Walk is ever-evolving and always inclusive. There is always something new. There is always something for everyone. And it’s always a great place to see and be seen.”

Over the past two decades, Art Walk has embraced a variety of holidays and themes, playing host to everything from haunted houses and annual Christmas Tree lightings to pop-up ball pits, beer release parties, silent discos, live sketch shows, and even marriage proposals and a wedding. It has attracted more than half a million visitors to the cultural venues, shops, restaurants and parks, drawing an average of 5,000 people every first Wednesday.

“First Wednesday Art Walk is a cornerstone of the Downtown Jacksonville experience and we’re excited to celebrate the 20th year of this beloved Jacksonville institution,” said Jake Gordon, CEO of Downtown Vision. “At DVI, our non-profit mission is to help make Downtown Jacksonville a more exciting place to live, work, visit and invest, and for two decades now, Art Walk is one of the key ways we deliver on our mission. We look forward to celebrating our downtown and this great milestone with you.”

To learn more about First Wednesday Art Walk and participating locations, visit [DTJax.com/artwalk](https://www.dtx.com/artwalk).

Clements, Whittier Join Berkshire Hathaway

Derrick Whittier and Caroline Clements have joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty.

Whittier is a seasoned broker associate with a deep-rooted connection to Northeast Florida, along with a passion for the region and a track record of success. He earned his bachelor’s degree in political science from the University of North Florida. Having spent his entire life in Northeast Florida, Whittier uses his area knowledge to provide insight and guidance to clients.

“We are so glad to have Derrick join our team and we know that he will be a great addition to our group here at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices,” said Josh Cohen, Broker/Manager of the Metropolitan office with locations in Avondale and San Marco.

Clements is a Northeast Florida native with a previous career in fashion. As a realtor, she has a deep appreciation for the local community and its quiet lifestyle.

“Her local knowledge, combined with her background in fashion and her commitment to fostering lasting connections, make her a valuable addition to our team,” said Cohen.



Caroline Clements



Derrick Whittier



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Chef Richard Robinson

Vevetas Tapas Introduces Island Flavors, Rum Bar to Lakewood

There's a new restaurant in the Lakewood area that's serving up some unique, flavorful eats alongside craft cocktails. Vevetas Tapas by Pink Salt, the brainchild of Chef Richard Robinson, a Johnson and Wales Culinary Arts trained chef and current owner of Pink Salt on San Marco Boulevard, is bringing a new vibe to the neighborhood dining scene.

"Jacksonville is growing, it's evolving, so it's exciting to be bringing flavors to the palate not seen in the local area," said Robinson, who originally hails from Jamaica. The talented chef has been working around the world honing his culinary craft before settling into the local neighborhood, where he finds himself right at home. With his own twist of Caribbean and island-infused eats, he's adding to the novel dining destinations that Lakewood has to offer.

Named in honor of his mother, Vevetas is poised to offer an exquisite menu collection that showcases the art of tapas, reimagined with a contemporary twist. Robinson curates dishes full of vibrant ingredients, meticulously selected. He even asks that you come to enjoy the food, relax and plan to spend some time, because "good food takes time."

From Scottish, wild-caught jumbo prawns blackened and served in a red coconut curry reduction accompanied by jasmine rice, to Australian Darling grass-fed wagyu steak in a miso broth with baby bok choy — or perhaps a vegan dish of black sesame noodles with beet roots, carrots, edamame, scallions and house-made, sesame-infused dressing – there's something for everyone to try.

"Jacksonville is continuing to grow, which also means it is embracing flavors from around the world," said Robinson. "I think people are craving well-made dishes with ingredients from cultures that offer new experiences and flavor profiles."

North Florida's dining scene has another feather in its culinary cap: Pink Salt - Restaurant and Wine Bar on San Marco Boulevard, and now the newly opened Vevetas Tapas by Pink Salt located at 1567 University Blvd. West in the former Gene's Seafood location in Lakewood. Visit pinksaltrestaurant.com for more details or call (904) 551-5467 for table reservations.



Mike Krzyzewski

Krzyzewski Comes to Florida Forum

The Florida Forum Speaker Series, presented by The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital, will welcome Duke University's Coach K – Mike Krzyzewski – on Wednesday, Nov. 8, 2023. The program begins at 7 p.m. at the Center for the Performing Arts in Jacksonville.

The passionate, dynamic and inspiring coach of Duke's men's basketball team, Krzyzewski is the NCAA Division 1 men's all-time leader for wins with 1,200 games in the win column. His success includes 35 NCAA tournament appearances, 13 Final Fours and five National Championships over 46 seasons as a head coach. He also coached the U.S. men's national basketball team from 2005 to 2016, leading Team USA to three Olympic gold medals in 2008, 2012 and 2016.

“ Krzyzewski is the NCAA Division 1 men's all-time leader for wins with 1,200 games in the win column. ”

The Naismith Hall of Fame coach is the author of two New York Times bestsellers, a 12-time National Coach of the Year, the Sports Illustrated 2011 Sportsman of the Year, and has been honored by USA Basketball as the recipient or co-recipient of the USA Basketball National Coach of the Year Award.

Funds raised by the Florida Forum support the Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital's commitment to raise \$1.5 million for two new Kids Kare Mobile Intensive Care Units for Wolfson Children's Hospital's Neonatal and Pediatric Critical Care Transport fleet. Kids Kare vehicles and helicopters transport more than 2,250 infants and children a year to Wolfson Children's Hospital for emergency critical care, trauma and specialty care.

Future Florida Forum Speaker Series programs include entrepreneur Steve Wozniak on Jan. 17, 2024, U.S. Navy Adm. James Stavridis (Ret.) on Feb. 26, 2024, and are made possible by sponsors Wells Fargo, Landstar and Florida Blue. For more information, visit thefloridaforum.com, call (904) 202-2886, or email womensboard@bmcjax.com.

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LeAnna Cumber

Cumber Joins Zoo Board

LeAnna Cumber has been appointed to the board of directors for the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens for a three-year term. This is a return to the board for Cumber, who had also served prior to being elected to City Council in 2019.

Cumber said her family has been going to the zoo since her kids were born and calls it an “incredible place” that is “not just for kids.”

“I really love being part of something that speaks to my love for animals, the importance of family-friendly activities, and the importance of educating kids and adults on the value of animal conservation,” said Cumber. “I am so excited to once again spend time with the men and women who make our zoo the fantastic place it is and do my part in helping to make it even better.”

Year after year, Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens continues to receive awards for its forward-thinking design and dedication to the welfare of the animals.



Cindy Watson

Watson Retires from JASMYN

Cindy Watson, founding board member and inaugural CEO of JASMYN, Jacksonville Area Sexual Minority Youth Network, announced her retirement effective Dec. 31, 2023. Over the past 30 years, she grew the organization from 1994’s small group at Willow Branch Library to today’s multi-million-dollar advocacy group with a three-building campus serving nearly 1,000 youth annually.

“One does not look at JASMYN and not see Cindy Watson’s fingerprints on every aspect of this dynamic, life-saving organization,” said Board Chair Blake Osner.

“Leading JASMYN to its nationally recognized role in empowering LGBTQ+ youth in Northeast Florida has been a joyful journey with many battles and even more accomplishments many did not think possible,” said Watson. “We have been innovators in this space from day one. From starting as a peer group for LGBTQ youth, to becoming a resource for all youth in fighting the spread of HIV and combatting homelessness. It’s been an honor to serve the Jacksonville community and the future leaders of Northeast Florida, where our mission has always been to empower and affirm the lives of all our youth. I know JASMYN and this incredible community have much greater things to achieve together as I step aside and begin my next chapter.”

A national search will begin for Watson’s replacement, with the goal to be completed by mid-2024.

Weinstein Joins Ronald McDonald House Charities

Megan Weinstein has been appointed new Chief Development Officer of Ronald McDonald House Charities (RMHC) of Jacksonville. She comes to RMHC after more than 20 years of experience overseeing major gifts, community and corporate partnerships, and communications for national nonprofit organizations, including the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida.

Weinstein will lead strategic fundraising, impact and delivery of the mission of RMHC of Jacksonville, which is to support the health and well-being of children by providing lodging and other services for critically ill, chronically ill and seriously injured children and their families. Supporting five local hospitals, RMHC of Jacksonville serves more than 1,100 families a year.



Megan Weinstein

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Historical Society Breaks Ground on Jacksonville History Center

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The Jacksonville Historical Society (JHS) held a groundbreaking ceremony last month to celebrate the first phase of work on The Jacksonville History Center – the city’s first museum dedicated to showcasing Jacksonville’s rich history.

JHS board members and city officials participated in the event, held in front of the historic Florida Casket Company building on Oct. 5. The 103-year-old building will be transformed to become the home of this interactive and educational historical center.

“The Jacksonville History Center is a long-overdue opportunity for this community to get to know one another,” said JHS Board Chair David Auchter at the ceremony. “We need to get to know each other, we need to get to respect each other as a result, and maybe even be kinder to one another – and it’s going to happen right here in this building.”

“Public history is where the evidence of the past meets the appetite of citizens in the present for authoritative research and understanding about their place and the people and events that preceded them,” said Jacksonville Historical Society and History Center CEO Dr. Alan Bliss, in part, in his introductory remarks.

The ground floor of the three-story building will be a dedicated space for historical displays and exhibits; the second floor will be developed as a venue for performances and events. The third floor will be transformed into a “desperately necessary” expanded archives and research space for the extensive archival collection JHS possesses, much of which is currently stored at off-site warehouses, Bliss said.

During the ceremony, Bliss thanked current and former JHS board members and Jacksonville city councilmembers



Ron Salem, Brittany Norris, Matt Carlucci, Mike Crabtree, David Auchter, Chris Miller and Alan Bliss gathered for the groundbreaking moment.

in attendance, including former City Councilmember Randy DeFoor, whom Bliss credited for the initial idea behind what has evolved into the Jacksonville History Center as it’s designed today. Additionally, he thanked DeFoor for her role in directing “a significant appropriation of American Recovery Plan resources to the historical society.”

“During the darkest days of the COVID-19 pandemic, she is one of a number of city council members and others here present who have been so pivotal to sustaining and elevating this organization’s resources at key moments,” he said.

Several current city officials attended the ceremony as well, including City Council President Ron Salem and councilmembers Chris Miller and Matt Carlucci.

“The renovation of this building will enable an expansion of the society’s capability to perform its work and to be an even more valuable partner in preserving and sharing Jacksonville’s past, serving its people in the present and in the future,” Salem said. “Those stories matter, so we appreciate the opportunity to help advance that work here at the Jacksonville History Center.”

In a later interview, Bliss said the Jacksonville History Center will hold rotating exhibits on a dearth of subjects, including music, baseball, insurance, banking, U.S. Navy, civil rights history, medicine and technology and natural history.

“This town is rotten with stories,” he said.

Bliss added Phase 1 will focus primarily on renovating the exterior of the 13,500-square-foot building, including “electrical, plumbing, concrete [building units], then the roof, and then preliminary interior work, which basically means sealing the exterior brick walls from the inside to prevent the permeation of water, moisture, humidity from the outside atmosphere coming into the air-conditioned building.” The estimated cost for Phase 1 is \$1.2 million.

Bliss said JHS will require another estimated \$1.7 million to complete Phase 2, which will involve interior work, HVAC, completing the interior utilities, refinishing the floors and replacing all the windows.

Also in a later interview, Councilmember Matt Carlucci discussed a bill he plans to introduce to the City Council for that remaining \$1.7 million.

“This is simply \$1.7 million to finish up the building improvements for the Casket Factory so we can have the [Jacksonville History Center],” he said. “I’d just like to get it done. I think it’d be the right thing but it’s a bit of a big ask – I get that – but again, we can keep doing this with small increments of help and drag it on for years or we can have something really nice in an important part of town for this type of facility to help continue bringing up the Eastside.”

Carlucci said he plans to hold meetings with his colleagues on the council to discuss the bill and hopes to get “as many co-introducers or co-sponsors as possible.”

Bliss said JHS hopes to complete this first phase of work by the end of March or beginning of April 2024.






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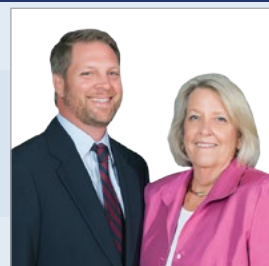
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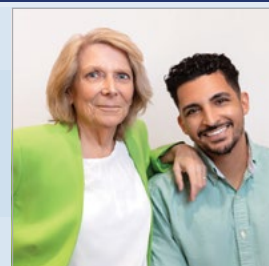
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Patricia Gillum Sams Megan Hayward

Sams and Hayward Join JTA Board

The Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) announced two new members of its board of directors, former JEA Diversity Program Manager Patricia Gillum Sams and Temporary Assistance Guru CEO Megan Hayward.

Sams and Hayward were appointed by City of Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan at the beginning of her term as Mayor. The Mayor appoints three JTA Board members who are confirmed by the Jacksonville City Council.

“I am pleased to welcome Patricia Gillum Sams and Megan Hayward to the JTA Board of Directors,” said JTA CEO Nathaniel P. Ford Sr. “Both Patricia and Megan come to the Board with years of experience in their fields and will be invaluable additions. I am confident they will help move the JTA forward in continuing to provide mobility solutions in Northeast Florida.”

New COO for duPont Fund



Sujata Narayan

Sujata Narayan has been named COO of The Jessie Ball duPont Fund and will oversee talent development, business systems, resource management and grants management and evaluation. With deep family roots in Jacksonville for more than four decades, Narayan has more than 25 years of experience in strategic planning and execution, talent management, program management, grantmaking and foundation operations.

“It’s a privilege to join an organization that is actively shaping, in so many positive ways, this community that shaped me as a young person,” said Narayan. “The duPont Fund team is passionate, energetic and committed to using their influence to create spaces where more people truly feel they belong.”

Prior to joining the duPont Fund, Narayan served for more than 13 years with Equinix, where oversaw corporate giving and employee volunteering, which generated more than \$12 million for more than 2500 global organizations and contributed more than 100,000 service hours. She oversaw the team that established and operationalized the Equinix Foundation as a private grantmaking entity.

“Sujata is an experienced foundation administrator, and a social impact, philanthropy, and community development practitioner with strong roots in urban planning. She is passionate about collaboration, inclusion, and equity and we’re excited to have her helping us further instill a culture of high impact and purpose,” said Mari Kuraishi, president of the duPont Fund.

Narayan is one of two recent hires at the duPont Fund. In June 2023, Sarah Reardon joined as Program Officer, stewarding relationships with grantees in Port St. Joe, Florida and the Commonwealth of Virginia as well as throughout the country. Prior to joining the duPont Fund, Reardon held the role of Director, Academic and Student Achievement for Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ). She led the U.S. Department of Education-funded \$2.2 million grant program that expanded FSCJ support of limited-income students. Reardon also worked as a grant writer for FSCJ, successfully generating more than \$15 million in federal, state and local grants for the institution.



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Enjoy Fall In Style

New Toll Brothers community welcomes its first residents

Late fall in northeast Florida is indeed the most wonderful time of the year. As the weather cools, Jacksonville residents spend more and more time outdoors. That’s especially true for the very first residents of the Terraces at San Marco, a luxurious Toll Brothers townhome community located in the heart of San Marco that features spacious rooftop entertaining spaces.

“It doesn’t get any better than November and December to sit on your rooftop with something delicious cooking on the gas grill, a bottle of champagne and a group of friends,” said Garry Adams, Sales Consultant for the Terraces at San Marco.

Located on Atlantic Boulevard, west of I-95 and next to Fletcher Park, the



Terraces at San Marco consists of 27 spacious, newly constructed townhomes that are ideal for buyers who want the convenience of urban living without having to sacrifice space or quality design. The townhomes feature contemporary, open floor plans and rooftop terraces with all-weather decking and stunning views of downtown Jacksonville.

With San Marco Square just steps from

their front doors, residents of the Terraces at San Marco enjoy easy access to their favorite neighborhood spots. Groceries, banks, pharmacies and boutique shops are within a short walk, as are more than a dozen restaurants, including Taverna, Rue Saint-Marc and Bar Molino.

“You just can’t beat this location. Everything you need is within walking distance,” Adams said. “It’s rare to find brand new, high-end homes with plenty of space and luxury features in the heart of a thriving historic neighborhood, and that’s what is really attracting buyers right now.”

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 that are perfect for entertaining. There is limited availability for corner homes, which average 2,085 square feet with approximately 469 square feet of rooftop terrace space.

With more than 50 years of experience building residential homes in sought-

countertops, soft-close cabinets and drawers, stainless steel appliances and optional gas cooktops, 8-foot doors, tankless water heaters and Shark-brand coating on the floors of the attached 2-car garages. Buyers can also create their own customized outdoor kitchen on their rooftop terrace.

Adams said about a third of the home sites have been sold and others are selling quickly.

“We have a number of move-in ready home sites available for buyers who are looking to close and move in before the end of the year,” Adams said. “Those quick-occupancy townhomes include stylish, tasteful features and finishings curated by our top-notch designers. We also have several home sites available for buyers who are looking to customize the finishings according to their own preferences.”

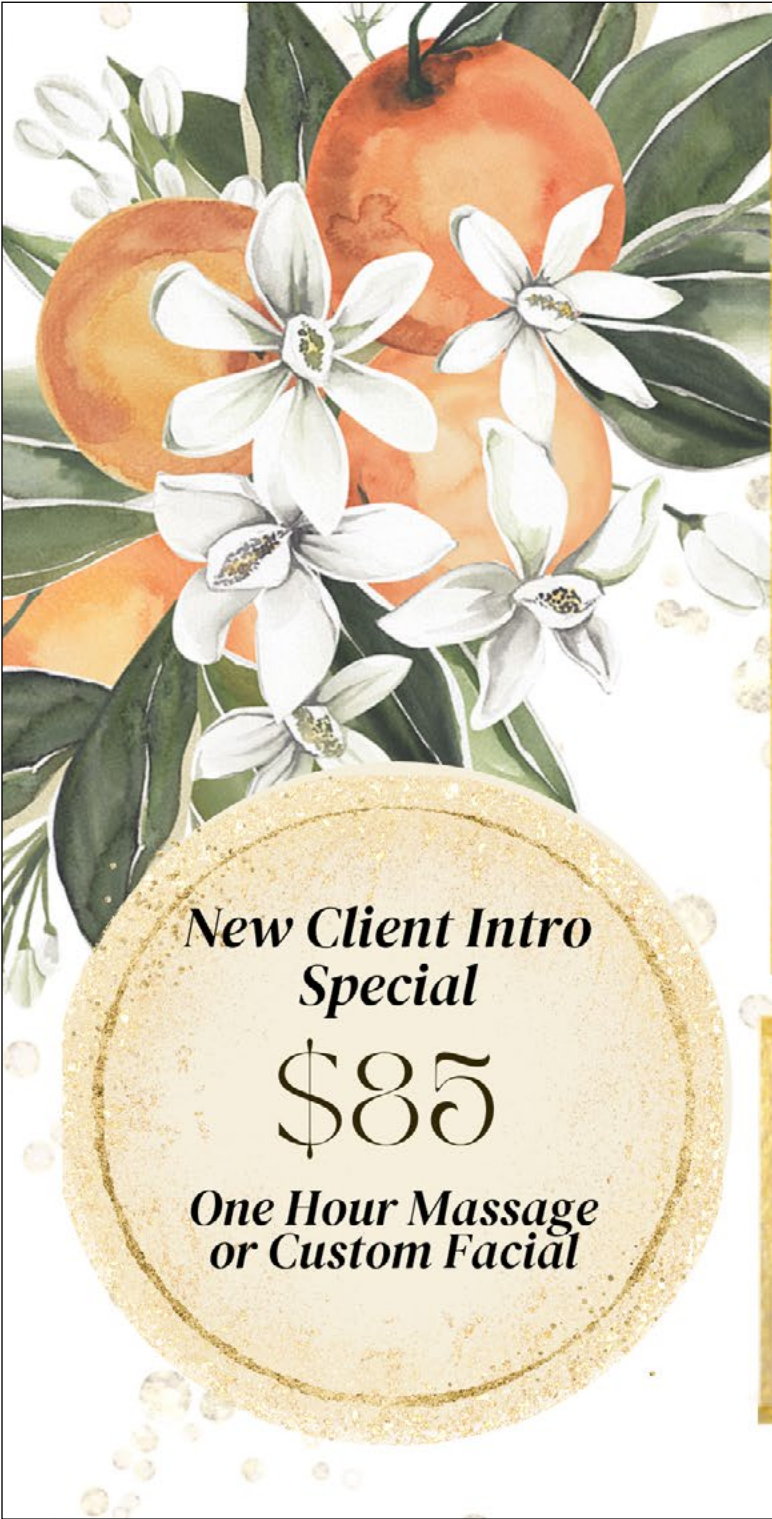
Those homes come with \$80,000-\$120,000 in customizable Design Studio upgrades, according to Adams. The 4,800-square-foot Toll Brothers Design Studio on Phillips Highway offers hundreds of options to fit every taste and style. They also offer the support of their professional design consultants to help buyers personalize their new home.

It’s one example of how Toll Brothers does all it can to help homebuyers get into the home of their dreams. Through Toll Brothers Mortgage Company, they also offer special opportunities and varying builder incentives for qualified buyers.

Terraces at San Marco are fee-simple ownership, so the buyer owns both the land and the townhome. A monthly Homeowners Association fee takes care of irrigation, landscape, lawn care and trash pickup.

“It’s luxurious, low-maintenance living at its finest,” Adams said.

The Terraces at San Marco are located at 1609 Bridgeton Dr. For more information, visit tollbrothers.com



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Autumn and Paul Combs with Denise Reagan and Nancy Powell

Scenic Jacksonville Executive Director Nancy Powell welcomes guests to the Great Cities Symposium 2023.



Amy Mathews with Demetrio Livingston



Steve Williams with Samiha Nazrul



Ted and Mary Lee Pappas with Lad and Mindy Hawkins



Phillip and Kasey Heilman



Gregory Williams with DeVaughn Murphy, J. Nicole Clark, Rebecca Williams and Errol White



Gardner Davis with Tom Davis



Rick Foster with John Alters, Nicole Renner and David Paulk



Mindy Hawkins with Beth Leavitt

Great Cities Symposium 2023 Welcomed AG Lafley

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Scenic Jacksonville hosted its Great Cities Symposium 2023 at the Garden Club Jacksonville on Wednesday, Oct. 4, with guest speaker AG Lafley.

The former CEO of Procter & Gamble, Lafley shared his insight and experience as a civic and nonprofit leader with more than 350 engaged Jacksonville community members and city leaders in attendance, including Mayor Donna Deegan, City Council President Ron Salem, Councilmembers Joe Carlucci and Nick Howland and Downtown Investment Authority CEO Lori Boyer.

Ahead of Lafley's presentation, Scenic Jacksonville Executive Director Nancy Powell said this annual event is a "conversation" with the community.

"It's a continuing conversation about how we can make Jacksonville better and what are the lessons we can learn from other cities," she said. "Nothing is cookie-cutter, every city is different, but we've been able to watch what other cities have done and to bring the speakers here to talk about their experiences. To let the community ask questions has just been really a wonderful growing event we're able to host."

Powell said Scenic Jacksonville focuses on inviting speakers from mid-size cities whose scale is comparable to that of Jacksonville to learn about both their successes and their challenges.

Lafley shared his experiences as founder and board chair of Cincinnati Center Development (3CDC) and his role in transforming downtown Cincinnati into a destination both residents and tourists now enjoy throughout the year as well as his work as The Bay Park Conservancy's founding CEO in Sarasota, where he helped create a "50-plus acre, beautifully designed and delightfully programmed signature bayfront public park."

His remarks provided timely insight for Jacksonville as it continues to work towards creating its own riverfront destination parks and public spaces in downtown for its residents and visitors to enjoy. Lafley shared powerful before-and-after photos from his time in Cincinnati and Sarasota to underscore what his teams and their city partners started working with and what they were able to achieve together.

"I think this all begins with commitment, real commitment to your community, real commitment to your city," he said in his introductory remarks.

In an e-mail following the presentation, Powell wrote, in part, "AG Lafley brought unique insights from a business and civic perspective that complemented prior speakers, who had served as mayors. Showing how it has been done successfully is inspirational and motivating. I personally resonated with his message that Jacksonville already has the people and the resources to transform our downtown and riverfront. We need to continue the commitment and focus and not get distracted."

This is the fourth annual Great Cities Symposium Scenic Jacksonville has hosted. Its previous speakers have included Tampa Mayor Bob Buckhorn, Chattanooga Mayor Ron Littlefield and Mayor Joe Riley of Charleston.



Great Cities Symposium 2023 Guest Speaker AG Lafley

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Red Shield Revelry

The Salvation Army of Northeast Florida's 10th Annual Red Shield Ball celebrated Love Beyond the Next Generation. Held at San Jose Country Club on Saturday, Oct. 21, the Red Shield Ball included dinner, live music, dancing and live and silent auctions in support of the life-changing work that takes place for women and families at the Salvation Army's Red Shield Lodge shelter. For every dollar donated to The Salvation Army, 82 cents stays right here in the Northeast Florida community.



Major Candice Biggers with Major Keith Biggers



Robert Devers with Steven Dimmick



The Joost family



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cles REGISTER

Sulzbacher



Robert Harris with Vanessa Gross and Martha Barrett

Transformations, Sulzbacher’s largest annual fundraising event, was held Thursday, Oct. 19 at the Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts at 5:30 p.m. Mayor Donna Deegan addressed the crowd, which also heard success stories from Sulzbacher clients. Funds raised contribute crucial operating dollars that support the agency’s comprehensive programs and services for homeless men, women and families, like case management, job training and placement, and healthcare.

Paola Parra Harris and Matt Laurie served as co-chairs of this year’s host committee, and co-presenting sponsors included The Jacksonville Transportation Authority and Florida Blue. Keitha Nelson, anchor of Good Morning Jacksonville, emceed the event.



Damien and Ruth McDonald with David Hoffman

Andrea Grappie with Laila Pullens

Sanctuary on 8th Street threw its annual fundraising event, Shindig, on Oct. 5 from 6-9 p.m. at the Brick and Beam in historic Springfield. The event supports the maintenance and growth of Sanctuary’s youth programs and featured. Made possible by the Delores Barr Weaver Forever Event Fund, Shindig featured food and drink, a silent auction and live music in a casual atmosphere.



Tim Kelly with Silvia Agreda



Jerry and Mary Bussell with Rick Cartlidge and Sue and Rich Karn



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First Coast Design Show

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UF Health doctors and panel speakers at the 2023 UF Health Breast Cancer public forum. Front row: Julie Bradley, John Murray, Smita Sharma; back row: Shahla Masood, Leigh Neumayer, Linda Edwards, Joseph Mignone and Rachel Carpenter.

Breast Cancer: The One Thing Top Docs want You to Know

As October’s Breast Cancer Awareness Month wrapped, one local expert is encouraging the community to continue its efforts to increase what she calls “breast awareness.” The concept gives women the tools to become self-aware of any dangers.



Dr. Shahla Masood

“Breast awareness is the most important thing. They need to really get to know their breasts and if there are any changes that occur, they need to refer to either their primary care or OB-GYN and try to make sure they are not dealing with anything serious,” said Dr. Shahla Masood, Chair, Department of Pathology and Medical Director of UF Health Breast Center. “This self-awareness is important, and screening mammography has helped significantly for us to find small cancers that are manageable and really treated very effectively.”

Masood has run UF Health’s annual October breast cancer dinner and forum for nearly 30 years with no cost – or strings attached – to the public. The goal of the event, and the UF Health Breast Center, is to provide patients a resource that has significant interest and knowledge about breast cancer across an entire team. According to Masood, the gathering and collective opinion of all the physicians engaged in breast cancer therapies – radiologists, pathologists, surgeons, oncologists, plastic surgeons, social workers – aids in a more cohesive treatment plan and follow-up for patients with breast cancer.

Because of advances in technology and science, there has been an improvement in the mortality rate from breast cancer. While many still think of breast cancer as a fatal disease, Masood stressed the importance of understanding that is no longer always the case and encourages people to remove the fear and move toward education to understand their best treatment options.

“First of all, breast cancer is not a single disease, it’s multiple diseases. And these breast cancer subtypes – every one of them – is really different from the other one. And we at the Department of Pathology have the capability of identifying which one of these breast cancers are low-grade, and which ones are high-grade that require a different kind of therapy and attention,” said Masood. “The majority of these small, image-detected cancers that we see these days as a result of screened mammography are small tumors that are very manageable, and patients live long – 20, 30, 40 years - after.”

This year’s public forum included a 7-physician panel of experts from the University of Florida College of Medicine and had more than 150 attendees. In addition to the forum, Masood hosts an international symposium every February for breast cancer physicians, where they educate and share the most recent advancements with the scientific community.

“We are just taking the responsibility to increase breast health literacy within our community,” said Masood. “We have had significant success in attracting people to come to this meeting, and then to see patients follow... what we tell them, and they often go and seek a physician referral. It definitely has an impact. This is a service to the community with no expectation of any return.”



David and Monique Miller with Dr. Floyd Willis, Rob Kelly and Melanie Lawson.

Peace in the Pages

READ USA hosted its fifth annual Peace in the Pages event on Sept. 28, celebrating the connection between literacy and the values of empathy, peace, education, freedom, leadership and success. Presented by David and Monique Miller, the event recognized seven local leaders for their commitment to literacy and closing the literacy gap in Duval County.

The following honorees were recognized:

- READ to Lead Award - Betty Seabrook Burney, I’m a Star Foundation
- READ to Succeed Award - Tim Cost, Jacksonville University
- READ to be Free Award - Kevin Gay, Operation New Hope
- READ to Heal Award - Nicole B. Thomas, Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville
- READ to Remember Award - Dr. Floyd Willis, Mayo Clinic
- Marjorie Broward Memorial Scholarship Award - Paula Findlay, Arlington Elementary School
- Mark Landen Memorial Award for Democracy through Journalism - Mark Woods, Florida Times-Union

The event was emceed by Melanie Lawson, and Shelley Read served as keynote speaker.

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Kimmy Clark with Andrea LaMondie



Lee and Drew Haramis with Lee Haramis, Jr.



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Taking Flight

The 3rd Annual Flight of Fancy gala raised over \$148,000 for The Allison Brundick Haramis Foundation, Angels for Allison, a Jacksonville based non-profit dedicated to assisting with funeral costs associated with the loss of a child. The event was held on Friday, Oct. 6 at the Garden Club of Jacksonville with more than 200 guests in attendance.

Flight of Fancy raised funds through ticket sales, over 50 corporate and individual sponsorships, and a live and silent auction. The Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund

agreed to match up to \$25,000 raised, bringing the total for the event more than \$148,000.

At the end of this year, Angels for Allison, established in 2010 by Drew and Lee Haramis in memory of their late daughter, will likely reach the milestone of funding \$1 million in grants to Angel families. For almost thirteen years, the Allison Brundick Haramis Foundation has lifted the burden of funeral costs from more than 960 families who were suffering the loss of a child and without means to pay for their child's funeral.



PHOTO/MEGAN CONKLIN

Empty Bowls, Full Philanthropy

Empty bowls translated into an event full of philanthropy at Feeding Northeast Florida's signature fundraising event, Empty Bowls presented by Morgan & Morgan, held Tuesday, Oct. 3 at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront. Roughly 300 members of the community experienced a simple lunch of soup and bread to bring attention to the issue of hunger in our region and carry that reminder beyond – through a souvenir clay bowl, handcrafted by local students and artisans.

Feeding Northeast Florida is the largest food bank in the area, serving eight counties. It provides more than 85,000 meals per day, serving more than 264,000 individuals annually.



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A painter painstakingly restores ceiling carvings to their original glory atop scaffolding erected inside the Florida Theatre.



Numa Saisselin, PC, Bryant and Nathan Marty look on as Mayor Donna Deegan cuts the ceremonial ribbon for the official reopening of the Florida Theatre.



Elements of the theater have been repainted to reflect its 1927 color palette.

Refreshed and Reopened

The Florida Theatre’s renovations uncover new links to its past

After being closed since mid-July 2023, the newly renovated Florida Theatre in downtown Jacksonville is ready for the show to go on. The 96-year-old facility officially reopened on Friday, Oct. 27 in a ribbon-cutting ceremony with Mayor Donna Deegan and other dignitaries, just in time for its Rocky Horror Picture Show the following day.

Renovations to the historic theatre include repairing the decorative plaster and painting it with fidelity to the 1927 color palette. The entire heating, ventilation and air conditioning system has been replaced, and the building’s electrical vault has been moved from the first to the third floor to remove any flood risk. All public restrooms have also been updated. The reopening coincides with the 40th anniversary of the last major renovation that took place in 1983. These improvements follow recent work to replace the theatre’s seats, upgrade audio and lighting, and create the Remedy Lounge expansion.

“The Florida Theatre is one of downtown Jacksonville’s gems. With its 100th birthday approaching, this is an exciting time to restore the Theatre to its full splendor,” said Mayor Donna Deegan.

Funding for the project has come from private Centennial Campaign donations, which were matched by the City of Jacksonville, as well as every Northeast Florida

patron who has paid the per-ticket \$4.50 restoration fee. Contractors included Auld & White Constructors, Sauer Mechanical, EverGreene Architectural Arts and Beacon Electric.

According to Jeff Greene, Executive Chairman & Founder of EverGreene Architectural Arts, The Florida Theatre project had some “unique” discoveries.

“Like the mysterious connection to John Eberson, one of America’s most prominent architects known for movie palace designs in the atmospheric theatre style – the outdoor feel, inside,” said Greene. “The original four faux tapestries that hang in the Florida Theatre were painted. Since they are the same size and have the same imagery as the ones in the Tampa Theatre – which Eberson did – we were able to replicate them. When we did our forensic research and put all the Theatre finishes under the microscope, we realized they were painted with the same paint and style that Eberson used. His signature, per se. It was fascinating to see what his influence did.”

“A big part of what we do at EverGreene is connect back to history. We wanted to return the Florida Theatre to its original, authentic self. When the building was renovated in the 1970s, they moved away from that a bit. We wanted to return as accurately as possible to what it looked like in 1927. The challenge was the short time

frame we had. The surprise or mystery was the Eberson connection. But we did our research, added some interpretation, and found the harmony and balance we were striving for.”

Over the past four years, the Florida Theatre has raised and spent \$15 million on building improvements. Theatre President Numa Saisselin said about \$8 million worth of work remains to get the rest of the building



A historical photo shows the vertical blade sign that used to adorn the Florida Theatre, an element hoped to return in future improvements.

“where it needs to be,” which includes Saisselin’s goal of bringing back the original vertical blade sign that used to adorn the Theatre.

“This is one of the last remaining theatres of its kind in our country. And we have to take care of it, nurture it and support it so we can continue to laugh, cry, dance, sing and do all that we do in our beloved Florida Theatre,” said Leslie Gordon, chairperson of the Theatre’s board of directors.

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Kelly Howard with Paul and Jill Whipple

Good Vibes, Good Tunes, Good Times

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

San Marco's Fletcher Park was the spot to be if you were in search of good tunes, good food and good vibes as the San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS) held its annual Concert in the Park on Friday, Oct. 20.

Guests enjoyed live music by Jesse Montoya Music, the John Lumpkin Institute's Halligan Quintet and headliner Bread and Butter Band. Local San Marco restaurants Bar Molino, Blueberry Artisan Bakery and K-bop Korean Kitchen provided on-site bites, or guests could pre-order "concert meals" from Town Hall Restaurant.

"It's one of our favorite events of the year and it's a great night, weather-wise," said concert-goer Jill Whipple.

This family-friendly, free concert is an annual event by SMPS "designed to gather our community in one of our neighborhood's showcase parks."



Matthew Patterson and Caroline Nooney



The McLogan Family out enjoying the evening at Fletcher Park.



Jim and Gretchen Root



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Volunteers Anna Valent, Michael and Melissa White and SMPS President David Paulk were on hand selling and fundraising for San Marco

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Jessica Tozy with Brittany Portigliatti and Shannon Cislo



Event Co-Chairs for the Young Collectors Party are Katie Buschini Sager, Patton Weber and Marjorie Davis



K.T. Gallagher with Elizabeth Roth and Wendy DeChiara

Young Collectors Raise \$10K



Shannon Darling and Liz Morgan

The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital held a kick-off event for its First Coast Design Show, the Young Collector's Party, on Oct. 5. This happy-hour styled event for young professionals and younger mothers celebrated "The Art Of Gathering" with mingling at Michael's Rug Studio, delicious food, live music by Barrett Thomas, a silent auction and cocktails. Women's Board President Kendra McCrary and First Coast Design Show Co-chair Emily Magevney also spoke at the event.

The Young Collectors Party encourages a younger generation to get involved and give back to the community, and it raised over \$10,000 toward the Women's Board's strategic fundraising target of the Kids Kare Mobile ICU, a neonatal and pediatric critical care transport vehicle.

"Our mission is to raise funds and awareness for this very special hospital, where no child is ever denied the very best of care, regardless of ability to pay. Our hospital provides almost \$40 million annually in charity and uncompensated care for our ever-increasing geographic area," said Kate Sager.

Along with Sager, the event committee included Marjorie Davis, Patton Weber, Brittany Portigliatti, Elizabeth Roth and Catherine Wellington.



Ashley Insetta with Shannon Langley

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Ellen Rubens, River Garden Auxiliary president with Evelyn Peck, River Garden Gift Shop manager and honoree.

Gift Shop Guru Honored

BY GUEST CONTRIBUTOR ELLEN RUBENS

The River Garden Auxiliary (RGA) held their Opening Meeting and Luncheon on October 24, where RGA President Ellen Rubens and Event Co-chair Elaine Hodz proudly bestowed the esteemed Minnie Schreiber Award to Evelyn Peck, for her selfless dedication as the manager of the River Garden Auxiliary Gift Shop for nearly a decade.

As a native from Greensboro, North Carolina, Peck was taught about the retail business from her father and uncle who owned shoe stores. Her beloved husband, Ira, was a resident of River Garden, and Peck wanted to support the community that took such good care of him. Shop sales have skyrocketed since Peck stepped in, but the true success comes from her marketing skills and dedication to serve the River Garden residents. Tens of thousands of dollars have been directed to River Garden Senior Services from the Auxiliary Gift Shop profits under her leadership.

The Minnie Schreiber Award represents Schreiber’s love and commitment to River Garden. Although Schreiber’s professional career was as a microbiologist for the State of Florida, her real passion was River Garden Hebrew Home, and she helped to steer the agency for over 55 years. If you were to ask Schreiber which job she enjoyed most, she would have said it was working as a River Garden Gift Shop volunteer. So coincidentally, it’s significant that Peck received the award for her volunteerism with the shop.

The River Garden Auxiliary Gift Shop is having a three-day Pre-Holiday Pop-Up Sale and “Bougie Boutique” Dec. 6-8.



Twenty-five-year board member Jay Southerland, right, with his Friends of the Board attendees



Joe and Alicia Longo with Ted Nelson

Cooking with a Conscience

Children’s Home Society of Florida (CHS) hosted its 39th Annual Caring Chefs on Sunday, Oct. 8 from 6-9 p.m. at The Glass Factory. More than 500 guests sampled fine cuisines and beverages from Jacksonville-area chefs, sommeliers and brewers while listening to smooth sounds from The Band Be Easy.

Participants in the 2023 Caring Chefs included Anthony’s Gourmet Catering, Bellwether, Copelands New Orleans, Khloe’s Kitchen, Maggiano’s Little Italy, Mojo Kitchen, Nineteen at Sawgrass, Routes Culinary Travels, River & Post, Seasons 52, Terra Gaucha Brazilian Steakhouse, Vernon’s at TPC, Villagio Bar & Grill, ABC Fine Wine & Spirits, DuBlase Whiskey, Peterbrooke Chocolatier, Small Cakes Cupcakery, Sunshine Cellars Moonshine, Sweet Pete’s, Athen’s Café, Pink Salt Restaurant & Wine Bar, and Chef Amadeus Culinary Concepts.

The goal of Caring Chefs is to raise awareness and funds for its Northeast Florida program that provide services to children and families in the community. CHS is the oldest and largest statewide organization devoted to helping children and families, serving more than 60,000 children and family members throughout the state each year. Programs include early childhood, teen parenting, counseling and mental health services.

San Marco ART FESTIVAL

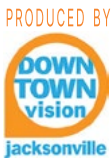
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Women’s Giving Alliance Hosts Annual Meeting

BY SUSAN BRANDENBURG

The annual meeting of the Women’s Giving Alliance (WGA) was held on Oct. 18, 2023, at the Adam W. Herbert University Center at University of North Florida. Collective Giving was the key focus of the day as WGA President Sheila Collier welcomed 220 women from its membership, which recently saw a 39% growth to 470.

“WGA is not only about pooling our dollars to have a strategic influence on our community, it’s also about pooling our ideas, relationships, and other resources from our diverse members to magnify our impact,” said Collier. “Our membership continues to grow every year – and we are nearly 500 strong now – because women who want to make a difference in our community recognize and embrace the power of strategic, collective giving.”

Collier also introduced Isaiah M. Oliver, the third president of the Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, who spoke about the power of collective giving and, as to the WGA, he referenced the major impact that women – his mother, wife, and three daughters – have had on his life. Oliver pledged to work collaboratively and collectively with the WGA and the entire community of Northeast Florida toward a just, equitable future for all.

“Strategic philanthropy is all about how we leverage our time, treasure, talent, testimony and ties to make our community a better place,” he said.

Following Collier’s description of the WGA’s key areas of focus, she introduced guest speakers, former

WGA president Ellen Wiss and Lift Jax CEO David Garfunkel.

Wiss attributed the founding of Lift Jax seven years ago to WGA’s focus on eradicating poverty for women and her recognition of the need to expand that goal to the entire community. Under the leadership of David Garfunkel, who came aboard in 2020, the goals of the organization crystallized and, since then, through collective giving and community partnerships, great strides toward alleviating poverty on Jacksonville’s East side have been made. Both Wiss and Garfunkel thanked the WGA for being a catalyst for change.

“This organization stands as a remarkable example of an all-sector collective impact effort,” said Collier. “By conducting the necessary research and deeply evaluating what it revealed, Lift Jax was able to identify specific needs in our community and initiate a movement of support. To see the impact this organization and others are having over time is a testament to the power of strategic, collective giving.”

Videos were shown of several WGA 2023 grant recipients, and Collier closed the meeting by encouraging membership to continue on the path of collective giving, expanding and reaching out to others during the upcoming grant cycle of 2024-25, which will focus on serving the fundamental needs of women and girls in Northeast Florida. In December, local nonprofit organizations serving women and girls will be able to apply for one-year grants for up to \$50,000 to meet the basic needs, such as food, shelter, childcare, health and safety, of women in girls living in the six-county area of Northeast Florida.



Sheila Collier

“WGA is not only about pooling our dollars to have a strategic influence on our community, it’s also about pooling our ideas, relationships, and other resources from our diverse members to magnify our impact.”

– Sheila Collier, WGA President

Since 2002, WGA has awarded more than \$8.9 million through 180 grants to more than 70 organizations in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns counties.



Isaiah M. Oliver and Sheila Collier with Ellen Wiss and David Garfunkel



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RESIDENTS

Junior



Betty Burney, left, stands with STAR students on Oct. 9 as the I'm a Star Foundation donated proceeds from its JaxHELPS Celebrity Basketball Game to Duval County schools.

Shooting STARS

I'm A Star Foundation teen servant leaders raised \$62,427 to end student homelessness and donated it to Duval County Public Schools on Oct. 9. The STAR Students presented the check at the October school board meeting to benefit the 3,203 unhouseed children in the school system. According to Duval Schools, this classification means students live in shelters, hotels, with relatives or on the streets. The proceeds will go toward rental deposits, doctor and dental fees, school uniforms, toiletries, food vouchers, bedding, sports equipment and school supplies, as well as graduation, SAT, ACT and college application fees. The total represents an all-time record in the history of its JaxHELPS initiative. The funds were raised through the organization's annual JaxHELPS Celebrity Basketball Game at Paxon School for Advanced Studies in July.



Keeping Students on Track

Bolles Lower School Whitehurst Campus unveiled its new and improved Bulldog Express on Oct. 9 to a crowd that included the entire student body, teachers, administrators and The Bolles mascot, Champ. Due to the generosity of the Powell family, the brand-new train is now taking passengers on several routes on the Whitehurst Campus, including to and from lunch at Verlander Hall every day. Students, decked out with conductor hats and train whistles, watched President and Head of School Tyler Hodges drive the train up the hill to deliver the orange-and-blue locomotive. Billy Powell and Ben Powell were recognized for their gift at the unveiling, which also honored Hugh Powell, making this addition to the Whitehurst Campus a reflection of the family's four generations at Bolles. The train's maiden voyage was taken by the youngest Powell and her Bolles classmates, but all students had the opportunity to ride the Bulldog Express throughout the day.



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Hailey Christy with her 3D model.

Center for Innovation Comes to Life

Bolles senior Hailey Christy worked with instructional technology specialist Gloria Wood to design a 3D model of the Center for Innovation, currently under construction on the Upper School San Jose Campus. She used Fusion 360 to design the 3D model from scratch, based solely on the 2D renderings of the 47,000-square-foot, three-story building.

“Hailey is a curious, responsible, exceptionally helpful young lady,” Wood said. “She spent countless hours learning how to use the Fusion 360 program in her free time and on the weekends. We are immensely grateful to her for sharing her talents with the School community.”

The school administration uses Christy’s scaled-down model to communicate the building design and its impact. Construction on the Center for Innovation is projected to finish in Spring 2024.

Douglas Anderson Celebrates Historic Achievement

Douglas Anderson School of the Arts (DA) celebrated a historic achievement as both the Jazz Ensemble 1 and Wind Symphony were both invited to perform at the prestigious 2023 Western International Band Clinic in Seattle, Washington, in November. This is the first time in the clinic’s history that one school has been accepted for both. The Wind Symphony is under the direction of Ben Gerrard and Jazz Ensemble 1 under the direction of Don Zentz.

For the seventh year in a row, “DownBeat Magazine” – America’s longest-running publication featuring jazz and blues artists – recognized DA’s jazz band as the best high school jazz band in the nation. DA has won more awards than any other school in the 39-year history of the magazine.

Building on 40 years of accolades, students in 2023, under the direction of Ted Shistle, also traveled to Carnegie Hall for the New York Wind Band Festival.

“We performed the world premiere of a work written for our ensemble, and the comments from the adjudicators were exemplary. The students were told that their performance was the best that had been seen in 25 years of this festival,” said Shistle.



Bette Loyd with her SJEDS granddaughter

A Grand, Special Affair

San Jose Episcopal Day School’s (SJEDS) annual Grandparents and Special Friends Day welcomed more than 200 guests to campus for student performances, guided campus tours and a photo booth. Grandparents and special friends had the opportunity to explore the campus and visit the student art gallery with the children.

“Grandparents Day holds a special place in my heart, and I eagerly look forward to it every year. I wouldn’t miss this day with my grandchild for anything,” said Bette Loyd, grandparent and SJEDS alumna.

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Blue Chip Students

Junior Achievement of North Florida (JA) is hosting the JA Stock Market Challenge for the second time on Wednesday, Nov. 8. Starting at 10 a.m., 40 teams made up of approximately 160 high school students from 10 local schools will gather at the Gallagher Club East at EverBank Stadium for the JA Stock Market Challenge, part of the JA Take Stock in Your Future program.

The students will participate in mock trading on the simulated stock market floor, buying and selling a pseudo-\$1 million in stocks to create a stock portfolio with the highest value. The live competition will be the finale of the JA Take Stock in Your Future program, designed to stimulate young people’s interest in personal finance and money management.

More than 700 students are participating in JA’s in-classroom programs at Paxon School for Advanced Studies, Stanton College Preparatory School, and Bartram Trail, Duncan U. Fletcher, Englewood, Jean Ribault, KIPP Bold City, Samuel W. Wolfson, Mandarin and Baldwin Senior high schools.

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Nolan Karch

Musical and Merited

Nolan Karch, a classical piano major at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, has been named a 2024 National Merit Semifinalist, one of only 7,000 nationally. Karch has composed 10 electronic music pieces, won several state Federation solos and duets, and tutors his fellow peers in Calculus in his spare time.

Since 1955 the National Merit Scholarship Program has awarded an average of 20 million in scholarships each year to this country's top high school scholars who perform well on the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test.



Riverside Presbyterian Breaks Ground

Riverside Presbyterian Church and Day School held its official groundbreaking ceremony for the Riverside Cornerstone Campaign on Wednesday, Oct. 18. Leaders of the Riverside Cornerstone Campaign used golden shovels to break ground together amid a crowd of supporters that included its Day School students wearing special, commemorative construction hats. The groundbreaking marks the start of construction for Riverside Presbyterian's centerpiece Mary Lou Davis Family Life Center, which will house church, school and community activities, the redesigned Rice Sports Zone, and a new youth center in a renovated space in the church education building.



Belkis Plata and Shannon Schott, with her son, Henry, pose with members of the Mariachi Primera Costa band.

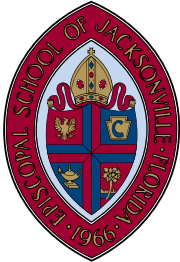
Honoring Hispanic Heritage

San Jose Episcopal Day School (SJEDS) celebrated Hispanic Heritage Month, Sept. 15 through Oct. 15, with a special visit from the Mariachi Primera Costa band, courtesy of Belkis Plata and SJEDS parent Shannon Schott of Plata Schott Law. The band played for students during morning drop-off, followed by a performance. Spanish teacher Liv Van Brunt spearheaded the Hispanic Heritage Month festivities which, in addition to the mariachi band, included immersive exploration of Hispanic culture and a sampling of Hispanic cuisine.

“By exposing our students to Latin American customs, we enable them to develop an appreciation for a culture distinct from their own. For many of them, savoring churros and experiencing a live mariachi band were entirely new experiences,” said Van Brunt. “We hope that our celebration of Hispanic Heritage Month sparks a curiosity among our students, encouraging them to delve deeper into learning about other countries and understanding how diverse cultures enrich the fabric of America.”



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Amber Amerson with Gary McCalla, Erin Skinner and Marilyn Gilman

College Showcase Yields On-the-spot Offers for Arts Students

Douglas Anderson School of the Arts (DA) hosted its first College Showcase in October to over 135 college representatives from 60 colleges. During the three-day showcase, representatives interviewed students, observed performances, conducted master classes, critiqued portfolios and took part in a traditional college fair. Some even conducted on-the-spot auditions, and multiple students received offers for admittance and scholarships.

College representatives from across the nation included Carnegie Melon, Peabody Conservatory, Oberlin Conservatory, George Mason University, University of Southern California, University of the Arts, Point Park, Maryland Institute College of Art, Columbia, Vanderbilt and Juilliard. Florida colleges were also well represented by Jacksonville University, University of North Florida, University of Florida, Florida State University, University of Miami and over 17 other state universities and colleges.

Sponsored by The Douglas Anderson School of the Arts Foundation, the event’s goal was to provide cost-effective ways for the students to be exposed to college programs across the country. It was modeled after a similar program started at Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas, Texas, and included student resume books for the representatives.

“Their process was easily replicated, and, in several areas, we were able to take it up a notch,” said DA Arts Director Natalie Hyder.

The College Showcase kicked off with an opening reception at the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens, sponsored by Gary McCalla.

“The arts director, arts faculty, PTSA and committee’s hard work was evident in the event’s success,” said Foundation Executive Director Jackie Cornelius.



Sharla Cowden with Bonnie Harrison



Timothy Simmons with Tina Wilson, Jeremy Franklin and Tonya Rowan



Ariela Pineda with Milia Ayache, Stephanie Mayer-Staley and Robin Walsh



Randy DeFoor with Charlotte Joyce and Allison DeFoor



John Citrone with Aaron DeCicco and Natalie Hyder



Kevin Covert with Liz McCoy, Kimberly Beasley, Joe Kemper, Regina Torres and Mike Beaman



Allison DeFoor with Nancy Chartrand, Cindy Pearson, Gary Chartrand and Jackie Cornelius



Diggin’ Dinosaurs

Bolles Lower School Whitehurst Campus Kindergartners roared during KCOVE Oct. 3, wearing dinosaur masks and hats, and sporting hand-crafted paleontologist vests as they rotated through interactive stations ranging from excavating dinosaur figurines in the sand pit to chiseling “fossils” out of hardened clay.

KCOVE stands for Kindergarten Creating Outdoor adVentures through Exploration. It is located outside behind the two Kindergarten classrooms and includes a water table, a sunken boat in a sand digging area, several outdoor tables and learning tools. Kindergarteners participate in KCOVE twice per month from September through May, with each KCOVE having a specific theme that the teachers incorporate into their curriculum.



A group of Crop Walk participants from South Jacksonville Presbyterian.

Crop Walk

Hendricks Avenue’s South Jacksonville Presbyterian Church, along with Faith Methodist, Geneva Presbyterian, Lakewood Presbyterian and St. Mark’s Evangelical Lutheran churches participated in its annual Crop Walk, which raises money locally for United Community Outreach Ministry, and more globally, for Church World Service. United Community Outreach Ministry is a food pantry and emergency service center, and Church World Service addresses hunger as well as poverty and disaster relief.



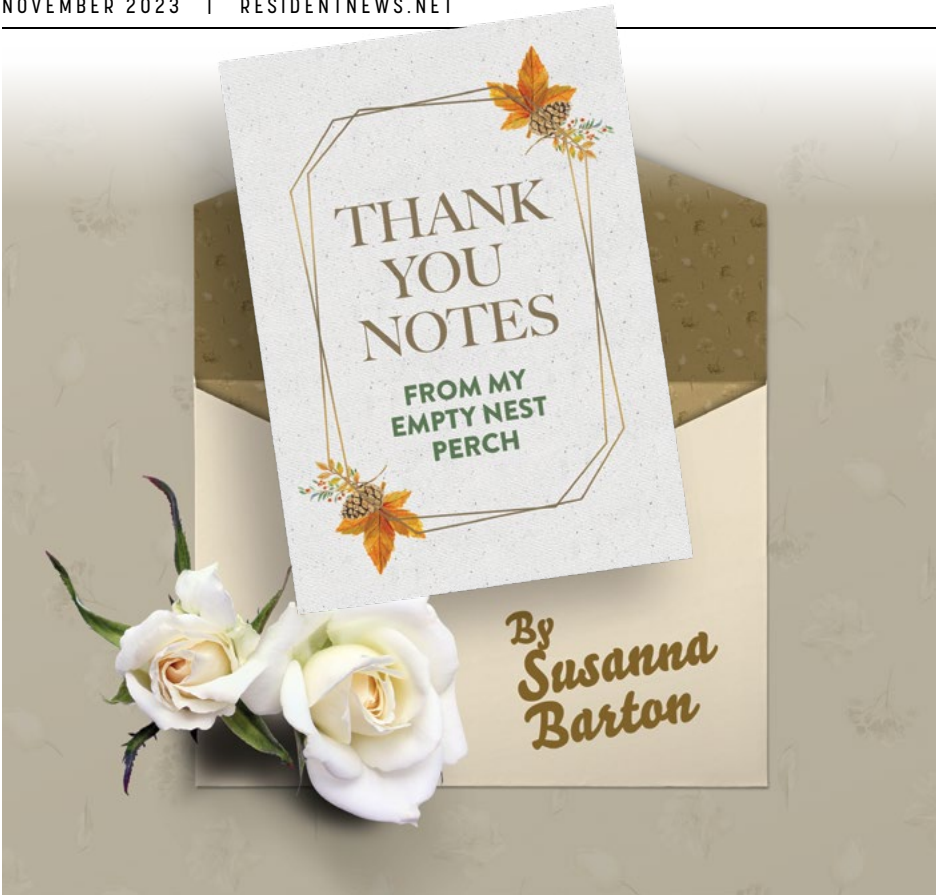
Assumption Gets In the Pink

Assumption Catholic School hosted its school-wide “Pink Out” day on Thursday, Oct. 5. With October being Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the inspiration for the day was to use the pink out to raise funds for the cause. From kindergarten through eighth grade, all funds collected from the event went toward breast cancer research.



The Honor is Ours

Samuel Wolfson School for Advanced Studies’ chapter of the National Honor Society (NHS) held its annual induction ceremony in October. NHS welcomed 67 new members including seven seniors and 60 juniors. Members are selected based on their commitment to the four pillars of scholarship, service, leadership and character. At Wolfson, NHS is dedicated to academic excellence and serving the local community through monthly service projects.



It's November, the month of all things thankful and the season for reflecting on our collective gratitude for the lives we lead, the people, places and moments that define these experiences, and the Resident Community that unites us.

Said another way, we are lucky to be alive in this moment, with all the people we love, and in historic neighborhoods that have been bringing it for generations. Lucky as all get out!

- Here are a few reasons I'm grateful to be right here, right now, right in this space we call home. Hopefully, my ramblings will inspire a similar list in your mind – just in time to prepare for that Thanksgiving blessing you may be called to offer come month's end:
- Growing up in San Antonio, Texas, I went to the same public school as my mother, uncle and grandfather, and all their relatives and friends – the same public school my nieces and my friends' and cousins' children attend today. It was an awesome educational heritage, one I'm proud to claim! When Jacksonville became my home, it felt super nostalgic to live in a neighborhood with the same school pride vibe. There are so many families in our Resident Community who have attended the same school generation after generation – public and private. I'm grateful for that legacy and dedication to the educational experience.
 - I'm also real, real grateful our hastily cobbled, 7 a.m. search party found Baby William pajama-ed and content in the front yard of a neighbor's house next to his dutiful charge, Barkley, when he toddled away from his house to explore the wilds of our neighborhood 15 years ago. That's one way to start the day! I'm also grateful for neighbors who returned the favor when Marley and her friend played "let's hide from your mom and not answer or reveal our location when she screams our names bloody murder-style over and over and over again like some nutball and calls the police." I'm beyond thankful to have graduated from this kind of parenting drama – like, so much, I get the shakes thinking about it. Moving along.
 - I'm grateful for the U.S. Postal Service employees who bring me hope of real letters and handwritten notes on the daily, rain or shine. I forgive them for cramming bills, catalogs I don't want, and advertising BS in my mailbox instead. I'm also thankful for the Amazon folks who deliver a dopamine hit every time they make one of their anticipated porch deposits. How could it be so wrong if it feels so good?
 - I remain ever so grateful for the waste collectors who pull up to my

overflowing garbage bins in their miracle machines each Wednesday and make my embarrassing mounds of trash disappear. They are earth angels. All of them.

- I am grateful for the neighbors who plan and execute all the fun neighborhood stuff I should apply more effort toward – Oktoberfest, Granadafest and the like. I am also

“ I could write for a very long time on how thankful I am for all the good in our home, our neighborhood and our Resident Community. It really is a long list. Most of all, I am grateful for the opportunity... to express my gratitude month after month via this Thank You Notes Column. ”

- thankful for the neighbors who go big at Halloween with cool candy and costume parties and super amazing decorations because it makes our neighborhood a real event for people, our family included.
- I'm grateful that when the lawn guy leaves the back gate open and our geridog, Dot, gets out and starts running frothy, blind-as-a-bat loops around the neighborhood, someone always notices and gives us a courtesy call or brings her ole skin 'n bones back to the yard – and closes the gate. Now that's neighborly.
 - I'm grateful that when we are down for some epicurean delight, or fancy feasting, or fried calorie explosion, we only must drive about two miles to get some of that. We can walk to some destinations. Plus, many of these restaurants are owned or managed by neighbors, which makes the culinary experience that much more hometown, special and satisfying.
 - I am grateful that no one got seriously injured in our backyard over the years, don't tell State Farm. LOL. We had it all – a trampoline, a mis-installed zipline, an uncle-built treehouse, blow-up castles and slip-n-slides on rooty, stick-y, dirt-cloddy grass. I am grateful little Morgan did not lose her entire jaw when she disembarked from our zipline with our home-job-zipline-handle-retrieval-system (an old dog leash) still clenched between her teeth, thus causing a cringy ejection

- of two perfectly non-ready front teeth into our dog-poop grass. And, whew! No visiting Afghan children or afternoon playdate friends ever busted through the flimsy trampoline netting doing double flips or playing "Wake Up Daddy." Shivers.
- I'm grateful for the Winn-Dixie in Lakewood and am not sure how I feel about an Aldi takeover because I'm not a big Aldi person, which is weird because I have a very high tolerance for thrifting, and off-price shopping, and bargains and such. I am grateful the Winn-Dixie was always a quick pull-in off San Jose Boulevard on my way home from work at The Bolles School all those years.
 - I'm grateful that ever since COVID, my husband, David, has been doing the store runs and cooking for us and our family and guests and on most occasions, even doing the dishes afterward. I am forever spoiled and grateful for this. I am also glad no neighbor has complained (yet!) about his small-time deer meat and game processing operations in the garage. And please, nobody complain, because this is how I get to enjoy all this non-food-sourcing, free-range/full organic meal-planning and cooking. David is a hunter-gatherer and preparer, and it really works out well for me, so thanks in advance. I am grateful to you for just looking the other way if you see something scary back there. Just. Look. Away.

way it was when we moved in with a 1-year-old and big life plans all those many years ago.

I could write for a very long time on how thankful I am for all the good in our home, our neighborhood and our Resident Community. It really is a long list. Most of all, I am grateful for the opportunity Pam, Seth, Debra and Lindsey and all the fine folks at The Resident Community News Group give me month after month via this Thank You Notes Column. It is very generous of them, and I am blessed by the inch-count they make available to me for my monthly prattling. Happy Thanksgiving!

Susanna Barton loves writing thank you notes and receiving them in any form, but she is NOT a big fan of the text response "thx" or "ty" – gratitude is much too important to shorten. She raised her family in Granada and has written professionally for The Jacksonville Business Journal, *The Resident News*, Jacksonville University and The Bolles School. She currently manages an online community called Grand Plans, which addresses geri-drama and all things elderly on www.mygrandplans.com. Each month, she will share reflections on neighborhood qualities for which she is grateful.



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ANIMAL HOUSE



Wings of Rescue volunteer pilots Kale and Anji Garcia in the cockpit with a puppy on a rescue flight out of Jacksonville.



Puppies getting ready to board the plane.

SHELTER FROM THE STORM

BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA

On Friday and Saturday, Sept. 1-2, Jacksonville supported a Hurricane Idalia Pet Flight Mission and Vehicle Transport Caravan that moved animals out of shelters in Florida to make room for pets affected by the storm. The flight was organized after Idalia, a Category 3 hurricane, made landfall Aug. 30 at Keaton Beach, Florida, in the panhandle's Big Bend area.

Idalia's eye tore across Taylor, Suwanee, Columbia and Baker counties, skirting Jacksonville before reaching Georgia. Its storm surge, wind and rain caused destruction and at least three confirmed deaths. In addition to the disastrous impact on residents and structures, it also brought flooding, damage and power outages to animal shelters and outdoor kennels in the hardest-hit areas.

A natural disaster pet flight mission aimed to alleviate the burden on Florida animal shelters was

quickly organized. According to Denise Deisler, CEO of Jacksonville Humane Society (JHS), the flight was made possible through cooperation between national and local animal welfare organizations: Petco Love, Bobs from Skechers, Wings of Rescue Disaster Response Flights and Jacksonville Humane Society's Florida Leaders in Lifesaving. The coalition arranged for a Wings of Rescue plane to pick up shelter pets in Tampa, coordinated by the Humane Society of Tampa Bay and the Pet Resource Center at Hillsborough County Animal Shelter. The plane then flew to Jacksonville's Cecil Airport to pick up more shelter pets before delivering them north to waiting shelters.

There were multiple vans carrying cats and dogs waiting on the Cecil Airport tarmac. They came from the Lake City Humane Society, North Florida Animal Rescue in Wellborn, Florida, and JHS. Transferring animals to

other rescue organizations opened kennel space for shelters in the storm's path, allowing those impacted shelters to respond to community needs and provide desperately needed help for pets that went missing, became homeless or were injured by the hurricane. Doing so also allowed any storm-damaged shelters to close for repairs or await restoration of electricity and utilities. The Lake City and North Florida shelters both lost power and sustained extensive damage to their outdoor kennels.

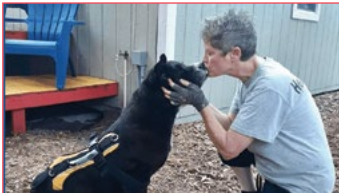
"We are a small shelter and have been without power," said Lake City Humane Society Shelter's Operations Director Ashley Gerondale. "We are overwhelmed with gratitude and can't put into words how grateful we are for this help."

Before the flight, volunteers checked on the pets, provided water, comfort and cleaned up when necessary.

READ MORE ON PAGE 41

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Jacksonville Humane Society and Wings of Rescue volunteers load pets onto plane.

Some of the dogs and cats of various ages and sizes even wiggled, wagged their tails and pushed excited noses and faces forward for attention from nearby people.

Each animal was fully vaccinated and medically cleared for travel by a licensed veterinarian. All pets traveled in an individual crate with water and were monitored by volunteers. The pets fly in pressurized, temperature-controlled cabins, breathing the same air as the pilots, according to Ric Browde, Wings of Rescue president and CEO.

Wings of Rescue volunteer pilot Kale Garcia, who has 15 years of experience, evaluated every crate's size and weight for efficient loading onto the Swiss Pilatus PC-12 single-engine aircraft. His goal was to load every animal on board. As the crates of all sizes were unloaded and lined up on the tarmac at his direction, he coordinated placement onto the plane with Maggie McGuane, Wings of Rescue Disaster Response Coordinator.

"There were so many animals that needed transport. I decided to rent a car and drive [from Tampa] to leave extra space free for more crates," she said.

McGuane, from Montana, travels wherever she is

needed, at a moment's notice to assist with animal disaster response and transport. Because she has family in Florida, she was well aware of the severity of the storms that hit the state.

The airlifted pets were flown to the Brandywine Valley SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). The organization is the area's largest animal welfare organization with multiple shelter locations in Pennsylvania and Delaware. They agreed to accept the 65 Florida cats and dogs and find them adoptive homes. No local shelter pets, however, are ever displaced by animals flown in from elsewhere.

Garcia's wife and co-pilot, Anji, assisted with the airlift. The couple are volunteer pilots for animal welfare missions and have volunteered for Wings of Rescue since the organization formed in 2012. These passionate animal advocates have flown thousands of animals to safety, usually flying four to five trips monthly. They formed a nonprofit charity, FETCH, to raise funds for emergency animal welfare flights not covered by other organizations.

Their story started 15 years ago during a Christmas Eve storm when the Garcias saw a man unloading a pet crate out of his plane.

"I said, 'Kale, look! He brought his dog with him,'" Anji Garcia said. "But then he unloaded another crate and put it his vehicle. Then another and another. That's when I had to go over and ask him what was going on. He told me he found out that they were going to be euthanized the next day and he had to save them. He had contacted a local rescue that was willing to accept every one, so he rescued those dogs. We never knew this kind of mission existed, but here we were, just the two of us in our almost-empty plane. Our children had left the nest; the seats in back were empty. All we could talk about was what we might be able to do if we removed those seats!"

Both say that they are just one piece of the puzzle that makes rescue flights of homeless and at-risk pets from overcrowded shelters or disaster areas possible. It takes an entire team to coordinate the logistics on the ground with the animals, airports and organizations. The in-bound flights to the affected areas often also deliver humanitarian and veterinarian aid.

The second part of Jacksonville's efforts to help animals and shelters affected by Idalia began at dawn the next day, Sept. 2, at JHS on Beach Boulevard.

“We are overwhelmed with gratitude and can’t put into words how grateful we are for this help.”

– Ashley Gerondale
Lake City Humane Society Shelter’s Operations Director

A second transport of animals was loaded into vehicles for transfer out of Florida. Approximately 100 cats and dogs from Halifax Humane Society, Sarasota Humane Society and JHS were driven to shelters in Georgia, South Carolina and Virginia.

"Connections and cooperation means we can maximize life saving, particularly during natural disasters statewide and beyond," Deisler said. "JHS gives thanks for our community and everyone who took pets into their homes to foster prior to the hurricane."



Volunteers loading pet crates onto the rescue flight.

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Joseph Provenza at Touché Gallery



Pat Setser

BY PEGGY HARRELL JENNINGS

All That Jazz

There were no prohibitions on fun at the Jacksonville Artists’ Guild’s season opening event, “All That Jazz” at the Ortega River Club. With music by Swing Bone, “Summertime” performed by Walden, New Orleans style cuisine by Chef Fernando, a costume contest, and Charleston dance lessons, the flappers and gangsters kicked up their heels to raise funds for Feeding Northeast Florida with a silent auction of paintings provided by members of the group.

Jacksonville Artists’ Guild (JAG) makes their presence known throughout the community through citywide events, partnerships with schools to produce murals and numerous exhibits. Some notable ones include the Jacksonville International Airport, the Jewish Community Alliance Vandroff Gallery, the Downtown Jacksonville Public Library, Green Cove Springs Courthouse, North Point Dental, and TAC Gallery on 320 E. Adams Street.

JAG is dedicated to “elevating artistic awareness and participation by artists through dynamic programs and exhibitions that enhance, encourage and promote the arts.” Monthly meetings at Lakeshore Woman’s Club allow members to socialize and learn from well-known speakers including artist Sarah Crooks, who is presenting on Nov. 13. For membership information or to view the online gallery, visit Jacksonville Artists Guild on Facebook, or go to jacksonvilleartistsguild.org.

The Nest Coworking

According to author Roger Scruton, “Art and music shine a light of meaning on an ordinary life.”

Imagine a workplace in which you are surrounded by interesting and beautiful artwork which changes monthly and enhances your workplace by shining that light on everyday experiences. That place is The Nest Coworking at 476 Riverside Avenue.

The Nest Coworking is the brainchild of Christie Radney and Patricia Orange, who established the offices, then collaborated with Kim Miller of FemArt to establish the organization’s first permanent gallery space. At their recent one-year anniversary celebration, over 100 people enjoyed food and libations to support funding for JilesJewels and promote breast cancer awareness. “The Garden” exhibition opens next on Nov. 4.



Patricia Orange and Christie Radney at The Nest anniversary party

More Beats

October’s Amplified Avondale had 15 participating artists, eight bands and DJ’s and The Lounge Series at Josephine. The next event is Nov. 24 from 6:30-9:30 p.m. with art, music, food and fun for all, with ample stimulation to transcend the ordinary.

For a totally unexpected experience, visit Touché Contemporary Gallery on Herschel Street. A recent opening of Joseph Provenza’s colorful, thought-provoking paintings was well attended. Check out the upcoming Dimelza Broche exhibit opening on Nov. 6, and get more information at touchegallery.com.

Don’t miss Open Studios at CoRK Arts District Nov. 18-19 from noon-6 p.m. Visit with over 70 artists in their creative spaces.

Keep your traveling pants on and beat it over to San Marco Nov. 24-25 to meet and greet Indie authors at San Marco Books and More and enjoy the San Marco Arts Festival Nov. 25-26. Sponsored by The Vault at 1930, the festival hosts painters, sculptors and other visual artists in Balis Park. More at sanmarcoartfestival.com.

While in San Marco, check out two new murals: Kava and Company by Heart Space Art (Ian Brody Cleary and Danielle Cleary) and Vestcor Companies created by Bridge Muralists (Keith Doles and team.)

Lots to see, lots to do and it’s only an Artbeat away.

Jacksonville Artists’ Guild’s All That Jazz



The Beat Goes On: Upcoming Events

NOV 3-9	<i>Just Desserts – A Musical Bake Off</i> at Theatre Jax	NOV 12	<i>The Journey</i> from Odd Rod at 7:30 p.m. at Theatre Jax	DEC 6	Artwalk, 5-9 p.m., Downtown Jacksonville
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THE WAY WE WERE



The Parrishes in their boat.



John and Davy Parrish with Phyllis and H.L. Geiger in Hope Town.

John and Davalu “Davy” Parrish

Dr. John Parrish, who is now retired after more than five decades as one of the most popular dentists in San Marco, still retains the friendly demeanor and sense of humor that always attracted patients to his chair. John’s wife, Davy, recalls a close family friend, Jeff, commenting on John’s popularity, especially with the ladies.

“What does John have that I don’t have?” he’d asked. Davy had the answer. “John makes them laugh.”

While going to the dentist is not a favorite pastime for most, John always managed to make a visit to his office as pleasant as possible. Born in Pensacola, Florida, in 1934, John grew up fishing, duck hunting and swimming in Lake Album and Lake Ogletree, often

pursuing those outdoor activities before he and his boyhood friends got to school. He has retained many of those friendships his entire life.

A football player and honor student in high school, John received dental treatment and decided on his future career as a dentist. A few of his most endearing traits, developed early on, have been his reluctance to accept praise for accomplishments and his somewhat rebellious nature. For instance, when chosen for the honor society, he refused to sit in the front row as designated, choosing to sit in the back row instead.

John Parrish attended Auburn University and then graduated from the University of Alabama School of Dentistry at Birmingham. He was elected president

of the dental school by his fellow students. After graduating, he joined the Navy and was sent to the Honolulu Navy Dental Clinic in Oahu, Hawaii, where he learned to sail and developed a love for the ocean, which has stayed with him. After leaving the Navy, he brought his family to Jacksonville and set up his practice in San Marco, where he made many good friends. He spent much of his time off fishing the waters of St. Augustine in his boat, Fugahwe, named after a little-known Indian tribe.

In 1986, Dr. John Parrish, a then-divorced father of two, met a beautiful widow, Davy Mudd, the lady he calls “the love of my life.”

“I was nailed,” he said, grinning. **READ MORE ON PAGE 45**



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The couple, who were married on Dec. 5, 1987, in the chapel of Southside Methodist Church, have lived in their home in Lakewood for 36 years and nurtured a blended family of five: John's sons, David and Robert, and Davy's daughters, Renee and Shawna, and son, Shannon.

Davy was born in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, graduated from Oklahoma City University and earned her master's and doctorate degrees from Nova University. One of the founders of The Bridge of Northeast Florida in 1982, her leadership as president and CEO of The Bridge over the next 32 years became legendary. During her tenure, Davy and her staff served more than 3,000 young people from the inner city annually with comprehensive education, social and health programs.

Davy retired as president/CEO of The Bridge on February 15, 2013, after accruing myriad national, state and local honors. Just a few of these include the 1997 Governor Lawton Chiles Heartland Award, 1999 Humanitarian of the Year by OneJax, 2001 Women's Giving Alliance Founding Member, 2008 Women of Color Education Award, 2009 Florida Times-Union EVE Award, and the 2013 Jacksonville City Council Proclamation for Outstanding Service to Children. Then-mayor Alvin

Then-mayor Alvin Brown even declared April 4, 2013, as “Davy Parrish Day.” While The Bridge merged with the Northeast Florida Boys and Girls Club in 2017, Davy has remained actively involved with The Bridge Legacy Scholarship Program

"Over the years, John and I have worked hard and played hard. We've enjoyed our friends and family as much as our time in the community," said Davy.

She reminisced on the fishing trips and vacations they took with their friends H.L. and Phyllis Geiger. H.L, prior to his passing, was an orthodontist who regularly worked with John in his dental practice. The Parrishes would often join the

John holding "Granddaddy Red Bass."

Geigers at their place in Hope Town, Abaco, Bahamas.

"We always had plenty of Phyllis's delicious original Peterbrooke chocolates while on the plane, and, once in the boat, the guys caught enough fish to share with



John, in his fishing boat, Fugahwe

for the foyer of their home in Lakewood.

"It was a labor of love," said Davy. "And it includes a special graduate of The Bridge, Nemiah Rutledge, who came to us as a young boy and – full circle – is now a member of our family and one of the top fitness trainers in Jacksonville, helping John and me stay healthy and in shape."

Today, John and Davy Parrish fondly look back at the life they've built together, their five children and five grandchildren, and the many people they have touched – John literally bringing smiles to the faces of his patients and Davy helping to develop productive future citizens. While both are retired, the Parrishes continue to be avidly interested and supportive of all things Jacksonville: the Jacksonville Jaguars football team, new Mayor Donna Deegan, and a number of nonprofit organizations that still seek support, guidance and advice from these two outstanding citizens of our city.

“Over the years, John and I have worked hard and played hard. We’ve enjoyed our friends and family as much as our time in the community.”

- Davy Parrish



all of the neighbors," said Davy.

In 2022, as a special gift to her family, Davy worked with interior designer and graphic artist Donna McNett to put together a large collage of photographs

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LOCAL FOLKS

Craig Hamilton: A Man of Many Minerals

BY JENNIFER JENSEN

At his core, Craig Hamilton is a collector. Over the years, he has collected coins, stamps, seashells and history, but what he loves collecting most is gems and minerals. He first started digging for rocks more than 65 years ago.

When he was in sixth grade at North Shore Elementary in Jacksonville, he bought a cigar box filled with three rocks for 25 cents from a fellow student.

“One of the specimens that I remember in particular was a yellow apatite crystal,” Hamilton said.

After that, he started going to a set of railroad tracks near his house to search for rocks.

“I just puttered around the railroad tracks for a few years and collected whatever I could find,” he said. “I’d spend hours breaking the granite open to get the little, teeny granules out of it. I was intrigued about finding something; it’s almost like buried treasure. When you go looking, you don’t know what you’re going to find.”

A few years later, he went to the Jacksonville Fair and met members of the Jacksonville Gem and Mineral Society who shared his love of gems and minerals. He joined the society later that year. He has been a member of the society ever since, except when he was in the Air Force and in Texas for technical school.

“The best part about rock collecting is the camaraderie as much as anything else,” he added.

Hamilton is not only a lifetime member, but an active one. He has been president of the society twice, in 1975 and 2015. He is also heavily involved in the society’s Community Outreach Program. He teaches a general geology class to fourth and fifth graders in

Duval, St. Johns and Nassau counties as well as classes to various groups around the community.

“I’ve taught everyone from kindergarten to age 90,” he said.

In 2015, the Jacksonville Gem and Mineral Society opened its clubhouse on Crown Point Road, which includes a 5,000-square-foot building with a museum dedicated classrooms to teach lapidary arts. They host auctions, arts and crafts sale, dinners and other community events. Their 35th annual fall show was in October at the Jacksonville Fairgrounds.

One of Hamilton’s favorite pieces in his vast collection was found during a dig at a limestone quarry in Lecanto, Florida, in the late 70s. During the dig, Hamilton and a few others shimmied up a pile of limestone and climbed into a pristine cave.

“I always equated it to a jewel box,” he said.

In this cave, he found a large chunk of limestone with honey calcite. He chiseled out a section of the rock as big as a steering wheel and found a snake skeleton. A 2-foot gardener snake died in the cave, then calcite dropped and crystallized on its bones. Hamilton offered this specimen and others to the University of Florida’s paleontology department. That specimen is still on display today in the Florida Museum of Natural History.

“It was very spectacular,” he said.



Craig Hamilton shows off the Jacksonville Gem and Mineral Society’s vast collection in their museum.

Some other favorite pieces in his collection are the rare and interesting ones, like his rock within a rock, a rock with mud inside, and a rock with water trapped inside. All of these are fully intact with no breaks.

“Those are all very special, all self-collected,” said Hamilton.

Besides being a collector, 80-year-old Hamilton also gardens, cooks, writes poetry, paints and enjoys arts and crafts. Every Christmas, he makes a different craft for friends and family.

“I’m up to between 80 and 100 people now,” Hamilton said. “It gets involved, but it’s a lot of fun for me. It’s sort of therapeutic.”

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Celebration of Life

by Elainah Ehrlichman

 Imagine walking into a bright, spacious room. You're surrounded by colorful round seating tables with beautiful personalized centerpieces, and at the front of the room is a dazzling display. This display is what we call a Life Story, and it exhibits all aspects of your loved one's life in a cohesive and stunning vignette-style fashion. From sports enthusiasts to gardeners to film fanatics and more, our design team has an abundance of décor at their disposal to ensure your loved one's Life Story encapsulates all of their favorite memories and important life moments.

Something that sets Hardage-Giddens apart from other funeral homes is our Celebration of Life approach to funeral services. This approach leans away from a traditional funeral as the emphasis is centered around your loved one's achievements, experiences, and their impact in life rather than focusing solely on their passing. We've designed our locations to have an open layout and natural lighting to encourage family and friends of the decedent to consider an alternative approach to their loss. We understand that losing someone is never going to be painless, and because of that, we try to think of the funeral service itself as a celebration of the deceased's life. Furthermore, we do our best to help the family and friends of the decedent draw strength from their loved one's life experiences and memories. While this approach might seem like a new concept, it's actually been practiced by various cultures for centuries!

The Life Story display is a heartwarming addition to the Celebration of Life perspective, as these table vignettes incorporate all the unique, essential elements

of your loved one's life. If your father loved to play golf and then relax on the beach, theme-specific décor will be presented in his Life Story and as centerpieces on the tables so that family and friends may visually take in his memories and life experiences. We've found that at services with Life Stories, there is a palpable lightness in the air. Families have expressed to us that having such a personal touch at their loved one's service made the day easier to get through, as it reminded them of the beautiful times their loved one had throughout their life. Having a physical representation of someone's life surrounding them at their own service brings an unmatched level of peace and calm to the room. Additionally, we encourage families to bring in their personal items to incorporate into the Life Story. This adds even more of a personalized touch because your loved one's most treasured possessions are proudly on display! Each Life Story varies from one to the next: some are full of our own décor, some have the family's items sprinkled throughout, and some consist only of the family's personal belongings. There's no limit to what we can create for you.

We have a designated department of individuals who create these displays; they are team members of what is called our Life Story Department. We understand that not knowing who is setting up a Life Story can stir up emotions due to the intimate nature of creating such a display, so let us reassure you that our Life Story Department consists of a small and dedicated group who all share the same passion for ensuring each arrangement turns out beautifully and exactly the way the family envisions it. The department's goal when

creating a Life Story is that when family and friends walk into the room, they are floored by the level of detail, personalization, and effort that goes into creating a table that honors the decedent. There has never been, and never will be, a display that our Life Story Department puts less than 1000% into. This is an extremely special and personal way to commemorate someone who has died, and Hardage-Giddens does not take this feat lightly. The gravity and immense importance surrounding the creation of these displays are constantly at the forefront of our staff's minds.

Many times, families have their own idea of what a Life Story should look like, and that's why we offer different packages to make sure we find the perfect match for what you have in mind. Additionally, we often set up in religious settings, community clubhouses, and sometimes the family's own home. We are always eager to do whatever it is that is going to create the best outcome for those involved, and we are happy to make as many adjustments as it takes to create the ideal Life Story table for your loved one.

We've included an example Life Story below so you can see for yourself how incredible they are! If you're interested in learning more about our Life Stories, please contact any of our locations. We are committed to answering all questions and inquiries about this meaningful add-on feature to funeral services. Please allow us to help make a difficult day a little bit brighter for you.



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

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Get back in the game

Playing football with an injury usually makes it worse. It's the same when you ignore a hernia, but the signs are easy to miss. Here are some hernia symptoms that often go unrecognized:

- Pain in the pelvic area
- Nausea and vomiting
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