



## Gala Celebrates Senior Services

Charles and Lauren Price were living the Pura Vida life as they arrived in style, ready to enjoy the River Garden Foundation Gala. The event, in its 31st year, was held Nov. 18 at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort and Spa in Ponte Vedra Beach. The evening gala showcased the unwavering dedication of donors and patrons to River Garden Senior Services. [READ MORE ON PAGE 27](#)

## Major Gift for Groundwork, Emerald Trail

Groundwork Jacksonville celebrated the continued support of the Emerald Trail at its "Trailblazers" event on Nov. 7, where Baptist Health's Kyle Reese announced a landmark gift from the organization. [READ MORE ON PAGE 22](#)



Jack Meeks with Nancy Schneider and JoAnn Tredennick

## RiversEdge Revisited

A Nov. 8 unveiling event generated a wave of excitement as updated renderings and plans were shared for four interconnected public parks, complete with interactive, custom artwork, for the Southbank's highly anticipated mixed-use development, RiversEdge: Life on the St. Johns. [READ MORE ON PAGE 8](#)



**Holiday Happenings**  
SEE PAGE 34



# Forum Raises Funds for Pediatric Trauma Transport

Catherine Wellington along with Gracie Register, Emily Magevney and Elizabeth Roth gave a warm welcome to Duke University men's basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski as he spoke at The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital's Florida Forum Speaker Series at the Center for the Performing Arts on Wednesday, Nov. 8. The Florida Forum support the Women's Board's commitment to raise \$1.5 million for two new Kids Kare Mobile Intensive Care Units. 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. [READ MORE ON PAGE 27](#)

# 10 MILLION WAYS HOME

With the giving season well underway, United Way of Northeast Florida committed \$10 million to key focus areas to ensure families can preserve, maintain and secure homes and "improve the Jacksonville ecosystem for housing ownership and affordable housing opportunities."

[READ MORE ON PAGE 14](#)

## Pink Ribbons, Big Checks



Pink Ribbon Jax, a local, all volunteer nonprofit that raises funds for breast cancer treatment, mammograms and research at Baptist Health and Mayo Clinic was on hand to celebrate its year-end tally at Underwood Jewelers in San Marco Square, Nov. 14. Since 2006, the group has raised more than \$3 million dollars; this year's total was \$360,000. Presenting the check were Greta Holmes, Mary Lou Jones, Aracely Bravo, Melissa Hirneise, Marcia Pendjer, Clayton Bromberg, Shelly Adkison, Leslie Burkhalter, Sarah Larkin and Denise Richards

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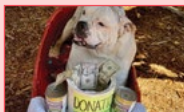
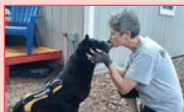
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Susan Masucci with Ron Townsend, Rick Cannington and Julia Zimmerman



Event Co-Chair Brittany Upchurch with Terry Fowler and Maggie Hightower



The PACE Center's Marlee sings the National Anthem.



Lorrie DeFrank, Seth Williams and Michele Leivas, standing, join Debra McGregor, Lindsey Gast-Pessia, Susanna Barton and Pamela Bradford-Williams, seated, at The Resident Community News table.



Jennifer Glock and Michael Ward



Stephanie Cugini and Tanya Orr with, seated, Claire Cameron, Amanda Napolitano and Mayor Donna Deegan.



Lucy, Monique and David Miller

# Celebrating Our Generous Community at National Philanthropy Day

Hundreds gathered at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront on Nov. 2 for the annual National Philanthropy Day luncheon, hosted by the Association for Fundraising Professionals. The luncheon honored those dedicated to serving others in the Jacksonville area, and our team was proud to be in attendance, listening to the heartwarming accounts of kindness, generosity and dedication. We here at *The Resident News* are blessed to see the good in our community every day, to attend your events and fundraisers, and to craft your stories so that we do our small piece to bring that good news to all our readers.

We love our communities and this city. Piece by piece, we can all make a difference. It is important for each of us to do our part for our city, our neighborhoods and our country. As we ready to launch the 2024 Circles Social Datebook and Charity Register Jan.1, we want to show gratitude for those who have contributed their piece to its success. We are thankful for all the advertisers who support us being the conduit to this altruistic community and we hope everyone has a wonderful New Year.

Imagine your home, totally organized!

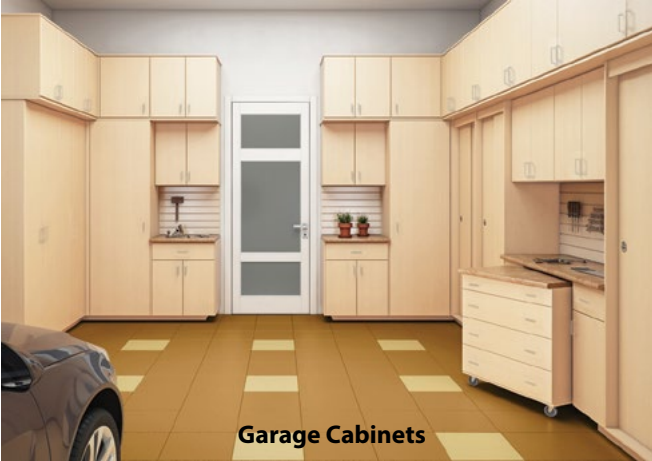
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### Ortega Forest



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UNDER CONTRACT

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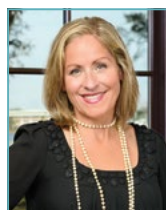
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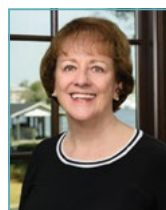
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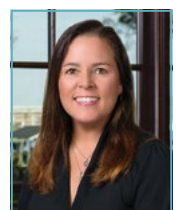
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Tyler Hodges with Elizabeth Lovett Colledge, Lovett's daughter; Rose Longenecker, Lovett's great-granddaughter; Elizabeth Longenecker, Lovett's granddaughter; and Julia Kalinski.

# A Legacy of Generosity

An anticipated \$3.4 million estate gift will continue philanthropist Betsy Lovett's legacy at The Bolles School, establishing the Betsy Lovett Financial Aid Endowment to help provide financial aid to Bolles students with needs-based tuition assistance. Lovett's previous contributions to the school included the creation of the Betsy Lovett Arts Center at the Middle School Bartram Campus in 2008. The anticipated gift announcement was made on Bolles's Grandparents' Day celebrations at the art center on Nov. 16.



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# You Asked for It

BY BROOKS ANDREWS, FLORIDA MASTER NATURALIST

You ask. We get answers. This column is dedicated to finding answers to our reader's most pressing questions. If there's a neighborhood-related question that you'd like help getting the answer to, submit it to our research team at [editor@residentnews.net](mailto:editor@residentnews.net).

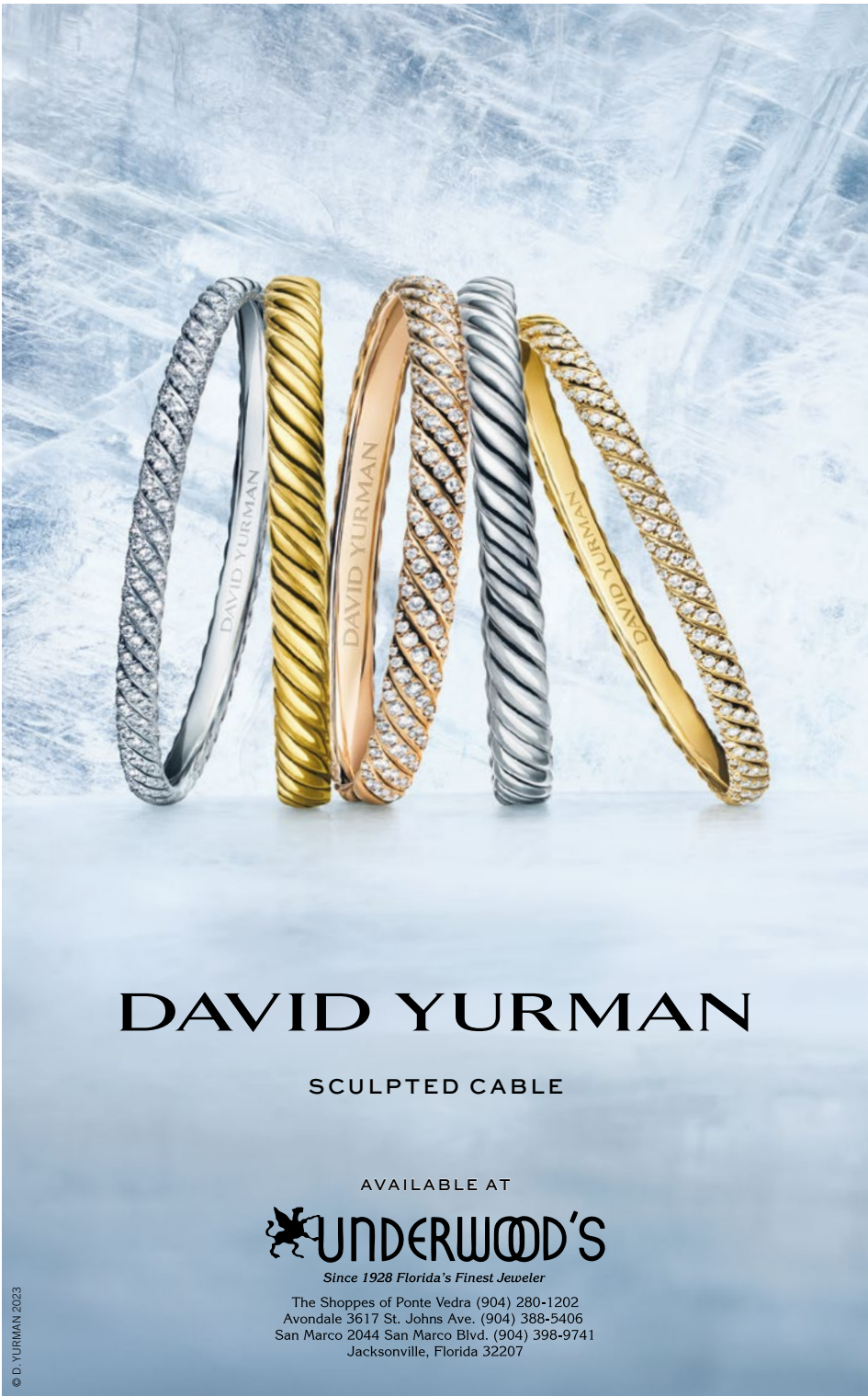
***“In Ortega we have been seeing trees with the top third dead. Soon the tree is cut down and removed. This is caused by lawn care people putting too much poison near a root of the tree. I hope you will write about this.” -William Malone***

Trees, like humans or any other living thing in nature, when stressed, have a cause and adverse effect. A tree will lose leaves and begin dying back, sometimes from the top down when under certain vascular or root stress. A tree contains a vast array of pathways known as xylem and phloem tissue intended to carry water and nutrients. When these pathways are disrupted, the tree attempts to try to heal itself and remain alive.

Observed stress, or loss of leaves, branches or the entire top of the tree can be caused by a number of reasons. The most common are drought (or for some species, over-watering), soil compaction, old age or root damage from construction. A young tree that has been container-grown may have root girdling, where the roots coil around the base and restrict water flow from the roots up to the branches and leaves. Poor sandy soil, especially when added over an established root system may drain too quickly, won't hold nutrients and may encourage drought.

Excessive fertilizer that contains herbicides – or weed killer alone, if overdosed – can damage root systems. Various vascular diseases or root-affecting fungus such as Armillaria root rot (mushrooms at base of tree) or Ganoderma (shelf fungus) may cause irretrievable root damage or tree wounds. And last, certain boring insects may also damage or restrict flow in the tree's vascular system. A quick giveaway that the problem is insects will be a tree that attracts woodpeckers.


Because there are several root causes (dad joke!), it's best to reach out to a certified arborist or someone like Larry Figart, our UF/IFAS Urban Forestry Extension Agent, for a thorough diagnosis before you crank up your chain saw. Just like any health issue, early preventive care will allow you to keep your trees healthy and happy for decades.



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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
- Fever
- Constipation
- Feeling full and bloated
- Heartburn
- Weakness and muscle fatigue in the upper leg or groin
- Pain when lifting or coughing

If left untreated, your hernia could grow, get more painful, or even become dangerous at some point. And a hernia won't go away on its own. The good news is today's minimally invasive hernia treatment options, including robotic-assisted surgery, can offer you fast recovery.

## Tackle your hernia like a pro!

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Renderings shared on Jacksonville Armada Football Club's Instagram account show what Northeast Florida's first soccer-specific stadium will look like.

# Armada FC Scores a New Home, Complex

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Jacksonville now has its first glimpse of what its new soccer stadium will look like through renderings shared by the Jacksonville Armada Football Club.

The designs were posted on the club's Instagram page on Nov. 15, the day after the Jacksonville City Council unanimously approved the rezoning for a mixed-use Planned Unit Development (PUD) for the roughly seven and a half acres on A. Philip Randolph Boulevard, bordered by Albert, Grant and North Georgia streets, that will house the new stadium.

The property in question is currently vacant and used as off-site parking for nearby venues in the sports and entertainment district.

According to the Soccer Entertainment Complex PUD written description, the stadium will have a minimum of 2,500 and a maximum of 30,000 seats.

Earlier in November, the football club announced

its inclusion in a Major League Soccer (MLS) NEXT Pro league along with details regarding the new stadium, which Armada Team President and General Manager Nathan Walter said “will become the first professional soccer-specific stadium in the history of Northeast Florida.”

The stadium will also be “a first of its kind,” added Armada Owner Robert Palmer.

“One of the challenges we saw with building a stadium for a soccer team is all the nights it’s unused, so we had this novel idea to create coworking space inside of the stadium,” he said.

To that end, designs for the stadium include 25,000 square feet of coworking space “embedded inside the stadium.” That office space will be used by Palmer’s real estate brokerage – LPT Realty – “as well as our local companies that want to be close to those real estate agents and other financial services, and other real estate-related entities.”

Palmer shared that construction crews are expected to break ground on the new stadium this January and his goal is to have the stadium completed in time for the Armada to play there in the MLS NEXT Pro in 2025.

Mayor Donna Deegan spoke at the early November announcement as well.

“I also believe that teams can be economic engines that create jobs and opportunities for neighborhoods where they play, while driving increased tourism and revenue for the city at large,” she said. “These positives are not a given, though. It takes a team that is truly embedded into the community, a team that truly cares and embraces its fans [and] a team that brings out the best in all of us. The Jacksonville Armada is certainly one of those teams.”

The developer for this project is RP Sports Investment, Inc. The architectural firm is kasper architects + associates. The project engineer is Waitz & Moyer Engineering.



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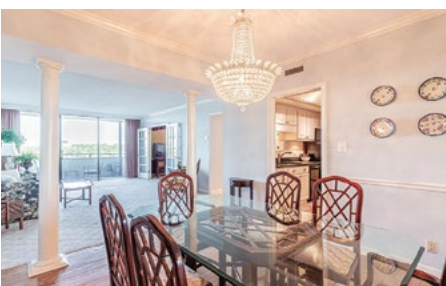
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# Anticipation Grows at RiversEdge



Marc Fornes of New York-based The Very Many shared details of his custom sculpture “The Pearl,” which will serve as the centerpiece for RiversEdge.



Updated renderings of RiversEdge: Life on the St. Johns depict what developers and the City plan to deliver to Jacksonville residents.



A street view of what residents can look forward to experiencing once RiversEdge comes fully online.

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

A November unveiling event heralded the next phase of construction for the Southbank’s highly anticipated mixed-use development RiversEdge: Life on the St. Johns.

Since the development broke ground in 2021, site work has been primarily unseen by Jacksonville residents as it has consisted of underground infrastructural work and bulkhead construction. Moving forward, however, the city will be able to see progress as the development and its amenities begin to take shape.

The unveiling event was held on Wednesday, Nov. 8, hosted by Dallas-based developer Preston Hollow Community Capital LLC in partnership with the City of Jacksonville, in the space that will soon be one of four public parks expected to come online by the end of next year.

“We are going to have four interconnected world-class parks,” said Preston Hollow Community Capital Managing Director Ramiro Albarran. “They’re all going to be connected with more than a mile of combined riverwalk, boardwalk, multi-use paths that are really going to encourage the community to engage. The one thing that is so important here is to view this as a community. This is not a real estate development project. What will be coming to the City of Jacksonville is a new community – a true gem for the City.”

While many of the details of these four greenspaces were discussed earlier this year at Riverfront 2025: A Look Ahead, new details were revealed last month regarding some of the public art commissioned for these public spaces.

New York-based artist and architect Marc Fornes discussed “The Pearl,” the custom art sculpture he’s designed to be the centerpiece of the development’s Central Park.

In a video played during the unveiling event, Fornes said, “We set out to create an ever-changing landmark sculpture that will offer a surprise no matter how many times you view it. The idea is, even if you only see “The Pearl” once, you will never forget it.”

Later, during his presentation, Fornes explained he wanted to create something large enough to be seen from across the river and to entice visitors to come explore the artwork, which they will be able to walk through and enjoy. This hollow structure is free of any beams or columns and is “barely” a quarter of an inch thick at its thickest point.

“We want you to come back and enjoy quality time by losing your time staring at the piece. At the end, it’s a gigantic 3D puzzle,” he added.

Ultimately, this 33-acre project will accommodate 1,130 high- and mid-rise residential units, 40 townhomes, a 125-slip marina and more than 100,000 square feet of restaurant, retail and entertainment space. Albarran said RiversEdge will also have the ability to accommodate 200,000 square feet of office space.

Plans were also shared to include a 200-room boutique hotel to RiversEdge. “The City of Jacksonville deserves an approachable, unique hotel experience,” said Albarran.

The Resident News has previously reported on the Toll Brothers as the project’s first confirmed vertical developer. When asked if there are any details regarding other vertical developers, Albarran said, “No, but something’s coming soon.”

The lineup of speakers also featured city representatives, including Mayor Donna Deegan, DIA CEO Lori Boyer and District 5 City Councilmember Joe Carlucci, who shared his own excitement about the included public greenspaces.

“Our city is craving greenspace, riverfront activation and quality shopping, dining and riverfront living, and this project – community – accomplishes all of those things,” he said.

Apart from an amphitheater planned for Central Park, which is currently in final design, Albarran said, “Everything you’re seeing here today is funded, committed and part of this next phase of work and will all be coming out of the ground. Everything you’ve seen here today is coming, and it’s coming in 2024.”

Merry Christmas

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# Deegan Introduces \$25.5M for Task Force Programs

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

A legislative package allocating nearly \$26 million for funding to address critical citywide issues as identified by Mayor Donna Deegan’s transition committees was introduced to the Jacksonville City Council last month.

Ordinance 2023-0807 was introduced and assigned at the Nov. 14 City Council meeting and calls for the appropriation of more than \$25.5 million in funding for Deegan’s Task Force Programs and Initiatives.

2023-0807 was introduced by the mayor and co-sponsored by Group 4 At-Large Councilmember Matt Carlucci, District 7 Councilmember Jimmy Peluso and District 14 Councilmember Rahman Johnson. According to the bill summary, the funding breaks down as follows (approximately):

- Youth and Families: \$5.87 million
- Programs for the American Dream: \$4.75 million
- Addressing Homelessness: \$3.6 million
- Healthier Jacksonville: \$5.7 million
- Building Local Businesses: \$2 million
- Honoring Service: \$50,000
- Accessible Duval: \$500,000
- Beautiful Jacksonville: \$1.8 million

In a telephone interview, Councilmember Peluso said that while some council- or committee members may “get a little nervous” about this large, lump-sum legislative package, he prefers it being presented this way.

“I’m much happier that it’s going to be one-and-done rather than having to do piecemeal stuff throughout the entire year,” he said. “This is already monies that we’ve appropriated for it, so, to me, this kind of makes sense. Now we’re just getting more and more clarity from the administration about where the money’s going.”

“ I’m much happier that it’s going to be one-and-done rather than having to do piecemeal stuff throughout the entire year. ” – Jimmy Peluso Councilmember

According to a legislative fact sheet, approximately \$12.4 million of the nearly \$26 million is federal funding through the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021, while the remaining balance will come from the City’s General Fund.

Now that it’s been introduced, it will move through the necessary committees for recommendations before advancing to city council for a final vote. Its next stop will be the Neighborhoods, Community Services, Public Health and Safety Committee.

The Resident News will continue to report on this as details become available.



California Skatepark crews continue work on the incoming skatepark beneath the Fuller Warren Bridge in Riverside.

## Riverside Skatepark begins taking shape

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Progress at the incoming Riverside Skatepark is gliding ahead as construction crews continue bringing the new park beneath the Fuller Warren Bridge to life.

When The Resident News last reported on the park in July, the only available images were design renderings of what the park would look like. Now, residents can actually see the park begin to take shape. The skate plaza is slated to consist of “three rooms/spaces between the freeway pillars for various skill levels.”

The park is part of Artist Walk, a new park planned for the stretch of land between the I-95 on- and off-ramps at Park Street.



California Skateparks is the company contracted to both design and build the park. In a telephone interview last month, California Skatesparks Director of Strategic Initiatives Miki Vuckovich said “the more tricky, innovative stuff has been done,” including the vertical elements in the park.

While Vuckovich said he has not personally been onsite recently, he has received “great reports from the field so far.”

“The great thing about using the space under the bridge is you can’t really build anything under a bridge for a lot of reasons, but skateparks seem to work really well, and you’ve got cover in the rain and cover from the sun. So, it’s pretty much constant skateboarding, which is, I think, what the community needs,” he added.

In an e-mail, City of Jacksonville Parks, Recreation and Community Services Director Daryl Joseph provided the following statement regarding construction progress at Riverside Skatepark:

“The skate park is under construction and is progressing. The Riverside Avenue plaza space, Emerald Trail and overall project is expected to be complete by the Spring of 2025. The park will open to the public following the completion of all park elements.”



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# Incentives Recommended for Pearl Street District

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Momentum continues to build for the Pearl Street District mixed-use development in Downtown Jacksonville's North Core area as the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) presented proposed incentives for the development totaling \$100 million at its November meeting.

The development consists of five blocks – N4, N5, N8, N11 and N9 – three of which gained conceptual approval by the Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB) in October, while the overall development advanced with final approval. DIA's recommended incentives relate to four of those blocks: N4, N5, N8 and N11.

According to the DIA staff report, those four blocks of Pearl Street District combined are expected to feature an estimated 1,021 multifamily residential units and more than 100,000 gross square feet of retail space "created with 85,488 square feet leasable space." This includes a required one-restaurant minimum per building with indoor and outdoor seating. The Pearl Street District will also feature a new public park – Porter House Park – and Pearl Square, both of which, the report stated, "are to provide programming such as street fairs, farmers markets, art festivals and pop-up events throughout the year."

The incentives include Recapture Enhanced Value (REV) Grants totaling \$59.62 million and another \$38.94 million in completion grants.

The developer, Gateway Jax, reported the Pearl Street

District will offer "a true neighborhood destination activation that supports 18-hour-a-day vibrancy."

One aspect of the development designs that received praise from DDRB Chair Matt Brockelman at the October meeting was the developer's inclusion of improvements to the sidewalks opposite the properties.

"[That] 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," Brockelman said.

During that same meeting, a question was raised regarding the possibility of including road enhancements or improvements to Beaver Street. Representing the applicant, attorney Cyndy Trimmer

stands today, Beaver is FDOT. We do not have FDOT approval to do any of those measures there, but we are in dialogue with them."

DIA Director of Operations Guy Parola said, "We've been asked to take a look at whether or not the city would take it over. That is a huge, broad question that is a couple steps above my pay grade, but these conversations are going to begin. We'll let you know where they end up."

Scenic Jacksonville Executive Director Nancy Powell spoke during the public comment, expressing her support of the project and sharing her thoughts on the need to bring improvements to Beaver Street as it pertains to this project.

"It could have a road diet, it could be pedestrian scale just like the Pearl Street, it would immensely enhance this project and really make it what it's meant to be," she said. "And I know that's the intent, but now is the time to do that."

Later, in a phone interview, Powell said, "Right now, if they do it now, they can plan accordingly with the way they're planning their buildings and everything else. Obviously, it could be done in the future, but it would be ideal to do it now as part of this master plan. They've got a great master plan; it could be enhanced by addressing Beaver Street because this is only phase 1 of what's going to be a multi-phase project, and street design is critical."

The Resident News reached out to FDOT for comment regarding any possible projects for that portion Beaver Street. FDOT Community Outreach Manager Hampton Ray provided the following statement via e-mail:

"FDOT strives to be good community partners. To that end, FDOT officials routinely meet with City officials to support long-term planning. I am unaware of any requests from the City of Jacksonville regarding this conceptual development. I would refer you to the City of Jacksonville or the developers regarding this concept."

The Resident News also reached out to the developer, via their legal representation at Driver, McAfee, Hawthorne and Diebenow, as well as the City of Jacksonville for comment, but did not receive a response by press time.

The incentives put forth will now go before the Jacksonville City Council with DIA's recommended approval.

“The Pearl Street District will offer 'a true neighborhood destination activation that supports 18-hour-a-day vibrancy.'”

– Gateway Jax, Developer

of Driver, McAfee, Hawthorne and Diebenow PLLC, explained that along with State and Union streets, Beaver Street falls under the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) right-of-way.

"We have a lot of things coming on Beaver. We are designing Beaver with ground floor activation in the hope that someday we will be able to do additional traffic calming on that street and really bring that street down to pedestrian scale," she said. "But as it



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# Special Committee Targets Homelessness, Affordable Housing

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The City of Jacksonville is making moves to address its homelessness and affordable housing crisis.

In the last two months, legislation has been introduced or enacted addressing these crises with proposed or secured funding into the millions to help solve them.

In addition to the \$25.5 million legislative package Mayor Donna Deegan introduced to fund the Mayor’s Task Force Programs and Initiatives, which includes roughly \$3.6 million to address homelessness, City Council President Ron Salem introduced legislation to create a Homelessness Initiatives Special Revenue Fund.

According to the bill summary, this fund appropriates \$1 million – \$500,000 each from the Mayor’s Task Force Contingency and the Council President’s Designated Contingency accounts – to provide assistance for Duval County residents and families “who have recently become homeless or who are at immediate risk of becoming homeless.”

Pending city council approval, Sulzbacher will be the organization responsible for overseeing and disbursing those funds for the diversion program.

Salem also convened a five-person Special Committee on Homelessness and Affordable Housing, chaired by Councilmember Joe Carlucci, which met for the first time on Monday, Nov. 20. Among its goals is to establish a homelessness trust fund. Committee members consulted with leaders from Changing Homelessness, Sulzbacher and Ability Housing for insight on the most critical issues surrounding homelessness and potential avenues to address them.

Following the meeting, Carlucci said it was time to start focusing on the “small picture.”

“We’ve got the big picture of the issues, now we need to focus on the nuts and bolts and getting it implemented,” he said.

“I actually am more encouraged than I have ever been, and I’ve been doing this for about 20 years,” said Sulzbacher CEO Cindy Funkhouser. “This is the most emphasis that I’ve seen put on homelessness and affordable housing by both the city council and the administration.”

Moving forward, the committee plans to work closely with community leaders like Shannon Nazworth, president and CEO of Ability Housing, to do so.

“I think honestly the most important thing is maybe not to try to do everything at once. Figure out the things you can do now – which they’re already doing with the diversion program – that’s the perfect example. They didn’t wait for the trust fund to be created, they saw something that could have immediate impact and they went ahead and did it,” she said.

“Identify the things that can happen quickly but realize that homelessness is the result of long-term systems failure, and we’re going to have to address that as well. So, we need to be looking at the long-term, setting real, bold goals; because, in the end, it is going to be the housing and they are going to have to invest in housing and that’s not going to have quick results, but it will have lasting results. So, honoring both, I think, is important,” said Nazworth.

Funding amounts and sources for the homelessness trust fund have yet to be determined, but Carlucci said there are multiple sources to consider.

The Special Committee for Homelessness and Affordable Housing is charged with an April 1, 2024, deadline to “report its findings and recommendations on these matters.”

According to the 2023 Point-in-Time Count, a “one-day snapshot” of how many people are experiencing homelessness in Duval, Clay and Nassau counties conducted by Changing Homelessness, the number of sheltered and unsheltered people totaled 1,247 across the three counties. Duval led with 1,176.

# Slowing Market Impacted by High Interest Rates

Traditionally, with the approach of Thanksgiving, the housing market slows. However, this is by far the biggest seasonal slowdown seen in many years. With a few exceptions, the number of days houses sat on the market increased along with active inventory throughout the region; prices remained high.

“The monthly supply of inventory in the region increased to 3.5 months,” said Diana Galavis, president of the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors, noting a 19% increase since September. “Overall, the Northeast Florida market is strong with the sales median holding with very little change.”

Even with the increase in inventory, the region still has a way to go before it can be considered a buyers’ market, where six to seven months of inventory is for sale. Yet, homes have never been so expensive in Northeast Florida. The region’s Home Affordability Index for single-family homes slid 4.5% to 63, registering at an all-time low.

The high cost of housing has a lot to do with interest rates, which reached the highest levels in October, according to Galavis.

“Buyers are pausing to see which direction the Federal Reserve, stock investments and the real estate market will move,” she said.



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- Shopping local makes for a better experience.** Popping into the shop next door isn't only convenient, but the local shop owner is likely going to be an expert on the product you're purchasing. That makes it a lot easier to get your hands on the merchandise, ask questions and even strike up conversations about those custom, off-shelf options. They're also more likely to go the extra mile.
- Learn to love the sales tax.** Local sales tax provides vital community services like police and fire protection, as well as trash collection and repairs to public spaces. Shopping locally is the best way to show pride in your city, support its future and help protect the places that make our city unique.
- People make the products.** Literally and figuratively. Local businesses often sell local products, which creates more local jobs and creates local flavor. But a big part of the reason we like certain businesses is because of the people there. Shopping local creates a personal connection with owners, retailers and neighbors and makes us feel more integrated and supported by the people around us.
- Say "buh-bye" to blah.** One-of-a-kind shops are a great place to discover something interesting. Local stores carry inventory based on what their customers want, so you're likely to find curated items not carried at national chains and big-box stores. You can also chase the emotional blahs away with the feel-good knowledge that, on average, nonprofits receive more than double the support from smaller, local businesses than national or international ones.
- Local = less leakage.** Local businesses tend to buy and sell with other local businesses vs. national companies where a percentage of the profit "leaks" out of the community or state. Smaller, local businesses also tend to have less overhead, which means less markup and more negotiation flexibility for you.

The team at *The Resident News* encourages you to expand your circle of local businesses and strengthen your circle of support for our neighborhood communities. And for more on how your local dollars are helping strengthen each other, check out the impact of local philanthropy in our 2024 Circles Social Datebook and Charity Register, releasing in January.

# Coj.net is now Jacksonville.gov

Mayor Donna Deegan and her administration have launched a new, rebranded website for the City of Jacksonville, which can be found at [jacksonville.gov](http://jacksonville.gov).

"It's a new day in our city," said Deegan. "So, we felt it was time to refresh Jacksonville's website in order to give citizens the best experience possible. To that end, we worked hard to modernize it and make it more intuitive, so that visitors can quickly and efficiently find the website itself, as well as the information they are searching for. We are well on our way to having one of the best city websites in the country, and I hope everyone will be as happy with the result as I am."

The new site offers an updated home page that connects citizens to critical resources, while retaining the content from the previous site, [coj.net](http://coj.net). Older [coj.net](http://coj.net) links will automatically redirect users to the corresponding page on [jacksonville.gov](http://jacksonville.gov). Additionally, there are no plans to change City of Jacksonville emails at this time.

All of the work on the new site was completed in-house with the City's Information Technologies Division.



North Riverside CDC Vice President Henry Scott and President Shirley Thomas, Groundwork Jacksonville CEO Kay Ehas, United Way of Northeast Florida Community Impact Vice President James Ellout and CEO Melanie Patz, and Groundwork Jacksonville Manager of Community Engagement & Equity Gloria McNair.

# United Way of Northeast Florida Commits \$10 Million

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

United Way of Northeast Florida President and CEO Melanie Patz shared news last month of a \$10 million commitment, to be distributed across three areas of focus, "toward housing for all people."

The announcement was made at a press conference at Greater Bethany Baptist Church in North Riverside on Tuesday, Nov. 14 in conjunction with Groundwork Jacksonville, LISC Jacksonville, LIFT Jax and the North Riverside Community Development Corporation (CDC).

Patz explained the three "key" focus areas are:

- Preservation (\$4 million): "working to reduce foreclosures and the effect of heirs' property issues and repairing existing homes to support residents remaining in their homes;"
- Infill development (\$5 million): "catalyzing infill developments, supporting loan funds for developers to help catalyze new construction of single-family and multi-family units and the acquisition and rehabilitation of single-family homes;"
- Boosting nonprofit and CDC capacity (\$1 million): "boosting the capacity of existing nonprofits and CDCs working to help homeowners remain in their homes and to help owners and renters find affordable options."

These focus areas were determined "in partnership" by United Way of Northeast Florida's Affordable Housing Task Force comprised of representatives from 16 Jacksonville companies and stakeholders.

This \$10 million commitment is made possible through MacKenzie Scott's 2020 \$20 million donation and builds on United Way's \$1 million investment supporting neighborhood-based programs aimed at rehabilitating owner-occupied homes and addressing issues surrounding heirs' rights made earlier this year.

United Way of Northeast Florida's repair and restoration program, in partnership with Groundwork Jacksonville, LISC Jacksonville and LIFT Jax – also announced earlier this year – continues to make tangible and impactful change for homeowners.

After the press conference, Historic Eastside CDC CEO Suzanne Pickett said addressing necessary home repairs through these kinds of programs "really is a mental health issue."

"If you think about the conditions that people live in, where they don't know how they're going to repair their homes...Just imagine the comfort once you have that repair and how that translates into other areas of your life," she said. "It's more than just home repair; I say it's a love letter to the community."

Following the press conference, Groundwork Jacksonville and North Riverside CDC conducted a neighborhood tour to showcase the impact these rehabilitation and repair programs have made on the community, highlighting new roofs and landscaping on residential properties as well as discussing extensive interior work that has substantially improved homeowners' quality of life.

"We know that making meaningful progress toward housing for all means joining together with a group of committed, passionate and effective partners, holding ourselves accountable to find transformative solutions and supporting the direction of community members leading improvements in their neighborhoods," said Patz. "We also recognize no one funder can solve this challenge alone, and we look forward to taking steps together with our partners to create long-term, sustainable change."

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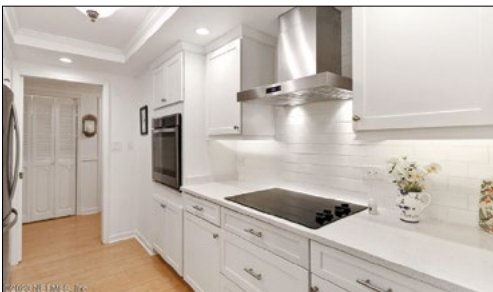
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Liz Jimenez, steward for Edgewood Park #3 on Edgewood Avenue.



Jennifer Taylor, Avondale resident and Boone Park North steward, participated in a fall 2021 park clean-up day.

# Greenspace Guardians: How Stewards are Helping Preserve Local Parks

BY KIM CLONTZ, SPECIAL CONTRIBUTOR

Riverside and Avondale are known for their beautiful parks and green spaces. But did you know that there is a small crew of volunteers who take time from their schedules to help maintain these little gems?

In 2019, the Parks Committee of Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) created a stewardship program that would elevate park preservation beyond the basic maintenance provided by the city.

“We established a mission to preserve the area’s 26 historic parks, just as we help preserve our historic architecture,” said Shannon Blankinship, executive director of RAP. “But we needed dedicated volunteers to make this happen.”

Parks Committee members went about recruiting residents who love their neighborhood parks. These stewards would act as the eyes and ears of each park by reporting to the city issues, such as storm damage, overgrown vegetation or overflowing trash cans. They would also pick up litter, remove invasive weeds and even plant trees

and flowers. Today, there are 25 stewards nurturing each park.

“I consider this park an extension of my home and neighborhood,” said Liz Jimenez who stewards Edgewood Park #3 on Edgewood Ave. “I want it maintained and beautiful for our neighbors and everyone who visits.”

Jimenez added that she’s always been involved with the parks, but now as part of the stewardship program, has a sense of community with other like-minded volunteers.

At regular meetings hosted by RAP volunteers, stewards come together and share ideas, experiences, problems and solutions. Some stewards even host after-hour “open houses” to share their park spaces with other stewards and neighbors.

Recently, Parks Committee members have encouraged stewards to create small flower gardens below each park sign – a touch of “curb appeal” for visitors. Stewards will be reimbursed for expenses should they decide to take on this project.

“Within the confines of city-owned property, we’re hoping stewards will enhance “their” park entrances,” said Pamela Telis, Parks Committee Chair. “If a bench needs repair, a tree is down or a light is out, we hope they will call 630-CITY. If they’d like to add and maintain a butterfly garden, we’d love that too!”

In the new year, RAP’s Parks Committee plans to extend this stewardship program to other green spaces that aren’t designated as city parks, such as water-front bulkheads and tree-lined medians. These spaces fall under the city’s public works jurisdiction and typically only get attention when a resident reports a problem. Preserving these additional green spaces is important in fighting extreme surface and air temperatures and storm water runoff.

“All the beauty that draws people to our area needs to be protected,” said Blankinship. “Our stewards serve a vital role in that preservation.”

For more information or to volunteer, visit [www.riversideavondale.org](http://www.riversideavondale.org).



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# MOVERS & SHAKERS



Laura Phillips Edgecombe

## Edgecombe Hired to Oversee Riverfront, Parks

The Jessie Ball duPont Fund has hired Laura Phillips Edgecombe as Principal, Downtown Public Spaces. Edgecombe will be an Executive on Loan to the City of Jacksonville, working with the Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services, with responsibility for facilitating the equitable activation of Downtown public spaces for the benefit of all Jaxsons. Edgecombe will oversee the strategy and implementation of activation plans

for the Downtown Riverfront and other Jacksonville parks and public spaces, including Riverfront Plaza and Lift Ev’ry Voice and Sing Park. She will serve as a liaison between city agencies, nonprofit partners and community groups, and will help ensure that public capital improvements, private development and activation initiatives are coordinated to maximize value for our community.

“Laura is an energetic, results-driven, creative initiatives leader who is committed to building vibrant and inclusive public spaces for Jacksonville’s Downtown – both on and off the riverfront,” said Mari Kuraishi, president of the Jessie Ball duPont Fund. “Laura is well-positioned to oversee a Downtown public spaces strategy that welcomes community participation and a wide variety of partnerships.”



Ascension St. Vincent’s physicians performing a percutaneous coronary intervention procedure.

## Ascension St. Vincent’s Hosts Cardiovascular Training

Ascension St. Vincent’s Riverside hosted a high-risk protected percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) training event on Nov. 2-3. PCI is a procedure used to treat narrowed or blocked sections of an artery in order to improve blood flow to the heart. This is the third time St. Vincent’s interventional cardiologists were selected to provide in-person demonstrations of live, complex cases to nearly a dozen physicians from across the country. St. Vincent’s Riverside is the only nationally recognized training site in the state for the procedure, which is typically the final option for those who cannot undergo open heart surgery.

Attendees also participated in discussions on best-practices when working on a PCI procedure and learned about cutting-edge technologies and innovations in the cardiovascular field. “We are honored to host this prestigious PCI event and feel blessed to have a talented cardiovascular team here locally,” said Scott Kashman, president and CEO, Ascension St. Vincent’s Riverside. “Currently, we have a waiting list for physicians who want to attend this training on our Riverside campus. This opportunity is invaluable for all involved, and I am grateful for our physicians’ commitment to helping their peers in the field.”

## JAGA Raises Funds for College Scholarships



JAGA Scholarship Golf Classic chairman Michael McKenny and JAGA president John Milton unveil a check in the amount of \$21,500 to benefit the JAGA scholarship program.

## Jacksonville Area Golf Association hosted its 20th JAGA Scholarship Golf Classic at Deerwood Country Club and raised \$21,500.

The proceeds will support JAGA’s 2023-2024 Charitable Trust program, which annually awards scholarship support to Northeast Florida high school graduates seeking to further their education on the college or alternative level of higher education. JAGA currently supports 45 students with \$2,500 renewable yearly grants or \$10,000 over four years of school. The current recipients represent 19 of the JAGA-member clubs (roughly half) and attend 23 different colleges in and outside the state of Florida. Since the Trust was formed in 1974, JAGA has awarded approximately \$2 million to approximately 400 deserving students.



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Andrea Eklund

# Eklund Joins Baptist Health

Andrea Eklund joins Baptist Health of Northeast Florida as its senior vice president, compliance & internal audit and chief compliance officer. In this role, Eklund will oversee Baptist Health’s corporate compliance, internal audit, privacy and information technology regulatory efforts.

Eklund received her Bachelor of Science in business management from Rockford College and her Juris Doctor from Northern Illinois University College of Law. She is a member of the Florida Bar Association, American Health

Lawyers Association, Health Care Compliance Association, American Academy of Professional Coders and American College of Healthcare Executives.

“We’re excited to welcome Andrea to the Baptist Health leadership team,” said Michael A. Mayo, president and CEO of Baptist Health. “Her personal values and leadership expertise align closely with ours, as we strive to uphold the highest regulatory standards in health care.”

# Zuino Named a “COO to Know”



Matthew Zuino

Matthew A. Zuino, executive vice president and chief operating officer (COO) of Baptist Health, was recognized by “Becker’s Hospital Review” on its 75-strong list of “Hospital and health system COOs to know” for 2023. The publication honored these individuals for their strategic approaches to initiatives that enhance operational efficiency at their organizations.

Zuino has more than 25 years of leadership experience within the health care industry. He joined Baptist Health in July 2017 and assumed his current position in January 2020, providing direction, leadership oversight and accountability for North Florida’s largest nonprofit health system, which serves around 750,000 people each year.

“We congratulate Matt on this well-deserved honor and thank him for his dedication to our community’s health,” said Michael A. Mayo, president and CEO of Baptist Health. “As the population of Jacksonville continues to grow at a feverish pace, his strategic and operational oversight ensures we expand with it so that we’re prepared to meet the community’s changing needs.”




Tracy Jester, Megan Trumpler and Christy Hodges

# Episcopal School of Jacksonville Presents at Florida Council for Independent Schools

Media Specialist Megan Trumpler presented on “Integrating Primary Sources in the Elementary Classroom.” Trumpler spoke about how she incorporates primary source documents, historical paintings and other tools to boost students’ comprehension of United States history, integrating technology and critical thinking. Trumpler also hosted a roundtable for fifth grade teachers to gather and make connections. Deans Christy Hodges and Tracy Jester presented on “Academic Integrity - Setting Clear Expectations on Individual and Collaborative Work.” This presentation took a deep dive into creating an honorable classroom environment, the importance of transparent communication, and more. FCIS is the accrediting body for independent schools in Florida, serving 144 member schools.

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Marisa Brighton



Sylvia Perry

# Brighton, Perry Join Groundwork Jacksonville Board

Marisa Brighton and Sylvia Perry have joined the volunteer board of directors for Groundwork Jacksonville, the City of Jacksonville’s nonprofit partner in building the Emerald Trail and restoring McCoys and Hogans creeks.

Marisa Brighton is the Senior Director of Strategic Engagement & Community Impact at Swisher, the locally owned and largest volume-producing cigar manufacturer in the United States. She is responsible for leading the development and expansion of strategic partnership initiatives in the Jacksonville communities in which the company has operated for over 160 years.

“**Together, we will ensure a brighter future for this community.**”

– Kerri Stewart  
Board Chair

“The work being done by Groundwork with the Emerald Trail aligns with Swisher’s commitment to community vitality. I look forward to learning from my colleagues and watching the Emerald Trail and other projects come to life,” said Brighton.

Sylvia Perry, a native of Jacksonville, is the publisher of Free Press of Jacksonville, a 37-year-old weekly newspaper that serves the African American community of Northeast Florida. She has served on several civic boards and committees including Jacksonville Urban Legend, Leadership Jacksonville and Junior League of Jacksonville.

“Groundwork Jacksonville is a trailblazer in the nonprofit world through the Emerald Trail which represents a binding tie that will blend our community together. Through this innovative pathway, work is done from the inside out to not only maintain but showcase Jacksonville’s unique diversity and culture,” said Perry.

“I look forward to working alongside these impressive women to achieve the mission of Groundwork Jacksonville. Together, we will ensure a brighter future for this community,” said Board Chair Kerri Stewart.



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## From Trash to Treasure

### JTC Running funds help transform trail system, park at former landfill

Jacksonville runners can look forward to a new trail coming to Aterro Park, thanks to a donation from JTC Running Partners to the Jacksonville chapter of the Southern Off-Road Bicycle Association (SORBA Jax).

The \$85,000 donation was announced on Nov. 17. It will fund a 3.1-mile, six-foot-wide running trail at Aterro Park, made of compacted crushed lime rock. Planning for this new running trail is underway.

This trail is part of a multi-trail system slated for Aterro Park, transforming the site of the former Sunbeam Road Landfill into a “multi-use recreation destination,” according to a November press release. Plans for the park include biking and running trails, a dog park, pickleball courts, Airsoft facility and a market. A three-mile mountain bike trail has already been completed with another one planned.

## Gellers Named to Environmental Protection Board



Josh Gellers

Josh Gellers is the newest member of the Jacksonville Environmental Protection Board. He was nominated by Mayor Donna Deegan and unanimously confirmed by the Jacksonville City Council. He will serve the remainder of Charles Garrison’s term and then a full, four-year term.

Gellers is a full professor at the University of North Florida in political science. He started working on city initiatives a few years ago while on the City of Jacksonville’s Special Committee on Resiliency and also served on Mayor Deegan’s Transition Team on the Infrastructure Committee’s Subcommittee on Resiliency.

As a member of the Murray Hill Preservation Association, Gellers was charged with handling the community’s response to the chemical smell issue.

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— Adventure, Naomi Uemura

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## Singleton Named Small Business Leader of the Year

Jon Singleton, founder and leader of the Singleton Team at Watson Realty Corp, has been named the 2024 Small Business Leader of the Year by the Jax Chamber Downtown Council. This prestigious award recognizes Singleton's leadership, commitment to the community and outstanding contributions to the small-business sector.

In addition to being a seasoned real estate professional, Singleton has actively participated in numerous community initiatives and charitable endeavors, reflecting his deep-rooted belief in giving back to the community.

"We are thrilled to congratulate Jon Singleton on being named the 2024 Small Business Leader of the Year by the Jax Chamber Downtown Council," said Neil Bridgers, vice president of the San Marco/San Jose office at Watson Realty Corp. "Jon's dedication to his clients, his team, and the community is truly commendable. This award is a well-deserved recognition of his exceptional leadership and contributions to the small-business sector."



John Singleton



Michael A. Mayo

## Mayo Chosen for Florida 500 List

Michael A. Mayo, president and CEO of Baptist Health, was named to "Florida Trend" magazine's "Florida 500" list of the state's 500 most influential business leaders. Mayo was among the 27 listed in the Life Sciences category, selected for community impact, best practices and leadership. Mayo has more than 32 years of health care executive experience and has been at the helm of Baptist Health since June 2021.

"It's an honor to be included in the 'Florida 500' list of leaders," said Mayo. "Particularly as it champions community impact, because the community is at the heart of everything we do at Baptist Health, including training the next generation of health care leaders to advocate for the needs of the communities in which they live and work."

“It's an honor to be included in the 'Florida 500' list of leaders.”

– Michael A. Mayo  
President and CEO,  
Baptist Health



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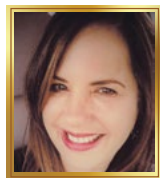
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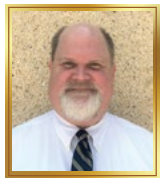
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# Glamour and Glitz Enhances San Marco Place

Champagne toast welcomes new amenities, luxury finishes

San Marco Place residents raised a glass to celebrate the completion of their newly renovated lobby on Friday, Nov. 3, marking the occasion with a toast to the hard work and efforts of fellow Board members and committees.

The completed lobby is the latest in a wave of updates and enhancements being made to the luxury, high-rise condominium, which have included a new pool and decking and updates to each residential floor exiting the elevators, including new lighting, artwork and flooring.

“As one of the owners of San Marco Place condominiums, having the lobby and other renovations completed means that I can be proud to show off where I live,” said resident Amy Gilbert. “It was already a wonderful building because of the people, but now it is beautiful as well.”

Currently underway are improvements to the elevators and elevator lobbies, which are expected to be completed by the end of this year. In January, renovations will begin to the condominium’s social room, which will include a new kitchen and social gathering space.

The 21-story high-rise was completed in 2006 and features 146 residential units alongside luxury amenities including a fitness center, swimming pool, clubhouse, spa, outdoor spa, on-site dining options and lighted tennis courts.



The Lastinger family

# Lastinger Family Donates \$1.1M to MOSH

The Museum of Science & History (MOSH) announced donations totaling \$1.1 million from the Lastinger family, inclusive of \$1 million from the Lastinger Family Foundation and \$100,000 from Lindsey and Ryan Riggs. The gifts will be honored through the naming of the river path and bridge planned for MOSH’s forthcoming 100,000-square-foot Northbank facility.

“In the 25 years that we lived in Jacksonville, MOSH contributed significantly to our children’s educational experience. We are delighted to play a small part in helping this incredible community asset realize its new vision,” said Allen Lastinger.

The Lastinger Family Foundation’s mission focuses on two goals: historical and environmental preservation, and the education, health and well-being of children. Since its inception in 1998, the Foundation has awarded grants totaling more than \$13.5 million. Lindsey Lastinger Riggs, executive director of the Foundation, currently serves as the governance chair on the MOSH Board of Trustees.

“The MOSH Genesis campaign precisely aligns with our family’s commitment to preserving Florida’s unique history, culture and environment, as well as advancing educational opportunities and quality of life for children. We are honored to add the Lastinger and Riggs names to a growing list of Northeast Florida families who stand in support of MOSH and its future,” said Riggs.

“When multiple generations of a family take personal ownership of ideals through their generosity, it speaks volumes about the family’s values and has long-term impact on the community. The Lastingers share a remarkable dedication to history and educational opportunities for youth,” said Maureen Mercho, Chief Development Officer of MOSH.

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Monty Selim with Gloria McNair and John Erstling



Kay Ehas with Carmin Godwin and Pamela Telis



Jim Dobson with Renee Parenteau and Jim Agee



Laura McKeithen with Brian Mickler and Laura Jane Pittman

# Trailblazers Set the Tone, Pace of Fundraising

## Major gifts announced at rally for Groundwork’s Emerald Trail

Groundwork Jacksonville held an event for donors to the Emerald Trail initiative on Nov. 7 at the Ritz Theatre and Museum in LaVilla. The group of early investors, nicknamed “Trailblazers,” are credited for recognizing the role of private philanthropy in such a project and understanding the benefits of having a world-class trail system in Jacksonville’s urban core.



Kerry Stewart with Betsy and Steve Crosby

During the event, Kyle Reese, chair of Baptist Health’s Social Responsibility and Community Health Committee, made a pivotal announcement about funding for the first 1.3-mile leg of the Emerald Trail, the LaVilla Link.

“We understand the most important things regarding community health happen outside the walls of our hospital. Our Social Responsibility and Community Health Committee looks at all the ways we can provide strategic investment in our community to lift the health of all of our community members,” he said. “Baptist Health will be giving a strategic investment over the next two years that will fully fund the LaVilla link of the Emerald Trail.”

Reese called the move “personal” for Baptist Health. The 14 neighborhoods connected to the Emerald Trail are home to over 1,000 Baptist Health team members.

“We all understand, standing in this place, the historic LaVilla neighborhood, the

walkability that we all desire...this was a no-brainer for us. What we hope this strategic investment will do will spur other organizations, businesses in the community so that we can get this done. And that we can continue to make our community all that we want it to be,” he said.

“When Baptist Health learned about this project, we knew it had to be among our top priorities for strategic investment in the community’s health,” said Michael Mayo, president and CEO of Baptist Health. “The Emerald Trail is more than just a trail – it’s a true community asset. It supports social connection, physical activity, overall well-being and economic vitality.”

Mayor Donna Deegan, a fellow Trailblazer with her husband, Tim, spoke at the event, saying she has always been a “huge believer in moving.”

“It’s been part of my vision from the beginning to make sure we’re connecting our neighborhoods...connecting people to health,” she said. “This is going to bring so much to Jacksonville in terms of economic development, jobs, business, but it is something we should all be incredibly proud of. I can’t think of another project that ties together so many of the things that will make our city great beyond the Emerald trail.”

While Baptist Health’s gift will help get construction of the LaVilla Link underway, Groundwork Jacksonville CEO Kay Ehas has also been working on additional funding, recently traveling to Washington, D.C. to promote the Emerald Trail.

“You know, we got the local option gas tax, right? \$132 million. The downside of that is that pays out over 30 years. Nobody’s waiting 30 years to get this project done,” she said. “We submitted a federal grant request for \$147 million that will enable us to complete the last five trail segments within six or seven years, maybe sooner.”

Ehas has had success in the past securing state and national grants for Groundwork Jacksonville’s other initiatives, McCoys Creek and Hogans Creek, including nearly \$6 million for Hogans Creek from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation’s National Coastal Resilience Fund, it’s largest to date.

# Good In-tent-ions

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

A small field behind Lakewood Church of Jacksonville and the San Jose Church of Christ was transformed into a tent and cardboard city on Friday, Nov. 10.

Individuals, families and groups constructed their makeshift sleeping accommodations for Family Promise of Jacksonville’s 13th annual Cardboard City fundraising event. Family Promise of Jacksonville Associate Director Beth Mixson said approximately 100 people attended the event, though not everyone would spend the night.

“We say come for the evening or come spend the night,” she explained.

The fundraiser is designed to raise both funds for the Jacksonville nonprofit and awareness of what unhoused families experience on a regular basis. It raised nearly \$60,000.

“Families are really the hidden homeless,” said Mixson. “It’s very seldom that you will actually see them on the streets. They are couch surfing, they are living in cars. They may be living in cheap motels. So, they are below the radar.”

According to Family Promise of Jacksonville, families with children make up 30% of people experiencing homelessness and there are more than 3,300 unhoused students in the Duval County Public Schools system.

In addition to constructing their own cardboard sleeping quarters, participants

participated in the Social Services Maze – an exercise designed to simulate the obstacles an unhoused family must overcome when trying to obtain shelter, food and clothing, medical services and employment.

The Social Services Maze was run by Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) honor students and students working towards a degree in the Human Services program. Jametoria Burton, the associate director of program development at FSCJ’s Center for Civic Engagement, said participating in the Social Services Maze provides students vital hands-on experience.

“It actually brings a sense of real life and practical perspective on what unhoused people have to deal with, all the problems and the roadblocks in terms of just trying to get stable. For them, it brings a greater awareness of the community issue,” she said. “It really brings their education alive, actually.”



Members of the Stanton College Preparatory Family Promise Club Olivia Garcia, Sage Peterson, Lindsay Johnson, Ariana Kani, Teju Vegi, Ashlynn Deason, Emma Palmieri, Samalkhya Karanam, Brissia Maradiaga, Indiana-Jones Pulumbarit and Emerson Smith.

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Friends of North Florida School of Special Education at the inaugural Dinner on the 11s.



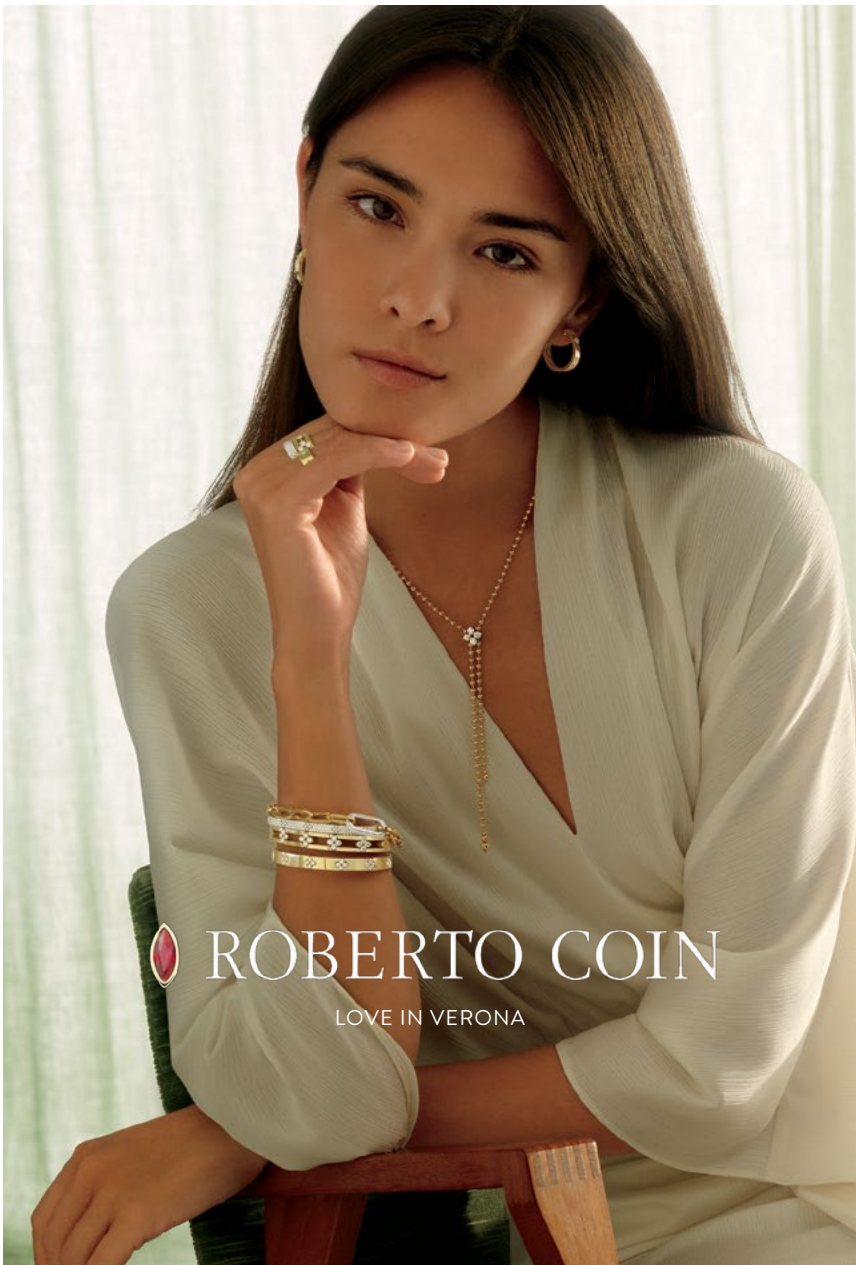
Michelle Gilliam with Susan Parisi and Bryan Ayer



Billy and Jill Morrow

# A Berry Good Kickoff

The North Florida School of Special Education (NFSSE) kicked off its inaugural “Dinner on the 11s” at Berry Good Farms on Saturday, Nov. 11. The event, hosted by NFSSE’s culinary team, featured a five-course dinner with wine pairings set al fresco among the trees and sparkling lights of the farm. Current students and alumni of NFSSE’s culinary academy showcased for guests their abilities learned during their time in the Academy. The vocational trainings help students grow into the best versions of themselves through successful experience in the workplace. The event is slated to become a regular series for NFSSE.



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Megan and David Russo with Katy Massa, Cary and James Young, Stacey Clark



Shawn Agee with Paul Byra, Michael Ballistreri, Patrick Toomey and Brett Burleigh



Ryan Potts with Kimberly Patterson, Kristina Perry and Mike Teixeira



Carly Bledsoe with Katherine Bryan and Sara Harris

# What a Ball, Y'all

## Cowford raises \$288,000

The Cowford Ball presented by Morgan & Morgan, held Nov. 4 at Deerwood Castle in Jacksonville, raised \$288,000 for the American Cancer Society to “help end cancer as we know it, for everyone.” The western-style event, which included auctions of children’s artwork and entertainment by Dean Winter and the Heat, had a focus on the organization’s Richard M. Schulze Family Foundation Hope Lodge, a free home-away-from-home for cancer patients and their caregivers.

In its long history, Cowford Ball has become the No. 1 charity fundraising event for the American Cancer Society in the Jacksonville area, having raised more than \$9 million since its inception.



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# Lutheran Social Services Launches Extended Refugee Program

Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida (LSS) launched its Circle of Welcome co-sponsorship initiative, funded by Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (LIRS). The co-sponsorship program aims to support resettling refugees in Jacksonville, Florida. Circle of Welcome provides support to refugees beyond the initial 90 days of the LSS Reception and Placement Program.

LSS is seeking groups to sign up as co-sponsors who will support the initiative. Co-sponsor groups commit to a minimum of six months of service and provide financial contributions ranging from \$1,000 to \$3,000. Groups must fulfill specific requirements, which include providing core services like housing assistance and mentorship. Visit [lssjax.org/circleofwelcome](https://lssjax.org/circleofwelcome) for more information.

In 2023, LSS provided assistance to over 2,500 individuals through its refugee resettlement program.

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# SOCIAL Circle Sports Flood the

Legendary Duke University men's basketball coach Mike Krzyzewski is set to speak at The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital's Florida Forum Arts on Wednesday, Nov. 8. Krzyzewski is the NCAA Division I men's basketball coach and will provide a Florida Forum support the Women's Board's commitment to Wolfson Children's Hospital's Neonatal and Pediatric Units for Wolfson Children's Hospital's Neonatal and Pediatric Units speaker in the Florida Forum series, coming Jan. 17, 2024.

Jean and Ross Kreuger with Patty and Don DeStephano



Ben Oates with Sarah Irving, Barbara and Fred Irving

## WeCareJax Celebrates 30 Years

Organization connects patients to compassionate care, regardless of ability to pay

WeCareJax celebrated the 30th anniversary of The Caring Awards on Nov. 9 at the River City Railway. Annually, this event honors the volunteer physicians and partners who go above and beyond to make care possible for uninsured and under-resourced community members who are experiencing a medical crisis. With live music, dancing, hors d'oeuvres and cocktails, this year's event raised \$90,101 toward its mission of compassionate care.



Alvin and Candice Kennedy with Dr. Charles Green



Megan Conklin with Dr. Courtney Rhoades, Natalie Keleher and Erin Harris

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# cles REGISTER s Fans e Forum

zyzewski, familiarly known as Coach K, drew a large crowd  
rida Forum Speaker Series at the Center for the Performing  
1 men's all-time leader with 1,200 wins. Funds raised by the  
raise \$1.5 million for two new Kids Kare Mobile Intensive Care  
c Critical Care Transport fleet. Steve Wozniak will be the next

Judy Hardwick with Susan Feely, Karla Newton, Sharon Lucie and Kendra McCrary



Lee Haramis, Sr. with Jessie Drew Hawkins, Drew Haramis and Lee Haramis, Jr.

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27



Deborah Parker with Adam Chaskin



Katie and Todd Sager



Samantha Holtzman with Haley Trager

## Livin' La Pura Vida

The 31st River Garden Foundation Gala was held on Saturday, Nov. 18 at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort and Spa. Themed "Pura Vida," the elegant, tropical-themed event embraced the phrase's positive, grateful and worry-free outlook on life, raising funds to benefit the residents of River Garden Senior Services. Baptist Health was recognized as the night's Community Partner Honoree for its unwavering commitment to providing skilled care to the seniors served by River Garden. Danielle Leder and Lauren Setzer served as the 2023 event co-chairs.

River Garden is five-star rated by the Agency for Health Care Administration and has earned ten Governor's Gold Seal Awards for Excellence in Long-Term Care.



John Adams Grant and Amy Grant with Gina and John Donohoo



Mike and Betty Sorna with Rich and Nancy Davis, Christina Levine



Carole Coplan with Marcia Jawitz, Susan Bonesz, Lisa Copeland and Audrey Goldman



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Jen Pabst with Tina Mayer, Jordan Halperin and Shawna Hendrix



Kathryn McAvoy with Judge Michael Kalil and Linda Crofton



Lin Pomerania with Princess Evans



Kathryn Ches with the Hon. Collins Cooper



Kim Demarre with Mary Gipson

# Bold City Turned Emerald City

## Guardian ad litem raises funds for foster children

The Guardian ad Litem Foundation held its There’s No Place Like Home fundraiser on Nov. 4 at the Garden Club of Jacksonville. With food, spirits, music and live and silent auctions, the Wizard of Oz-themed event raised funds to serve abused, abandoned and neglected children in the dependency systems in Duval, Clay and Nassau counties. There are roughly 1,200 children currently in the court system in our community.



Jason "Moose" Hamilton, EverBank employee and self-advocate on The Arc Jacksonville's board of directors, spoke at Dinner with Bill & Friends.

## \$290,000 Raised for Arc Jacksonville

The Arc Jacksonville held its 30th annual Dinner with Bill & Friends fundraising event on Friday, Nov. 3. The event, presented by Florida Blue, celebrates The Arc Jacksonville community and all who are served by the organization, inspiring change and sustaining much-needed programs in the community. This year, more than \$290,000 was raised from donations and support from the nearly 500 people in attendance. Ben and Diana Davis served as the event’s honorary chairs.

This year's Dinner with Bill & Friends was held in memory of an early ambassador for people with intellectual and developmental differences, Bill Sackter. Sackter spent much of his life in an institution and, when eventually moved into the community, he spoke often of the need we all have for “a good friend, a good job and a good home.”

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Jeff and Cory Driscoll with Bridget O'Brien and Bugsy, Meghan Green



Jennifer Zerbe with Chris Murphy, Meghan Bowser, Hannah Miller and Julia Langford



Iman Hall with Daria Shaw



Lexi Fisher and Julie Barker

# The Crown of King Street

## Riverside WineFest shines in support of RAP

The Annual Riverside WineFest, hosted by Riverside Liquors and benefiting Riverside-Avondale Preservation, was held Nov. 18 from 6-9 p.m., amid food trucks and live entertainment. The free, public street festival filled King Street with vendor tents of more than 250 wine selections. Hundreds of guests attended and took home souvenirs of the event's signature logoed polymer wine glass developed specifically for wine tasting.



Dr. Kathleen Decker with Michelle Becht



Emily Vanhook with Katelynn Pittman and Peyton Pickett



Deana Roberts and Rachel Adams



Latisha Akerele and Josiah with Kathleen Brady

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# A New Dawn of Acceptance

JASMYN held its 17th Annual Coming Out Day Breakfast on Tuesday, Oct. 24 at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront. The event celebrated diversity in the workforce and honored the work of individual leaders, employee resource groups, corporations and non-profit partners, while focusing support for LGBTQIA+ teens and young adults.

Catherine Montgomery was the winner of the Emerald Award for her work to establish The Lighthouse support groups at Christ Episcopal Church, and Dr. Tom Serwatka was honored with the organization's most esteemed recognition, the Diamond Award. Serwatka was one of the co-founders of the event and served on the organization's board for more than a decade. Eliza Byard served as the keynote speaker.

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Frank Sanchez with Austin Fender, Morgan Fender, Hope and Dana Fender, Evan Fender, Tyler Hodges and Rusty Newton



Frank Sanchez, Tyler Hodges and Dana and Hope Fender signing the matching \$5 million commitments to build the facility.

# Dual Donations Drive Innovation

Dana and Hope Fender signed a commitment on the morning of Oct. 30 to match a \$5 million gift from Frank Sanchez to build the Center for Innovation on the Bolles Upper School San Jose Campus. The 47,000-square-foot, three-story building marks the most expansive construction undertaking on the San Jose Campus property since the building now known as Bolles Hall was constructed as the San Jose Hotel in 1925.

The dual \$5 million donations from the Fenders and Sanchez are the largest single gifts in The Bolles School's history. The state-of-the-art structure will now be called the "Frank R. Sanchez & Hope and Dana E. Fender Center for Innovation" in honor of their generosity.

"We are grateful for the Fenders and Frank Sanchez's historic gifts to the Institution. Their commitment exhibits extraordinary support to our students and faculty in their pursuit of always raising the bar of academic excellence, which is truly humbling. Dr. Dana Fender

and Mr. Frank Sanchez are industry leaders and innovators within the areas of medical science and technology. We are proud to have these two wonderful families associated with this landmark facility," Bolles Chief Advancement Officer Carol Nimitz said.

Construction on the \$26 million building began June 2022 and is expected to be completed in spring 2024. It will house Bolles' science, math and technology programs, as well as expansive areas for advanced courses in robotics, computer programming, information technology, engineering and design. It features cutting-edge classrooms and 12 specialty labs, as well as Bolles' Anatomage table, the world's first and only virtual dissection table used by medical schools and universities around the globe. Bolles has long been one of the few high schools in the country to offer students this college-level science resource.

"The Center for Innovation is an

exciting work of both art and engineering, but like all campus structures, it exists to support the learning that happens within its footprint," said Bolles President and Head of School Tyler Hodges. "In this case, this means collaborative hands-on learning, academic exploration with inspirational faculty and the ability for students to experiment and gain practical experience as they work toward their highest potential to serve our community and the world."

The state-of-the-art structure is being constructed on the San Jose Campus' last prime development site adjacent to Bolles Hall on a bluff overlooking the St. Johns River. Faculty and school leaders strongly felt the building – designed by Miami-based Zyscovich architects and constructed by Jacksonville-based Stellar design-build company – should complement the school's focus on real-world learning that allows students to create, invent and explore using a variety of tools, materials and technology.

"The ornate design was meant to be a living building bringing an abundance of windows and glass walls throughout," said Bolles Associate Head of School Mike Drew. "Walls can move to make multiple classrooms into one big open room or open a classroom to the outdoors in many cases. We wanted to capitalize on the proximity of the building to allow all students to be inspired by the beautiful outside views of the river. Every floor has its own terrace and gathering place that encourages discussion, collaboration and creativity. As technology and science evolves the building will be able to evolve with it."

Science Department Chair Nancy Hazzard called the space an "intellectual incubator" that will expose students to "an entirely new and exciting level of academics."

The school still needs an additional \$8 million in philanthropic gifts to meet the cost of the building.

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Eric Henderson, as Herr Drosselmeyer, and Bella Morrill, as Clara, rehearse for the Community Nutcracker.



Debra Rankin with Clara Palaquin and Sagan Paul in rehearsal for the Community Nutcracker.

BY PEGGY HARRELL JENKINS

The Nutcracker Ballet

It's the most wonderful time of the year as visions of sugar plums – sugar plum fairies, actually – prepare to take stages all over town

to dance in The Nutcracker Ballet. Tchaikovsky and Petipa's creation, although not so well-received in 1892, is now a beloved worldwide holiday favorite. Here are some options to see Clara and her Prince battle the Rat King without missing a beat this holiday season:

- Community Nutcracker – Dec. 8 and 9 at the Florida Theatre. With 200 local performers, the Community Nutcracker gives away approximately 1,900 free tickets to include those who may not have the opportunity to enjoy a full-length ballet and has donated over \$750,000 to date to local nonprofits.
- First Coast Nutcracker Ballet – Dec. 15-17 at the Moran Theatre of the Jacksonville Center of Performing Arts. A Jacksonville tradition for over 50 years, this show takes the stage to the accompaniment of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra, under the direction of Kevin Fitzgerald
- Florida Ballet – Dec. 9 and 10 at the Thrasher-Horne Center, and Dec. 15-17 at the University of North Florida
- Jax City Ballet – Dec. 22 at the Betsy Lovett Arts Center at the Bolles School, under the direction of Julia and Alexy Kuznetsov.



Dimezla Broche

Art and Artists

Don't forget Artwalk and Jacksonville Artists' Guild's "Winter in the South" Art Exhibit at the Main Library on Wednesday, Dec. 6.

Dimelza Broche's exhibit "Uncharted Self" at Touche' Gallery on Herschel Street is on display until Dec. 15.

Be sure to visit the Corner Gallery and the Jessie at 40 E. Adams St. for Artist in Residence Hiromi Moneyhun's "Shibari" display, as well as "A Rising in the East" and "The Color of Law" exhibits.



Pablo Rivera



Peggy Harrell Jennings with Pat Setser and Stephanie Pyren-Fortel

And a Drumroll, Please...

National League of American Pen Women Jacksonville chapter members took prizes in the state contest. In art: Pat Setser, 1st place; Cookie Davis, 2nd place; Stephanie Pyren-Fortel, Honorable Mention. In children's literature, Peggy Harrell Jennings, 2nd place.

Ortega resident Dawn Inglis Montgomery's painting "Established 1925" is one of 41 works from 22 states in the National Juried Painting Exhibition on display at the University of Southern Mississippi Museum of Art.

Ted Head took first place in the Jacksonville Watercolor Society Exhibit, and Pablo Rivera received the Cheap Joe's Merchandise Award and was named the Jacksonville Watercolor Society's Artist of the Year.

To paraphrase Pablo Picasso, "The arts wash away from the soul the dust of life." There are activities galore guaranteed to beat the dust off our everyday lives as we celebrate the light and joy of the season.



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The holiday season is well underway in our Resident neighborhoods and there is plenty to do and be done in preparation, but be sure to make time for some of these events happening in our communities throughout the month.

NOW – FEBRUARY 2024

Colors of the Wild: A Zoolights Lantern Experience

Be dazzled by the 70-plus Asian lanterns that will set the Jacksonville Zoo aglow for the Colors of the Wild event, running on select nights now through February 2024. This event is being touted as “one of the largest Asian lantern events in the country.”

**Who & Where:** The Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens (370 Zoo Pkwy.)

**When:** Select nights, 5:30-9:30 p.m.

**More Details:** [jacksonvillezoo.org/colors-of-the-wild](http://jacksonvillezoo.org/colors-of-the-wild)

NOW – DECEMBER 29

Dazzling Nights

Experience a night of holiday magic – from a 40-foot snowglobe to a candy cane corridor to nightly snowfalls – at the Jacksonville Arboretum and Gardens’ Dazzling Nights event. The first entry begins at 5:30 p.m. on select nights; the last one is at 8:30 p.m. On-site and off-site parking is available. (Off-site parking offers a shuttle, though be sure to arrive 30 minutes prior to your entry time.) Tickets must be purchased online in advance.

**Who & Where:** The Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens (1445 Millco Rd.)

**When:** Select nights, 5:30-8:30 p.m.

**More Details:** [dazzlingjax.com](http://dazzlingjax.com)

DECEMBER 1 – 3

“The Art of Gathering” – the 2023 First Coast Design Show

This annual event showcases more than 20 exhibitors and hosts various events including lectures, workshops and demonstrations. It closes with its signature Children’s Fashion Show, this year in partnership with The Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens. This three-day event benefits Wolfson Children’s Hospital.

**Who:** Hosted by The Women’s Board of Wolfson Children’s Hospital

**Where:** Prime Osborn Convention Center (1000 Water St.)

**When:** Show runs 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. on Friday and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; Special Events schedule varies

**More Details:** [firstcoastdesignshow.com](http://firstcoastdesignshow.com)

DECEMBER 1

Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) First Friday: Luminaria Kit Building

Enjoy a festive evening of live music, drinks and cookies while preparing kits for RAP’s 39th annual Luminaria happening December 10.

**Who:** Hosted by RAP

**Where:** The Buckland House (2623 Herschel St.)

**When:** 5-7 p.m.

**More details:** [riversideavondale.org/events](http://riversideavondale.org/events)

San Marco Tree Lighting Ceremony

Experience some holiday magic with the tree lighting ceremony in Balis Park. School orchestras and bands will provide live tunes and ho-ho-who knows what special guest may attend to perform the honors of lighting the tree.

**Who:** Hosted by San Marco Merchants Association

**Where:** Balis Park (San Marco Square)

**When:** 5-6 p.m.

**More Details:** [facebook.com/events/1010083566875381](https://facebook.com/events/1010083566875381)

DECEMBER 2

Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals’ Festival of Lights 5K & Holiday Magic in the Square

Kick off December with the 28th annual Festival of Lights 5K, supporting the Children’s Miracle Network Hospitals of Jacksonville. People can choose between a one-mile fun run or a 5K race. Both are open to participants of all ages and abilities. While you’re at San Marco Square, stay for the Holiday Magic festivities from 5-8 p.m.

**Who:** Hosted by 1st Place Sports and San Marco Merchants Association

**Where:** San Marco Square

**When:** 1-Mile Fun Run starts at 5 p.m.; 5K begins at 5:30 p.m.

**More details:** [1stplacesports.com/races/fol/sanmarcomerchants.com/community/holiday-magic](http://1stplacesports.com/races/fol/sanmarcomerchants.com/community/holiday-magic)

Christmas in Avondale

This time-honored community event in Avondale is a tradition dating back more than 30 years. Bring your friends and families and enjoy live music, food, drinks and more as St. Johns Avenue, Dancy Street, Ingleside Avenue and Talbot Avenue are closed to street traffic and the community can come together in the streets for an evening of holiday fun.

**Who:** Hosted by Avondale Merchant Association

**Where:** St. Johns Avenue, Dancy Street, Ingleside Avenue, Talbot Street

**When:** 4-8 p.m.

**More details:** [historicavondale.com/cia/](http://historicavondale.com/cia/)

DECEMBER 6

**Caroling on the Corner of Park and Post**  
Spread some holiday cheer by joining in on some good old-fashioned caroling at the corner of Park and Post streets in Five Points. No musical experience or expertise required.  
**Who:** Hosted by Riverside Presbyterian Church  
**Where:** The corner of Park and Post streets  
**When:** Begins at 6 p.m.  
**More Details:** Contact Riverside Presbyterian Church at (904) 355-4585



**Christmas Luminaria on Cathedral Hill**  
Explore the charm of St. John's Episcopal Cathedral and the First United Methodist Church with historic tours and enjoy live music at each location. Santa will be in Cathedral Park, and there will be a Candyland bounce house for the little ones. With food trucks, a sip-and-shop and art, it's sure to be fun for the whole family.  
**Who:** Hosted by St. John's Cathedral  
**Where:** St. John's Cathedral/Cathedral Park (256 E. Church St.)  
**When:** 5-8 p.m.  
**More Details:** [facebook.com/events/1011056793534162](https://facebook.com/events/1011056793534162)

DECEMBER 8 AND 9

**35th Annual Historic Springfield Holiday Home Tour**  
With a "Home for the Holidays" theme, this event showcases six unique and fabulous homes in Historic Springfield. Children 12 and under are free.  
**Who:** Hosted by the Springfield Improvement Association and Archives  
**Where:** Tour starts at the SIAA building (210 W. 7th St.)  
**When:** 5-9 p.m.  
**More details:** [historicspringfield.org/product/holiday-home-tour/](https://historicspringfield.org/product/holiday-home-tour/)



DECEMBER 8-27

**21st Annual Gingerbread Extravaganza**  
This treasured holiday event includes the traditional gingerbread exhibit at Old St. Andrew's Church, as well as a holiday gift shop and tour of the Merrill House Museum. Kids Day is back on Sunday, Dec. 10 with photos with Santa Claus, face painting, and more.  
**Who:** Hosted by the Jacksonville Historic Society  
**Where:** Old St. Andrews Church (317 A. Philip Randolph Blvd.)  
**When:** Times vary, most days 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.  
**More details:** [jaxhistory.org/test-new-home/gingerbread-extravaganza/](https://jaxhistory.org/test-new-home/gingerbread-extravaganza/)



DECEMBER 10

**RAP's 39th Annual Luminaria**  
As the sun sets, the streets of Riverside and Avondale will begin to glow with candlelight as residents line their walkways and sidewalks with candles in paper bags weighted down with sand.  
**Who:** Hosted by Riverside Avondale Preservation  
**Where:** Riverside and Avondale neighborhoods  
**When:** 5:30 p.m.  
**More details:** [riversideavondale.org/rap-news/39th-annual-luminaria](https://riversideavondale.org/rap-news/39th-annual-luminaria)



DECEMBER 16

**San Marco Preservation Society's Luminaria**  
Experience the magic of Luminaria as you follow a designated path brilliantly lit by hundreds of luminaria. This family-friendly event is free to attend, and guests will also enjoy a live nativity scene as they stroll down the path. Luminaria kits will be available for purchase in San Marco Square at various dates leading up to and including the day of the event.  
**Who:** San Marco Preservation Society  
**Where:** San Marco  
**When:** 6 p.m.  
**More Details:** [facebook.com/events/1439032590011814](https://facebook.com/events/1439032590011814)



DECEMBER 29

**TaxSlayer Gator Bowl**  
Close out the year with the 79th annual TaxSlayer Gator Bowl at EverBank Stadium. This annual college bowl game dates back to 1946. This year, a team from the Southeastern Conference will square off against the Atlantic Coast Conference. The competing teams will be determined at the close of the regular college football season. Tickets went on sale in September.  
**Who:** TaxSlayer Gator Bowl  
**Where:** Bill Gay Grounds at EverBank Stadium  
**When:** Noon  
**More Details:** [taxslayergatorbowl.com](https://taxslayergatorbowl.com)



DECEMBER 31

**New Year's Eve Fireworks**  
Ring in 2024 with a dazzling firework display over the St. Johns River, courtesy of the City of Jacksonville. The fireworks will launch from a barge between the DoubleTree and Hyatt hotels and the show will be visible from several downtown locations, including the North- and Southbanks, Brooklyn and the Riverside Arts Market. Come down early to snag your spot.  
**Who:** The City of Jacksonville  
**Where:** Various Locations  
**When:** Midnight  
**More Details:** [specialevents.coj.net/Special-Events/New-Year-s-Eve.aspx](https://specialevents.coj.net/Special-Events/New-Year-s-Eve.aspx)



# Gala Night

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## 35th Annual

# Historic Springfield Holiday Home Tour

December 8th & 9th, 2023  
5-9 PM



Springfield Improvement Association and Archives (SIAA)

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Children 12 & under are free.  
[www.historicspringfield.org/product/holiday-home-tour/](https://www.historicspringfield.org/product/holiday-home-tour/)



# THE WAY WE WERE

# SYLVIE SMITH



BY JENNIFER JENSEN

After 37 years with Duval County Public Schools (DCPS), Sylvie Smith is retiring. She signed her retirement paperwork in mid-October and will work her last day Dec. 21.

“Your career in the school system is something to remember,” Smith said.

And this career all started because of a question and a phone call.

In 1986, Smith was working at The Florida Times-Union. She was presented with a list of phone numbers to call to get people to subscribe to the newspaper. One of those phone numbers belonged to the principal of Paxon Junior High School. He was concerned about how Smith got his private number, but the conversation quickly shifted to Smith telling him she filled out an application at the school and asked if they were hiring. The principal pulled her application and brought her in for an interview on her lunch break. She was offered a job that day.

“I only worked at the Times-Union for one day,” Smith said. “He gave me my big break.” And she never looked back.

At the time, Smith was recently divorced with a young son, Brian, and needed to provide for him.

“The money wasn’t great, but I had my parents,” Smith said. “I managed and I made my way up.”

Smith had always had a love of finance – and even a short stint as a bank teller – which started when she attended the now-renamed Riverside High School.

Any time there was an opportunity for her to learn more or solicit advice from others, she took it. She educated herself and learned about the other positions in the school.

She started as a teacher’s assistant, then worked in the dean’s office before eventually helping with records and appointments in the guidance counselor’s office.

“She took me under her wing,” Smith said of the guidance counselor.

When the guidance counselor retired, she told Smith she needed to venture out and work at a different school. Smith interviewed at Venetia Elementary School and was hired on the spot to work in the front office. She has been at the school ever since, working her way up to bookkeeper and serving as the extended day director since its inception.

“I’m here every day, and I love it,” Smith said. “I’ve been humble and grateful to the people who took me under their wings.”

After 27 years, Smith said she realized it was time for newer blood to take over.

“It’s time for me to start living the second part of my life,” she said. “It’s been a good run.”

Some of her notable memories were in the role of safety patrol sponsor – one she held for 20 years. This year marked her 18th trip to Washington, D.C. with the safety patrol students.

“I tell the parents, it’s a working trip for you, and it’s a working trip for me because it’s all about kids,”

Sylvie Smith and her son, Brian Smith, on a cruise to celebrate her 60th birthday and his 40th.

she said. “I could do that trip in my sleep. I can do everything except drive the bus.”

She recently ran into one of her previous safety patrol students who is now a senior in high school, recalling that the student was the one chosen to lay the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on the trip to Washington, D.C.

“That was such a special moment that I will always remember,” Smith said.

While she will miss her colleagues and students, Smith is looking forward to her retirement.

“I’m excited about retirement,” Smith said. “I’m just excited to be alive.”

Her son, Brian, bought a house near Callahan and invited her to live there with him and his daughter, Arianna Haigler Smith.

“I’m excited about that. He’s my rock,” she said.

However, Smith – whose favorite thing to do is shop – joked that she’s not sure how her clothes and shoes are going to fit at her son’s house.

“I can’t even tell you how many shoes I have,” she said. “My stuff fills up three closets. I’m going to have to put a garment rack in the garage, because I’m not giving up my clothes.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37

## We've Already Decked The Halls



### Where are *you* spending the holidays?

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A photograph of two young women standing in front of a large mural of colorful roses. The woman on the left is wearing a patterned poncho and jeans, and the woman on the right is wearing a blue t-shirt with 'CABOS' and jeans, making a peace sign.

said. And that makes me feel good.

A large, close-up image of a Reuben sandwich, showing layers of corned beef, sauerkraut, Swiss cheese, and Thousand Island dressing on a toasted rye bagel.

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A detailed advertisement for CityGrille & Raw Bar. The top section features the restaurant's name in a white serif font on a dark blue background. Below this, a gold banner contains the text 'Open Christmas Eve & New Year's Eve'. The central part of the ad is a high-quality photograph of a plated dish: a seared salmon fillet topped with a white sauce and black caviar, served with asparagus, cherry tomatoes, and a yellow puree. The bottom section has a dark blue background with white text for 'Gift Cards Available', a phone number, and an address. A gold banner on the right side says 'Reserve Your Table' above a QR code that includes the restaurant's logo.

2023-2024

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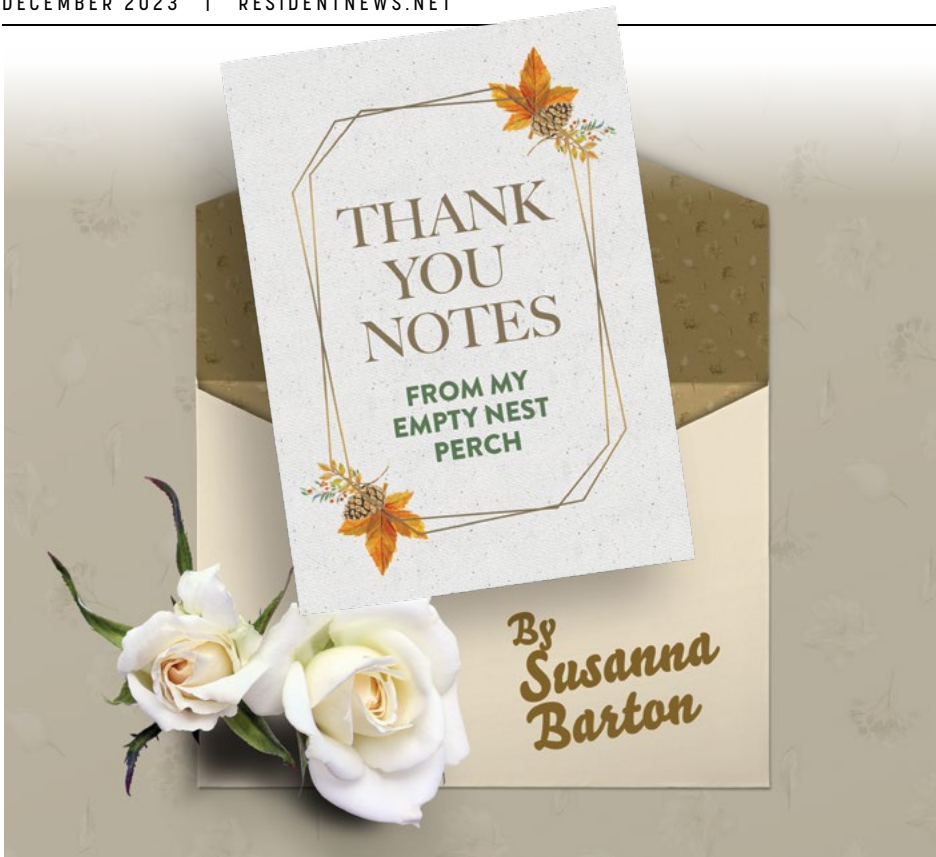
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**This holiday month, I’m taking a new approach to the Thank You Notes column, and I invite you to participate. Here’s the plan: instead of just being grateful for our neighborhood’s many qualities, we are going to turn the tables and look for opportunities to be the neighborhood qualities for which others are grateful. We’re going to deck someone else’s halls instead of jingling our own bells – hark our own angel moves instead of heralding someone else’s. Capiche?**

For those who aren’t into clever ethereal-speak, here’s an example. I appreciate that residents in our neighborhood USUALLY drive slowly around Granada Park. This month, I’ll focus on being that slow driver my neighbors appreciate. (I think we’re all sitting on the same side of the table now.)

This experiment began more than a decade ago when I decided to give up self-focus for Lent. I called it “40 Years unto Me, 40 Days Unto Others.” The intention was to go into each day open and obedient to holy nudges – the ones that motivate us to be someone’s angel on earth, the callings we usually ignore in our busy, hard-charging, me-centered lives. I began each morning with silence, scripture and the simple prayer, “Use me.”

And it worked! I began to think less of my own needs and more about how excited I was to be meeting the needs of others I encountered in my community each day. No two days produced the same needs. Do-gooding and deeding others was fulfilling, enriching and boundless. I know this because I chronicled them like the Nutty Professor in an online journal, and here are some of my entries:

- (Circa February 2011) Thank goodness for some serious heavenly hand-holding! I enjoyed total silence this morning for nearly 10 minutes without even wondering how – and most importantly when – I was going to do it. Then, when I checked my email, the first thing that popped up was a note from St. Mark’s Episcopal Church (I’m on their mailing list so I can stalk them for The Resident News stories) containing the Lenten readings. I prayerfully asked God to show me his blessings today. And... do you hear me snapping? That’s how long it took for today’s good deed to unfold. Just like [insert snap].

Here’s how it went down: When I went out to get the paper this morning, I saw a man from the next street over walking past our house. He usually walks briskly each morning, pumping hand weights and putting us all to shame with his early morning enthusiasm. But today he was just... walking. His wife died last week. I’ve

been meaning to share my sympathies with him for days. True to form, I told myself I would do something about that when I had more time to do it. That obviously was not the answer God was looking for this morning. As I was hustling the kids into their shoes and braiding hair, I glanced out the front door, and guess what? My mourning neighbor walked by for a SECOND loop! This time, the not-so-subtle hint did not go unnoticed. After the kids left, I made some “almost as good as homemade” cookies and put them on a plate. I wrote my neighbor a note and told him how much I admired his wife’s friendly ways and how his commitment to daily walking inspired me to start my own morning running routine. And instead of leaving them on his doormat like I wanted to do, I rang the doorbell. We spoke a few words, he smiled and I left. It wasn’t hard, it didn’t take much time and it felt – right. As in, “Right on!” (All Saints Episcopal Church friends will get that. For anyone who hasn’t experienced an All Saints service ender “hallelujah, right on,” you should.)

- (Circa March 2011) My deed was to write a very dear friend of mine with whom I spent many fun years in our San Antonio high school. I miss her very much. She lives in Dallas now, too far away to see on a regular basis. She and I hit it off immediately because we thought everything was funny; we laughed our way through our final years of high school. I appreciate this friend because she makes it easy for me to be my weird quirky self and laugh about it. It’s friends like Kate who make me smile. So, I told her so.

The other deed was more of a “have to” but mentionable, nonetheless. I have been involved in the Philanthropic Initiative class through the Community Foundation here in Jacksonville. Tonight, we had another meeting. We are attempting to share the encouragement and advice of Duval County Public Schools’ “Teachers of the Year” in a way that’s meaningful and impactful with local teachers, parents, and ultimately, students – a \$50,000 grant! This project definitely measures up as a “good deed,” I hope. The education situation in Duval County needs help – big time. Lastly, today I attempted to smile at everyone I saw today. It felt nice, even though I didn’t see too many people today, and sometimes I felt a little too, well, smiley.

- (Circa later March 2011) Today’s deeds can best be described as another low-hanging fruit opportunity and a stretch. The low-hanging fruit was to go through Marley’s closet and bag up all the extraneous items for Goodwill. Goodbye large, cheaply made Rasta

ManBanana from the fair! Adios single bunny slipper! Hasta la vista remnants of Polly Pockets and half-emptied beading sets! I’m sure someone will enjoy them, but that deed was done more for my desire to purge than to benefit others. Does that count? Done in that way, probably not. So, when I drove past the elementary school lemonade stand a few minutes later, I redeemed myself and purchased a glass – over-purchased even.

The stretch? Well, maybe it wasn’t such a stretch. Maybe it was a deed, depending on how you look at it. That deed was executed at the musical instrument fix-it place this afternoon. I was ready, too. I walked in and willed, willed, willed God to let me deed someone big time. I was on – and looking. There were a handful of men in the store, and there was a lot of chatter. A tired-looking woman with a nice smile took Ben’s trumpet to the back for a quick fix (he had to get a new spit sheath or something like that).

Rolling her eyes at all the men and their prattling, she said she was the only one in the store who didn’t get all stressed out about stuff. I told her I liked her necklace. And that was all it took. Have you ever wound someone up, and you swore they’d never stop? She talked about how she put the necklace on layaway a few years back and now she has a charm bracelet on layaway and how she’s going to St. Augustine this weekend to help her mother and how she wants the new Nintendo 3D and – as Seinfeld’s Elaine would say – “yada, yada, yada.” Instead of acting disinterested and annoyed, I decided to listen up and engage her. I homed in on her abounding yada. This is not like me. Sometimes big talkers like this woman make me retreat and plan my escape. It ended up being

a nice conversation. I learned some interesting things about her, and she got to purge an excess of information. Maybe that felt good for her. A deed? I think listening joyfully to someone who wants to share is a deed. Maybe not, but maybe so?

I learned a lot during my two-year – yes, TWO-YEAR – Lenten experiment on obeying the nudge. Those were sweet days! But I’m not going to lie, it doesn’t come naturally. Even after two years, it just – doesn’t. Self-focus has a tight grip, and to loosen it you have to be super-Nutty Professor about it. It takes practice. So, let’s do that. I’m going to give “doing unto others” another go this holy holiday season, and I hope you will, too. We have so much to be grateful for in our Resident Communities. Surely, we can seek out ways to be the reason another neighbor feels thankful this month. Get used this holiday, and be grateful when you are.

**Susanna Barton self-publishes Lenten challenges each year and 2024’s will be taking the “I” out of Lent, because it’s Lent, not Lint. Look out for it! 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](http://www.mygrandplans.com). Each month, she will share reflections on neighborhood qualities for which she is grateful.**

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# ANIMAL HOUSE

## ASHA, A MANATEE AGAINST THE ODDS



Asha is prepped for release as Craig Miller, far right, looks on. Her previous skin loss on her right side became an identifiable marker in the wild.



A recovered Asha is prepared for transport back to the wild.



Asha, healthy and full-grown.

BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA

In March 2021, a lone West Indian Manatee calf was found swimming along in Volusia County’s Halifax River amid waters far too cold for even healthy, mature manatees. Rescuers dubbed the year-old calf Asha and pulled her from the frigid waters on March 5.

With open wounds, underweight and cold-stressed, Asha was in critical condition. Cold stress is like frostbite for manatees, occurring when water drops below their 68-degree comfort zone, triggering a cascade of physical illness. Rescuers feared she would not survive.

Because manatees cannot adapt to cold water or regulate body temperature, exposure causes their metabolism and appetite to drop. Their digestion slows, causing weight loss and starvation. The manatee’s usually robust immune system is weakened, leaving them vulnerable to toxins, diseases, infections and lesions. Cold-stressed manatees must be rushed into 80-degree water and given food and vitamins.

Unfortunately, something unprecedented occurred during Asha’s rescue. During transport, the skin peeled off the right side of her body. The exact cause of her skin loss was unknown at that time.

Craig Miller, 58, is Jacksonville Zoo & Gardens’ Curator of Manatee Conservation and director of their Manatee Critical Care Center (MCCC). He was part of the team that rescued Asha.

“Asha’s extreme skin condition had never been seen before,” said Miller. “Although manatee conservation experts are studying the condition, the exact cause remains a mystery. One possible theory points to nutritional deficiency.”

Despite ongoing research and similar reported cases, the exact cause has not yet been identified. According to Miller, Jacksonville is the only federally permitted manatee acute care center that has seen and successfully treated such extensive skin loss. After transport to Jacksonville’s MCCC, Asha began six months of around-the-clock care to recover, grow, gain weight, learn to feed and survive on her own.

As a West Indian Manatee, Asha is a native Florida subspecies that grows to ten feet and 1,200 pounds. These slow-moving “sea cows” are herbivores that spend hours grazing on aquatic sea grasses found in shallow, sunlit waters. She traditionally would have remained with her mother for up to two years in the wild.

While warnings of the known perils threatening Florida’s manatees remain, the types and severity of threats have changed. Human-related catastrophic injuries or deaths traditionally cause the greatest numbers of manatee deaths, most from watercraft strikes (73 in the first six months of 2023), fishing net entanglements or being crushed in canal locks or flood gates. Manatees die or are injured by discarded trash, fishing monofilament line, hooks and nets.

“Cold stress is like frostbite for manatees, occurring when water drops below their 68-degree comfort zone, triggering a cascade of physical illness.”

Tragically for manatees, the manatee speed zones, warning signs and publicity have little impact on boating habits that maim or kill manatees as they swim or float. Rampant coastal development of natural river shorelines, springs, bays and canals – manatee habitats and travel byways – threaten the already questionable survival of these vulnerable marine mammals.

Then, in 2011, alarms were raised that industrial and municipal sites and farms were allowing toxic runoff or deliberately dumping chemicals, fertilizer, sewage and manure into Florida waterways. Years of worsening water quality caused deadly algal blooms that triggered a catastrophic mass die-off of seagrass in the Indian River Lagoon, where hundreds of manatees winter. The malnutrition, starvation and hundreds of manatee deaths that followed was named an Unusual Mortality Event. From December 2020 to mid-2023, there were an estimated minimum of 1,817 manatee deaths, with 1,052 in 2021 alone.

Since July 2006, the Jacksonville Zoo’s Marine Mammal Response Team has assisted FWC with manatee, dolphins and pygmy sperm whale rescue and recovery. It has saved more than 30 sick or injured manatees. During the 2021 crisis, the zoo treated 13 manatees, the busiest year on record. In 2022, eight manatees were treated. As of October 2023, there have been seven manatees in care.

In October, the zoo broke ground for its Manatee River Habitat, an expansion to four new pools and three habitats, tripling the facility. The new mixed-species environment will feature manatees and Florida’s native fish, reptiles and birds.

Despite her overall critical condition, Asha defied the odds. During her rehabilitation at the zoo, Asha grew from 5’7 to a healthy 8’2 length and gained more than 600 pounds.

On Feb. 13, 2023, Asha was part of a record-breaking release of twelve rehabilitated manatees back into Blue Spring State Park. She lost both parts of her satellite tracking device on Feb. 25, which were recovered from Lake George the following day, just weeks after release. However, there have been reported sightings of her in the St. Johns River.

“Asha has been sighted twice and appears healthy. Because of her distinctive large white side, she is easily identified. A biologist saw her on June 21 at the base of the Dames Point Bridge. On June 28, a citizen spotted her in the Trout River swimming upstream from the zoo. She swam right past us,” Miller said.

Asha’s success encourages manatee rescuers and researchers because, as Miller said, “just knowing she’s out there makes everyone happy.”



Clay Eye  
Physicians & Surgeons

# Happy Holidays

From Our Clay Eye  
Family to Yours

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# LOCAL FOLKS *Monique Worthen*



Worthen celebrating being named Principal of the Year for Region 2 for Duval County Public Schools.

BY JENNIFER JENSEN

Jacksonville native Monique Worthen has been an educator for 19 years and has a passion for helping others. For the past seven years, she has been the principal at Venetia Elementary School, and in that role, she serves as the face of the school. Recently, her passion for the position landed her as Principal of the Year for Region 2 for Duval County Public Schools.

“I’m more the behind-the-scenes type, but in this role, I have to be in the front more,” Worthen said. “I just like to do the work and help get it done.”

At the end of the day, her goal is always to do what is best and right for the children, in addition to serving as a support system for her teachers and staff amid the ever-changing rules and regulations coming down from the state and federal levels.

“Every decision, everything that I do is for my staff and the students,” she said. “There are hard days, but I love it.”

While doing so can be challenging, she emphasizes the need to understand that her teachers and staff have a life outside of school and that their personal journeys affect their job.

“You have to take care of them as a person first, before all the academic stuff,” she said. “I try to keep that at the forefront, keeping the goal in mind.”

Prior to her principal position, Worthen had initially taught first, second and third grades before becoming a reading coach at Normandy Village, followed by Venetia Elementary, where she then moved up to assistant principal. As a teacher, she enjoyed sharing ideas with her colleagues. She then realized if she transitioned to a reading coach, she could share those ideas with even more teachers and help more people. Then, after three years, she decided she wanted to reach even more students, teachers and staff and moved into the administrative side of education.

“Being able to analyze, observe and give teachers feedback on what needs to be done or what I feel would help them was always a passion for me,” Worthen said. “And to help others strive for academic excellence and have that belief system that all students can learn.”

The key is finding what each student connects with and what can help them be successful, she said.



Monique Worthen at a performance with Beautiful Feet Arts Company.



Monique Worthen with her No. 1 supporter, her mother, Josephine Worthen.

“Everybody has a positive or something they can add to learning, to the story. So that’s what I try to do.”

In her spare time, Worthen dances ballet, jazz and African dance with Beautiful Feet Arts Company, which is a faith-based Christian arts company. The organization’s goal is to help the community through performances at prayer, women’s and dance conferences.

She also loves spending time with her family, most of which still live in Jacksonville.

Her mother, Josephine, is her best friend.

Josephine Worthen was a single mother and had Monique when she

was 17 years old.

“She just went into the workforce and made sure I always had what I needed,” Worthen said. “I always saw her working hard and just doing it.” She credits her mother with instilling in her a strong work ethic and discipline toward taking care of business and getting things done.

“She’s always there to help and support me,” Worthen said. “She definitely helped me build that foundation of who I am.”

Worthen is also a big fan of true crime – especially a “good mystery.” She enjoys getting cozy on the couch and catching up on Netflix, movies and shows. When she needs some major R&R, she likes to book a spa day. Ponte Vedra Inn and Club and the Ritz Carlton in Amelia Island are two of her favorites.

In her early days as principal, she recalled bringing a lot of work home over the weekends, which began to take its toll and prompted her current policy of no-work Saturdays.

“I don’t pick up my laptop. I don’t check my email,” she said. “I try to really set some of those boundaries. You have to learn how to have that work-life balance.”

So what’s on the horizon for Worthen? As a woman of faith, Worthen said she has been praying about what she should do next. She would love to write a book about going through challenges with endurance and grace, or maybe one outlining the characteristics that help people succeed in education, or perhaps even parlay that into being a principal coach – a position that doesn’t exist yet, but she hopes it will someday.

“I would love to coach new principals, in year one to three, to kind of help set them up for success. I like the coaching role,” she said.

Although she doesn’t have an immediate plan yet – which isn’t typical for her – Worthen is ok with that.

“I’m learning in this season of my life, just to be content where I’m at now,” she said.



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Danielle Dollar, Lucy Rachels and Rylie Ringhaver on the rooftop of Estrella Cocina.

# Home for the Holidays

BY **LUCY RACHELS**  
(HOME FOR HER OWN HOLIDAY FROM AUBURN UNIVERSITY)

While college students, siblings and parents anticipate students’ return home for Christmas break, the question of how to keep young adults entertained (and off the couch) surfaces. With an entire month back home, it’s easy to slip into a 30-day wave of boredom. However, Jacksonville boasts many spots that make for the perfect Friday, Saturday or even weekday afternoon and can help keep students entertained this winter.

Momni Boutique in Murray Hill, located on Edgewood Avenue, has become a hotspot for high school and college girls in recent years. Since opening in 2009 as an alterations store and officially opening as a boutique in 2015, Momni – run by Joy Lee and her mother, Mary, hence the name Mom-n-I – has become one of the most popular boutiques in Jacksonville. With their holiday collection having dropped the last week of November, and their holiday Christmas party coming Dec. 14 from 6-8 p.m., Momni is currently sporting lots of unique holiday pieces, giving shoppers an opportunity to find something special for the festive season.

After a touch of shopping, college kids can head over to Community Loaves, just three doors down. A locally owned, organic sourdough bakery, their team of bakers crafts everything from scratch, and the well-lit cafe makes for an easy brunch spot or coffee date. Community Loaves started in 2012 as an organic bike-delivered subscription bakery and now has variety of pastries, drinks, and homemade loaves of fresh sourdough bread. Menu highlights include an egg sandwich and avocado toast, with dining options inside or al fresco.

Another hot shopping spot in Jacksonville is Fifi’s Fine Resale Apparel of San Marco, a designer consignment store with a large variety of discounted designer clothing, purses and shoes. Fifi’s contributes to nonprofit organizations, with the San Marco location donating all unsold items to AngelAid

Foundation, making it a great winter shopping spot for fashionistas with a heart for philanthropy season.

If you’re in need of a fun new dinner spot, Estrella Cocina, located on the seventh floor of the Wells Fargo building, has a gorgeous view to offer, as well as Mexican and coastal-inspired dishes. The Baja-Mexican restaurant opened in 2021 and has since been ranked one of Jacksonville’s best rooftop bars. Menu highlights include ceviche, flautas and a variety of fruity house cocktails. Additionally, the restaurant has \$5 margaritas on Jags game days, just dropped a new brunch menu, and has the self-proclaimed “best late-night menu in Jax.” Open on Friday and Saturday until 1 a.m., their rooftop is sure to make for a great night.

After more late-night fun? Buchner’s Bierhalle offers a spirited night. Located on the Murray Hill strip, two doors down from Moon River Pizza, the bierhalle is a speakeasy fronting as the smoke shop Blackhat Vapor Company. The ambient spot and outdoor biergarten offers a menu featuring popular German foods, including wurst, cheeses, sandwiches and pretzels, with a wide variety of wine and beer. This Christmas season, they are hosting their 3rd Annual Weinhnachtsmarkts, or Christmas markets, on Dec. 15 and 16, and will feature a curated selection of vendors displaying holiday merchandise and ‘gifts worth giving.’

On Dec. 10, a familiar favorite, Luminaria, will take place. Luminaria, an annual event that runs through Ortega, Avondale and parts of Riverside, entails neighbors carefully lining driveways with candles and lighting them at dusk. When lit, the neighborhoods, especially Avondale, glow with Christmas cheer and community love and make for a great sightseeing outing. Luminaria kits will be available soon through the Riverside Arts Market, so grab one to join in the holiday fun!

These outings are just a sampling reminder that our bustling city is as vibrant as ever, with lots to visit – or revisit! – while students are home for winter break.



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Father Jason, along with Bruce Eaker, tated Deacon Dale in the "Pope Mobile."

# RESIDENTS

## Junior

Assumption Catholic School held its annual All Saints' Day parade on Nov. 1. Students and staff dressed up as their favorite saint and marched in a parade toward the celebratory mass. Families and friends come to campus to join in and watch the highly anticipated procession and festive attire.

The original All Saints Day originated in the year 609, when Pope Boniface IV dedicated the Pantheon in Rome to the Blessed Virgin Mary. Today, All Saints' Day, also known as All Hallows' Day is a Christian celebration that honors all the saints of the church, whether known or unknown.



Second grader Ella Patterson



Rayan Asakrieh with Andrew Haddad, Ben Johnson, Luke Kallivayalil, Andrew Davis and Ram Thang



Third graders Brooklyn Thompson, Benjamin Abrams and Victoria Espinoza



Bishop Kenny's signed collegiate student-athletes Kaitlyn Gilmore, Skylar Fick, Sydney Roundtree, Claudia Stockard, Riley Talbert, Clare Coyle, Evan Gardner, Graham Evans, Mallory Swain and Rachel Howard.

## Ten Collegiate Scholar-athletes Sign at Bishop Kenny

Ten Bishop Kenny High School seniors signed college scholarships on National Signing Day, Nov. 8, with all ten being recognized as scholar-athletes.

**The signed student-athletes include:**

**Clare Coyle**, Furman University, basketball

**Graham Evans**, Boston University, swimming

**Skylar Fick**, University of West Alabama, volleyball

**Evan Gardner**, Mount St. Mary's University, swimming

**Kaitlyn Gilmore**, Pensacola State College, softball

**Rachel Howard**, Duquesne University, swimming

**Sydney Roundtree**, United States Merchant Marine Academy, basketball

**Claudia Stockard**, University of Alabama at Birmingham, beach volleyball

**Mallory Swain**, Belmont Abbey College, volleyball

**Riley Talbert**, University of Alabama at Birmingham, basketball

These Bishop Kenny High School seniors not only bring exceptional athletic talent to their respective colleges but also embody the school's commitment to academic excellence.



The Assumption Catholic School middle school cross country team.

## Strong Showing at States

Assumption Catholic School's middle school cross country team traveled to Holloway Park Cross Country Course in Lakeland, Florida, for the Florida Youth Running Association's Middle School Cross Country State Championship on Oct. 28. The girls 3K team placed third, and the boys 2K team finished in 12th place. The team had a couple strong individual finishes as well with seventh grader Graziana Gowdy placing third and Alexandra Lumpkin coming in 14th place.

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Bishop Kenny's FHSAA Class 2A state champions. Top row: Chance Bottenfield, Peter de Boer, Carter Wright and Riley Brownell. Bottom row: Coach Ray Millari, Coach Stephanie Jaeger, Christian Grden, Matthew Leitheiser, Evan Gardner, Graham Evans, Angelo Candelora, Owen Kerkezi, Coach Laurel Valley

# Three-peat for Bishop Kenny Boys Swimming

The Bishop Kenny High School boys swim team made history by winning their third consecutive FHSAA Class 2A state title at the 2023 Swimming & Diving State Championships held on Nov. 4 at the Florida Aquatic Swimming and Training Facility in Ocala, Florida. The Crusaders came out on top with a total of 236.5 points, marking a historic “three-peat” for the Crusaders, who also claimed the state championship titles in 2021 and 2022. It was also their fourth district title and third consecutive regional title.

Led by head coach Laurel Valley, the team secured first place in the 200 and 400 freestyle relays and set new school records in the 400-free relay and the 100 backstroke. Sophomore Carter Wright also took first place in the 100 backstroke.

“What an incredible season,” said Valley. “From the start of the season, everyone's question was whether we would be able to win it for a third time. I tried to temper my expectations because we did lose some very talented swimmers, and I wasn't sure how the team would handle it. Midway through the season, they had a great showing at the Catholic Invitational Meet, and I thought the possibility might be there. When we lost the relay to a disqualification in districts, I felt that possibility narrow. We were able to refocus the boys and make sure they were concentrating on individual events to regain the points that we would lose from the relay. The boys came out strong at the state meet and never looked back.”

In addition to the boys' success, the school's girls team also had a strong season, securing district and regional championships and a sixth-place finish at the state level. The 200-free relay team – consisting of Rachel Howard, Talley Gettemy, Pearson Wedell and Victoria Weldon – claimed first place at the state level. Howard also set a new school record in the 100 fly and placed second in the state.



Bolles Eighth Graders Band on Class Trip to North Carolina

# Mountain Bonding

Bolles eighth graders traveled to Black Mountain, North Carolina, during the week of Oct. 23 to spend time connecting with nature and each other. The 145 classmates spent four days at the YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly, participating in team-building activities like a ropes course, a mountain hike, an ecological simulation game and heritage crafts, and celebrating their last year in middle school together. They also ventured off-site for whitewater rafting on the French Broad River, braving Class II-III rapids under the guidance of French Broad Adventures. During the evenings, students enjoyed campfires, s'mores and dancing.



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## Empower Hour

This fall, the Bartram Learning Resource Center on the Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus launched Empower Hour – a program that provides students with dedicated time to improve their executive functioning skills. Led by middle school learning specialist Janice Rausch, these intensive sessions are designed to equip students to take greater control of their learning, simplify the understanding of specific executive functioning skills and provide clarification on how to execute those skills while allowing for opportunities for practical application. The first two Empower Hours held this school year covered organization and notetaking, and those who attended received custom-created Doodle Notes pages with information reinforcing the lessons.



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.



## Record-breaking Food Drive for San Jose Episcopal Day School

Sixth grade students at San Jose Episcopal Day School orchestrated a record-breaking Annual School-wide Food Drive Friendly Competition, generating substantial support for the St. Mary’s Episcopal Church Food Pantry. The drive amassed 3,261 items, valued at approximately \$8,000, eclipsing previous collection records. The school fostered spirit for the event through a homeroom competition for the coveted title of “Collection Champions.”

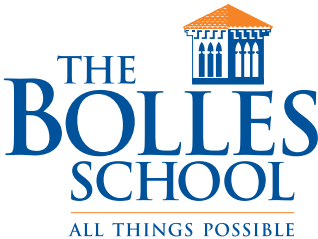
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Gavin Boree with Daylin John-Hill and Parker Kane   Sophia Joos with Simany Lee and Kate Meyers-Labenz   Chayce Kieck with David Martin, Spencer Stephens and Chris Joost   Landon Kyser with Carter Lancaster, Alex Meyers-Labenz and Seth Tolentino   Julia Murphy with Ashlyn Anderson and Bella Bergeron

# 17 Bolles Athletes Sign Commitments

Seventeen Bolles student-athletes representing six sports were honored on Nov. 8 for committing to a particular college or university to continue their athletic and academic careers. Family, friends, coaches and faculty gathered in Davis Gym on the San Jose Campus to celebrate.

**Ashlyn Anderson,**  
Kennesaw State University, volleyball  
**Bella Bergeron,**  
Denison University, volleyball  
**Gavin Boree,**  
High Point University, lacrosse  
**Daylin John-Hill,**  
Jacksonville University, lacrosse  
**Sophia Joos,**  
Emory University, swimming

**Chris Joost,**  
Boston College, cross country/  
track and field  
**Parker Kane,**  
Florida Institute  
of Technology, lacrosse  
**Chayce Kieck,**  
Clemson University, baseball  
**Landon Kyser,**  
University of Wisconsin, swimming

**Carter Lancaster,**  
University of California,  
Berkeley, swimming  
**Simany Lee,**  
University of Georgia,  
swimming  
**David Martin,**  
Samford University, baseball  
**Alex Meyers-Labenz,**  
Duke University, swimming

**Meyers-Labenz,**  
Duke University, swimming  
**Julia Murphy,**  
Virginia Tech, swimming  
**Spencer Stephens,**  
U.S. Naval Academy, baseball  
**Seth Tolentino,**  
Texas A&M University, swimming

**Kate**

This is the first of three college commitment ceremonies planned at Bolles this school year to recognize student-athletes as they commit to colleges. Ceremonies are also planned for February and April 2024.



Bolles students and children from Sanctuary on 8th Street celebrated at Bolles' Halloween Carnival.

## No Tricks, Just Treats

Children served by Sanctuary on 8th Street were treated to a Halloween Carnival celebration at the Bolles campus, hosted by the upper school's Community Connections organization. The treasured tradition included games, prizes and candy and served as a first-quarter reward for the Sanctuary children. All 75 of the upper school clubs worked for about a month to organize their table and games like cornhole and pumpkin ring toss. The carnival is typically the first event for each of the clubs, providing an early team-bonding experience for them as well.

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# Honoring Veterans

With the school lined with American flags, San Jose Episcopal Day School hosted its yearly Veterans Day Chapel on Nov. 8. During the morning ceremony, the school paid tribute to military families while the U.S. Navy Color Guard presented the colors with pride. Attendees, including students, teachers, parents and members of the congregation, respectfully stood during the service's songs, each song holding personal significance for those who or their family members had served in the military. Leading the service was Father Steph Britt, Rector of San Jose Episcopal Church, who expressed heartfelt gratitude for the dedicated men and women who have bravely served our nation.



# A Salute to Veterans

Leaders on all four Bolles campuses hosted special Veterans Day celebrations on Nov. 10 to honor those who have served our country in the military. On the Lower School Ponte Vedra Beach Campus, students welcomed veterans, parents and guests to George Hall for a commemorative flag event with patriotic songs and presentations. The Lower School Whitehurst Campus held a morning program in McGehee Auditorium with vocal performances of the National Anthem and other patriotic tunes, and the Bolles band recognized each branch of the military by playing each one's official songs. It also included two special video messages sent in from active-duty Bulldog parents. The Middle School Bartram Campus held a convocation in Parker Auditorium with a message from 29-year Navy veteran Capt. Jim Fossa, who worked on the retired USS Orleck now docked in Jacksonville. Meanwhile, the Upper School San Jose Campus hosted an activities period celebration led by the club Veterans Encouraging Teen Success. The event concluded with Bolles musicians Tim Groover II and Aidan Turney playing "Taps" from the Bolles Hall towers.



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Ty Clagget with Rob Morgan, Jen Ware and Liz Morgan



Charleen Hutchinson with Lauren Baly, Allyson Fraser and Tori Walton



Bishop Kenny's Claudia Stockard spikes the ball on Bolles during the schools' annual Pink Out game.

# Hosting Hope

The Aidyn Mae Hope Fund charity event, presented by Vestcor, was held on Nov. 9 at The Garden Club of Jacksonville in Riverside. The event raised funds for research efforts into a Gene Replacement Therapy (GRT) for FOXG1 syndrome, an incredibly rare brain disorder with less than 1,000 cases diagnosed globally that affects normal brain development and functionality. Event committee members included Tarik and Melissa Bateh, Leslie Jones, Erin Jones, Jenn Kjellman, Joseph and Aryn Lentz, Chip and Jen Skinner, Joe and Morgan Teichert, Gary and Holly Walsh, and Tori Walton.



Joseph and Aryn Lentz



Charles and Kimberly Gehrdes with Quincy Gottlieb, Stephanie Beer, Darryl Gottlieb, Robert Gehrdes, Aidyn Mae Gottlieb and Tessa Gottlieb.



Erin Skinner with Brad and Charlie Harby, Erica and Joe Nagy

# 16th Annual Volleyball Pink Out

The Bishop Kenny vs. Bolles rivalry is known for its intensity, but when that collective passion is channeled into a worthy cause, it gets transformed into a remarkable force for good – in this case, the fight against breast cancer.

The 16th Annual Bishop Kenny vs. Bolles Pink Out was not only a competitive clash on the volleyball court but a successful effort in raising over \$2,000 for The DONNA Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting breast cancer patients and their families. Throughout October, funds were raised through t-shirt sales, a food truck event and the donation of the game's entire gate proceeds.

Head Coach Suzanne Winkler of Bishop Kenny and the late Bolles Head Coach Elise Bush initiated the Pink Out game in 2007. Their vision was to raise awareness about breast cancer within the Jacksonville volleyball community.

"I hope the Pink Out never loses its value, because the students, fans and players really come together for a great cause," said Winkler.

The Crusaders swept the Bulldogs in three straight sets, but the true victory for both teams went beyond the win-loss column.

Bishop Kenny competed in the girls volleyball state Final Four in November and finished the season as the fourth-best team in Florida in the 4A division.

## 21st Annual Gingerbread Extravaganza

### To-Do List

1 Get your creativity on! Enter the gingerbread display contest! Must submit display by Dec. 1st.

2 Invite others to enter the contest!

3 Gingie says, Sponsor a holiday tree!

4 Buy tickets! Scan to enter

5 Meet Santa on Kids Day, Dec. 10!

6 Play the scavenger hunt!

7 Buy a gingerbread cookie!

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- 1 RAP Headquarters  
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Dec. 9-10, 10-4pm
- 2 Riverside Church at Park and King  
Open sanctuary, Christmas music from organist,  
Worship Ministry
- 3 Friends of the Labyrinth at Peace  
Memorial Park  
Walk the magical labyrinth, musical performances,  
hot chocolate/coffee food truck
- 4 Garden Club & Go Tuk'n  
Luminaria Festival and ticketed tours
- 5 Stockton Street District  
Enjoy entertainment and dining
- 6 Riverside Ave Christian Church  
Live nativity and concerts
- 7 Grace Church of Avondale  
Live Nativity, Christmas carols, cookies and coffee on  
the front steps of the church

- 8 Riverside Park United Methodist Church  
Navy Band Southeast public concert
- 9 St. Paul Catholic Church  
candle-lit Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
- 10 Church of Good Shepherd  
UNF Cozy Choral Concert 5:00 pm
- 11 FSCJ Kent Campus  
ZenCog Luminaria Bike Ride 5:30pm
- 12 Iguana on Park  
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and drinks
- 13 Biscottis  
Book your Luminaria dinner reservation
- 14 Pedal Pub  
offering Luminaria mobile pub bike tour (2702  
Ernest St, Jacksonville, FL 32205)
- 15 Memorial Park  
Food trucks & fire trucks, train for kids, Santa &  
Mrs. Claus, Popcorn & Cotton Candy, Stiltwalker

- 16 VyStar Credit Union
- 17 Cady @ Compass
- 18 Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida  
Network Realty
- 19 Cowford Realty  
Donuts and Cider Stop
- 20 ZenCog
- 21 Sun-Ray

Witness the beauty  
of Luminaria by  
taking a stroll  
through your  
favorite parks for  
beautiful displays of  
luminaries.

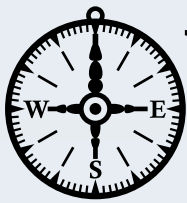


RIVERSIDE  
AVONDALE  
PRESERVATION'S  
39TH ANNUAL  
*Luminaria*  
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 10TH  
BEGINNING AT DUSK

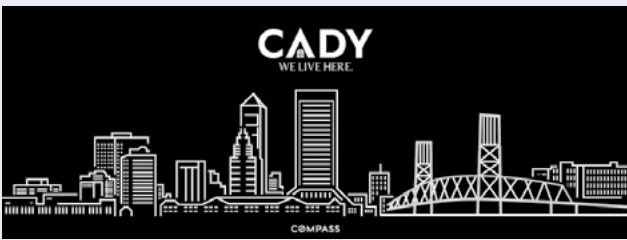
This year's poster was designed by local tattoo  
artist and retailer, **Myra Oh**. Check out her  
shop on Stockton Street, Planet Circle.



OUR SPONSORS



**VyStar**  
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**RAP**  
RIVERSIDE  
AVONDALE  
PRESERVATION

**HISTORY OF LUMINARIA**  
Luminaria has become one of the premier holiday events in Jacksonville and a legacy for the Riverside Avondale neighborhood. This year, we will be entering in our 39th wonderful example of community pride and dedication to our neighborhood.

The event is community driven involving many volunteers, and includes events planned and coordinated throughout the Historic District.

**PURCHASE YOUR KITS** today from Riverside Avondale Preservation online or at the Riverside Arts Market. Drive thru kit sales at 2623 Herschel St., Jacksonville, FL 32204. Saturday & Sunday 10-4. [Riversideavondale.org](http://Riversideavondale.org). Merchandise available: posters, keepsake totes, magnets, and raffle to win a ZenCog illuminated bike cruiser just in time to join the bike parade!

By buying your Luminaria kit through RAP, you help supply free Luminaria candles and bags to our parks, public spaces, and places of worship at no cost to them. Thank you for your support!



PRESERVING COMMUNITY

Riverside Avondale Preservation exists to preserve Riverside Avondale's historic fabric and unique character; promote local businesses, arts, and culture; advocate with and for the neighborhood, and celebrate community. You can join us in our mission by becoming a member today.

## *In Loving Memory*



# NANCY REILLY SCHULTZ

JULY 20, 1930 - NOVEMBER 9, 2023

Nancy Jane Reilly Schultz died November 9th, surrounded by her family.

The only daughter of Eunice Crowley and John F. Reilly, Nancy was raised in Garden City, Long Island, until the age of ten, when the family moved to New Orleans. There Nancy attended Sacred Heart Convent School and graduated from the McGehee School. The family often spent summers at Ponte Vedra Beach, where she met a handsome jitterbug partner, sixteen-year-old Fred ("Fritz") Schultz. In 1951, before her twenty-first birthday, Nancy graduated from Smith College and married Fred Schultz that August. Catherine was born the following June, while Fred was finishing at Princeton. She always said that it was so much fun to audit classes with all the college boys and to be immersed in campus life. One day Nancy mentioned a disheveled old man with crazy hair who had taken an interest in her and the baby. When Nancy told Fred, he said, "You don't know who that is? That's Albert Einstein!"

Later in life, Nancy went back to college, majoring in fine arts. In 2000 she received a BFA from the University of North Florida, summa cum laude, Phi Kappa Phi. Although she embraced painting late in life, she found great joy in making art and had a significant degree of success, counting 15 solo exhibitions and 13 group exhibitions. Her work in acrylic and in colored pencil, chiefly featuring flowers in brilliant colors, hangs in eight corporate collections and many more private collections.

Nancy was very involved in civic work, beginning with the Junior League when she and Fred first moved back to Fred's hometown. Since she was not a Jacksonville native, she was surprised and proud to have been chosen for membership. Through the Junior League she became the first docent at the Cummer Gallery of Art and later became head of their docent program. She was a caseworker for Volunteers of America as well as a part-time social worker. She was finance chairman for Symphony Showcase, raised donations for Channel 7, served as co-chairman of the Lead Gifts Committee for Hubbard House, served on the Steering Committee for the Metropolitan YMCA, was a volunteer for PBS, served as Duval County Women's Chair for the March of Dimes, was a founding member of the Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital,

and served on the Executive Committee of the University of North Florida, where she remained an honorary trustee.

In addition to her volunteer work, through the Schultz Foundation she supported Riverkeeper, Jacksonville University Marine Science Center, The Schultz Center for Teaching and Leadership, Smith College, Bolles School, Episcopal School, Paideia School (Atlanta), St. Vincent's Hospital, Jacksonville Zoo, Princeton University, and Daniel.

In 1963 Fred was elected to the Florida House of Representatives, becoming Speaker in 1968. During these years Nancy was very busy raising young children and taking care of her disabled brother. When Fred was Vice-chair of the Federal Reserve and the children were older, she began an exciting time in her life, meeting and corresponding with Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis, and having lively conversations with Ronald and Nancy Reagan, Shirley Temple Black, and Barack and Michelle Obama. Fred was received by heads of central banks and ministers of state worldwide. Together Fred and Nancy toured nearly all of Western Europe and East

Asia including visits to Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, and an occasional trip to Africa and South America. In their later years, traveling with family and friends, London became their favorite destination.

After her children left the nest and Fred retired from public service, Nancy opened a tennis shop in Avondale. Looters took the name "The Smash" a little too literally and the store closed after plate glass windows were smashed to steal warm-up suits.

Although as a girl Nancy was utterly uninterested in sports (preferring instead to dance the jitterbug at every opportunity), Fred encouraged her to learn golf



and tennis. For twenty years she played for the Timuquana "A" women's tennis team, rising to number three. After she gave up tennis she and Fred began to play golf again, and she even got a hole-in-one at Timuquana. When golf became too arduous, the two of them

would race-walk for miles up and down Riverside Avenue and around Memorial Park, never failing to don their signature wide-brimmed hats. Nancy kept up her walking in later years, striding along around the condo parking lot with her walker, ever the tenacious and spirited little Irish girl.

Nancy Schultz was a vivacious and involved grandmother, the central switchboard for family updates, who expected to hear from her children regularly. She felt that it was her sacred responsibility to keep up with each development in the lives of her friends and family. In fact, Nancy thought that it was basic human courtesy to be intensely curious about people's lives. As a consequence, she got to know each workman who crossed her threshold, each server at a restaurant, and more recently, each nurse who cared for her.

Up until a few weeks before her death at 93, she often said that she still felt like a teenager, and the entire family agreed. Despite her experiences among the great and powerful, she was always unaffected and full of joie de vivre, at heart the perpetual bobby-soxer.

Nancy is survived by three of her children: Catherine Schultz McFarland (Douglas McFarland) of San Francisco, Frederick Schultz Jr. of New York, and Clifford Schultz of Jacksonville.

Her six grandchildren are Keegan Kelley of Atlanta, Caitlin Kelley (Christian Valley) of Atlanta, Bronwyn Kelley (Grant Cooper) of New York City, Dr. Mei Schultz of Washington D.C., and Reilly and Rick Schultz of Jacksonville.

Her great-grandchildren are Arabella Karamesic, Roman and Sawyer Karamseic-Kelley, and Sophia Valley.

Nancy's husband Fred Schultz predeceased her as did her youngest son, John Reilly Schultz.

Farewell, Mom. Farewell, Gammy. Flights of angels sing thee to thy rest.

In lieu of flowers, please send any gifts to Daniel, a wonderful children's welfare organization in Jacksonville. [www.danielkids.org](http://www.danielkids.org)



# Grief During the Holidays

by Elaine Ehrlichman

The holiday season is a time of cheer and festivity for many people, but for others, it's a time of the year that stirs up memories and difficult emotions. Grief can feel especially overwhelming during the holiday season due to the heightened emphasis on spending time with family and loved ones. If you're struggling as the holidays near, try to remember that you aren't alone. Below, we've compiled some tips for coping with your grief during this last stretch of the year.

**Spend time with people who understand your situation. Alternatively, spend some time alone.**

Spending time with people who understand what you're going through can be incredibly comforting, as long as the proper expectations and boundaries are set. Explaining beforehand that you may need to take breaks from socializing throughout the night or that you would prefer not to talk about how you're feeling are both great ways to communicate your needs.

If you're unsure of how to communicate what you need, try writing your boundaries down on a piece of paper and practice saying them out loud before spending time with others. You can also send out a message before your arrival so that you don't have to talk about these sensitive topics in person.

Sometimes, others' company, though well-intentioned, can be too much to handle when you're processing your grief, and that is perfectly okay. Spending time alone can also be healing, as there aren't any expectations; you can do precisely what you feel like doing to help yourself feel better, and it's

completely up to you what those things are. Please keep in mind that if you do choose to spend some time alone, there is a difference between healthy alone time and isolation. Remember to reach out to your support network from time to time so you can make sure you're spending your solo time in a healthy manner rather than a potentially isolating one.

**Partake in or reassess traditions.**

If you and your loved one had special traditions during the holiday season, continuing to partake in these traditions can help you feel reconnected with that person. Not only will it remind you of the wonderful times spent together, but it will also encourage you to keep the traditions going. That being said, it's important to note that this may also be a good time to consider if you'd even like to keep certain traditions going, as sometimes situations change. Putting pressure on yourself to hold onto something that no longer serves a positive purpose isn't necessary, and it's okay to let go if that's what feels right.

There are countless ways to honor a loved one, so try to think of something that feels sincere and healing to you.

**Find a private outlet to release your emotions.**

Keeping your emotions under lock and key can be isolating and painful. Instead, try expressing yourself in a way that comes naturally to you. If you make art, try creating a piece that illustrates your pain and grief. Contrary to what some people may say, art doesn't have to be pretty. Think of it like opening your mental floodgates and allowing all of your pain and sorrow

to spill onto the canvas. It might sound like a strange way to process your emotions, but it can be extremely helpful to visually see what your mind feels like.

If making art doesn't feel like the right approach, don't worry! There are so many other outlets to explore. Singing, sewing, and even exercising are all examples of hobbies that can double as an emotional outlet. It's all about trying different things and finding what feels best for you.

**Distract yourself.**

Sometimes, the best thing you can do for your mental well-being is to distract yourself. Taking steps to process your grief is always going to be important, but it's essential that you don't push yourself too hard. You will heal in your own time, so it's okay to distract yourself when things start to feel overwhelming. Try watching a funny movie or visiting a local museum to take your mind off of your current emotions for a little while. What you choose to do all comes down to personal preference.

Ultimately, coping with grief is about doing what feels right for you. What helps one person may not be the best choice for you, and vice versa. Everyone heals differently, so don't feel badly if something doesn't seem to be helping. It's all about experimenting with different coping skills and figuring out which one is most healing for you. Hardage-Giddens has multiple resources for grief management, so please contact us if you need some support. It's what we're here for, and we always want to help. Please take care and be kind to yourself during this holiday season!



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904-288-0025

**HARDAGE-GIDDENS HOLLY HILL  
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3601 Old Jennings Rd., Middleburg  
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Please contact any of our locations for more information regarding grief resources.

# COMPASS

There's no place like **home**,  
especially for the holidays...

Let us help find your **forever** in Murray Hill, Riverside, Avondale & Ortega.



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