



## Tressed to Impress

Melody Choate, Director of Education at Hair Peace Salon, teased the runways as one of only 18 international stylists on the Odete DaSilva Hair Team during February fashion weeks in New York and Milan.

READ MORE ON PAGE 17



## Remembering Rug Legend, "Mayor" Hooshang Harvesf

Jacksonville mourns the loss of Hooshang Harvesf, Ph.D., who passed away Feb. 3. The Persian-born Harvesf owned and operated Hooshang Oriental Rug Gallery since 1977, it was Avondale's oldest shop. Lovingly dubbed the "Mayor of Avondale" he was known for his holiday nutcracker window display and knowledge of rugs from weaving centers around the world.

READ MORE ON PAGE 46

## Contending with Corruption

Jacksonville Ethics Commission issues joint statement in an attempt to prevent a state amendment they say might "weaken anti-corruption laws and local ethics commissions."

READ MORE ON PAGE 8

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A Golden Year  
for Neighborhood Preservation

Victor Joudi, Michael Mills and Jonathon Addington greeted attendees of the 2024 Riverside Avondale Preservation Annual Meeting and Preservation Awards on Feb. 15, which celebrated 50 years of community and honored those dedicated to historic preservation and neighborliness in the Riverside Avondale area.

READ MORE ON PAGE 13



Emma Sicoli with Jackie Drayton

## Fashion Shines After Dark

Fashion and flair were in full display at North Florida School of Special Education's inaugural Heart of the Runway After Dark evening fashion show at the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center on Tuesday, Feb. 13. Local celebrities, including television personality Vic Micolucci and the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville Executive Director Diana Donovan, strutted down the runway in springtime ensembles created by the fashionable partnership between Rodger Woika's team at Dillard's and Linda Cunningham of Linda Cunningham Designer Boutique.

READ MORE ON PAGE 25



Si beau! Carlee Mukes and Ayumu Hinata were the epitome of the Bohemian spirit and decadence of 1890s Paris during the Moulin Rouge-inspired 9th Annual #DTJax Gala, Duval Rouge, on Feb. 23.

READ MORE ON PAGE 21

## Record-Breaking Crowd for Ortega River Run



A record-breaking crowd cheered on nearly 1,700 runners during the 46th Annual W.W. Gay Ortega River Run Feb. 10. The run was anchored at Episcopal School of Jacksonville's St. Mark's Campus, whose financial aid efforts were also the beneficiary of the event. Face painting, balloon art, a game truck, sweets, giveaways and more were all part of the street fair that accompanied the run.

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# Mayor Appoints James Director of Planning and Development

Mayor Donna Deegan has appointed R. Brett James, a 24-year U.S. Navy veteran, to serve as Director of Planning and Development for the City of Jacksonville, effective Monday, Feb. 5, 2024. In this role, he will be responsible for all operations of the City's Planning and Development Department, including the Community Planning, Current Planning, Development Services, Building Inspection, Transportation Planning, and the Office of Resiliency. "I'm excited to see Brett join our administration as the Director of Planning and Development," said Deegan. "His successful career brings a fresh perspective and a wealth of knowledge to Jacksonville, both of which will benefit our citizens now and into the future."

During his previous federal career, James established himself as an industry leader in the federal planning niche. As a longstanding member of the American Planning Association, he was elected as chair, conference chair, and vice chair of its eminent Federal Planning Division. Career accolades include Outstanding Community Planner for the U.S. Air Force and the Meritorious Civilian Service Medal.



R. Brett James



Friendship Fountain along downtown's Southbank reopened Feb. 15.

BY JENNIFER JENSEN

After three years, the Friendship Fountain along downtown's Southbank has finally reopened. The city unveiled the updated, state-of-the-art entertainment fountain during the Sip and Stroll on Feb. 15. The 500,000-gallon fountain features a programmed light and water show with the river and city skyline as its backdrop.

"When you picture Jacksonville in your mind, it's Friendship Fountain that comes to mind," Mayor Donna Deegan said during the ceremony. The development of the fountain and park was originally a citizen-led effort, she said. "It truly is the people's park."

The Friendship Fountain, located within St. Johns Park, originally opened in 1965 and was designed by architect Taylor Hardwick, who also designed the building that now houses the Jessie Ball duPont Center. The project was originally led by Commissioner Dallas L. Thomas.

"The fountain that is open and operating now is a very different fountain than what was operated in 1965, of course," said Daryl Joseph, Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Services for the City. "Friendship Fountain is now a state-of-the-art facility with the latest technology as it relates to entertainment fountains."

According to Joseph, a focal point of this renovation project was to also address the aging infrastructure of the fountain. These upgrades included addressing malfunctioning lights, leaks and deteriorating structures, as well as new innovations like a waterfall wall and revamped fountain components. Additionally, improvements were made to the surrounding area, including circular benches with integrated speakers, pergolas for shaded seating, and new walkways with LED lights that can change colors. The overall cost of this phase was \$7.95 million.

"This is just the beginning of the types of projects we want to have...more riverfront public spaces," said Councilmember Joe Carlucci.

The next phase will include a mist screen and on-site projector, as well as changes to the park area through the addition of a themed playground, restroom, picnic area, concession stand, wedding venue and interpretive gardens. These phases are scheduled to open late summer 2024 and fall 2025.

This is not the first upgrade for the fountain; there have been many projects to update or maintain the various systems that are required to operate the fountain's water, lighting and music. It was refurbished in 1985 when the Southbank Riverwalk opened. It operated for about 15 years before its water pumps started showing signs of irreversible damage. An update was planned in 2001, specifically centered around Jacksonville serving as the Super Bowl host city, but shortly after it was repaired, two of the fountain's three water pumps stopped working permanently. In 2010, the city planned a \$3.1 million project to replace the old pumps. It reopened in June 2011 and had been unchanged until now.

Former Councilmember and Downtown Investment Authority CEO Lori Boyer was a big champion for getting the fountain reopened during her tenure.

"This project has been a long time coming," Boyer said. "And it's an exciting start."

"Since Friendship Fountain has been open, it has increased the visitors to the park and Riverwalk," Joseph said. "Also, it has provided another exciting space downtown for citizens and visitors to experience."

Nightly shows will be held at 7 p.m., 7:30 p.m., 8 p.m. and 8:30 p.m., weather permitting.

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# New Home for Mental Health

Baptist Health, Wolfson Children's Hospital and THE PLAYERS Championship Village celebrated Wolfson Children's new Behavioral Health and Wellness Unit with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and tour on Friday, Feb. 9. The 20-bed inpatient unit will double the number of beds available for children and adolescents requiring hospitalization for mental health conditions. "Unfortunately, the 66 beds that are available between Jacksonville and Orlando are not enough to meet the growing need for inpatient behavioral health care services in Northeast Florida, and we are grateful to all who have helped us meet the demand for this vitally important care," said Michael A. Mayo, president and CEO of Baptist Health.

The unit is funded, in part, by a \$3 million gift from THE PLAYERS Championship Village and a \$5 million appropriation from the State of Florida. Located on the third floor of Wolfson Children's, in the space previously occupied by the pediatric intensive care unit, the Behavioral Health and Wellness Unit opened to patients Feb. 12. "We know the need for behavioral health services is increasing, and our new inpatient unit will not only help save lives, but it will serve as a safe and comforting space for our patients as they receive the care they need," said Allegra C. Jaros, president of Wolfson Children's. "Wolfson Children's can continue to provide compassionate and individualized care for our patients and families thanks to their support of this new behavioral health unit."



Michael A. Mayo, president and CEO of Baptist Health, speaks at the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

# Free Services for Child Well-being

The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services recently established Project LAUNCH, a new mental health care initiative aimed at promoting the holistic well-being of children in Jacksonville, specifically for those from birth to eight years old. Project LAUNCH is designed to enhance the social, emotional, cognitive, physical and behavioral aspects of a child's development. It includes free, comprehensive, in-home mental health services for parents and families to help foster the nurturing environment that is crucial during a child's early years. "We understand that positively impacting mental health at an early age is not just a goal; it's a heartfelt mission that holds the power to transform lives," said Project LAUNCH Program Director Chris Atkins. "We aim to instill a sense of emotional well-being that will resonate throughout a child's life, ensuring a brighter and more resilient future for the children and families we are privileged to serve." The program is made possible through a five-year grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Certified mental health therapists will provide in-home mental health assessments as well as tailored counseling, parent education and wraparound services. For more information or to enroll in the Project LAUNCH program, call (904) 487-5802 or email [projectlaunch@jfcjsjax.org](mailto:projectlaunch@jfcjsjax.org).



Summer King with Demika Jackson and Kellie Ann Kelleher-Smith

# Planned Giving Symposium Helps Philanthropy Professionals Sharpen Skills

## The Planned Giving Council of Northeast Florida convenes industry professionals for education, ethics and networking

BY LAURA PHELPS



Olivia Bush and Tonnie Alliance

The Planned Giving Council of Northeast Florida (PGC) welcomed a diverse cross-section of professionals from the philanthropic sector on Feb. 8 for the 14th annual Planned Giving Symposium. "As an organization, we work to bring together those in the philanthropic sector, nonprofit leaders and development professionals, as well as professional wealth advisors," said Mariette Brodeur, president of the PGC. "Our goal is to network with other professionals, educate ourselves, share ideas and build a community with a goal of

increasing philanthropy in our community." This year's half-day symposium was held on Florida Blue's sprawling campus on the Southside of Jacksonville and covered a broad range of topics from ethics to people skills. "This year we wanted to focus on some of the ethical aspects of charitable gift planning, some of the tax issues, and then round out the day with some emotional intelligence. What's nice about that broad range of topics is it's helpful for everyone," Brodeur said. The Council brought in experts from across the country and within the local community to speak with about 50 attendees. The morning sessions examined case studies for an in-depth discussion on ethics, legal considerations and lessons learned from success stories. Later sessions offered engaging exercises on how to build relationships with different personalities, and keys to success for fundraisers. PGC is a professional association for people whose work includes developing, marketing and administering charitable planned gifts. Its members include estate planning and tax attorneys, accountants, bank trust officers, financial advisors, consultants and representatives of nonprofit organizations and institutions. It also works closely with the Estate Planning Council of Northeast Florida to share resources and education for the benefit of the members of both organizations. "If we're all working together to share best practices and discuss trends, we can have a greater impact in Northeast Florida," Brodeur said.



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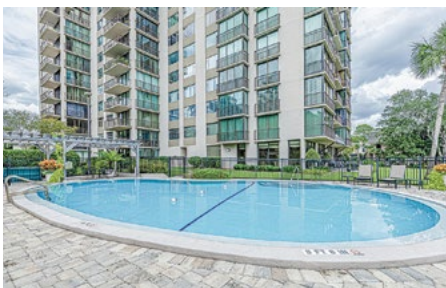


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Group 4 At-Large City Councilmember Matt Carlucci addresses the Jacksonville Ethics Commission to express his continued opposition to Senate Bill 7014 at a special meeting on Monday, Feb. 12.

# City Raises Contention Over Ethics Bill

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The Jacksonville Ethics Commission has issued a statement opposing a state bill containing amendments that it says would result in “reducing anti-corruption efforts of all local ethics commission in the State of Florida.”

The bill in question – Senate Bill 7014 – was passed on Feb. 1 with amendments added “last minute,” the statement continued, “without any notice to, or input from, any local ethics officials in the state.”

These amendments include language regarding how complaints can be submitted to ethics commissions, requiring allegations to “be based upon personal knowledge or information other than hearsay,” and virtually eliminating the ability to submit complaints anonymously by requiring “a complaint to be written and signed under oath or affirmation by the person making the complaint.” Furthermore, it would prohibit ethics commissions’ from self-initiating investigations.

During the Feb. 1 Senate Session, Senator Danny Burgess responded to questions regarding the personal knowledge requirement.

“What we’re looking to do here is add greater protection from more malicious or meritless attempts that are politically motivated,” Burgess said. “I believe this is consistent with what we already require in other areas,” adding that allegations or complaints must be “based on some form of merit.”

Senator Jason W.B. Pizzo said he was “fully in support” of the bill but argued the amendment pertaining to personal knowledge should not be included.

“I think this is a poison pill as a gatekeeping function, which I get because we think people abuse it,” he

said. “But this is unnecessary, and we should just let with the standard that applies now, otherwise there’s a lot of stuff you’re not going to be able to uncover.”

Ultimately, the Senate passed the bill as amended.

The Jacksonville Ethics Commission has joined a coalition of local ethics commissions, including those from Miami-Dade County, Palm Beach County, City of Tallahassee and the City of Naples. In a letter sent to the member of the House State Affair Committee and the Florida House of Representatives on Feb. 12, the coalition, on behalf “all major Florida local ethics commissions,” urged representatives and committee members to:

- “Pass the House Ethics Bill (CS/HB 1597) without any amendments that weaken anti-corruption laws and local ethics commissions;
- “Oppose the personal knowledge requirement for ethics investigations and complaints, which would dismantle oversight of government;
- and “Oppose any efforts to restrict local ethics commissions’ ability to self-initiate investigations of public corruption.”

The Jacksonville Ethics Commission held a special meeting on Monday, Feb. 12 to discuss the legislation and its response to it.

During the meeting, City of Jacksonville Office of Ethics, Compliance and Oversight Executive Director Kirby Oberdorfer said the amendments included in SB 7014 are “a solution for which there is no problem, at least in Jacksonville.”

Ninety-four complaints have been filed with Jacksonville’s ethics commission from 2015 to 2023; of

those, 55 were “either anonymous or informal.”

Twelve of those 55 complaints were considered for self-initiation, Oberdorfer said, and the commission has “self-initiated in two of the 55.”

At-Large Group 4 City Councilmember Matt Carlucci attended the meeting as a guest to speak to his continued opposition to the legislation.

“The way that the language was inserted into the bill, without public hearing and without any committee work, that’s the height of contempt and arrogance, and I think it’s unethical, which is exactly why we are against it and most of the local commissions around the state are against it – matter of fact, all of them are,” he said after the meeting.

In its statement released later that evening, the Jacksonville Ethics Commission urged the House to reject the amendments as the requirements included therein “may intimidate and have a chilling effect on persons who have information about corruption by local officials and employees.”

“If this bill passes, it would be a disservice to Jacksonville citizens and it will cause us to move backwards in ethical oversight,” said Jacksonville Ethics Commission Chair Juanita Dixon in the statement. “This will impact public trust in government. We hope this bill, as amended in the Senate, does not pass in the Florida Legislature.”

The statement also requested that representatives of local ethics commissions have the ability to testify before the House of Representatives before the amendments are voted on.

SB 7014’s companion bill in the House of Representatives – House Bill 1597 – does not currently have these amendments and as of Feb. 19 was added to the State Affairs Committee agenda.

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Renderings of the Park Street Road Diet

Photo by Mark Kratzer

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# Spring Start Date for Park Street Enhancements

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The Brooklyn community will soon be seeing progress on the long-awaited road enhancements planned in the Park Street Road Diet.

Discussions and plans for this project, part of the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), stretch back several years. The development team on this project include Prosser, Inc. and Prime AE. According to a summary of the project in the CIP, it will “provide modifications to existing roadway infrastructure from Forest Street to Stonewall Street with the Brooklyn Neighborhood to enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity and improve vehicular safety.”

The planned enhancements include adding a two-way protected bike lane, on-street parking, expanded sidewalk areas, reduced roadway widths (for safer pedestrian crossing) and the planting of street trees.

Earlier last month, Mayor Donna Deegan spoke on work the city is doing to streamline its processes to ensure projects – particularly projects like the Park Street Road Diet, that have

been in the pipeline for quite a while – progress and that those streamlining efforts are “continuing.”

“From a technology standpoint, we’re going to a DocuSign system where, obviously if you have digital signatures as opposed to stacks of paper, things are going to move through a whole lot faster and more efficiently,” she said. “That’ll save time, it’ll save money.”

In February, *The Resident News* reported on the Downtown Investment Authority’s approval back in January of a one-year lease for a parcel of land on Bay Street to JEA to use as a construction easement to install chilled water lines along Bay Street. As payment for the lease, JEA has offered in-kind services at a minimum of \$300,000 for the Park Street Road Diet project.

According to the City of Jacksonville, the project is currently budgeted at \$5.2 million, though updated costs will be available once the contractor submits bid pricing.

Construction is currently slated to begin this spring.

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# New EverBank Branch Brings Convenience for Ortega

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

EverBank is moving its Florida banking headquarters to a new location at the corner of Herschel Street and San Juan Avenue in Ortega.

EverBank President of Florida Banking Curt Cunkle said he expects the new branch to open this summer. This is a relocation of its branch at 501 Riverside Ave. —

its current banking headquarters – where it's been for roughly 10 years. Its five-person staff team from Riverside will also be transitioning to this new office, and Cunkle said this new location provides opportunities for growth, both in services offered and staff size. An evaluation is currently underway to determine the type of products EverBank could offer at the new Ortega branch.

"We'll be expanding more than just what we're doing

now, and this location will provide an advantageous environment to do that," he said.

When EverBank first considered the idea of relocating its Riverside branch, Cunkle said the top priorities were retaining the 3,100 branch clients and 350 businesses clients banking there and ensuring the next location wasn't an inconvenience for them or EverBank employees. It turns out, the Ortega location might be even more convenient for them.

“We looked at our existing customers and we actually have more of our existing customers who live closer to the Ortega than our Riverside branch,” he said. “Same for our merchant customers. [For the] vast majority, Ortega is going to be more convenient than Riverside.”

Cunkle said his team is planning a seamless transition to avoid any disruption of services for EverBank clients.

"It'll literally be Friday afternoon we'll go on and exit the Riverside location, and Monday morning we will be at the Ortega location."

They are currently moving through the permitting process for tenant improvements before the new Ortega branch is ready to open.

"EverBank's strategy toward investing in our community, investing in our employees and clients...this relocation from Riverside to Ortega, it really just supports that," he said.

This will be the third bank laying down roots at the existing structure at Herschel and San Juan. It was constructed in 2008 and was first home to Florida Bank. In 2015, Iberiabank Corp. moved into the building, but closed three years later, as reported by *The Resident News* in August 2018.

EverBank has nine branches in the state of Florida with three of those locations in Jacksonville.

# St. John's Cathedral Provides Opportunity for Unity

St. John's Episcopal Cathedral will host The American Friends of the Parents Circle – Families Forum on March 16 from 9-11 a.m.

The Parents Circle – Families Forum stands as a beacon of hope, comprised of over 700 bereaved families from both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian

conflict. United by the profound loss of loved ones, these families have chosen a path of reconciliation over revenge. Despite their deep-rooted divisions and animosity, the event's two speakers will share their personal journeys of transcending hatred to embrace peace, forgiveness and hope.

Register to attend at <https://bit.ly/4bMk8Pm>. The program will also be presented online via Zoom. In the spirit of the event, the Cathedral requests that all attendees leave political paraphernalia at home and refrain from rallying or engaging in acts of public display.



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Families are already enjoying the new playground at Ringhaver Park, a public-private project between Friends of Jax Playgrounds and the City of Jacksonville.

# Playground Paradise

## City, Friends of Jax Playgrounds celebrates new playground at Ringhaver

The City of Jacksonville and Friends of Jax Playgrounds held a celebratory ribbon cutting ceremony for the grand reopening of the playground at Ringhaver Park on Wednesday, Feb. 28.

Providing the funding for the playground's new rubberized play surface and playground equipment was a public-private partnership between the City of Jacksonville and the Friends of Jax Playgrounds nonprofit organization. Of the \$720,000 needed to update the playground, Friends of Jax Playgrounds provided nearly \$220,000 to install the rubberized surface, which provides a more accessible experience for all children.

The playground has been closed since 2019, Friends of Jax Playgrounds Founder Kim Clontz explained.

"When I came across it, it was flooded and all the equipment was falling apart; it was not safe, so they had to just gate it off," she said.

The playground was already open to the community prior to the ceremony, and Clontz said she's already seen children exploring and enjoying the new equipment, with one little boy telling her he didn't ever want to leave.

"To me that is the perfect testament to the success of a playground, if a kid never wants to go home and leave the playground," she said.

City staff, City Councilmembers Jimmy Peluso and Rahman Johnson, and former Councilmember Randy DeFoor also attended the ceremony.

# St. Johns Riverkeeper Wins Environmental Lawsuit

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

St. Johns Riverkeeper and six other environmental nonprofit organizations are celebrating a win after a three-year-old legal battle regarding delegation of the Clean Water Act wetland permitting program.

In December 2020, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) delegated authority of the program to the State of Florida.

St. Johns Riverkeeper, the Center for Biological Diversity, Defenders of Wildlife, the Sierra Club, the Conservancy of Southwest Florida, the Florida Wildlife Federation and Miami Waterkeeper filed a lawsuit against the EPA the following January alleging this delegation violated multiple "bedrock environmental bedrock laws," among them the Endangered Species Act and the Clean Water Act.

"The EPA essentially lowered the bar to allow a state for the first time to administer the federal wetlands program without meeting federal standards," stated a St. Johns Riverkeeper newsletter.

The newsletter explained, "Florida developers have long referred to the local delegation of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act as the 'the Holy Grail.' St. Johns RIVERKEEPER [sic] and environmental organizations throughout the state opposed the delegation due to concerns that a resulting lack of oversight, federal protections and due diligence would result in the potential losses of crucial wetlands and habitats for protected species."

"[The ruling] basically restores federal protections that were lost with the delegation of the permitting process to the state," said St. Johns Riverkeeper Lisa

Rinaman. "It gives us another important layer for protection for vital wetlands in the St. Johns River watershed that impacts water quality as well as flood control right here in Jacksonville."

Rinaman added the defendants had 10 days from the Feb. 16 ruling to request a stay; they can also file an appeal.

As of Feb. 23, to Rinaman's knowledge, nothing had been filed by the defendants, though she said "it's probably likely" that they would.

Rinaman added this legal win "just underscores the magnitude of the importance of Florida wetlands. We're losing them at an alarming rate, so if anything, we need more protections, not less. So, we're thrilled that this is moving it back in the right direction."



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Brandi Mathews with Missy Cady



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Iris Eisenberg with Dori and Christian Thomsen, Jim Busch

# Preservationists Honored by RAP

Riverside residents and supporters of Riverside Avondale Preservation gathered for the organization's Annual Meeting and Preservation Awards Feb. 15 at Riverside Church at Park and King. Celebrating 50 years of community and projects, the awards honored individuals,

organizations and businesses within the historic district that exemplify outstanding achievement in historic preservation and the welcoming and inclusive nature of the neighborhood. Awards were presented in two categories: Design

and Construction, which celebrates the work of builders, designers, craftsmen and homeowners to preserve the integrity and enhance the beauty of the district; and Service, which recognizes the acts of neighborliness and philanthropy by individuals, businesses and organizations.

## AMONG THE WINNERS HONORED WERE

**Architectural Rehabilitation Award, Residential**  
Michael Rowan, Celtic Construction Solutions  
for 2532 Park St.

**Architectural Rehabilitation Award, Residential**  
John J. Hove and The Lane Group  
for 3730 Richmond St., also known as Hove Hall

**Interior Design Award**  
Don Eduardo Cocina Mexicana for 2665 Park St.

**New Construction Award**  
Glenn Chandler, Bold City Properties, and Matthew Jarvis, Atomic Garden, for 3841 Boone Park Ave.

**Good Neighbor Award**  
Ron Rothberg

**Community Impact Award**  
Greg Corcoran, JEA

**Small Business Advocate Award**  
Hooshang Harvesf, Hooshang Oriental Rug Gallery

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Mike Shad, Five Points Theatre Building

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Donald Roy Peak, Special Recognition  
15th Anniversary

**Riverside Arts Market Award**  
Frank Widner, Special Recognition  
15th Anniversary

**Wayne Wood Award**  
Jeff Graf

Explore [residentnews.net](https://residentnews.net) for even more behind-the-scenes photos from the RAP Annual Meeting and Preservation Awards.



Tolu Adewale with Claudia Prana, Phyllis Bell-Davis and Stephanie Shieldhouse



Bill Shelton with Jeff Graf and Marisa Whittemore



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# Slice of Love

## Simonetta's Brick Oven Pizza Bus's family recipes bring authentic Neapolitan flavor

Simonetta's Brick Oven Pizza Bus may be brand new, but just one bite of its authentic, brick-oven fired pizza brings forth the generations of experience, greatness and integrity that flavor Philip Simonetta's classic Italian pies.

"When I put something out, it's 100%. It's the best it can be," said Simonetta.

It turns out "best" is a time-honored family tradition that began with his grandmother, Rose Symia. Simonetta, the oldest grandson of her six children, used to spend every Friday night as a child cooking alongside his grandmother – pizzas, soups, candies – in the classic Neapolitan style. It's an experience that fed his passion for food, and it's her recipes that built the Pizza Bus's individual pizza lineup and fresh Italian desserts like cannolis, Italian cookies and tiramisu.

"There's one reason I'm bringing this product to Jacksonville," said Simonetta. "It's because, for me, food is a way of life, food brings people together no matter what, brings strangers together."

Simonetta already has two thriving businesses – he's the broker-owner of Pier 21 Realty and the Florida Real Estate School by Pier 21 Realty, which he runs with his son, Aiden. But the Simonetta's Brick Oven Pizza Bus is bringing Simonetta back to his roots in the restaurant businesses. He owned several sandwich and pizza shops in Philadelphia before he got into real estate around 15 years ago.

"It was never work; it was a passion. It reminded me of [my grandmother]. Doing this kind of work isn't really work. It brings her memory back," he said.

Symia's memory comes alive in Simonetta's Margherita, The Meats, The Vegetarian and The Works pizzas. The Bianca, however, is his favorite, with mozzarella, parmesan and ricotta cheeses topped with minced fresh garlic and a drizzle of pesto sauce. The Margherita serves as the Pizza Bus's all-star base, which Simonetta said can be customized with any number of toppings.

The individual 12" Neapolitan pizzas are made with authentic 00 flour, also known as Caputo or Italian flour, San Marzano tomatoes and Grande cheeses. Traditionally, these high-end ingredients would drive up the costs of the pizzas, but Simonetta is able to offer them at about \$2-3 less than full-restaurant competitors who use cheaper ingredients.

"Instead of opening up a physical restaurant with all the overhead and expenses, I wanted to find something I could buy and

build, eliminate my expenses, and in turn, be able to charge less for the product I'm serving," he said.

The bus that houses Simonetta's Brick Oven Pizza Bus is a 1995 International 3800 that used to serve as a church bus. Simonetta purchased it with only 32,000 miles, gutted the entire thing and began constructing the mobile pizza kitchen.

"The bus is self-sufficient, everything is made in the bus," he said.

Simonetta and his son installed everything from a dough machine to a full-sized wood-fired brick oven, which they had to build by hand to fit inside the bus. It fires at around 900 degrees and cooks a pizza in just 90 seconds.

"Brick oven pizza is the best pizza in the world. That's how pizza was originally made in Napoli, Italy," said Simonetta. "When you make the Neapolitan pizza with the 00 flour, you'll see when you taste it. There's nothing like it. It's crunchy, but yet it's soft."

Simonetta didn't only lean on what he knew to be his favorite, he actually taste-trialed dozens of different dough and ingredient combinations to ensure he was serving what the people liked. He is so committed to keeping his dough to the highest standards that the bus is limited to serving just 150 pizzas per day.

"The dough we make is a two-day process, so you can't just make more dough. There's only so much you can make and hold for the time period," he said.

Simonetta's Brick Oven Pizza Bus is currently open seven days a week from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., or until the 150 pizzas are gone. It is stationed next to Simonetta's Real Estate Brokerage and School Pier 21 Realty at 2200 Cassat Ave. but is licensed as a mobile food unit and available for private parties.

"I want to give people this product that's superior to anything else on the market. It's probably going to be the best pizza in Jacksonville out of a bus. It's crazy," he said.

While Simonetta's ultimate goal is to have a Simonetta's Brick Oven Pizza Bus on every college campus, it's more about bringing a great product to people than making money.

"There's so much turmoil in the world today. Nothing brings people together anymore; I think there has to be something," he said. "Food has a big thing to do with that. It's an elixir that brings people together. Hopefully, it can."



Aiden and Philip Simonetta hand-built the kitchen inside Simonetta's Brick Oven Pizza Bus.

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# MOVERS & SHAKERS



Mary Fisher

## Fisher Retires, Sells Agency

After a notable and well-respected 35-year career at the helm of Fisher Agency, Mary Fisher has completed the sale of the firm to Erin Gordon, owner of Savvy Partner. Fisher began merging her branding, website and public relations agency with Gordon's digital marketing agency in 2020; now that it is complete, Fisher will officially retire effective April 1.

Fisher has had a long Jacksonville-based career, starting in 1979 as a graphic designer with Lee Printing and then as a creative director of Jacksonville Magazine before founding then-named Mary Fisher Design in 1989. It was one of the first woman-owned website design companies in America. She has been honored by multiple organizations for her entrepreneurialism and has served as a mentor to students and business owners through Florida State College Jacksonville, University of North Florida, Junior Achievement, Chamber of Commerce, Women Business Owners of North Florida and Women's Business Center's Athena PowerLink.

Fisher will remain a consultant for the agency on an as-needed basis.

## Firehouse Subs Juggernaut Sets Eyes on Cap's on the Water



Stephen Joost with Bernard De Raad

San Jose resident Stephen Joost is returning to the restaurant industry as he takes over majority ownership of the St. Augustine restaurant Cap's on the Water.

Along with his fellow founding partners, Joost sold their popular sandwich chain Firehouse Subs in 2021. Following that, Joost invested in Yoga Den, a privately-owned yoga brand with 12 studios throughout Northeast Florida, including locations in Avondale and San Marco. Returning to the restaurant industry, however, remained a goal.

"I've been blessed to be a part of the restaurant industry in Jacksonville for the last 30 years, but I'm not finished yet," he said. "I wanted to build another restaurant company, but never imagined this opportunity or that I would find such a perfect fit with Bernard. It is an honor to own an iconic restaurant like Cap's on the Water and continue the legacy that Bernard and his team have built."

Bernard De Raad purchased Cap's on the Water in 1999 and plans to stay on as an owner to oversee and manage daily operations. The two restauranteurs also plan to work together on developing "several full-service, coastal restaurants."

"Stephen believes in the culture and philosophy we have built at Cap's and will ensure that it remains intact, and that is very important to us," said De Raad. "My fingers are always itching, and I have been dreaming up ideas for future concepts for years. We share a vision of opening new, iconic restaurants that use the same proven model as Cap's on the Water."



Stacey Sparks

## A Spark for Berkshire Hathaway

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty recently announced the addition of Stacey Sparks to its team. Sparks is a top producer with over two decades of experience in the industry. She specializes in military and relocation services, understanding the unique needs and challenges faced by families undergoing those kinds of transitions.

"I am thrilled to be part of such a prestigious and forward-thinking brokerage," said Sparks. "I am eager to leverage the cutting-edge tools and technology available at Florida Network Realty to enhance the level of service I provide to my clients."



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Grace Note Brewing co-owners Jeremy Baker and James Trimble.

# A Harmonious Blend of Beer and Music

A new, music-themed craft brewery checks all the boxes for beer aficionados and music lovers alike.

Grace Note Brewing celebrated its grand opening last month with live music, food and, of course, plenty of pints for its new patrons to enjoy.

Co-owner and brewer Jeremy Baker said he hopes the brewery will become a new spot for live music within the community.

“We’re really excited to start talking to more musicians,” he said. “It feels really cool to think that we might have another spot for people to get used to seeing live music.”

Baker owns Grace Note with his business partner and lifelong friend, James Trimble. It is located next to High Tide Burrito at the Windward Sadler Point Marina on the Ortega River. Grace Note has been many years coming, but Trimble said he “couldn’t be more happy with the way it turned out.”

“We’re going to be able to offer all these new and interesting variations of these beers in a time where everybody seems to be reproducing the same product for a shelf,” he said.

Baker said he and Trimble worked hard to create a drink service that had “something for everyone,” including wine, gluten-free and non-alcoholic options.

Grace Note Brewing is located at 4591 Lakeside Dr., Suite 108. Its hours are Wednesday and Thursday, 3-9 p.m.; Friday and Saturday, 11 a.m. to 11 p.m.; and Sunday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. It is closed Monday and Tuesday.



Megan Trumpler with Tracy Jester, Chip Morgan, Kelly Bates, David Sandlin and Marcus Wells

# Teachers Confer on Technology’s Impact on Education

Faculty and staff from Episcopal School of Jacksonville attended the Future of Education Technology Conference in Orlando Jan. 23-26. David Sandlin and Megan Trumpler attended from the Lower School; Tracy Jester and Marcus Wells from the Middle and Upper School; and the Technology Department sent Kelly Bates and Chip Morgan.

“After each conference, I always come back with a new excitement for teaching, eager to implement some of the tools and ideas that I learned. With this year’s big topic, generative AI and its impact on the future of education, we were able to see a glimpse of what education may look like in the next two to 10 years and learn ways to navigate these advancements in the classroom,” said Jester. “Many of the workshops were geared towards our AI policy, which taught educators and students how to use AI efficiently and ethically.”

# Four Stars for Florida Forum Speaker

Four-star Admiral James Stavridis, retired, received full marks from Jacksonville attendees for his appearance at The Women’s Board’s Florida Forum on Monday, Feb. 26 at the Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts.

Stavridis is currently the vice chair, global affairs and managing director of The Carlyle Group, a global investment firm. But the decorated admiral is most well-known for his numerous U.S and international medals and decorations while serving for 37 years in the U.S. Navy. Among his commands, he served from 2009-2013 as the 16th Supreme Allied Commander at NATO and led the U.S. Southern Command in Latin America from 2006-2009. He also served as senior military assistant to the Secretary of the Navy and the Secretary of Defense, and has published 12 books on leadership and maritime affairs.

Stavridis’s Florida Forum appearance was made possible by Florida Blue; he was the third and final speaker in the 2023-24 Speaker Series. Funds raised by the Florida Forum support The Women’s Board’s commitment to raise \$1.5 million for two new Kids Kare Mobile Intensive Care Units for Wolfson Children’s Hospital’s Neonatal and Pediatric Critical Care Transport fleet.



Dr. Mark Gould and Ellen Gould



Kyle Starling

# Starling Joins Berkshire Hathaway

Kyle Starling joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty as its newest Realtor. Having called Northeast Florida his home for 40 years, Starling finds joy in exploring all the area has to offer alongside his wife and daughter. He is deeply familiar with the local real estate market and brings customer service experience to his new role.

“I am thrilled to embark on this new chapter,” said Starling. “Having spent four decades in this vibrant community, I am eager to help families achieve their real estate goals and contribute to the growth and success of our beloved Northeast Florida.”

“We look forward to witnessing the positive impact he will undoubtedly have on our clients and the community,” said Josh Cohen, Broker Manager at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty.

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# Choate Raises the Bar(ettes) at Fashion Weeks

Local hairstylist Melody Choate had a hair-raising triumph last month as she was chosen to join the expert stylists on the Odete DaSilva Hair Team, which works with the Global Fashion Collective. The international team consists of only 18 stylists from around the world that work backstage to prep models for the most iconic Fashion Weeks across the globe: New York, London, Milan, Paris and Tokyo. She recently tressed to impress at the New York Fashion Week, Feb. 9-14, and the Milan Fashion Week Feb. 20-26.



Melody Choate

Choate was chosen based on her spectacular audition performance after a class with DaSilva. She described the audition process as an “impeccable style in 10 minutes or less.”

“One of the main things when working this kind of event is timing, so you have to work very well under pressure because there is a lot going on around you, and everything is very fast-paced,” she said. “With all these really high-shine lights, they catch every single stray hair, any imperfection, so you have to make sure that’s perfect for photography and be able to do it very quickly.”

Choate said they sometimes must complete as many as 30 models an hour, along with makeup and dress, but that she thrives under that pressure and loves the chaos, as it helps her stay laser-focused on the end goal.

“It really is a team effort. There’s not any ego involved or any competition, because everyone is just working to create the same goal: to get all those people out on the runway looking perfect,” she said.

In addition to being 12-year stylist, Choate is the Director of Education for Hair Peace Salon in Riverside and has spent five years as a Color Educator for Goldwell – the color line used by Hair Peace – teaching classes to other stylists in salons along the East Coast.

She plans to attend the fall 2024 New York Fashion Week as well. Her 2025 goal? “Next year, I’d like to do all of them.”



Pierre N. Allaire



Charles E. Commander IV



T.R. Hainline, Jr.

# Three New Directors Step Up to Save Florida Land

North Florida Land Trust (NFLT) has welcomed three new individuals to its now 16-member board of directors. Pierre N. Allaire, Charles E. Commander IV and T.R. Hainline, Jr. are the newest members of the NFLT board and will each serve a term of three years.

“We welcome Pierre, Charles and T.R. to our board and are very lucky they have agreed to help guide us in our efforts to save Florida’s natural landscapes because it is now or never,” said Allison DeFoor, president of NFLT. “These men bring a wealth of knowledge that will help contribute to our organization.”

“It is now or never.”

– Allison DeFoor, President, NFLT

Allaire is an independent consultant and works in nonprofit fundraising, board development and management, executive coaching, campaign planning and endowment building. He retired from the Baptist Health Foundation in 2018 after serving as the vice president and chief development officer.

Commander is a partner with the Atlanta office of Heidrick & Struggles, serving as the global sector leader of the engineering, construction and infrastructure services specialty division. Commander has served in the U.S. Navy and has a personal link to NFLT as his late father was one of the organization’s top supporters.

Hainline is a shareholder at Rogers Towers’ Governmental and Regulatory Law Department. He has extensive experience in comprehensive planning, zoning and permitting and sat on the Mayor’s Park Task Force from 2004-2005.



Don Zentz with his John LaPorta Jazz Educator of the Year award.

# Zentz Honored as Jazz Educator of the Year

Don Zentz, Director of Jazz Studies at the Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, has been honored with the John LaPorta Jazz Educator of the Year Award, presented by The Jazz Education Network and Berklee College of Music. It recognizes educators who have made a distinctive impact on jazz.

Zentz has 39 years of musical impact under his belt, having taught at every level in education and across all areas of band: concert, marching and, particularly, jazz. He has directed the All-State Jazz Bands of Florida, Georgia, Alabama and Maine and has been a Keilwerth Saxophones Performing Artist since 1995.

Last year, Zentz was named Jazz Educator of the Year by the National Jazz Festival and the Jacksonville Jazz Festival inducted him into their Hall of Fame. For over 20 years he was a per service saxophonist with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra and his 30-year tenure with the St. Johns River City Band culminated with his appointment as music director and conductor.

In addition to his long list of musical accomplishments, he and his wife, Laurie, led an interactive “Jazzin’ It Up” concert series for elementary students that served over 20,000 children in Northeast Florida and South Georgia.



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Natalya Bannister Roby

# Bannister Roby Called to Lead ECS

Natalya Bannister Roby has joined Episcopal Children’s Services (ECS) as the new CEO, effective Jan. 16, 2024. She will be responsible for overseeing the strategic vision of the organization and day-to-day operations. Bannister Roby replaces Connie Stophel, who served in the role for the past two decades and has been with the organization for 34 years.

“I am honored to lead Episcopal Children’s Services as we embark on this exciting next chapter. Building upon Connie Stophel’s strong foundation, our commitment to children achieving their full potential remains our top priority,” said Bannister Roby.

Bannister Roby comes to ECS with a doctoral degree in educational leadership and a proven track record of transforming organizations through her purpose-driven culture efforts. Her experience includes

working with Boys & Girls Club where she garnered national attention for her award-winning programs and most recently at the PACE Center for Girls’ national office, leading center operations throughout Florida.

“I approach this work with my whole heart. It is a calling,” she said. “Throughout my professional journey, I have witnessed the importance of early childhood education and prevention as crucial elements in fostering stronger and healthier communities. Together, we can secure a brighter future for children and families across Florida.”

With a budget of more than \$100 million, ECS is one of Florida’s largest youth service nonprofits and a leader in early childhood education, serving thousands of children and their families throughout the state of Florida.

# Specialty Pediatric Cardiologist Comes to Jacksonville

Pediatric cardiologist Dr. Ram Bishnoi has joined the C. Herman and Mary Virginia Terry Heart Institute at Wolfson Children’s Hospital. Dr. Bishnoi is double board-certified in pediatrics and pediatric cardiology. His areas of expertise include pediatric interventional cardiology, pulmonary hypertension, and inpatient and post-operative care. As a pediatric interventional cardiologist, he is trained to perform specific minimally invasive catheter-based treatments for heart conditions.

At the Terry Heart Institute, Dr. Bishnoi will also establish a pediatric pulmonary hypertension program in addition to caring for patients recovering from cardiac surgery and interventions at Wolfson Children’s.



Dr. Ram Bishnoi



Owner Peter Jaghab stands before his inventory of premium cigars at Second Wind Cigars in San Marco.

# A Smokin’ New Business for Hendricks Corridor

Where there’s smoke, there’s premium cigars, as Second Wind Cigars has now joined the ranks of the small businesses along the Hendricks Avenue corridor in San Marco.

The cigar lounge opened Jan. 1, though owner Peter Jaghab said his team is still planning its official grand opening celebration. At Second Wind Cigars, in addition to premium cigars, patrons can enjoy a 15-seat lounge with soft jazz playing over the sound system – when sports aren’t being played on the four big-screen televisions. Lockers are available to store personal belongings – including cigars, since the lockers are temperature- and humidity-controlled. Coffee and soft drinks are currently available for purchase and Jaghab said he hopes to expand that to include alcoholic beverages as well.

Jaghab said it’s “an honor” to be a part of the San Marco small business community.

“I’ve always loved the community, the restaurants, the atmosphere, the architecture and the history behind it, and I’m just happy to be a small part of what I’ve always loved,” he said.

Second Wind Cigars is located at 3921 Hendricks Ave. Its hours are Monday through Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 8 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; and Sunday, noon to 5 p.m.



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# Clark Joins RAP as Creative Placemaking Specialist

Kandice Clark has joined Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) as its Creative Placemaking Specialist, a newly created position within the organization which will preserve, maintain and enhance public places in the historic district through collaborative initiatives, events and projects with the community.

Clark has used placemaking to advocate for community artists and revitalize public spaces as seen in her most recent project, The Petite – a monthly pop-up featuring different artists and bakers the last Friday of each month that ran from July to September last year. Additionally, as a founder of the Black Mural Map, Clark oversaw project installations, liaised between businesses owners and artists, and worked to “provide narrative insight and meaning behind the impactful murals that shape our community through storytelling.”



Kandice Clark is Riverside Avondale Preservation's new Creative Placemaking Specialist.



Leaders from Women's Care, its practitioners, physicians and staff were on hand to celebrate the Grand Opening.

# Women’s Care Opens New Riverside Facility

Women's Care, a women's health physician group, is expanding its healthcare offerings in Jacksonville with the opening of a new, 25,000-square-foot facility in the Riverside community.

The state-of-the-art facility provides obstetrics and gynecology care, 3D mammography, high-risk maternal fetal medicine, bone density screenings, lab services and in-office surgery.

“Many of our patients benefit from getting their mammograms and yearly checkups done together in one appointment,” said Xujia Annie Smith, MD. “Our hope is that easy access to multiple services will make it more convenient for women to get the care they want and need.”

The practice, located at 1232 King Street, opened on Jan. 15 and replaces the Women's Care practices inside Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside. Women's Care OBGYNs in Riverside will now be providing labor and delivery care at Ascension St. Vincent's Family Birth Place Southside.

A grand opening ceremony and ribbon cutting was held at the new location on Feb. 22. More than 20 physicians and advanced practice providers will be accepting new and existing patient appointments at the Women's Care of Riverside. Patients can schedule online at womenscareobgyn.com or call the office directly at (904) 478-5384.

“The outpouring of encouragement and support we've received since announcing Clark's role in fulfilling this position has been overwhelming.”

- Shannon Blankinship  
RAP Executive Director

In her new position within RAP, Clark will work with the support of the organization's Creative Placemaking Steering Community. According to RAP Executive Director Shannon Blankinship, Clark's first projects will include formulating a “micro-strategic plan” and “a report card of public spaces for the neighborhood.”

“The outpouring of encouragement and support we've received since announcing Clark's role in fulfilling this position has been overwhelming. We are eager to build community partnerships that will enhance the neighborhood,” said Blankinship.

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# A CHANGE FOR CLIMATE

RAP has been a leader in highlighting the challenges presented by climate change in preservation of the historic district. In tracking and mapping ongoing flooding concerns, RAP presented our findings to city leaders and became a founding member of the Jacksonville Climate Coalition.

*“Learn more about the meaningful and lasting impact of Riverside Avondale Preservation over the last 50 years all year long...”*



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# Weaver Ignites Legacy 2024



Delores Barr Weaver

Local philanthropist Delores Barr Weaver, through a \$61 million gift to the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, has recommended grants to local nonprofits as part of her Legacy 2024 grantmaking plan. She has chosen to focus on selected nonprofits that she has supported for many years in causes like the arts, revitalization and housing, environmental issues, and ensuring all people in Northeast Florida and beyond can live a life in which they thrive. The nonprofits receiving the funds will be notified as grants are awarded.

The \$61 million contribution to Weaver’s donor-advised fund in July 2023 made it the largest gift in the foundation’s 60-year history. Legacy 2024 was developed in partnership with staff at The Community Foundation over the last six months. The process identified organizations with exceptional previous results records and tailored funding in ways that would help each grow beyond Weaver’s support, setting them up for long-term success.

“The Community Foundation’s expert staff and charitable giving solutions have enabled me to have greater impact in the region I love than I ever could alone,” Weaver said. “I want to congratulate and thank the Legacy 2024 agencies and the staff of The Community Foundation for their partnership over many years.”

The plan includes a variety of grant types: one-time funding for specific projects; matching challenges to bolster sustainability; and long-term, multi-year grants to deepen community impact.



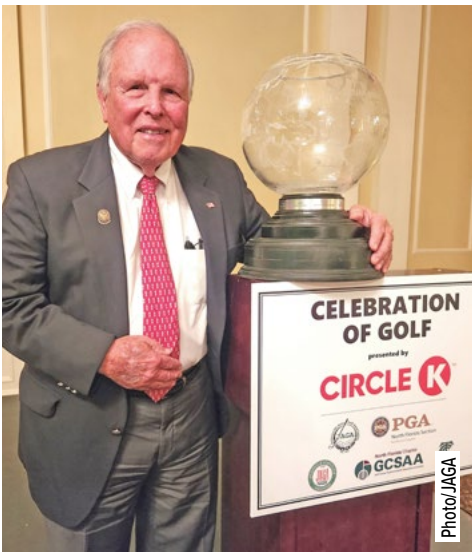
Minerva Torres Collazo

# Collazo to Direct Salvation Army Social Services

Minerva Torres Collazo has joined The Salvation Army of Northeast Florida as its new Social Services Director at the Towers Center of Hope.

Previously, Torres Collazo served as a professor of social work at Ana G. Mendez University and the divisional social services director with The Salvation Army in Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. She holds bachelor’s and master’s degrees in social work and earned her doctorate in education with a concentration in organizational leadership.

Torres Collazo’s goals at her new position “are to evaluate development of organizational policies and protocols, as well as program planning, and adequately staff the facility so it can meet the needs of its participants as effectively as possible while being able to serve the community of Jacksonville.”



Tom Dudley won the 2024 Deane Beman Award

# Evening Honors Golf Greats

The eighth annual Celebration of Golf presented by Circle K was held Feb. 21 at Timuquana Country Club to a sellout crowd of more than 240 supporters of the game of golf. The banquet brings together the golf community to recognize and honor those who have made notable contributions, both on the course and off. The event’s net proceeds, approximately \$10,000, will be presented to the JAGA Scholarship Trust program for scholarships to college-bound area students.

The evening’s top honor, the Deane Beman Award, was presented to Tom Dudley. The Timuquana member has served as a rules and competition official for the United States, Florida State and Jacksonville Area Golf Associations. Tama Caldabaugh of The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach received the Jacksonville Women’s Golf Association’s top honor as the 2022-23 Championship Winner.

The banquet was co-sponsored and organized by the Jacksonville Area Golf Association and the Northern Chapter of the North Florida PGA, with the support of the Jacksonville Women’s Golf Association and the North Florida Golf Course Superintendents Association. Michael McKenny served as event chair and Richie Bryant was the evening’s emcee.



JWGA president Vickie Galpin with JWGA top award winner Tama Caldabaugh

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Savanne Giroire, Robin Klob and Agnella Dolor

# Bohemian Benevolence for PlacemakingJax

Downtown Vision Inc. brought the opulence of the Belle Époque to Downtown Jacksonville on Friday, Feb. 23 as they hosted their annual #DTJax Gala. Themed “Duval Rouge,” the glittering event blended Duval decadence with 19th century Bohemian Paris to raise funds for PlacemakingJax. PlacemakingJax helps Jaxsons engage underused public spaces by collaboratively creating pop-

up and large-scale activations to bring the community together. Duval Rouge transformed MOCA Jacksonville into the full splendor of Moulin Rouge’s mystery with captivating entertainment from Ramona + the RIOT and a silent disco with Hush Hush Headphones. The event also featured extravagant bites from local restaurants, a photo booth and silent auction.



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# Great Food, Folks Gather to Solve Hunger

Velvety bourbons, savory samplings and even a few three-pointers spotlighted Feeding Northeast Florida's Bourbon & Brisket fundraiser Feb. 3. The annual tasting event, which raises enough money to provide over 250,000 meals annually to local families facing hunger, filled Strings Sports Brewery with philanthropists and foodies alike.



Stef Cox with Travis Newsom, Colby and Victoria Adeeb



Morgan Kehnert with Tyler Grant

The event featured local restaurants and distilleries like Bono's, Manifest Distilling, Four Rivers Smokehouse, and the host restaurant's own brews. An executive bourbon steward led the whiskey tastings, bringing a touch of enrichment to the night's events, which included a silent auction, live music and a few tosses at Strings's full-size basketball hoop.

Proceeds from the event support Feeding Northeast Florida's mission to solve hunger in Northeast Florida through partnerships with more than 325 nonprofits across an eight-county area.



Kirk Perrow with James Young



Chris and Colleen Haley with Annie and John Erstling



Danielle Anderson with Amy Miles, Victoria and Jason Miller



Rob White with Jeremy Pinkney



Darlene Uhler-Batiste with Sheila Jackson, Georgeann and John Roeder, Laurie Haas, Rita Cannon, Debbie Veale, Karen Anderson, Dianne Lott, Katie Williams, NeeCee Lee, Diane Bailey and Paulette Lumley

# Cooking Up Hope

## Menu chosen for Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary's 38th Annual Celebrity Chefs

Members and friends of the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary gathered in February to sample and establish the menu for the 38th Annual Celebrity Chefs Tasting Luncheon and Silent Auction, scheduled for April 4, 2024, from 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Prime Osborn Convention Center.

The keystone of this popular annual event is the gathering of local celebrities – media personalities, government officials and business leaders – all dishing up tastes of their favorite recipes, as well as an eclectic silent auction to raise money for the programs of The Salvation Army of Northeast Florida. Since the event's inception, more than \$2 million has been raised, making it the largest fundraiser for the organization.



Debbie and Ernie Veale with Susie O'Quinn and Rita Cannon



Kathy Kelemen with Michele Kehnert, Deborah DeFoor and Melina Buncome

"It's always an honor for us to collaborate with community partners and businesses when we work to serve our community's needs," said Major Keath Biggers with the Northeast Florida Area Command. "We appreciate their support of The Salvation Army here in Jacksonville. Help at this event helps sustain program services provided through The Towers Center of Hope."

Celebrity chefs for 2024 include Sheriff T.K. Waters, Action News Jax's Mike Buresh, Jen Burns and Kevin Brown from the Jacksonville Beach Sea Turtle Patrol, CSX's Mike Corey, Reverend Kate Moorhead Carroll of St. Johns Cathedral, Fellowship of Christian Athletes' Matthew Roop, Ernie Veale from Stellar Properties, and Beacon Fisheries' Mike and Karen Eddy and Sue and Hank Turner.

To purchase event tickets, visit [bit.ly/3vMyJKd](https://bit.ly/3vMyJKd).

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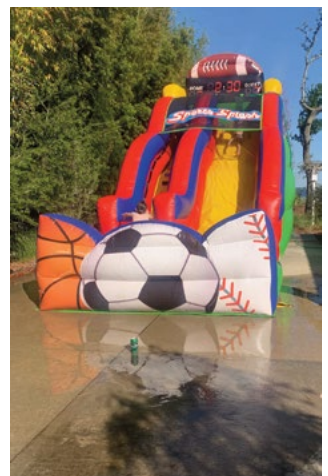
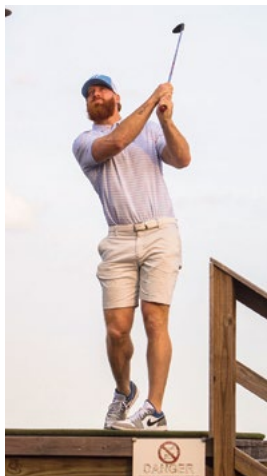
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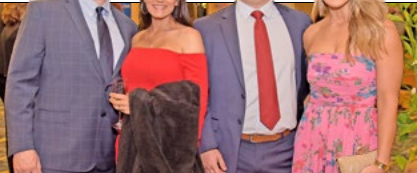
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# From Trauma to Triumph

## 17th Annual A Night for Heroes Gala supports life-saving efforts of TraumaOne

UF Health Jacksonville held its annual black-tie fundraiser, the 17th Annual A Night for Heroes Gala, on Feb. 3 at the Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront where guests celebrated the true heroics of UF Health Jacksonville staff and first responders, raised funds to provide state-of-the-art equipment and spread awareness of the value of a local Level I trauma center in our community.

The night's 2024 honoree, Harvey Doliner, delivered a heartfelt message of the impact the organization had in his life, speaking about how UF Health Jacksonville and the TraumaOne helicopter saved his hand and arm, and gave him his life back after his life-threatening accident with a plane propeller.

"They really care," Doliner said. "It's so unbelievable, the dedication and care."

A Night for Heroes was started in 2008 to help fund UF Health TraumaOne and has since expanded its support to the critical care units as well. Its Heroes Council has grown to 30 members strong, led this year by event co-chairs Olivia Frick and Jessica Cummings.



Penelope Royer with Angela Simons, Mary Jean Coppedge and Diana Glendinning



Linda Cunningham with Mac

# HEA F



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Coretta Hill with Jayne Evans



Nicole and DeVaughn M



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Eddie Smith, Hannah Clark, Shannon Smith and C.J. Jack

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Michelle Harp with Karen Breakell and Emily Knight-Smith



Heart of the Runway fashion show models strut their stuff

# ARTS OVERFLOW FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS

## Success of Heart of the Runway results in dual events

The sold-out Heart of the Runway, hosted by North Florida School of Special Education (NFSSE), brought extra love to Valentine's Day with heartwarming, dual fashion show events on its campus at The Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center.

Due to popular demand of the traditional fashion show and luncheon, NFSSE launched its inaugural Heart of the Runway After Dark Feb. 13, 2024, a special cocktail hour and evening runway show with Honorary Chair Karen Darr. The event was a preview of the high-style fashion show that would be held the following day featuring heart-stealing NFSSE student models donning designs from Dillard's and Linda Cunningham's spring collection reveal.

Heart of the Runway After Dark gave attendees a front-row view of the latest fashions alongside hors d'oeuvres and signature cocktails created and served by NFSSE's own Berry Good Farms Culinary team. Meredith Frisch served as Honorary Chair of the Feb. 14 Heart of the Runway Luncheon and Fashion Show.

Tiffany Heavener with Dr. Laura Grippa



Jana Angel with Diana Donovan



Josh Smith with Suzanne Hendricks and Tom Janning



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Motorcycling ensemble, 1930s. © FIDM Museum, Courtesy American Federation of Arts, Photo: Brian Sanderson.




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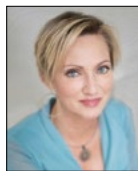
  
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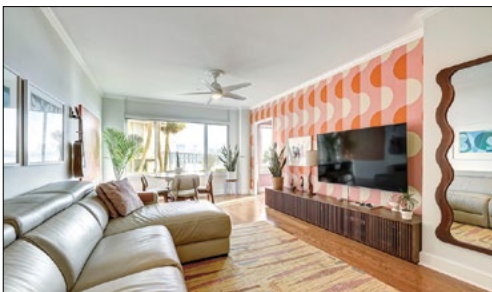
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Nick Patterson visiting the Arashiyama Monkey Park Iwatayama in Kyoto, Japan.

# LOCAL FOLKS

## NICK PATTERSON

BY JENNIFER JENSEN

Nick Patterson was just eight years old when he made the big move from Scotland to Jacksonville with his mother and twin brother. He fell in love with Jacksonville and, despite a short stint away for college, has no intention of ever leaving again.

“As I started getting older and deciding whether I wanted to move away, I really looked at Jacksonville as this up-and-coming city that still had art and music, but also felt like a livable city,” Patterson said. “I could afford to live here and still be able to travel, which is a huge passion of mine.”

He eventually fell in love with someone who saw Jacksonville as he did. He met his wife, Josie, when they worked together at Starbucks. At the time, she was his boss. They became close friends but didn’t starting dating until many years later.

“We were really good friends and saw each other through different relationships and stuff, and kept being that constant in each other’s lives,” he said.

Eventually, they went on their first date to a sushi restaurant and began dating in January 2013. They purchased a home in Murray Hill in 2015 – they love its small community feel and walkability – and were married on Nov. 11, 2017.

“When we were looking at houses, I would always check out the walk score,” he said. “There’s so much you can walk to over here and the community has grown so much since we bought our house.”

The couple lives there with their two-year-old, long-haired French bulldog named Toast, who Patterson calls “a living teddy bear.” He considers himself lucky to have his immediate family living nearby as well. His brother, a director at MOCA, and wife live in San Marco, and his mother and stepfather live in Avondale. The rest of his family lives overseas, spread out in Australia, Germany and Scotland.

But luckily, traveling – including overseas – is one of Patterson’s many passions. He and Josie travel as much as they can, on trips often based around music or some odd, obscure or unique landmark that they found online. One of his favorite places is Edinburgh, Scotland, where he once lived. He even proposed to Josie while on a trip to Arthur’s Seat, an extinct volcano in the middle of the city. The couple is fond of Kyoto, Japan – an “incredible place” – as well as Rome and Lucca in Italy.



Nick Patterson

“It’s always fun when we travel, we like going off the beaten path,” Patterson said. “She’s my travel buddy.”

Back home, a big draw for Patterson to the local area was Sun-Ray Cinema, of which he is now the general manager.

“My brother told me about Sun-Ray and I knew I had to check it out,” he said. “I really enjoy it so much. I was a patron since the day they opened. It’s cool to see the other side of it. I hope that it helps me facilitate that great experience, for other people, that I had for the last decade.”



Josie and Nick Patterson in Kyoto, Japan.



Nick Patterson with wife, Josie, in Lucca, Italy.

Patterson appreciates the venue because of the content it brings to the audience. One of his favorite events is the Sleeping Giant Film Festival held each year.

“The programming, the events...that drove me to Sun-Ray,” he said. “[Co-owner] Tim is just amazing in what he finds as far as artists, musical acts and just unique programming that otherwise Jacksonville wouldn’t get.”

He also said the area is “spoiled for choice” when it comes to amazing coffee shops and culture in the area. Some of his favorite shops are Flamingo Coffee in Murray Hill and Sequential Coffee. While he used to venture out regularly to Birdies in Five Points or Riverside’s Keg and Coin, he’s mostly a homebody now unless a new restaurant pops up in the area.

“Anytime a local restaurant opens up, especially in Murray Hill, I want to try it and really try to support local businesses,” he said. “We don’t really leave this side of town often. We try to find what we can in the community.”

Patterson also really enjoys music, attending music festivals and collecting records. At one point, he had more than 1,000 records. He loves to pop into vintage and antique stores, as well as Tiger Records in Riverside to see what’s available. While he recently reduced his collection, the number is steadily climbing again.

“If there’s a special edition of one of our favorite artists, we try to get it,” Patterson said.

“Anytime there’s records, I feel compelled to go through the entirety of them all see if there’s like one record that I want.”



Nick and Josie Patterson striking a classic pose in front of Sun-Ray Cinema.

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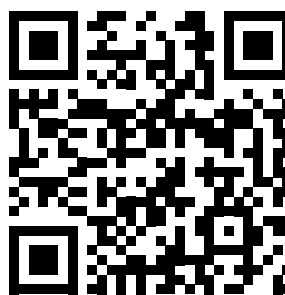
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I'm grateful that our real-life Resident Community has an excellent complementary edition on the interwebs. This is such an amenity! We can go to social media and find an extra slathering of neighborly connection and community, making our actual neighborhood experience even more profound. We are lucky, because that's not always the case. Most people live in a neighborhood that's either spread out in its actual existence but super allied on social media, or in a connected neighborhood with no presence online. This is not so for our Resident Community. We are #ResidentStrong in actuality and cyberspace-ity, and for that, I am grateful – rather, #Blessed.

Some of you may say, "I have zero idea what you're talking about." Your online profile may be a blank space. You may not even be out there "on the line" in any way whatsoever. But I hope this column gives you the encouragement you need to get out there and embrace a presence on social media that will better connect you to all the goings-on, needs, celebrations, joys, challenges, giveaways, sales, events and opportunities in our neighborhood. I promise this will level-up your tangible Resident Community experience in meaningful, in-person ways.

The bottom line? We can be better neighbors if we are active on, aware of, and semi-fluent in both spaces.

Let me start with the obvious fact: our neighborhoods are GREAT. By design, our communities promote connection, conversation and ways to flex your "good neighbor" behavior – at the park, we see friends and support lemonade stands; at restaurants and stores, we run into people we know, catch up with neighbors and patronize their business; on street corners, sidewalks or streets, we convene about why there are police cars in the park or who's moving to what house where. We carpool together, cry together,

bring meals to people who are sick or experiencing loss, find lost pets together, worship together and enjoy nature in the same spaces. Our communities have enviable connection points. And we should be so grateful to those land-boom Florida developers who designed our neighborhoods for people and relationships. This is all good – good for our souls and great for property values.

The second obvious fact is that – like our neighbors, and by their unique design – social media platforms offer an equally tight, buzzy version of our communities. The amiable kinship we enjoy in our actual neighborhood is amplified ten-fold in its digital realm.

I visited my interwebs accounts recently to prove this theory out. Here are a few things I learned about my neighbors during a five-minute perusal, info that already has upped my good neighbor game:

- Mary Jane is out of the hospital, according to a post from her daughter. She welcomes any cards, calls or correspondence you might offer, as they uplift her spirits greatly.
- Neighborhood Coaches Verhoef and Rivera both earned state Coach of the Year honors, a win for the next grocery store run-in.
- The St. Johns Cathedral Bookstore and Gift Shop posted some great photos from a recent Downtown Jacksonville Artwalk, a helpful reminder to get out and go next time.
- A dog ran out in front of Laura's car and found his way into her home. Though "Boy Dog" is in good hands for now, he really isn't suitable for Laura's current living situation, and she is looking for his forever home. The Humane Society can't take him for a month. Can you? (Update: Laura's house IS his forever home, and that is everything wonderful.)
- Julie reads banned books.
- Corner Farm Kitchen has a new Indian-inspired breakfast menu with spicy and savory dishes for a change of pace.
- Kerry is taking on the 31-mile December Dash Challenge for To Write Love on Her Arms. You can support her fundraising efforts by making a donation, any amount helps, big or small.
- Happy Brew in San Marco is opening and asks that patrons be patient with and show grace to its employees who

are hard at work training and learning new skills. They are also raising money for their mission operation. Happy Brew provides employment, job training and leadership opportunities for individuals with intellectual and developmental differences in a community café where hope is shared.

- Jan Ann is giving away a book on Blenheim Palace on the Buy Nothing 32207 San Marco/Lakewood/Empire Point/Spring Glen page. It's available porch pick-up. Also, Jeff will receive any unwanted autumnal pumpkins for his tortoises. A local teacher is looking for some magazines if anyone has some they want to get rid of. Oh, and there's a family moving into a neighborhood house and they need EVERYTHING – please keep them in mind if you're looking to give any household items away. BTW, Nicole is giving away 20 acrylic name tags and a party garland for FREE. Mariana is offering up an orthopedic dog bed for that older pup in your life.
- Romeo has been found, again.
- Natalie is selling a beautiful gold mirror and some long bookshelves on the Ortega Forest, Ortega, Venetia and Avondale Neighborhood Home Goods Swap. Please note they are for porch pick up, no delivery.
- Jack just turned 16! Watch out for him. LOL.

These are just the neighborhood good-to-know tidbits for future in-person engagements that popped up in a quick five-minute scroll. The interwebs are bursting with opportunities to serve, support and better engage with our neighbors. Trust me, Julie and I are going to have a great conversation about those banned books she likes to read when I see her out on the town. And many posts have links where you can support people like Kerry on the spot. This is the power

of good inspired by a healthy online neighborhood community.

When you take a few minutes get out there online, you upload helpful context on what your neighbors, friends and family are going through. This is real connection! They may have just lost a family member or a pet; they maybe have moved their last kid into a college dorm and are empty-nesters like me at long, long last. This a-ha knowledge might spark thoughts on how you can reach out to someone in your actual space and offer assistance, love or encouragement. People don't shout these things at you from their kitchen window when you walk by their house – but they do toss it out there online.

So, I say, "More of that!" Let's celebrate our neighborhoods' rich, connected spaces by embracing opportunities to participate in each other's lives more this year. They are there for the taking both online and off. With an open mind and generous spirit, we can make the small investment of time it takes to be present and partaking wherever that community thrives. #HomeSweetHome

Susanna Barton loves building online community, especially during Lent when she publishes unconventional Lenten posts on the Facebook. This year's series is called "Rolling My I-s: A Lenten Challenge to Give Up Me, Myself and I-Talk," also available in book form. A Granada resident, Barton 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).

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# Underdog Victory for Professionals at the Underwood Cup

Northern Chapter PGA Professionals overcome five-point deficit on final day to win

In a final day that harkened back to the American heroics at the 1999 Ryder Cup at Brookline Country Club, the team of 12 Northern Chapter PGA Professionals overcame a seemingly insurmountable five-point deficit entering the final day Singles matches to pull off a stunning victory in the 33rd edition of the Underwood Cup at Timuquana Country Club.

The Underwood Cup features elite players among Northeast Florida's professional and amateur golfers. With just 12 Singles points available, captain Mike Broderick's Professionals won eight matches and tied two to grab nine of the available points and eke out a 12 ½ - 11 ½ victory over the Amateurs. The Professionals were captained by Mike Broderick of Deerwood Country Club, with Jack Aschenbach of the North Florida Junior Golf Foundation assisting. Mike Del Rocco of San Jose Country Club led the Amateurs, assisted by fellow San Jose member Mark Taylor.



Professional Captain Mike Broderick with Underwood Jewelers' Clayton Bromberg and Amateur Captain Mike Del Rocco.

Conducted by the Northern Chapter of the North Florida PGA, the Underwood Cup has been sponsored by Underwood Jewelers all 33 years. Underwood Jewelers President Clayton Bromberg served as Honorary Starter and host of the post-event luncheon and awards ceremony.

With support from volunteers and promotion by Jacksonville Area Golf Association and the Florida State Golf Association, the event has been hosted by Timuquana Country Club for 31 years since 1992, with the exception of 2022 and 2023, when the event was held at San Jose Country Club. A third host venue, to be announced in the near future, will soon be added to the three-club rotation.

The Amateurs lead the cup series 17-13-3.



Honorees Bob Adelhelm, Kathy Cayon, Rafael Santiao and Beth Heath

# Selflessness of Four WWII Chaplains Resurrected in Humanitarian Awards

On Feb. 3, 1943, the WWII U.S. Army transport SS Dorchester was torpedoed by a German U-boat and sank. As the Dorchester went down, four 1st Lt. Chaplains of different faiths made the ultimate sacrifice and gave their life jackets to others. Two of the chaplains were Protestant, one was a rabbi and one was a Catholic priest. They assisted the crew, prayed, joined arms and went down with the ship, forever immortalized as the "Four Chaplains."

Eighty-one years later to the day, the Four Chaplains Annual Memorial Service was presented by Chaplain Patrick Archuleta at the National POW-MIA Memorial Chapel of the High-Speed Pass at Cecil Field in Jacksonville where Archuleta presented the prestigious Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation Legion of Honor Humanitarian Awards to four Jacksonville residents. The awards recognize lifetime service to all people regardless of race or faith.

Honored at the ceremony were retired U.S. Marine Corps Lt. Col. Robert Adelhelm of the Vets4Vets and Semper Fidelis Society, Kathy Cayton of the Navy Wives Club of America, Rafael Santiago of the Military Affairs Veterans Service Office, and Beth Heath of the We Can Be Heroes Foundation.

The executive director of the Four Chaplains Memorial Foundation, Bill Kaemmer, was the keynote speaker.

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# Winterland Festival Supports Local Arts

Winterland Music Outreach Foundation hosted Winterland Six at James Weldon Johnson Park Feb. 23-25. The mixed-genre music festival featured a mix of local favorites alongside national headliners like the Osees, Blonde Redhead and Caroline Rose. It brings in additional arts through local vendors, live demonstrations and visual art installations.

The festival raises funds for the Winterland Music Outreach Foundation to invest in the equality and sustainability of the Jacksonville arts economy. The organization is working to establish an artist residency program, record label, and has plans to bring more concerts

and educational opportunities for musicians and music lovers in Jacksonville.

“Being a part of the growing arts and culture scene here in Jacksonville is both inspiring and challenging,” said Glenn Michael Van Dyke, Winterland co-founder and musician. “We want to cultivate an environment where artists can flourish and share their music, but also ensure that this city is a place their careers can blossom.”

Winterland Six was presented by the City of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Music Experience, the music discovery platform of WJCT Public Media, and the Jessie Ball duPont Fund.



The Sporting Fashion exhibit at The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens features women's sporting attire from 1800 to 1960, like this inline skating ensemble from the 1890s.

## Always in Fashion

The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens is hosting the final stop of “Sporting Fashion: Outdoor Girls 1800 to 1960”, the first exhibition to explore the evolution of women's sporting attire in Western fashion. It contains more than 60 ensembles worn for outdoor activities during the 19th and 20th centuries, including swimming, fencing, tennis, golf, motorcycling and piloting. The attire on view come primarily from affluent women in Western Europe and North America, who had greater access to leisure and sport activities. The collection of garments and accessories explores how fashion met the needs of new pursuits for these women while preserving their socially approved mobility. “Sporting Fashion” opened Feb. 28 and will run through May 19.



A Vision for Art 2024 Featured Artist Emily Ozier, professionally known as EMOY, with her art.



# 42 Artists Convene for A Vision for Art

A Vision for Art, the annual art exhibition fundraiser for Episcopal School of Jacksonville, St. Mark's Campus, recently selected 42 artists to showcase their work at the 5th annual A Vision for Art Exhibition. The artists, who were selected from over 90 applicants, hail from Florida, South Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and Louisiana.

This year's featured artist is Emily Ozier. Known as EMOY, she honed her craft in Italy under the guidance of

impressionist master John Singer Sargent. While she creates from her studio in Tennessee, she traces the roots of her expressive style to her Cuban heritage.

A Vision for Art kicks off April 19 with a ticketed opening-night celebration and shopping days April 20-23, all held on the Episcopal School of Jacksonville, St. Mark's Campus at 4114 Oxford Ave. This year's event is presented by Northern Trust. To learn more, visit [avisionforart.com](http://avisionforart.com).



Judge Brian J. Davis, 2022-23 board chair of The Community Foundation, with honoree Sarah Crooks and Sally Lee, daughter of Ann McDonald Baker.

## Crooks Receives Art Award, Grant

Sarah Crooks, a multidisciplinary ecofeminist artist who has made significant contributions to the Northeast Florida community for more than three decades, has been honored by The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida with the 2023 Ann McDonald Baker Art Ventures Award.

The award is bestowed annually in recognition of a local artist whose work brings distinction to Northeast Florida. It is named for the late Ann McDonald Baker, the first woman to serve as the chair of the Board of Trustees of The Community Foundation, and it includes a \$10,000 unrestricted grant for the recipient.

“Sarah shares a love for many of the things that inspired my mother: love of nature, education, and service to the community,” said Sally Lee, award selection chair and daughter of Ann McDonald Baker. “These intersections, as well as the sheer beauty of Sarah's work, made her a natural choice for this year's award.”

Crooks's work blends art with environmental science, reimagining human relationships with the natural environments of Northeast Florida. Collaborations include Cathedral Arts Project, The St. Johns Riverkeeper, Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, The Museum of Science and History and the East Coast Greenway Alliance.

# MOCA Installs Massive Frank Stella Work



MOCA Jacksonville's new installation, “Jacksonville Stacked Stars,” in progress at artist Frank Stella's studio.



Frank Stella

MOCA Jacksonville unveiled the newest installation in its Project Atrium Series, Frank Stella's “Jacksonville Stacked Stars,” on Feb. 29. This brand-new work of art was commissioned and created in honor of MOCA Jacksonville's 100th anniversary celebration. It features two of the artist's iconic stars stacked in a single sculpture that fills the museum's massive atrium. Through the use of sophisticated computer models, “Jacksonville Stacked Stars” seems to defy the forces of gravity and sculptural norms. A second Frank Stella exhibition, “Printmaking,” will be installed alongside the stars, featuring works from its permanent collection complemented by loans from local collectors.

The installation was curated by MOCA Senior Curator Ylva Rouse; the Project Atrium Series is made possible by Joan and Preston Haskell and Driver, McAfee, Hawthorne & Diebenow.



## Beyond Black and White (and Read All Over)

Once it's been “read all over,” upcycle last month's *The Resident News* into adorable black-and-white gift bags. Add a bold, black stamp, washi tape or clip-on accent to breathe new life into your old newspapers. It's a great way to show your local pride for thoughtful teacher, birthday or holiday gifts.





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# Little Run, Big Cause

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Florida (BBBSNEFL) hosted its 7th Annual Little Big Run 5K and Fun Run, presented by Availity, on Saturday, Jan. 27. Over 100 Bigs, Littles, runners and supporters gathered in Riverside to celebrate National Mentoring Month step-by-step, helping raise more than \$10,000. The course featured a route that crossed the new Fuller Warren shared-use path bridge.

“Funds raised through this event help our organization defend and ignite the potential of Northeast Florida’s youth. Little Big Run is a little run for a big cause,” said Sara Alford, CEO of BBBSNEFL.

For more than 110 years, BBBSNEFL’s cause has impacted children, families and the community by providing mentoring services that inspire children’s personal and academic achievement. To learn more or become a mentor, visit [bbbsnefl.org](https://bbbsnefl.org).



Kenny Gilbert’s Southern-inspired cookbook, and topic of his recent broadcast.

## Local Chef’s Cookbook Goes National

Florida’s embassy in D.C. partners with San Marco bookstore to promote

In February, the Florida House on Capitol Hill Book Club, along with San Marco Books and More, hosted Chef Kenny Gilbert for a broadcast about his cookbook “Southern Cooking, Global Flavors.”

In the book, Gilbert offers up 10 iconic Southern dishes, followed by twists with international variations on the classic version. It connects the global culture to the comforting potential of Southern cuisine and celebrates the cultural influences that have coexisted in America.

Gilbert has had a three-decade career that includes fine dining restaurants and a stint as Oprah Winfrey’s personal chef. He made his national debut on “Top Chef” in 2010, but is based in Jacksonville, where he owns Silkie’s Chicken and Champagne Bar.

The Florida House on Capitol Hill Book Club hosts authors, booksellers and book experts quarterly to discuss literature about the Sunshine State. “Southern Cooking, Global Flavors” is available at San Marco Books and More, [sanmarcobooksandmore.com](https://sanmarcobooksandmore.com), as well as online retailers.

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# THE WAY WE WERE

## Dr. and Mrs. David Pirrung

David and Margaret Pirrung with their daughters, Tyler and Jennifer

The Pirrung family with longtime friend John McCain

BY WINDY TAYLOR

David Pirrung and Margaret Tyler Pirrung are Virginia natives – him from Roanoke, her from a small town called Hopewell. It’s an area steeped in Civil War history. “[Ulysses S.] Grant had his headquarters at Epps Manor, on a bluff over the James River. His troops lived out on the waterfront, and they were the food supply for the troops in Petersburg. They used to bake 10,000 loaves of bread a day and send it by the rail to Petersburg. When I was growing up, I used to play on what we called the “playground.” It was this huge field with a lot of bumpy hills at one end. We came to find out, several years later, that place was [the ruins of] Fort Abbott,” said Margaret Pirrung.

Margaret trained as a nurse at the University of Virginia (UVA). When she first went away to college, women could not go to UVA for their first two years, only their third. So, she had to go to a girls’ school, Mary Washington, before moving on to UVA. But then, it was in that UVA hospital cafeteria that fate introduced her to David Pirrung. They married June 6, 1959, after dating for a year.

Dr. Pirrung joined the Navy and the couple left

Virginia for Florida. David Pirrung interned at Pensacola Naval Hospital, and then went to flight surgeon school. “He was one of two flight surgeons deployed to the USS Enterprise. He was in charge of Air Group 6, and that’s where we met [Senator] John McCain. We were good friends,” said Margaret Pirrung.



Margaret Tyler Pirrung (third row, far left) with her nursing school class at the University of Virginia, June 1959.

During their time in the Navy, the Pirrungs had two children: a daughter, Tyler, and a son, David Jr., four years later. Navy wives – in the 1960s – were permitted to

“When I was growing up, I used to play on what we called the ‘playground.’ It was this huge field with a lot of bumpy hills at one end. We came to find out, several years later, that place was [the ruins of] Fort Abbott.”

– Margaret Pirrung

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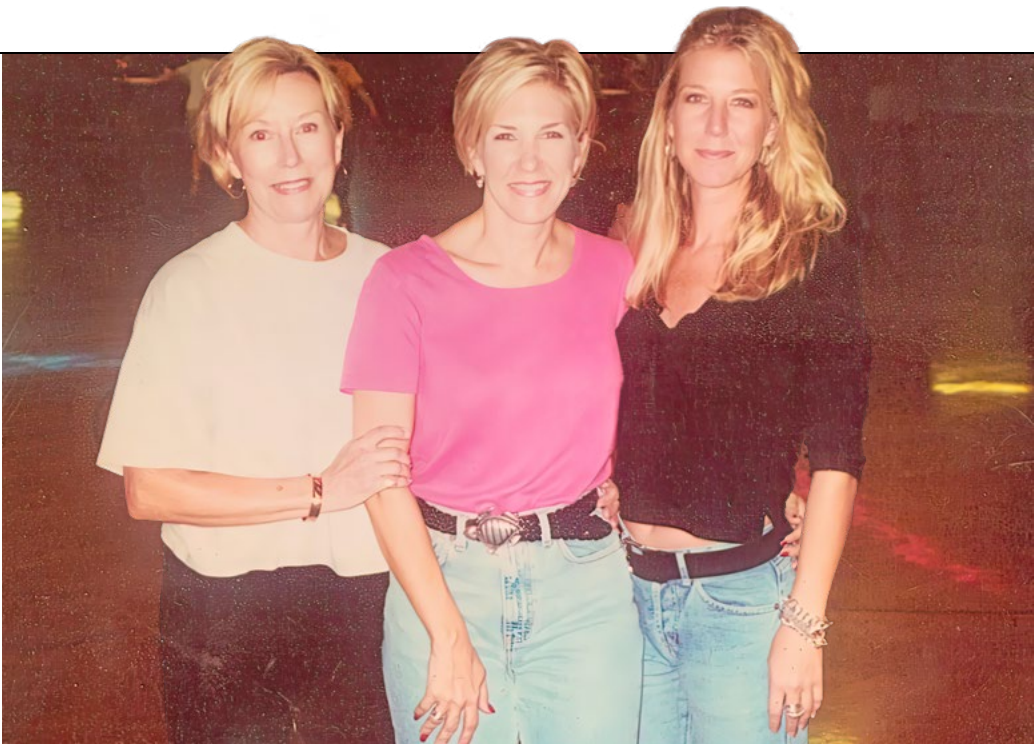


travel to the ports where their husbands were onboard ships. Margaret recalled when she met up with David’s ship in Cannes, where they had an apartment for three months.

“I went home, to my family, so I could work to buy my plane ticket. I remember when I went to get my plane ticket, I thought, this is enough money to buy a washer and dryer!” she said. “The first day I went on the beach, I had on my one-piece demure black bathing suit, and I felt like I had a winter coat on. So, I went out and bought myself one of several bikinis.”

They explored the Mediterranean, taking road trips to Positano, St. Tropez and watching the Grand Prix in Monaco.

In 1964, the Pirrungs were relocated to the Naval Air Station Jacksonville, where Dr. Pirrung left the Navy to pursue a residency in family medicine at Duval



Margaret with her daughters, Tyler and Jennifer

when Carol was seriously injured in a car accident in 1969.

“Andy, their son, lived with us his senior year because he wanted to graduate from Episcopal,” Margaret Pirrung said. “He lives in Phoenix, but he still comes to see us every year.”

Dr. Pirrung was in private practice with Dr. David Gouch for nearly four decades, then was named the first medical director of St. Vincent’s Medical Center. The Pirrungs joined St. Marks Episcopal Church, and Margaret filled her time with volunteer work, including as a nurse with Planned Parenthood and the Channel 7 Auction.

“One of the items that was donated [for the auction] was a picture of Nancy Darby and I in a pair of underwear; she was in one leg and I was in the other!” she said.

Dr. Pirrung eventually retired and worked part-time at Baptist, while Margaret worked for Dr. N. H. Tucker. During the pandemic, they sold their home and left Jacksonville for two years.



Jennifer Pirrung      David Pirrung, Jr.      Tyler Pirrung

Medical Center (now Shands Jacksonville). The family bought a house on Apache Avenue, where they lived for thirty years. Shortly thereafter, their third child, Jennifer, was born. Although Jennifer was the only member of the Pirrung family born in Jacksonville, the whole family still

considers it home.

John McCain and his first wife, Carol, moved to Orange Park around the same time. The Pirrung family remained close to Carol and her three children when John McCain was taken prisoner in Vietnam in 1967, and

“I really like Donna Deegan, I think she’s doing a lot for the city.” – Margaret Pirrung

“My daughter down in Winter Park just insisted that we come down there and live, but when we got down there, I missed my friends here. So, we moved back here in June,” said Margaret Pirrung.

The Pirrungs fill their time with friends, family and cheering for the Jaguars. Margaret is a big fan of our new mayor.

“I really like Donna Deegan, I think she’s doing a lot for the city,” she said. “I admire her an awful lot. She sticks to what she believes in.”



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Bolles Upper School San Jose Campus counselor Katie Cussen with Olympic gold medalist Samantha Livingstone and fellow counselor Lauren Genduso

# Olympian Speaks on Mental Health for High-Achieving Children

Olympic gold medalist Samantha Arsenault Livingstone visited the Bolles Upper School San Jose Campus Jan. 24-25 for a series of presentations centered on mental health, the dangers of perfectionism and finding balance for high-achieving kids. The world-renowned swimmer is a high-performance consultant, speaker and mental health activist.

Livingstone founded Livingstone High Performance (LHP) in response to the mental health crisis impacting young people across the globe, disrupting the old-school model of mental toughness as the path to high achievement. She spoke to school advisors about the mental toll that striving for success can take on students. She then presented parents with “Healthy High Achieving Kids – Perfectionism, Success at What Cost?” and had a similar discussion later that day with athletic liaisons and upper school students.

She shared her journey to the top of the Olympic podium, opening up about the stress of high achievement, the pressure to be perfect and how she rose above challenges through a shift from a performance-based identity to a purpose-based identity. She encouraged listeners to embrace humanness, use the power of pause, lead with curiosity, and practice self-kindness as opposed to self-judgment.



Senior Co-Editor-in-Chief Emma Klopfer works on an edition of Élan.

# Douglas Anderson Student Magazine Wins Highest Honors

Élan, an international student literary magazine published by the Creative Writing department at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts, won highest honors in the 2023 REALM national contest from has the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE).

REALM, which stands for Recognizing Excellence in Art and Literary Magazines, awarded Élan its First Class distinction, bestowed upon only five recipients in the State of Florida and 105 nationwide. The REALM program celebrates the art of writing through publicly recognizing literary magazines produced by students with the support of their teachers. Nominations of 375 student magazines came from 46 states and five countries.

“I am so immensely proud of Élan and its staff, past and present, who have ensured the success of youth creativity in a time when our imagination is needed the absolute most,” said Élan Senior Co-Editor-in-Chief Emma Klopfer.

Élan was originally created as a grassroots publication of the English Department in 1986 and now provides a creativity platform for students globally, including Japan, Korea, India and France. It is published three times a year by a staff of 18 juniors and seniors under the direction of faculty advisor Tiffany Melanson and student editors Niveah Glover, Klopfer and Brendan Nurczyk.

“As a former student editor of Élan, I am especially proud of how the publication has evolved in its 37-year history from a photocopied ‘zine to a world-class international literary publication. It’s a true honor to shepherd these talented young editors through the process every year,” said Melanson.





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## March 23, 2024 Ice Cream Run

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[clarkeschools.org/icecreamrun](https://clarkeschools.org/icecreamrun)





Students from Episcopal School of Jacksonville attended the Northeast Florida Regional Science and Engineering Fair.

# Episcopal Sweeps to State Science Fair

At the Northeast Florida Regional Science and Engineering Fair Feb. 12-13, all of the students from Episcopal School of Jacksonville were chosen to move on and represent the region at the State Science and Engineering Fair of Florida April 2-6. Students Alex Chindris and Anabella Platt were also chosen to represent the region at the International Science and Engineering Fair in Los Angeles in May.

Several of the students were named recipients of special awards and cash prizes totaling \$1,400. Junior Alex Chindris also received an impressive \$35,000-per-year scholarship for four years to Jacksonville University.

Marion Zeiner, Episcopal's Director of Scientific Research, said, "It is the skills and knowledge that they gain in all academic areas that have provided the foundation for their successes in their research and science competitions."



Kindergarten students at Assumption Catholic School

# Aging Gracefully

Kindergarten students at Assumption Catholic School celebrated the 100th day of school in style on Jan. 26. The tiny time travelers – and a few of their teachers – were not their normal, youthful selves, but instead marked the milestone day as 100-year-old versions of themselves, complete with gray hair, reading glasses and a touch of whimsical silliness. With age comes wisdom, and this group is definitely 100 days smarter!



Students Jenna and Cole Flint with their grandfather



Second graders perform during Grandparents Day at Assumption Catholic School.

# A Grand Celebration for Catholic Schools Week

Assumption Catholic School capped off the final day of Catholic Schools Week, Jan. 28 through Feb. 3, with a celebration for the families' grandparents. A festive mass was followed by performances from the kindergarten, first and second grade students, and the day ended with activities, classroom visits and snacks in the courtyard. Catholic Schools Week starts the last Sunday in January and runs the entire week.

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Nat Glover speaks to Riverside Presbyterian Day School.

# Glover Inspires Local Students

As part of Riverside Presbyterian Day School's Black History Month celebration and studies in February, the school welcomed special guest Nathaniel "Nat" Glover, Jr. to speak. In his chapel message, Glover shared his journey to becoming the Sheriff of Jacksonville, and he encouraged students to be their best selves by planning, preparing, persevering and praying. The service ended with a reminder to students that they can do anything they put their mind to.

Jazz in the Garden

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# 41 Phenoms Signed to College Athletics

It was a day of celebration and pride as 41 local high school seniors from Bishop Kenny High School, Bolles and Episcopal School of Jacksonville took center stage on Wednesday, Feb. 7, 2024, for National Signing Day ceremonies that marked the next chapter in their educational journeys. These students were cheered by their respective schools for cultivating not only a strong education, but also committing to continue their athletic careers at the next collegiate level.



**BISHOP KENNY HIGH SCHOOL**  
Bishop Kenny's committed collegiate athletes: Emily Wheldon, Kolbe Sexton, Carson Cope, Andrew McWilliams, Nash Beenen, Ethan Proffitt, James Resar, Lily Pragle and Davis Johnson

**Nash Beenen**, U.S. Naval Academy, football | **Carson Cope**, Eastern University, soccer | **Davis Johnson**, Emory University, cross country and track and field | **Andrew McWilliams**, Daytona State College, baseball | **Lily Pragle**, Erskine College, beach volleyball | **Ethan Proffitt**, Florida Atlantic University, football | **James Resar**, University of Iowa, football | **Kolbe Sexton**, Benedictine College, football | **Emily Wheldon**, Georgia Southern University, cross country



**THE BOLLES SCHOOL**  
Leila Bata with Zee Curtis and Presley Wolfe | Ethan Binns with Kellen Padgett and Sara Wasserman | Garrison Butler with Christin Hills and Noah Cole



**THE BOLLES SCHOOL**  
Aidan Lynch with Garrett Watterson, Ella Stakem and Hilary Englert | J.D. Matson with Jacob Campen | Anthony Whittall with Elizabeth Erlendsdottir and Keira Scott

**Leila Bata**, Amherst College, cross country/track and field | **Ethan Binns**, Grove City College, lacrosse | **Garrison Butler**, University of Cincinnati, football | **Jacob Campen**, Denison University, lacrosse | **Noah Cole**, Gardner-Webb University, football | **Zee Curtis**, Florida State University, track and field | **Hilary Englert**, Furman University, women's basketball | **Elizabeth Erlendsdottir**, Georgia Institute of Technology, swimming | **Christin Hills**, Washington & Lee University, football | **Aidan Lynch**, Middlebury College, baseball | **J.D. Matson**, Washington & Lee University, football and lacrosse | **Kellen Padgett**, Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, lacrosse | **Keira Scott**, University of Northern Colorado, swimming | **Ella Stakem**, Belmont Abbey College, women's basketball | **Sara Wasserman**, Georgetown University, rowing | **Garrett Watterson**, Sewanee: The University of the South, men's basketball | **Anthony Whittall**, University of South Carolina, swimming | **Presley Wolfe**, Tulane University, track and field



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**Nate Blair**, Western Carolina University, football | **Omarr Dixon**, College of Holy Cross, football | **Cam Goldknopf**, William and Mary, golf | **Ella Henderson**, College of Wooster, swimming | **Connor Hess**, Trinity University, golf | **Kent Jackson**, Jacksonville University, basketball | **Grace Jones**, Mercer University, softball | **Hannah Kowkabany**, Washington and Lee University, cross country/track and field | **Jake Melograna**, Catholic University, football | **Henry Robards**, Mercer University, golf | **Grady Schwartz**, University of Tampa, basketball | **Charlotte Seay**, The Citadel, soccer | **Nora Slack**, University of Southern Maine, soccer | **Skyler Watts**, University of South Florida, track and field

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Davis Johnson

Melanie Staples

Bridget Sutter

# Trio Selected as National Merit Finalists

Bishop Kenny High School seniors Davis Johnson, Melanie Staples and Bridget Sutter have been named as National Merit Finalists in the 69th annual National Merit Scholarship Program. As finalists, they rank in the top 1% of the over one million students who started the National Merit process as juniors back in October 2022. The three young ladies were selected based on their PSAT scores, outstanding academic performance and involvement in leadership roles in extracurricular activities and honor societies. Finalists are eligible to compete for a \$2,500 National Merit Scholarship; scholarship offers will begin late March.



# Students Fly Like Ospreys

Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus sixth grade students took a class field trip to the University of North Florida's Osprey Challenge Course Jan. 26. Advisors joined the sixth graders as the group climbed and ziplined their way through the course, working together to problem-solve along the way. The high ropes adventure course opened in 2012 and is operated by the university's Campus Recreation.

# Former Sheriff Speaks on Race Relations



Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus Head Josh Bauman with Former Jacksonville Sheriff Nathaniel "Nat" Glover and Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus social studies teachers Kellie Marks and Allison Greene

Former Jacksonville Sheriff Nathaniel "Nat" Glover visited the Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus on Jan. 26 to speak with Kellie Marks and Allison Greene's eighth grade civics students about his experience facing racism and how he focused on uniting people during his career to inspire change. Glover is the first Black sheriff of a major city in the Deep South since the Reconstruction era. At age 17, Glover unknowingly headed into Ax Handle Saturday, a harrowing encounter with racism that Glover says committed him to a lifetime of fighting for justice. He joined the Jacksonville Police Department in 1966 and rose through the ranks before being elected sheriff in 1995. He was a mayoral candidate in 2003 and served as the 29th president of his alma mater, Edward Waters University. His memoir, "Striving for Justice: A Black Sheriff in the Deep South," was released in 2023.



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Children at the Fundación Santa Laura Montoya in Columbia.

# Students Organize Clothing Drive

Bolles Hispanic Student Union co-presidents Sofia Brieva and Emma Vasquez organized a clothing drive benefiting a children's community center to support families in need in Jamundi, Colombia, this winter.

The juniors collected, washed and sorted the clothes into categorized bags for Brieva to deliver in person to Fundación Santa Laura Montoya while visiting family.

The Hispanic Student Union is sponsored by language teachers Adriana Stam and Araceli Crotty.

# New Home Base for Baseball Charity

Walk Off Charities celebrated the opening of its new facility at Fort Family Park, 8000 E. Baymeadows Rd., with a ribbon cutting ceremony on Friday, Feb. 23. The Fort Family Park facility will serve as the organization's home base for its baseball leagues for children ages 5-18.

Mayor Donna Deegan was in attendance at the event, along with leaders from the city, city council, Walk Off Charities and Duval County Public Schools.

Walk Off Charities runs youth baseball clinics and leagues and improves facilities in the area in order to bring the sport of baseball to children who can't afford to play.



Ayanna Nelson



Maurice Chakour



Ayviana Singh in character in Over the Tavern.

# Douglas Anderson Students Win YoungArts Awards

Four local Douglas Anderson School of the Arts (DA) students were among the nearly 700 visual, literary and performing artists named as 2024 YoungArts award winners. Maurice Chakour (Jazz/Guitar), Ayanna Nelson (Voice/Jazz) and Ayviana Singh (Theatre/Spoken) were selected as competition winners. Kierra Reese (Visual Arts) was listed as a notable Winner with Distinction.

These students will join a distinguished community of artists who are offered creative and professional development support throughout their careers. As a Winner with Distinction, Reese is also invited to participate in National YoungArts Week and is eligible to be nominated to become one of the U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts.

DA had one student make YoungArts's 2024 60-nominee list for U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts – Niveah Glover, a 2022 YoungArts winner for writing. The nominee list will be reviewed by the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars and the 20 winners will be announced in the coming months.

"The benefits of participating in the YoungArts competition extend beyond recognition; students who apply and enter automatically have their names sent to colleges across the country, opening doors to further opportunities in their artistic pursuits," said DA Foundation Director Jackie Cornelius. "This recognition is a testament to the hard work and creativity of our students, as well as the dedication of our instructors."

Additionally, the YoungArts Foundation acknowledged the instructors who have played a pivotal role in guiding and mentoring these students: Valerie Anthony, Michael Beaman, Ingrid Damiani, Deja Gee, Brian Griffin, Joe Kemper, Morgan Stuart, Khanh Tran, Barry Wilson and Don Zentz.

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# IN MEMORIAM



## Clayton Ford Riley

BY PEGGY HARRELL JENNINGS

Clayton Riley would have enjoyed the standing-room-only gathering of his family and friends at Riverside Presbyterian Church where he had been a faithful member for 70 years until his passing at age 98. His joyful presence was evident in the scripture, words of remembrance, prayers, songs and the sweet and humorous stories shared not only at the service by his son, Jim, but also afterward, as those who loved him gathered to visit and talk about the dear, charming, charismatic man who never met a stranger, loved everybody he met and was a “relentless encourager.”

Rev. Dr. Brian Lays said Riley was “always asking, pursuing, singing really loudly and enthusiastically, praying and loving. He was an ambassador for faith, rooted and established in love.”

Riley grew up in Ohio as the youngest of seven children in a loud, boisterous family who loved to work. His first jobs were in sales: soap, his mother’s pies, chips at the fair, newspapers. After serving in the military during WWII and the Korean conflict, he graduated from Ohio University on the GI Bill.

With orders to report to NAS Jacksonville, Riley met Ed Morrow, who noticed Riley’s Beta Theta Pi fraternity ring and invited him to his parent’s house in Avondale where he met Morrow’s cousin, Maureen O’Crowley. It was love at first sight and they were married within a couple of weeks.

In 1951, Riley started Riley-Kirby Company whose distributorship sold over 100,000 vacuum cleaners in the greater Jacksonville area. This “greatest salesman of all time who could sell you a \$1,000 vacuum cleaner in five minutes” said that things were easy to sell if you believed in them. He worked tirelessly, winning cars and luxury vacations for his achievements.

Riley, the “ultimate family man,” stayed busy with his children, church, numerous civic organizations, playing golf and tennis at Timuquana Country Club, riding his bicycle, and playing volleyball at the YMCA. The couple, along with their six children – Ford (Elizabeth), Scott (Missy), Martha Love Rotella (Jay), Jenifer Skinner (Chip), Paul (Kelly) and Jim (Dana) – made Ortega Forest their home until Maureen passed in 1978.

At his memorial service, Riley’s grandchildren remarked that he was always reaching out – writing letters, calling people on their birthdays and never missing an opportunity to tell people how important they were – and asked, “How did Grandpa have that much love to go around?”

That love extended to a young widower, Mary Elizabeth (Bibbie) Ingram, and her five children: David Ingram (Terry), Laurie Stottlemeyer (Joe), Andy Ingram, Susan McCormack and Jennifer Tucker. He and Ingram enjoyed 40 years hosting Super Bowl parties, reunions at Crescent Beach, playing tennis, traveling and being with their extended “Norman Rockwell family” before Ingram and Tucker predeceased him.

Riley’s singing, laughing and joking was ever-present, his blue eyes twinkling with childlike enthusiasm, and embracing life with gusto and a big “Yahoo!”

Rev. Dr. Steve Goyer told a story of how Riley decided at the age of 85 that he wanted to sing a solo at church and invited everyone to come. Secretly, the pastor and choir director, Andrew Clarke, were hesitant but, since Riley was a devoted elder member and church deacon, they agreed to do so with trepidation and a lot of prayer. During the service, Riley stepped up to the microphone, with no notes, and nailed his rendition of “Sweet Little Jesus Boy.”

It was that spirit and confidence that exemplified the legacy of Clayton Riley. His children, 26 beloved grandchildren, 27 great-grandchildren and the multitude of people who loved and were loved by Riley can join the heavenly chorus – which, no doubt, Riley is leading.

As he would say, “I’ll see you when the roads get better.”



Mary Elizabeth “Bibbie” Ingram with Clayton Riley



## Hooshang Harvesf, Ph.D.

The Avondale community learned of the passing of Hooshang Harvesf, Ph.D. on Saturday, Feb. 3, in Jacksonville, Florida, his hometown outside of his native country of ancient Persia. He was predeceased by his father, mother and brother, Dr. Keikhosrow Harvesf, M.D., a local pediatrician, whom he followed to North Florida back in the 1960s. He is survived by his niece, Mojdeh Harvesf (Ourmazdi), and nephew, Cyrus M. Harvesf, along with grandnephews and a grandniece.

Harvesf was born in Kerman, Iran, and emigrated to the United States due to persecution of Christians in his home country, which proved to be a great move for his family and his business pursuits. Remembering his roots was key for his passionate career; in his native culture, rugs were underfoot in every home. Multiple rugs would be spread throughout the rooms of homes across the Middle East. It was a tradition that he curated through his life’s long journey.

After earning his Ph.D. at the University of California Berkley, he moved to Jacksonville to begin his career, where he would fall in love with the people of Jacksonville – from Avondale to the Beaches – and all neighborhoods in between. One thing was clear, he loved Avondale and was always proud to be a productive member and Board Chairman Emeritus of the Board of the Shoppes of Avondale, now referred to as Historic Avondale. His input brought the best outcomes in updating and management decisions for the area, even as far back as the mid-2000s, when Avondale went through major upgrades to pavers, historic lighting and more.

Starting his rug business back in 1977, Harvesf was the longest continuously running business in Avondale, selling rugs from the top weaving centers of the world for decades. Not only did he sell rugs, but he was an educator on the craft of hand-tied and loom-fed mills that procured beautiful works of art. If a guest or visitor wanted to learn about the value and craft of rugs, he would take the time, and quite often would build friendships with those that were intrigued by this unique form of art. He made fast friends and procured relationships, even if there was no business to be done. He simply loved to talk about his treasure trove of rugs – it wasn’t about the sale, and it wasn’t about the money.

Many of the works he purchased were not just rugs, but pieces to be hung as displays on walls, or procured in museums due to the time-honored traditions of highly skilled, professional weavers that created life-like beauty in colorful, dyed wool and silks to create landscapes, patterns and color-combinations of magnificence.

Harvesf was quick with a smile and had sincere respect for those that took time to build relationships and spread kindness; his wisdom was unmistakable. He was also a man of few words – but when they were spoken, people listened. Full of insight, wit and kindness, his advice was paramount and encouraging to anyone that took time to appreciate and enjoy his company.

He earned his reputation as one of the most knowledgeable, kind and considerate salesmen. His collection of rugs are placed in some of the finest homes in North Florida and far beyond the shop’s local area; many will be passed on for generations to come as part of his legacy and that of the families and friends he served.







by Elainah Ehrlichman

Funeral rites and customs have existed alongside humanity for thousands of years. The ways that we approach end-of-life ceremonies stem largely from our upbringing, culture, and religious affiliations. Different ways of handling funeral and memorial services have evolved over time, and today, planning a service for either yourself or a loved one can be as customizable as you can imagine. That's why we are so excited to announce that coming in July 2024\*, our Hardage-Giddens Riverside location will be opening its doors to a brand-new celebration of life pavilion, designed specifically to accommodate your perfect service or event.

But first, a little background on celebration of life services and how Hardage-Giddens came to be a top-tier provider of them. A celebration of life service differs from a traditional service in both mood and the level of personalization present. In a celebration of life service, much of the focus is on celebrating your loved one's life and accomplishments rather than focusing on the loss of life, so oftentimes, the mood is one of hope. These services also offer countless personalization options, such as choice of music (some families choose to create a fully hand-picked playlist filled with impactful songs), delicious catering, round seating tables that allow for storytelling and the sharing of heartfelt memories, and a 100% unique Life Story display table that visually details your loved one's favorite moments and life experiences. The ways you can personalize a celebration of life service are truly limitless!

Before 2016, Hardage-Giddens' Life Story department was not yet established, and our funeral directors took it upon themselves to personally create meaningful displays with the items families brought in to them. Hardage-Giddens understood the need to devote an entire branch to creating a fully personalized service, as this was clearly something that families treasured (in fact, over 50% of families let us know that they would opt for a celebration of life service if given the choice). In 2016, we doubled down on efforts to make this vision a reality and successfully established our Life Story department. Now, we have a dedicated team of professionals who excel at making families' wishes bloom into beautiful visual representations of their loved one's life. From stunning table centerpieces to breathtaking Life Story displays, our Life Story department takes care of families in a unique and artistic way.

Providing families with everything they need to create a memorable service is what Hardage-Giddens does best, and our new indoor-outdoor pavilion is another incredible addition for families to utilize. This life event center features exposed wood to enhance its luxurious yet rustic feel, high ceilings, an open seating area, a covered patio, hinged side glass panel doors, and so much more. Having such a versatile space allows for countless options when planning a service or special gathering.

Another exciting aspect of the recently developed venue is that, while it can be used for funeral and memorial

services, it can also be used for other events. This elegant space was designed with the understanding that life has many reasons to celebrate, so we invite you to hold any momentous occasion here! From birthday parties to corporate lunches, our exquisite pavilion can accommodate any purpose. This indoor-outdoor structure also allows for the inclusion of nature by swinging open the side doors into the surrounding grass field. Perfect for a teatime luncheon!

Over time, we at Hardage-Giddens have learned that having more options on the table for families to choose from consistently benefits them. We have gathered extensive resources to ensure that creating celebration of life services is a viable reality for the families we serve, and this addition to our Hardage-Giddens Riverside location is yet another beautiful place to hold a meaningful service or important event in. Whether you opt for a traditional service, a celebration of life, or simply wish to celebrate one of the many monumental times in your life, our center is ready to accommodate you. Thank you for continuing to put your trust in us; we cannot wait for you to experience the pavilion firsthand!

Special thanks to Celebration of Life Manager Julie Bucek for providing information regarding celebration of life services.

*\*Date is approximate.*

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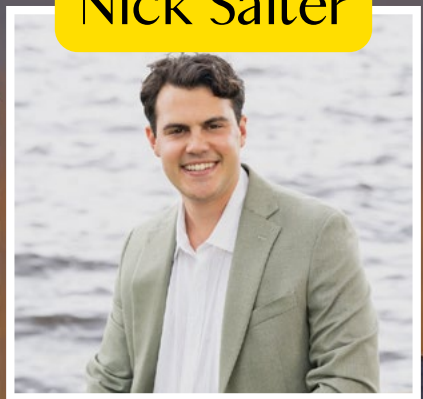
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