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FULL SCALE FUN at San Marco Beer Fest

Hundreds of residents, including (front row) Renee Farhat, Jonathan Wright, Michelle Wright, Jay Farhat, (back row) Jeff Knight, Jon Singleton, Candace Singleton, Tyler Fugitt with his daughter and Dane Bennett with his son, gathered in Balis Park March 9 for craft brews, classic rock covers, contests and camaraderie at the 3rd Annual San Marco BeerFest, hosted by the San Marco Merchants Association and Aardwolf Brewing. Next year's event has been scheduled for March 8, 2025.

READ MORE ON PAGE 12



SELFLESSNESS GROWS AT YMCA'S GIVING TREE GALA

Ashley McLeod, Mike Biagini and Nathan Wiltei celebrated community impact and the legacy of W.W. "Bill" Gay at the March 9 Giving Tree Gala, hosted by the Winston Family YMCA and the YMCA of Florida's First Coast.

READ MORE ON PAGE 24

Heart Ball Pumps \$2.2M



Into Northeast Florida

Chairpersons Pat and Inger Geraghty and the 36-member Executive Leadership Team led the American Heart Association to record-breaking fundraising for the 2024 Heart Ball.

READ MORE ON PAGE 25

SUMMER CONSTRUCTION FOR SAN MARCO

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is planning a mid-year start date for work on intersection enhancements at San Marco Boulevard and Hendricks Avenue to improve safety for drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians.

READ MORE ON PAGE 10

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Seventh graders Rio Burnett and Caroline Sutter

EASY AS PI

On March 14, famously known as Pi Day, Assumption Catholic School students marked the occasion by taking part in an interactive physics experiment by affixing their science teacher, Bill Hawthorn, to a wall using duct tape to demonstrate force, pressure and the concept of the center of gravity. This distinctive exercise not only made physics concepts more accessible, but it also offered an enjoyable and unforgettable learning experience through active participation and a few pies in the face of the good-spirited science teacher.



GRANT FAST-TRACKS FUNDING FOR EMERALD TRAIL

A \$147 million federal grant will fund the design and construction for the Emerald Trail's five remaining links. This record-setting grant is the largest one-time federal grant the City of Jacksonville has ever received.

READ MORE ON PAGE 11

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Letters TO THE EDITOR

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

Fighting Against a Warehouse District

The following was sent to City Council and DIA Board members.

My name is Jeff Schembera. I am currently president of the Peninsula Condominium Association. We are a 40-story building located one block from a proposed self-storage warehouse. A survey of Peninsula owners was conducted with 170 opposed to a self-storage warehouse, two in favor and one undecided. Peninsula residents, along with many others, have successfully fought against a warehouse of storage units on the corner of Prudential and Hendricks twice during the past two years. This time around, the developer is attempting to hide the warehouse of 500 storage units with affordable housing and several potential retail offices/shops. Let me be perfectly clear, if this was just a development of affordable housing and shops, we would be supporting it. Affordable housing and retail would bring many benefits to San Marco and the Southbank. Instead, these additions to the primary developer goal of a self-storage warehouse represent a subterfuge to get your support. To add insult to injury, the developer proposes tax credits and loans from taxpayers to help fund a warehouse at the entrance to both San Marco and the Southbank.

The Peninsula Condominium has 234 units and 475 residents with 73% of the units occupied by owners. The Association also owns the vacant lot in front of the Peninsula consisting of slightly less than an acre. Adjacent to us is the Strand Apartment rental building, and across from us is San Marco Place Condominium. Together, these three buildings make this block of residences the most densely populated block in Jacksonville and Duval County with approximately 1,200 residents. The Peninsula and Strand are located directly on the St. John's River. There are several entrances to the Riverwalk, one on the west side of the Peninsula and one on the east, which the Peninsula and Strand maintain for the City. It currently provides a beautiful setting for the citizens of Duval County and visitors to enjoy.

Peninsula residents are a tenuous bunch. In 2013, they filed legal actions against the contractor who built the building, multiple insurance companies and a number of subcontractors. To date we have received settlements of \$60 million with additional litigation still pending 11 years later. Our residents did this by paying the legal fees associated with this, not on a financed contingency basis. I share this with you so you can see that our residents will continue to oppose and fight the placement of a self-storage warehouse at the entrance to San Marco and Southbank. All of the perils that come with such a development will jeopardize the 1,200 women, men and children who live one block away.

The long-range Peninsula plan was to continue improvements along Riverplace

Boulevard by working with the DIA and city in possibly developing a green space/park for residents and the general public on the front of the property. If a self-storage warehouse is located one block away, we will need to begin exploring commercial usage to offset loss of property values. Just recently, the COJ spent substantial funds (\$4.6 million) giving Riverplace Boulevard, one block from the proposed warehouse, a road diet by reducing the road from four lanes to two in order to increase bike and pedestrian usage. The addition of a self-storage warehouse will increase trucks, moving vans and pickups going to and from the warehouse. This will endanger the substantially increased foot traffic and bike usage due to the road diet. Will the city widen Riverplace Boulevard to four lanes again to accommodate the self-storage warehouse and spend another \$5-6 million? Many millions of dollars were spent remediating Friendship Fountain with nightly light shows to draw residents and visitors downtown. What will residents and visitors opinion be of the dichotomy of a warehouse district next to a beautiful attraction?

If this newest proposal for a self-storage warehouse is approved, it will result in a warehouse district. I know that this sounds like an exaggeration, but is it? Last year during public hearings, a well-respected local businessman stated "that if this proposal (self-storage) is approved, I will have a proposal for self-storage submitted right away." The referenced location for another self-storage is two blocks from the proposed self-storage warehouse. You will then have created a warehouse district that will forever detract and ruin the south entrance to San Marco, one block from the Riverwalk.

Is a warehouse district worth the degradation of San Marco and the Southbank?

Respectfully,
Jeff Schembera

President, Peninsula Condominium Association

Jacksonville University to Host Armada Regular Season Games

The Jacksonville Armada Football Club announced Jacksonville University (JU) as its primary facility partner for the 2024 National Premier Soccer League and Women's Premier Soccer League regular season matches. The matches will take place at Southern Oak Stadium, located on the JU campus, just 10 minutes from the Armada's new stadium development in Downtown Jacksonville.

"We are proud to align with Jacksonville University for the upcoming regular season games. It's a somewhat full-circle moment; we have a lot of great memories playing in the U.S. Open Cup in the early years. Being able to host both men's and women's home matches at Southern Oak Stadium will undoubtedly enhance the game-day atmosphere and further strengthen the ties between both organizations and community," said Nathan Walter, president of the Jacksonville Armada FC.

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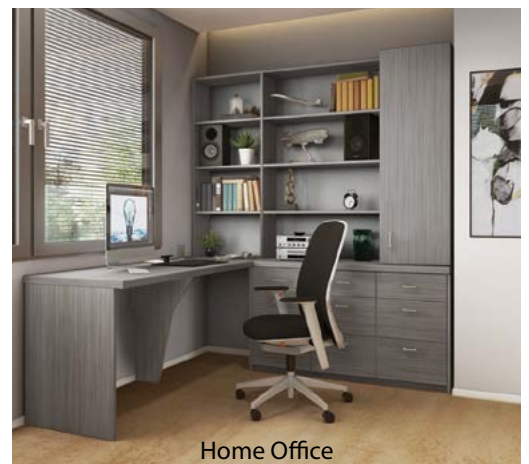
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Riverside



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Old Ortega



4340 Baltic Street

3 bedrooms, 2 baths, 1,679 sf
listed for \$490,000

Ortega Terrace



UNDER CONTRACT

4958 Arapahoe Avenue

3 bedrooms, 3.5 baths, 2,494 sf
listed for \$800,000

Ortega Forest



UNDER CONTRACT

4969 Prince Edward Road

4 bedrooms, 2.5 baths, 3,263 sf
listed for \$750,000

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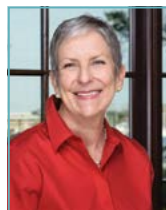


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Panelists for Urban Resurgence: Exploring Commercial Real Estate Developments in Downtown Jacksonville included Bryan Moll, Billy Zeits, Ken Thomas, Matt Marshall, Alex Sifakis and moderator Julia Holden Davis.

Bisnow Returns for Downtown State of the Market

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Bisnow, the global business-to-business platform for the commercial real estate industry, returned to Jacksonville Thursday, Feb. 29 for its fifth annual State of the Market event at the Southbank Hotel Jacksonville Riverwalk.

This year, Bisnow expanded the event to include three expert panels on topics related to Jacksonville's current commercial real estate climate.

The first panel, "Urban Resurgence: Exploring Commercial Real Estate Developments in Downtown Jacksonville," was moderated by Julia Holden Davis, shareholder and member of law firm Gunster's board of directors. The panel featured major players in Jacksonville's commercial and residential development community including: Alex Sifakis, president, JWB Real Estate Capital; Bryan Moll, CEO, Gateway Jax; Billy Zeits, vice president of government affairs, Corner Lot; Matt Marshall, senior vice president of development, RISE: A Real Estate Company; and Ken Thomas, project executive, Catamount Constructors.

The panelists covered a variety of topics during their discussion, among which was the theme of collaboration

between developers and the city. Sifakis called the utilization and availability of incentives "critical" for commercial development in the downtown area.

"Projects don't really pencil-in downtown without incentives, currently," he said.

Sifakis added, however, that he hopes to see that change in the coming years, regardless of how long that takes, so government incentives will no longer be needed. He said the key is "building the right buildings."

"You can't build a suburban building in downtown," he said. "You've got to have ground-floor retail, you've got to have great architecture. We'll build a sense of place and have great amenities that will drive rents up, and now you won't need those government incentives."

Marshall said despite the challenges developers face in downtown Jacksonville – similar to developing other urban cores – now is "a fantastic time" to be part of the downtown area from "an opportunity perspective," particularly considering the work the city is doing with its park systems, including the Emerald Trail.

"All of that is so important for us as

developers to continue to have interest in wanting to develop downtown. We need that city as a partner and now's a great time to be part of it," he said.

Bisnow's other two panels, "Investment Trends: Uncovering Opportunities and Risks in Jacksonville's Commercial Real Estate Market" and "Jacksonville's Journey: Shaping a Community-Driven Future," featured speakers included Downtown Investment Authority CEO Lori Boyer, Landings Real Estate Group President Christopher Bicho, The KABR Group Managing Member Adam Altman, Advanced Wealth Education Corporation Founder and CEO Dorian Carter, Carter-Haston Director of Investments Clayton Williams, Ability Housing President and CEO Shannon Nazworth, LISC Jacksonville Executive Director Dr. Irvin Pedro Cohen, Jessie Ball duPont Fund Downtown Public Spaces Principal Laura Phillips Edgecombe and Columbia Ventures Development Manager Ryan Akin.

Moderators were Ahead CRE Founder and CEO Laura Gonzales and Commercial Realty Advisors & Investment Group Broker Craig Emmanuel, respectively.

Bisnow will return to Jacksonville for another event in August.

Prudential Club Coming to Prudential Drive

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The husband-and-wife duo behind The Players Grille are planning a new, elevated bar experience for San Marco called The Prudential Club.

Planned for the site of the former American Cancer Society building at 1430 Prudential Dr., just down the street from the recently opened City Grille, will be a 12,000-square-foot building with a 904 Liquors storefront, vast indoor space and an existing enclosed garden on property.

Owner Phil Visali said the indoor space will be separated into different areas, including a bar area, stage and VIP sections.

The liquor store is the first phase of construction and will be approximately 3,000 square feet, Visali said, with entrances in the front and rear, and access to the 50 onsite parking spaces.

There is a third phase to the project – which had originally been a main part of the plan – to include a rooftop area, however Visali said that was relegated to a third phase "if there's a need."

"We didn't realize the inside was so big once we knocked down all the walls," he explained. "We want the customers, the patrons, to be able to go outside and enjoy the fresh air, but the garden is actually bigger than the rooftop. We don't know if we're actually going to do it, so that's why we've pushed it to phase three."



The former American Cancer Society building at 1430 Prudential Dr. is expected to transform into the Prudential Club and 904 Liquors.

The Prudential Club will preserve the memorial pavers installed by the American Cancer Society, engraved with the names of loved ones, in the enclosed garden, with plans to enhance the garden area.

Additionally, Visali intends to bring the Players Group corporate office to this location.

"It's just going to be an amazing spot for the local community in San Marco and the visitors to Jax [sic] who stay at the local hotels," he said.



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Community Opposition Remains for Southbank Self-Storage Mixed-Use

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

A rendering of the thrice-revised development featuring retail, self-storage and residential units intended for space at Hendricks Avenue and Prudential Drive.

Residents of San Marco spoke in continued opposition to the PUD rezoning request for a mixed-use project featuring self-storage at Hendricks Avenue and Prudential Drive during a city council meeting Tuesday, March 26.

Community Opposition

Residents aren't alone in their opposition. On March 5, the Urban Core Citizens Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC) submitted a letter to the Jacksonville City Council opposing the rezoning. The

letter read, in part:

"It is the belief of the Urban Core CPAC that the development of a 10-story, 'mixed-use' building overwhelmingly devoted to public storage units, requiring numerous levels of public incentives, will not further the stated goals of the Downtown Overlay but will only serve to set a counterproductive precedent for future Downtown development deals."

The letter stated the proposed structure's scale "is grossly out of proportion" to its neighboring structures

and "will forever distort the fabric of this key intersection." It continued that the development would negate "previously, publicly funded efforts to promote business-friendly walkability at this gateway to the Southbank Riverwalk."

The Urban Core CPAC also submitted a similar letter of opposition to the Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB), the Land Use and Zoning Committee and their respective chairs stating, in part: "Self-storage facilities are not listed as an approved development

and are therefore prohibited. Inclusion of such a storage facility as the predominant use within a mixed-use development does not alter that fact."

Both letters were signed by Bryant Schumaker, chair for the Urban Core CPAC.

In its March newsletter, San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS) issued the following statement:

"Although there have been some changes to the project, as a result of both the community's voice and the efforts

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

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of the SMPS, the fact remains that self-storage is still not a permitted use under the Downtown Overlay. Additionally, the board believes that self-storage is not the best use of this particular property. For these reasons, the San Marco Preservation Society opposes the development as currently proposed. The SMPS will continue to represent the neighborhood on this matter as the PUD goes through the City's review process."

The Resident News reported previously on a Feb. 1 Town Hall meeting hosted by the SMPS during which attorney Steve Diebenow presented the revised design — a 10-story building featuring ground-floor office and retail space, second-story parking, the self-storage components and 100 studio, one- and two-bedroom units, a percentage of which will be affordable housing — and fielded questions and concerns from the community.

"We think we've addressed all of those [major concerns expressed by the community]," he said at the Town Hall, those being design, "what was inside the building" and the partial alley closure.

Residents at the March 26 city council meeting expressed their continued opposition to the project.

"Let this be three strikes, you're out," one resident said.

Diebenow did not respond to requests for comment from him or his client on this matter.

A Procedural Amendment

Not unrelated to the rezoning request is another piece of legislation currently moving through the city council proposing an amendment to City

Council Rule 4.601 (Majority Action). The proposed amendment in Ordinance 2024-0119, filed by the Office of General Counsel (OGC), would "provide that a tie vote on a quasi-judicial matter does not constitute a denial."

Senior Assistant General Counsel Jason Teal explained this amendment emerged from a settlement agreement between the developer for this proposed project and the City of Jacksonville after he appealed the tie vote that ultimately denied the previous PUD rezoning request last June. The tie vote being interpreted as a denial was "one of the

“ It is the belief of the Urban Core CPAC that the development of a 10-story, ‘mixed-use’ building overwhelmingly devoted to public storage units, requiring numerous levels of public incentives, will not further the stated goals of the Downtown Overlay but will only serve to set a counterproductive precedent for future Downtown development deals. ”

– Urban Core Citizens Planning Advisory Committee (CPAC)

points of contention" in the appeal, Teal said.

"The interpretation by the General Counsel's Office of the Council's rules was that the city council can only take positive action...or affirmative action by a majority vote," Teal said. "Because the motion was made to adopt or pass the rezoning, the fact that it didn't have an affirmative vote, which is defined in our council rules as a majority vote, then the interpretation was that it's effectually a denial of the motion, which denied the rezoning."

Teal referenced Florida Statute 166.033, which contains language on

how a municipality must handle land use matters, specifically "the municipality must approve, approve with conditions, or deny the application for a development permit or development order."

"The argument stated by the appellant in our case took the position that this means that there must be an 'affirmative action' to do one of those things," he wrote in a later e-mail. "Our position is that our Council Rules identify the need for an affirmative action to approve, so when they don't have an affirmative action (i.e. a tie vote) the motion fails."

He added that OGC introduced the

legislation "because the need for the filing of the legislation stemmed from a settlement agreement and not the normal channels."

Should the amendment pass, in the event of any future tie votes on quasi-judicial matters, the city council would be able to follow avenues already available to it, which a bill summary for ordinance 2024-0119 explained, are "move to reconsider the item for the purpose of moving and acting on an alternate motion, rerefer the item back to the appropriate committee of reference for additional consideration, or take any other action authorized by the Council

Rules or applicable law."

Teal explained that last summer's 9-to-9 tie vote was a rare occurrence – "the first time any of us can remember it happening" – and this legislation is a "recognition" that a tie vote "doesn't restrict, prohibit, change any of the options that the council still has when they come to any vote on a quasi-judicial case."

However, former District 5 City Councilmember LeAnna Cumber, an adamant opponent of the previous PUD rezoning request, said the proposed amendment to the council rule is "outrageous."

"It's a total gift to developers, and to developers who have controversial projects, because what the bill would do is it would make it so you would have to have a majority of members vote to kill the bill," she said. "Tie votes fail, because in order to win, you have to have a majority. So what this would do is it would make quasi-judicial bills far harder to actually deny."

Quasi-judicial matters are matters in which council members essentially sit as judges and cast their votes for or against an issue after considering expert testimony and reviewing competent, substantial evidence on the matter in question. Cumber explained council members must have "a legal reason" to vote against a quasi-judicial matter.

2024-0152 (the PUD rezoning request) will next be considered by the DDRB on April 9. 2024-0119 (the council rule amendment) will go before the Rules Committee at its April 1 meeting.

The Resident News will continue to report on these matters as they develop.

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Windward on the Move, Two Marinas Acquired on the Waterfront

Amenities now enhanced due to input from boaters

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Winds of change are blowing at Windward Sadler Point Marina since its 2022 acquisition by Windward Marina Group, and they're bringing new fueling services for boaters on the St. Johns River.

The acquisition combined Sadler Point Marina with its neighboring Ortega River Marina and plans are in place to make access easier between the two formerly separate entities.



Crews working to install the new fuel tanks Windward Marina Group has brought to the marina.

Longtime boaters at Sadler Point will still see husband-and-wife duo Brooks and Jenny Busey at the marina, who have stayed on to run the service side of the marina under their umbrella, Sadler Point Marina Inc., and maintain a minority ownership in the larger combined property.

Since Windward came on board, Brooks Busey said, it has made a number of improvements: resurfacing the parking lot, painting the buildings and coating the decks on all the docks. But the fuel tanks, which are expected to be operational by April, are a "big deal."

"Prior to this, the Lamb's Yacht Center was the only game in town for getting fuel on the upriver side of the CSX Railroad bridge, and [it's] a little harder to get to," he said. "We'll be able to be competitive with Lamb's and offer a second place to get fuel on the river. Beyond Lamb's, you've got to go way upriver or past downtown, so I think it'll be a nice amenity."

Windward Marina Group Vice President and Commercial Relations Manager Stephen Mask said Windward typically allows for a 12- to 18-month period to get a "big picture" idea of what the community needs.

"Sadler and Ortega were both operational upon acquisition, so we brought them together to share existing amenities," he said. "We are currently working on upgrade designs and should have information to share by mid- to late summer."

Another feature that Windward has brought to its Sadler Point Marina is the JetRide boating club, which is leasing 20 slips there for its rentable boats. JetRide is a boating membership



This image illustrates the property at Sadler Point (Left, under the bridge at US 17 or Roosevelt Blvd), adjoining to the former Ortega River Marina, which are both now part of the Windward Marina Group's acquisition and merger of the two marinas.

that allows members to rent from its fleet of boats and jet skis from any one of its 12 Florida locations, with another one in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.

"Typically, we see people who are new to boating get into boating that way," Busey said of the club. "Or folks who are aging out and don't want to deal with all the hassle, but still want to go for a boat ride periodically. It works out really well for them."

In addition to the amenities Windward has brought to Sadler Point, the marina has existing amenities that are popular by sea and by land: on-site restaurants The Loop and High Tide Burrito, and the latest microbrewery addition of Grace Note Brewing.

"Having two restaurants has turned out to be really nice, and opening the brewery has been the cherry on top," Busey said.

Busey said he believes the marina has "got good things going on" and now, with Windward Marina Group at the helm, he hopes to see the marina continue to grow.

"I think it's always going to be beneficial to get more people exposed to the waterfront," he said. "By partnering with Windward, leaning on their financial clout to do some of the things that we wanted to do around here that as a mom-and-pop we were struggling with...I think it's been a good move."

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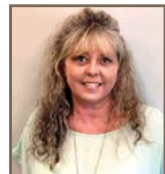
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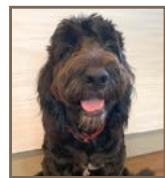
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A Planned Unit Development (PUD) rezoning request has been approved for 1509 Hendricks Ave.

Changes Coming to Former Columbus Social Hall

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The Jacksonville City Council recently approved a Planned Unit Development (PUD) rezoning request for 1509 Hendricks Ave.

The property was previously zoned as Commercial Community/General-01 and was previously owned by Columbus Social Club, Inc. The property sold in April 2021 to WBT Property LLC.

A building renovation plan by SIM Architecture submitted with the PUD rezoning request shows the interior divided into three spaces: an area marked Tenant #1 at 2,604 square feet; an area marked Tenant #2 at 1,522 square feet, and a 4,090-square-foot area adjacent to these two that appears to be allocated for a fitness center.

Property owner Worth Turner is already a San Marco business owner. His Jacksonville Hollingsworth showroom is located on San Marco Boulevard. He also owns the building that houses Foliahom, for which he was an award recipient of a 2023 San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS) beautification award.

"He definitely knows what he's doing with these properties," said SMPS President David Paulk.

Paul said he hasn't yet "spoken at length" with Turner about this current project, but that SMPS would be interested in Turner's solution to the parking situation.

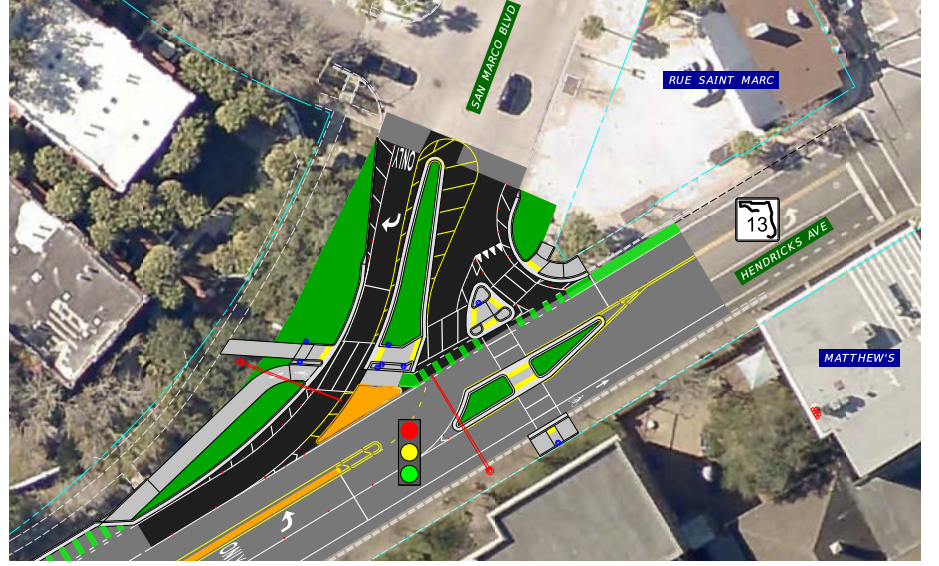
"Glad to see [that] kind of density in that area, but they don't supply any of their parking as is," Paulk said. "So, we're kind of interested what their solution for that is, because it'll definitely be an intensification of use."

"But if his prior properties are any indication, I expect that it'll be a great-looking property once he's done," he added.

As of March 25, no new permits have been filed with the city for any work related to the property.

The Resident News reached out to Turner for comment on his plans for the Hendricks Avenue property but did not receive a response by press time.

Visit residentnews.net for more information and to view the proposed floorplans.



A concept of the traffic improvements planned for the intersection at San Marco Boulevard and Hendricks Avenue. Courtesy of FDOT.

Caution: Roadwork Ahead

Intersection improvements planned for San Marco Square intersection

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) said intersection improvements are coming to the San Marco intersection of San Marco Boulevard and Hendricks Avenue.

According to FDOT Community Outreach Specialist Jacob Pickering, construction is expected to begin mid-2024 and will include "milling and resurfacing the intersection, adding a traffic separator in between the north and southbound lanes of Hendricks Avenue, installing new pedestrian crossing signals as well as widening the paved bike path and widening San Marco Blvd. New lighting, signage and signals will also be constructed under this contract."

Pickering said these updates will improve safety for drivers, bicyclist and pedestrians by increasing visibility for everyone on the road and furthering FDOT's "commitment to safety" through the Target Zero statewide initiative, which has a goal of bringing the number of "transportation-related serious injuries and deaths" down to zero throughout the state.

A virtual and in-person hybrid construction open house will be held on Tuesday, June 4 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at the Jacksonville Urban Office Training Center (2198 Edison Avenue) to allow the public to learn more about the project and ask questions.

Those interested in attending the event virtually can register by calling (562) 247-8422 and entering access code 954-089-539 or online at attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/1455150200386499674.

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‘Milestone Moment’ for Emerald Trail

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The City of Jacksonville, Groundwork Jacksonville and the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) are celebrating a “major victory” in their commitment to delivering the Emerald Trail to the Jacksonville community.

During a press conference on Tuesday, March 19 at the Phoenix Arts and Innovation District in Springfield, representatives from the three entities – Mayor Donna Deegan, City Council President Ron Salem, Groundwork Jacksonville CEO Kay Ehas and JTA CEO Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr. – shared details on this transformational \$147 million grant, the largest one-time federal grant the city has ever received.

“Infrastructure is about connecting people and communities.”

– Mayor Donna Deegan

Additional speakers at the press conference included District Director Bryan Campbell with the Office of Florida Representative Aaron Bean and Tony Cho with the Phoenix Arts and Innovation District, which will be situated along the Emerald Trail’s link in Springfield.

City Councilmembers Matt Carlucci, Jimmy Peluso and Ju’Coby Pittman attended the press conference as well.

Ford said of the nearly 700 applicants, a total of 132 recipients were selected, and Jacksonville received the sixth-highest allotment from the pot of \$3.1 billion in funding from the U.S. Department of Transportation Neighborhood Access and Equity grant program.

This grant, combined with a 20% match totaling \$36.65 million from the Local Option Gas Tax, will fund the design and construction for the remaining five links of the Emerald Trail: Segment 3 (southwest connector

between Riverside and McCoy’s Creek); Segment 4 (the S-line connector); Segment 6 (on the westside connecting North Riverside, Woodstock and Robinson’s Addition); Segment 7 (on the northwest, linking Durkeeville, College Gardens and Newtown); and Segment 8 (linking Eastside, Phoenix and Springfield).

“These remaining five segments will be significantly accelerated because the funding on the local option gas tax was over a 30-year period,” Ford said. “Now we have all of the funding that would have been slated over that timeframe on a much earlier passage of time and we’re able to move forward.”

The LaVilla link is the first segment of the 30-mile trail system set to open, tentatively scheduled for early May. Ehas explained that 40% of the trail is either “complete, under construction or in design.” In addition to the LaVilla link completion, construction on Hogan Street is slated for later this year and Hogan’s Creek, currently in design, should begin to see construction by 2026.

During her remarks at the press conference, Deegan called this grant a “milestone moment” for the city.

“That record-setting amount for the Emerald Trail is a testament to the power of collaboration, to the power of Team Jacksonville,” she said, adding that the Emerald Trail touches on “some of the top priorities” of her administration: health, economic development and infrastructure.

“Infrastructure isn’t just roads and bridges or how we get around,” she said. “It’s also about connecting people and communities. It’s one of the biggest goals of this grant: reconnecting neighborhoods that were cut off by infrastructure and transportation decisions implemented decades ago.”

Following the press conference, Ehas shared



City Councilmembers Jimmy Peluso and Ju’Coby Pittman, District Director with the Office of Representative Aaron Bean Bryan Campbell, Groundwork Jacksonville CEO Kay Ehas, City Council President Ron Salem, Mayor Donna Deegan, JTA CEO Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr., Tony Cho with the Phoenix Arts and Innovation District, JTA Board Chair Debbie Buckland and City Councilmember Matt Carlucci at the March 19 press conference.

comments on the additional funding still needed to carry the project through to completion. The only remaining portion of the project that still needs funding, she explained, is the Hogan’s Creek construction, which will “be a combination, too, of local and federal dollars.”

“There’s a FEMA BRIC grant; it pays for 75% of the project, so that’s the grant we’ll be going after for Hogan’s Creek,” she said.

FEMA’s Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) grant program has an allocated \$1 billion in funding; it “support[s] communities through capability and capacity building; encouraging and enabling innovation; promoting partnerships; enabling large infrastructure projects; maintaining flexibility; and providing consistency.”

Looking to future plans for Groundwork Jacksonville, Ehas said the organization will be establishing “a long-term agreement with the City” regarding the trail once it’s fully completed.

“We’re going to help with maintenance, we’re probably going to be doing programming and activation,” she said.

Last October, the City of Jacksonville, Groundwork Jacksonville and the JTA executed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the trail’s remaining five segments.

Construction crews broke ground on the Emerald Trail in 2021. Once completed, it will connect 21 parks, 16 schools, 14 urban neighborhoods, three hospitals, two colleges and the JTA Regional Transportation Center.

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Robby Sharp dressed for the occasion during the afternoon full of festivities.



Michael Dickey with Shannon Jaycox



Alexei and Avery Acosta spending quality time together in the heart of San Marco during BeerFest 2024.

Lagers and Lions Toast San Marco Beer Fest

The 3rd Annual San Marco Beer Fest, hosted by the San Marco Merchants Association and Aardwolf Brewing, drew hundreds of festivalgoers to Balis Park March 9. More than 25 local breweries sampled craft beers and alcohol-free tastings alongside food vendors and local restaurant fare. Onsite boutiques and a vendors' market offered shopping and browsing options amid a backdrop of the classic rock sounds of String Theory. Next year's event has been scheduled for March 8, 2025.



Dave and Evie MacDonnell with Archie



Sydney, Steven and Skye McDonald enjoying an afternoon of family fun.



Rhett Roberts and Matt Guza with Natalie Leedy, who represents Historically Hoppy in Springfield.



Kym Hammer and Bill Brim cut the ceremonial ribbon on the new space.

Lutheran Social Services Unveils Renovations

Lutheran Social Services of Northeast Florida (LSS) celebrated the completion of an 18-month renovation to its facility at 4615 Philips Hwy., marking a significant milestone for the agency, now in its 45th year of service. It held a re-opening ribbon-cutting on March 6 for more than 130 community supporters to showcase the facility upgrades, as well as the addition of four new nonprofit partners that have moved into the facility: CAN Community Health, JaxCareConnect, WeCareJax and Vision is Priceless.

Renovations included an improved lobby area, new freezer for the LSS Food Pantry, as well as fresh paint and carpeting.

"These renovations represent more than just physical upgrades; they symbolize our unwavering commitment to providing hope and support to our clients," said Bill Brim, LSS president and CEO.

LSS and its onsite nonprofit partners collectively helped 90,000 individuals in 2023.




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Cummer Debuts Sporting Couture

Friends and supporters of the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens, along with members of the Museum's Ponce De León Society, gathered during the evening of Feb. 28 for the Museum's opening party for the exhibit *Sporting Fashion: Outdoor Girls 1800 to 1960*. The first exhibition to explore the evolution of women's sporting attire in Western fashion, the collection examines the competing priorities of style, function and propriety, and charts the cultural and material developments that allowed women to make their way outdoors. It will be on display through May 19.

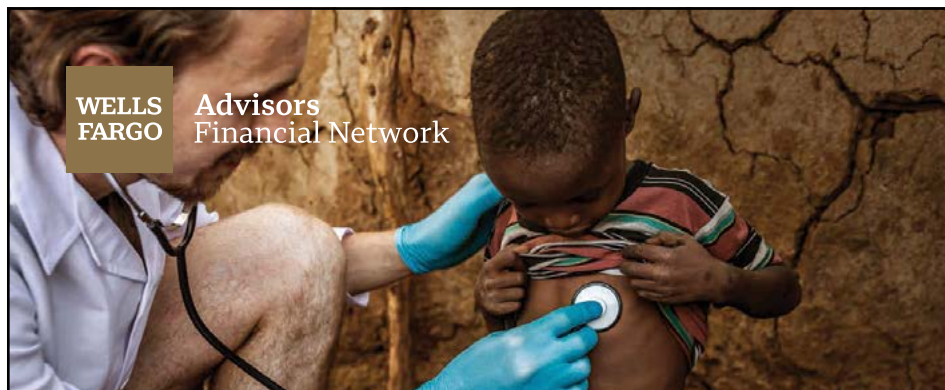


Edie Murphy with Nina Mariotti-Swanson, Maria Rodammer, Dana Kilborne, Ken Thompson, David Osgood, Brittany Turner, June Lundy, Reema Hannoudi and Alexis Montoto

New Digs for Cypress Bank & Trust

Cypress Bank & Trust held a ribbon-cutting ceremony March 26 to mark the debut of its newly remodeled office in the heart of San Marco, at 1910 San Marco Blvd. The event marked a significant milestone in Cypress's history, celebrating its six-year tenure in this historic location and reaffirming its commitment to the community. Guests had the opportunity to network, meet the banking team and experience the charm of this historic office.

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DeSantis Signs Bill to Protect Minors from Social Media

Governor Ron DeSantis signed HB3, "Online Protections for Minors," on March 25. It prohibits children younger than 14 to hold a social media account and children ages 14 and 15 will be required to obtain parental or guardian consent to create or maintain one.

"Social media harms children in a variety of ways," DeSantis said. "HB3 gives parents a greater ability to protect their children."

The bill also includes requirements for pornographic or sexually explicit websites to use age verification to prevent minors from accessing sites that are inappropriate for children.

Once the bill goes into effect, it will require social media platforms to terminate accounts by users younger than 14, including those the platforms categorize as "for the purpose of targeting content or advertising."

Users will have 90 days to file a dispute, after which point the minor account will be terminated. Users younger than 14 will also be able to request an account termination, which will go into effect within five business days after the request is made. Language in the bill also requires that any personal information the platform gathered on these terminated accounts must be permanently deleted "unless there are legal requirements to maintain such information."

Fourteen- and 15-year-old account holders will see similar terminations to their accounts should they fail to obtain parental or guardian consent. Parents or guardians, and the account holders themselves, will also have that same ability to request an account termination.

"Knowing or reckless" violations of the new law will cost social media platforms "up to \$50,000 per violation."

This is an amended bill from one DeSantis vetoed earlier in March that would have prohibited minors younger than 16 from holding social media accounts.

The bill's passage is not without opposition, however.

NetChoice, an organization launched in 2001 "to make the Internet safe for free enterprise and free expression," issued a veto request to DeSantis earlier in March, stating HB3 "would violate Floridians' constitutional rights and place their privacy at risk."

NetChoice Vice President and General Counsel Carl Szabo issued a statement following the bill's signing on the 25th stating, "An unconstitutional law will protect exactly zero Floridians. HB3 is also bad policy because of the data collection on Floridians by online services [it] will in effect require. This will put their private data at risk of breach."

NetChoice members include major social media platforms like Meta, TikTok and X as well as other internet giants like Google, Yahoo! and Pinterest.

The new law will go into effect Jan. 1, 2025.



MOSH staff and other cleanup volunteers at the Southbank Riverwalk Cleanup with MOSH event on March 19.

8.5 Tons Collected During Great St. Johns River Cleanup

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Last month, hundreds of volunteers gathered at various cleanup sites to participate in the second annual Great St. Johns River Cleanup.

This collaborative movement by the St. Johns Riverkeeper, local municipalities and organizations is an effort "to expand our collective cleanup efforts across the St. Johns River watershed this spring." The Duval County/City of Jacksonville event was held on Saturday, March 16.



A cleanup crew at the Harborview Boat Ramp in Ribault Park.

On March 19, cleanup efforts continued at the Southbank Riverwalk Cleanup with MOSH event, followed by the T. K. Stokes Boat Ramp Cleanup March 23.

According to St. Johns Riverkeeper Outreach and Engagement Specialist Steph Morse, nearly 500 volunteers gathered

at 37 clean-up sites across the county. These volunteers spent a collective 956 hours filling 859 garbage bags with more than 8 1/2 tons of trash.

The Great St. Johns River Cleanup will continue until April 25 at more than 60 locations in St. Johns, Brevard, Clay, Orange, Volusia, Putnam and Seminole counties to keep the watershed clean. The events in Duval County on March 16 kicked off the cleanup festivities and coincided with the City of Jacksonville and Keep Jacksonville Beautiful's 29th annual St. Johns River Celebration Cleanup.



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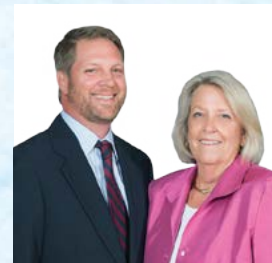
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Omar Hebeishy 904.728.1779



Karen Ashley
904.859.1010



April Bachtold
229-416-6394



Brayden Carroll
904.742.6734



Roni Drdla
303.523.7520



Christina Gonzalez
904.537.1005



David Hamasaki
904.805.3196



Erik Kaldor
904.226.0433



Avis Kingson
786.763.0786



Anil Pathak
904.477.0629



Meg Sanders
904.790.3637



Marilyn Stewart
904.599.2369



Juliette Vaughn
904.993.3618



Sabrina Wickham
904.463.0315



Hannah Windsor
904-534-6790



Katherine Wohlers
904.314.7524

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Mark Rosener

MOVERS & SHAKERS



Dr. Tom Dragovich

Rosener to Direct Watson Realty Mergers, Acquisitions

Watson Realty Corp. has appointed Mark Rosener as its Director of Mergers and Acquisitions. Rosener will spearhead the company's efforts to identify and capitalize on growth opportunities, including acquisitions and strategic partnerships. He has been a part of the organization since 2005, serving on the leadership team since 2009 and as the Regional Vice President of the North Central Region prior to his new role.

"Mark's track record of success and his unwavering dedication to our company's mission and values make him the perfect choice to lead this important aspect of our growth strategy," said Ed Forman, president of Watson Realty Corp.

"I am committed to finding opportunities that will further enhance our capabilities and expand our reach. I look forward to working with our team to identify strategic opportunities that will position Watson for continued success in the years to come," said Rosener.

Dragovich to Head Cancer Division

Dr. Tomislav "Tom" Dragovich joined Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center as head of the Division of Cancer Medicine and medical oncologist-in-chief on March 11. He will also serve as medical director of the center's clinical research programs and hematology and oncology services. Dragovich brings extensive experience in medical oncology and clinical research, with an expertise in gastrointestinal cancer, clinical trials and cancer drug development.

"Dr. Dragovich has dedicated two decades of his career to advancing our understanding of cancer biology," said Dr. Bill Putnam, medical director of Baptist MD Anderson. "We are looking forward to sharing this expertise in clinical trials and cancer medicine with the Jacksonville community and beyond as part of our quest to offer tomorrow's cancer treatments, today."

Dragovich comes to the area from Banner MD Anderson Cancer Center in Arizona, where he was one of the founding oncologists and division chiefs of its cancer center.

"I'm honored to be joining Baptist MD Anderson," said Dragovich. "I look forward to collaborating with this talented team to offer innovative cancer treatments to the community."



Amy Crane



John Zell

Crane to Lead Foundation's Grantmaking

Amy Crane has been promoted to Vice President of Programs at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida (TCF), where she will oversee the foundation's discretionary and donor-advised grantmaking. She succeeds Kathleen Shaw, who spent 22 years - most recently as senior vice president - in the role before leaving to be the inaugural Executive Vice President of the private Terry Family Foundation.

Crane steps into the position with more than 10 years of experience at TCF and more than 20 years of nonprofit arts management. She is a graduate of the Leadership Jacksonville Class of 2009, and currently serves on the Cultural Services Grant Program panel for the city's annual appropriations to the arts.

"I couldn't be more pleased to say that we have found that leader right here among our ranks," said Isaiah M. Oliver, TCF president.

As part of the transition, John Zell has been promoted to Senior Vice President of Development, having recently celebrated 27 years of service to TCF. In this capacity, he will oversee an expanded development team and partner with professional advisors in service of their clients' charitable and financial goals.



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The Davis Family

\$1.5M for New MOSH Building

The Museum of Science & History (MOSH) announced significant donations for the MOSH Genesis capital campaign totaling \$1.5 million from the Davis family. The donations include \$1 million from James E. and A. Dano Davis Family Charities and \$500,000 from Jill and Jed Davis. The combined gifts will be honored through the naming of the front lobby of the new museum upon its completion.

“As a multi-generation Jacksonville family, we take pride in supporting organizations that elevate the quality of life for all families in Northeast Florida,” said Jed Davis, president and CEO of the Davis Family Office.

The MOSH Genesis capital campaign supports plans for MOSH to relocate from the Southbank to a new 100,000-square-foot building on the Northbank of the St. Johns River in Downtown Jacksonville.

Jill Davis currently serves as the vice chair of the MOSH Board of Trustees and is also the chair of the MOSH Genesis capital campaign cabinet.

“Working side-by-side with Jill this past year on the MOSH Genesis capital campaign, I am inspired by her personal dedication to bringing a world-class museum to Northeast Florida,” said Maureen Mercho, Chief Development Officer of MOSH. “By supporting this capital campaign, the Davis family is breaking down barriers to lifelong learning.”



Chelly and Jeff Schembera



Pierre Allaire and Lynn Shad



Mindy and Lee Hanna

A Silver Anniversary for Land Conservation

The North Florida Land Trust (NFLT) celebrated its Annual Meeting and 25th Anniversary at TPC Sawgrass March 3. The event, presented by the Doolittle Family, provided an update on the nonprofit’s land conservation accomplishments and recognized honorees dedicated to land conservation.

President and CEO Allison DeFoor and Board Member Lisa Barton presented the inaugural Charlie Commander Land Conservation Award to Atlantic Beach Holding Co. and the Bull Family. The award is given to a landowner who is dedicated to conservation and was named after Charlie Commander, a longtime supporter of NFLT and champion for conservation who passed away last year. Two NFLT Legacy Awards were presented to NFLT Founder Bill McQuilkin and former NFLT President Jim McCarthy.

NFLT has protected more than 37,000 acres over the last 25 years. In 2023, they raised nearly \$2.5 million as a required match to state and federal funds for stewardship of conservation lands retained by the trust. These lands currently total over 17,000 acres with the balance of lands protected passed along to partners in conservation such as Florida Forever. They increased their prescribed fire capabilities and burned about 320 acres last year, along with 100 acres already this year, which helps restore habitats. They also planted 82,500 long-leaf pine seedlings.

“It is the urgent part that I try to stress; it is now or never,” said DeFoor. “It is a race between us and



David Strickland speaks at the North Florida Land Trust's 25th Annual Meeting.

the bulldozers for these vulnerable lands. We are all collectively going to have to work together to deal with that and make sure these natural spaces are preserved for future generations. We have big goals, and if we all join in, we can make it happen. It is now or never.”

DeFoor also announced some milestone gifts from supporter Delores Barr Weaver – a \$1 million pledge over the next ten years to support land-buying efforts and a \$25,000 matching 1:1 grant to create an endowment at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida.

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Guest Speaker- Melissa Nelson, State Attorney

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Wiatt Bowers

New Additions to Scenic Jacksonville Leadership

Scenic Jacksonville announced three new board members, as well as the officers for its 2024 term.

Wiatt Bowers, Melissa Schmitt and Billy Zeits joined the board. Bowers is an urban planner with nearly 30 years of experience. Schmitt is a certified financial planner with the Sextant Wealth Advisory Group at Raymond James, and Zeits is a senior project manager at Corner Lot Development.

“As a Jacksonville native, I believe this is our time to create an intentional and beautiful river city,” said Schmitt. “Passionate people who care, are generous with their time and work towards a shared vision are powerful. It’s that combination that creates meaningful change.”

Current board member Michael Kirwan was elected as president for the second term, along with Bill Hoff Jr., vice president; Jim Overton, vice president; Laura D’Alisera, secretary; Tom Larson, treasurer; and Susan Caven, ex officio.

“We are very fortunate to have such talented community leaders joining Scenic Jacksonville’s Board,” said Kirwan. “These new directors bring energy and enthusiasm to our already active and passionate board and will help us continue our mission of preserving, protecting and enhancing the scenic character of our city.”

Scenic Jacksonville is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to preserve, protect and enhance the scenic character and beauty of Jacksonville. It believes in the power of community for constructive change and is a founding member of both the Riverfront Parks Now coalition and the Jacksonville Climate Coalition.



Melissa Schmitt



Billy Zeits



Michael Kirwan



Alex Benavides, Julie Handley, Theresa Bennett Hill and Clay Meux recently rolled off the board at DESC.

Board Change for Downtown Ecumenical Services Council

The Downtown Ecumenical Services Council (DESC) elected its 2024 board officers: Board Chair Claude Moulton, Vice Chair Deborah Pierson, Treasurer Trista Carraher and Secretary Jesse James. Pamela Prier will shift to Immediate Past Board Chair.

DESC also offered gratitude to four directors who rolled off the board due to term limits: Alex Benavides, Julie Handley, Theresa Bennett Hill and Clay Meux. All four served more than 10 years in different leadership roles.

“These four leaders are irreplaceable,” said Prier at the annual meeting. “We owe them a tremendous amount of gratitude for all they achieved through their volunteer service.”



Newly appointed DESC Board Chair Claude Moulton

“These four leaders are irreplaceable.”

– Pamela Prier, Immediate Past Board Chair

Moulton said he is excited about the work ahead and looks forward to continued success at DESC, which seeks to proclaim the love of Jesus Christ by providing basic needs for those in emergency situations or experiencing poverty.

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Janice Small with Dawn Simmons Witherspoon and Elizabeth Brown

Hats Off Gala Tops Fundraising Record

More than 150 parents, alumni and friends of San Jose Episcopal Day School (SJEDS) gathered for the "Hats Off to San Jose" Gala and Fundraiser on Saturday, March 2. The event raised a record-breaking \$110,000 to benefit the school, a portion of which will be allocated toward renovating the gymnasium space that serves both the school and San Jose Episcopal Church.

Attendees embraced the festive spirit by donning their favorite hats, fedoras, fascinators and baseball caps. They also had the opportunity to take home their own personalized souvenir hats.

"This gala was a record-breaking success thanks to the many parent volunteers who love SJEDS and showed their support for such a fun event," said Brian Pargman, SJEDS Director of Development and Marketing.

Plans are already underway for the 2025 gala, which will mark the school's 75th anniversary.



Forrest Holland with Emily Rottmann and Shelly Jones



First Horizon Downtown Banking Center Associates Derrell Gibbs, Keith Rumph, Susan Newman, Debbie Coffman, Denise Akers, Cherrie Dye and Jennifer Kirouac

First Horizon Foundation Launches Grants for Good

In honor of First Horizon Corp.'s 160th anniversary, First Horizon Foundation announced the launch of its Grants for Good campaign March 25. Grants for Good will provide \$1.6 million - 160 grants of \$10,000 - to nonprofit organizations dedicated to strengthening the communities it serves.

"We are honored to collaborate with organizations committed to uplifting those in need, fostering sustainable growth and fortifying resilience through impactful programs that strengthen the financial health and well-being of our beloved communities," said Bryan Jordan, First Horizon Corp. chairman, president and CEO.

Grants for Good is open to any 501(c)(3) organization eligible to receive funding from First Horizon Foundation. Nonprofits can apply through the First Horizon website and only one application per nonprofit organization is permitted. Photos are encouraged with submissions. Applications will be accepted until April 30, 2024, and recipients will be announced in June.



Rockwell "Rock" Pillsbury, Jr.

Pillsbury Named Bolles Athletics Director

Rockwell "Rock" Pillsbury, Jr. will join The Bolles School as its next athletic director, following a nationwide search.

"Rock has a track record of demonstrated athletic leadership in a variety of independent schools. He has thrived in high pressure environments, prioritizes building relationships, has experience

navigating the new challenges and opportunities of NIL, has worked closely with both admissions and advancement, and loves to help student-athletes pursue their dreams," said Bolles President and Head of School Tyler Hodges.

Pillsbury, who called the school's reputation "impressive," will bring his own

impressive 35 years of experience to the Bulldogs, including a record with 19 CIF-SS Championships, 13 state titles and 64 league championships. He was also named Nevada Athletic Director of the Year.

Pillsbury will take over for Matt Morris, who is retiring after 36 years with Bolles.



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Janine Richie with Raymond Lackie and Chante Potter



Clark LaBlond with Audrey Lackie



Deanna and Kareem Byfield

Real Estate Company Celebrates Legendary Anniversary

Legends of Real Estate celebrated its 10th anniversary with a night of awards and announcements at the WJCT Studios Feb. 28.

The evening recognized the company's top 20 producers, including top three Maria Pappas, Shannon Judge and Evelyn Martin. Buzz Thomas and The Collective was honored as the top-producing team. In addition to the awards, the company announced a rebrand and the launch of a short-term vacation rental division under its property management company.

It is the first time Legends had done a celebration of that magnitude, with owner Audrey Lackie noting

that more than 100 were in attendance for the "phenomenal" night. Attendees enjoyed tasting menu selections from Lemongrass Thai Bistro, Mandola's

Italian Kitchen and Gregory's Catering, while Bread & Board dished up a grazing table for the social hour.

"I think I've opened up Pandora's Box," joked Lackie. "I don't know that the agents will let me go back to a small group. It was a wonderful, wonderful event."

While Legends started in 2006, the 10 years marked the date that Lackie took over ownership. Lackie had opened her own branch of the company in 2014 before buying out the original owner in 2018.

"I wanted to own my own company and I had always loved their brand," said the 40-year industry veteran.

“ I wanted to own my own company and I had always loved their brand. ”

- Audrey Lackie
Owner, Legends of Real Estate



Owner Cheryl Fluhr in her San Marco boutique, Syrene.

European Flair Near San Marco Square

San Marco resident-turned-small business owner Cheryl Fluhr is bringing European flair to San Marco with Syrene, her new arts, gifts and home decor boutique.

With an inventory primarily composed of goods from Italian and French markets and "a little bit from everywhere else in between," Syrene will offer European elegance to San Marco residents at its Hendricks Avenue location.

Syrene recently celebrated its grand opening March 1 and Fluhr said the boutique is the fulfillment of her

dream to own her own business. Prior to this, she had worked in finance. She had previously attempted to build a business working with interior designers, but COVID dashed those plans, ultimately leading her to Syrene.

"When I finally made the decision to open the store, it felt like everything just fell into place," she said. "It's so great to be part of the merchant community in San Marco and get to know the other merchants, get to know the neighbors. It's just such a great place to work."

Fluhr said she had always wanted

to be in a place "like San Marco" and feels "lucky" to now work in the same place she lives.

"There's so many great stores on the Square and it's just so cool to be in a community where we all sort of complement each other," she said. "I really feel like, as we keep adding stores and vendors and restaurants, it'll really become a destination, and I think that's what everyone would hope for."

Syrene is located at 2016 Hendricks Ave. Its current hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m.

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Root Ball gala Co-chairs Erica Paul and Sally Baker Lee

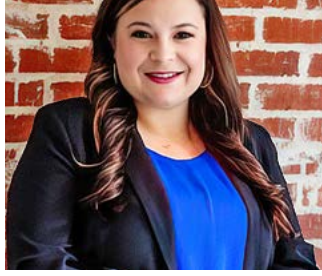
Root Ball Gala Co-chairs Named

Greenscape of Jacksonville, Inc. announced its co-chairs of the 17th Annual Root Ball gala, Sally Baker Lee and Erica Paul. Lee is the daughter of Greenscape founder, the late Ann Baker, and is a past president and current board member. Paul has returned to Greenscape's board of directors and is a strong advocate for Jacksonville's tree canopy.

To celebrate another successful planting year, the Root Ball, themed "Celebrating Trees, Growing Community," will feature a Kentucky Derby race watch, casino games, frosty mint juleps, Southern fare, a silent auction and wine pull. The inaugural Canopy Champion Award will also be announced.

The event will be held May 4 at the Garden Club of Jacksonville. To purchase tickets, go to [greenscapeofjax.org](https://www.greenscapeofjax.org).

Jones to Head Junior Achievement Development



Priscilla Jones

Priscilla Jones has joined Junior Achievement of North Florida (JA) as the organization's Vice President of Development. She will be the driving force behind JA's fundraising initiatives and will work in concert with the president to execute a capital campaign to help bring a JA Discovery Center to North Florida.

"We have ambitious goals and are in a season of organizational growth where Priscilla's leadership will be critical to support an increased capacity for mission delivery," said Shannon Italia, president of JA.

Prior to joining JA, Jones worked with other local nonprofits like Rethreaded, Women's Giving Alliance, Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida and the Association of Fundraising Professionals.



Amber Angeloni

Angeloni Receives National Museum Honor

Amber Angeloni, Manager of Visitor Experience at the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens, has been named the 2024 recipient of the Nancy Hanks Award for Rising Stars by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). She was honored, in part, for her 2023 work to launch the Cummer's Gallery Host Program, which improved visitor satisfaction by transforming traditional gallery security positions into Gallery Hosts, trained to educate and converse with visitors about art, in addition to policies.

The award will be presented at the 2024 AAM Annual Meeting & MuseumExpo in Baltimore, Maryland, May 16-19.



Bill Schmidt with Claudia Hart Mally, Charlene Boggs Hughes, Cynthia Craig Bliss and Dee Ramsey Burnett

Everybody's Boyfriend Celebrates His 80th



Bill and Mary Dudley Schmidt



Bill Schmidt with Libby Girlinghouse

Bill Schmidt, jokingly referred to as "everybody's boyfriend," celebrated his 80th birthday as everybody's boyfriend should.

"We'll just invite your girlfriends," said Mary Dudley Schmidt to her husband.

The invitation to the simple, backyard celebration read "Girls Only." More than 40 of Bill Schmidt's girlfriends, several of whom have been part of his life since kindergarten in Mrs. Archebald's classroom on Edgewood Circle in 1949, enjoyed great food and reminisced about their Lee High School days.

Schmidt, a star athlete from the then-named Robert E. Lee High School, has been the mascot of his "Lee Lunch Bunch" girlfriends for 25 years. He is a graduate from the University of Florida and later founded William G. Schmidt Advertising and Public Relations.

Mary Dudley Schmidt, who spent many years flying internationally for Delta Airlines, teases her husband about his long-term relationships. She has had no worries about his "girlfriends" since he pledged 29 years ago, "I may not have been your first date, or first kiss or first love...I just want to be your last everything."

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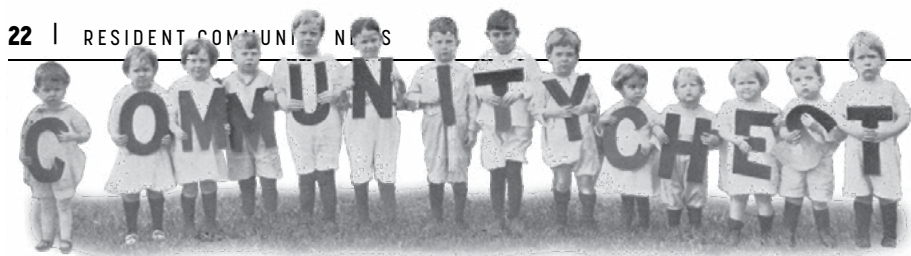
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Children line up for the 1924 Community Chest (later known as United Way of Northeast Florida) Kickoff.

United Way Celebrates Centennial with Community Concert

The United Way will ring in its 100th anniversary with "Uniting for Tomorrow: A Community Concert Celebration," presented in partnership with CSX. The event will be held on Saturday, April 13 from 4-8 p.m. and features live music from local bands like John Lumpkin and The Covenant, The Katz Downstairz, and

Cover of the 1983 United Way of Northeast Florida Annual Report



Wayne and Delores introduce Honor Rows students to NFL Commissioner Paul Tagliabue in the 90s.

Tocqueville members David and Linda Stein partner with United Way to found the Stein Fellowship, a first-of-its-kind dual-mentoring program in Northeast Florida for young professionals and struggling middle school children (2006). Today, the program has more than 200 alumni creating change in their communities.

Mama Blue, as well as speakers on United Way's century of impact in Northeast Florida. Activities include a kids' zone, virtual scavenger hunt, food, drinks and anniversary swag for sale.

The concert celebration will be held in James Weldon Johnson Park, 135 W. Monroe St., in honor of the location of the first-ever United Way rally

in April 1924. It is free and open to the public, and lawn chairs and blankets are recommended.

The United Way works to give hope and opportunity to those who need it most by providing basic needs, strengthening financial well-being and advancing racial equity in Northeast Florida.



Mukti Gathers Fighters for Freedom

Rethreaded hosted more than 500 community members and business leaders at its 13th Annual Mukti Freedom Gala, presented by UPS, at The Glass Factory in Jacksonville on Feb. 24. This year's event theme was "Flourish," and it featured a champagne welcome, photo booth, hors-d'oeuvres, dinner, shopping, silent and live auctions, entertainment, music and a meaningful story from a local survivor of human trafficking.



Mukti means "freedom" in Bengali, and the Mukti Freedom Gala is the largest annual fundraiser for Rethreaded. This popular community event raises a significant portion of the nonprofit's annual revenue, helping them provide employment, career development and supportive services for local survivors of human trafficking.

"We are tremendously grateful to everyone who participated in making this year's Mukti Freedom Gala such an impactful event," said Rethreaded's Founder and CEO Kristin Keen. "Thanks to the generosity of our Jacksonville community, volunteers, sponsors, and donors, our Survivor Development Program will help even more survivors of human trafficking to flourish in the year ahead."

Without support like a stable job, 85% of survivors of human trafficking will likely be trafficked again. Rethreaded was founded nearly 13 years ago by Keen and has employed 85 survivors locally, contributed to the support of over 4,000 women globally, and collaborated with over 349 companies.



Shirley Turner



Linda Berry Stein
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All events are free unless noted and open to the community. Please join us.

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Marie Celano and Theresa Wilcox

GIVING TREE GALA HONORS FORMER SHERIFF

The Winston Family YMCA welcomed guests, supporters and community leaders to the Jessie Ball duPont Center on March 9 for its annual Giving Tree Gala, remembering the contributions of W.W. "Bill" Gay and celebrating the donors and friends who help create its community impact.

Each year, the Winston Family YMCA and the YMCA of Florida's First Coast honor an individual who exemplifies that mission with the W.W. Bill Gay Community Impact Award. This year's 2024 recipient was Nathaniel "Nat" Glover, former Jacksonville Sheriff and past president of Edward Waters University.

"I would say that Nat Glover has probably been the most impactful citizen on Jacksonville and in Jacksonville in the last 100 years, if not forever," said Steve Pajcic in a video honoring Glover.



Michael and Cara Hillyard



John McKee with Noel Twillman

SYMPHONY BRINGS MUSIC IN VOGUE



Courtney Chrestensen with Grant O'Brien



Chris and Tracy Lambert

Music was the new fashion at the 2024 Jacksonville Symphony Gala, Music in VOGUE, an evening celebrating music education and community engagement, with music by artists who have graced the cover of the iconic VOGUE magazine. The March 2 event kicked off with a cocktail reception, followed by dinner, a live auction and performance, before concluding with a dancing-filled afterparty.

Proceeds from the gala support the Jacksonville Symphony's school outreach, musical education and Jump Start Strings programs, and help bring once-in-a-lifetime opportunities to students to perform in Jacoby Symphony Hall. Tim and Evelyn Woodward served as the evening's honorary gala chairs.

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The 2024 Executive Leadership Team included Tim and Stephanie Cost, Fredrik and Danielle Eliasson, Mike and Tracy Grasher, Diane and Steve Halverson, Dr. Ricardo and Martina Hanel, Camille and Mark Harrison, Anthony and Frances Jabbour, Paul and Claire Joiner, Charlie and Anne Joseph, Chris and Rachel Lazzara, Bruce and Leslie Lowthers, Jonathan and Dawn Mason, Rick and Amy Morales, Natalie Beach and Kevin Moran, Evan and Juli Ritter, Amy Ruth and Michele Sahdala, Darnell and Celestine Smith, Donnie and Shelley Smith.



Jamie Sandifer served as the 2024 auction chairperson and will reprise her role in 2025.

\$2.2M RAISED FOR AMERICAN HEART ASSOCIATION

American Heart Association
Heart Ball

LEADERS OF IMPACT

2023 FIRST COAST NOMINEES

The Leaders of Impact campaign, chaired by Kyle Dorsey, raised nearly \$100,000 during a 7-week blind competition. The First Coast formally awarded Jarret Dreicer as this year's winner.

The 2024 Heart of the First Coast Heart Ball, made possible by Life is Why sponsor Florida Blue, raised a record-breaking \$2.2 million to fuel the American Heart Association's (AHA) mission advancements across Northeast Florida.

Pat and Inger Geraghty served as the chairpersons for the March 2, 2024, event, alongside the AHA's Executive Leadership Cabinet and Century Club members. The AHA celebrates 100 years of service this year.

The 2025 event will be chaired by Anthony Hucker, CEO of Southeastern Grocers, and Elizabeth Thompson, founder and CEO of Intuitive Quest, LLC.



Retiring Founding CEO Cindy Watson and former Board Chair Tina Wirth share a hug onstage.



Dan Harris With Richmond Wynn



Current and former JASMYN staff at the Gayla



Cindy Watson with Krista Girty



Sandy and Bill Bond

GAYLA HONORS GROWTH, FOUNDING CEO

JASMYN marked its 30th anniversary with its Gayla fête March 2 at The Glass Factory. Themed "JASMYN's House" in honor of a time in the past when discretion was vital for LGBTQIA+ youth seeking support, the event featured JASMYN House "rooms," games, music, dancing, food and drink, and celebrated Cindy Watson, founding board member and inaugural CEO who retired in 2023.



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Handmade with Hope

Once Sharon Meehan's children were grown, her sewing equipment began drifting into disuse, and she slowly came to terms with the fact that something had to be done with it.

"You don't sew a whole lot for kids that are college age," she said. "You're finished with the pajamas and the Halloween costumes."

So, she reached out to her friend, Beth Wilson, who is the clothing director at the Downtown Ecumenical Services Council (DESC) and asked if she could make some dresses to donate to the nonprofit organization.

That was almost 10 years ago.

Today, Sewing Hope, the volunteer group Meehan founded to work with DESC, has grown to a group of approximately 12 volunteers who meet at

Meehan's house every Tuesday afternoon, transforming it into a hub of measuring, cutting, sewing and ironing activity for DESC.

In addition to the handmade clothing, Meehan

also sets up benches outside her house every week to collect donations, be they shoes, clothing or fabric. Over the years, Sewing Hope has begun receiving fabric donations from businesses; they've even received a pair of sewing machines from a company in Texas.

What began simply as smock dresses for younger girls has also expanded to include skirts, headbands and ensembles, along with canvas bags that DESC's clients use to transport items home from the DESC closet and/or food pantry.



Sewing Hope founder Sharon Meehan with volunteers Betsy Miller, Paula Mathews and Betty Ann Gordon showcasing some of the items they made in just a single afternoon. They've made 450 pieces this year alone.

"We have a lot of clients that come on the bus or walk, or do a combination [of both]," Wilson said. "For the ones that don't come in a car and need to carry home groceries and clothing, [Sewing Hope] provides very sturdy strong canvas bags, which are something that we never had before. That is a wonderful service."

Wilson said DESC has received rave reviews about the items Sewing Hopes donates for their clients.

"Oh my gosh, those are the nicest things," she said. "They're made with love; they're special. [Our clients] are getting something that's brand new, nobody's worn before. It has been handmade, hand-sewn for them."

Sewing Hope has provided collections for all occasions, seasons and holidays, in a variety of patterns and colors, so there's always a variety to choose from in their inventory.

"We're just so extremely grateful to them for their generosity, their hard work, their loyalty and their will," Wilson said.

Meehan is no stranger to volunteering. As a military wife whose moved multiple times from Navy base to Navy base, she found volunteering to be a way not only to give back but also to make friends and learn more about her community.



Paula Mathews working on a new dress for Downtown Ecumenical Services Council.



Betsy Miller at her sewing machine.



Betty Ann Miller Gordon during Sewing Hope's weekly volunteer sewing session.



Catherine Friedline with Avery Williams and Mercedes McGowan



Ariana Sybert with Sarah Stone

Frank Stella Headlines Project Atrium, Exhibit Opening

Mayoral proclamation included in patron celebration

Supporters, friends and donors of MOCA Jacksonville gathered in the museum's atrium Feb. 29 for the unveiling of the Frank Stella installation, Jacksonville Stacked Stars, as part of MOCA's 100th anniversary celebration.

MOCA's Executive Director Caitlin Doherty and Trustee Emeritus Preston H. Haskell spoke at the reception, along with University of North Florida President Moez Limayem and Mayor Donna Deegan, who presented Doherty and Limayem with a mayoral proclamation.

The exhibit opening drummed up excitement for MOCA's upcoming Centennial Gala April 6, themed "A Walk on the Wild Side" in honor of its current, '70s-reflective Norman E. Fisher Collection.



Isaiah Oliver with Mari Kuraishi



Jackie Cornelius with Ross Singletary, Britt Morgan-Saks and Andrea Barnwell Brownlee



Gabrielle Magid with Rikki and Chip Southworth and Claudia Baker

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Luxury Unmatched

The Singleton Team's Golden Formula for Success

From volunteering with Scouts to spending years in active combat zones as a Naval Officer, preparation and perspective have become cornerstones in Jon Singleton's success, both in life and real estate. Singleton parlayed his experience managing a \$1.6 billion portfolio of military housing into a decade-long realty career that had him positioned as one of the top Realtors in Northeast Florida.

Then, in 2012, the savvy Singleton became a dynamic duo with the addition of Susan Hopkins – a third-generation Realtor with a background in sales and advertising. She joined the seasoned veteran, and the two discovered a working formula that was undeniable.

"Within the first year – my second year in the business, his 11th – we both doubled our business. And we were like, 'Wow, something's working here,'" said Hopkins.

Since then, the San Marco Watson agents have skyrocketed into the No. 1 team in their office, and they've held that position for 15 years. They are also on track to be the No. 1 team in all of Watson Realty – which is the No. 1 brokerage in Northeast Florida – in 2024. Collectively, they have sold more than 1,000 homes, each one a commitment to put service first.

"We're not trying to rack up units of sales. What we really focus on is what's best for our people. Sometimes we talk them out of buying a house because it's just not the right fit," said Singleton.

They also rebate tens of thousands of dollars to veterans every year through Watson's Military on the Move commission rebate program.

Unlike larger teams, who might pair a client with an inexperienced agent, the boutique Singleton Team ensures either Singleton or Hopkins stays hands-on. Both are certified experts. They each carry the mark of a Certified Luxury Home Marketing Specialist (CLHMS) and have achieved CLHMS Guild recognition for proven success in the high-end market. Their balance of male vs. female insight, coupled with the incredible amount of experience in closing negotiations, brings a collaborative mastery unique to the luxury home market.

"With the 1,000 transactions, we have encountered an enormous spectrum of challenges," said Singleton. "There's

very few things that could come up that we haven't already come across."

The Singleton Team also brings concierge service to a level far more extensive than other competitors in the marketplace, regardless of price point. They create videos and social media, develop floor plans, meet with construction and staging contractors to ready a home for sale, and even tap into their regional and national relocation networks to bring energy into each home's branding. Hopkins said they also hold exclusive events that create an enormous amount of buzz for their listings, like the upcoming invite-only event for brokers to tour their newest \$4.5 million listing.

The team's commitment to the Golden Rule frequently has buyers and sellers returning for more.

"If you just treat people really well, they tell everybody. It's wonderful," said Singleton.

Some extended families have closed more than a dozen transactions with their trusted advisors at The Singleton Team.

"There's a lot of second, third and fourth generations that are moving back to San Marco, Avondale and Riverside," Hopkins said. "There's a lot of beauty there. You can't find homes like there are in the historic district anywhere else, especially in Jacksonville."

"The materials that were used back 80, 90, 100 years ago were better quality," Singleton seconded. "They're beautiful and well-built structures."

Whether it's a first-time buyer, a downsizer or someone finding a forever home, the team views each buyer holistically, understanding that a home purchase is part of their life's bigger picture.

"It's not just price, neighborhood and condition of the home, which are things that maybe you could write down on a spreadsheet. It's also what's going on with the family dynamic – really trying to find some place that would be a great next step for you to thrive with whatever your long-term goals are," said Singleton.



Susan Hopkins & Jon Singleton
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A Presidential Look at Latin America and Mexico's Perspective on Hemispheric and Bilateral Relations

BY **FRANK M. DENTON, BOARD MEMBER, WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL OF JACKSONVILLE AND RETIRED EDITOR, FLORIDA TIMES-UNION**

Mexico has a unique, and intimate, perspective on the illegal immigration crisis that is roiling American politics, since millions of the immigrants from all over the world pass through that country to reach the U.S. border.

As a former president of Mexico and an expert on globalization, Ernesto Zedillo is expected to offer his own insights into the crisis when he speaks to the World Affairs Council of Jacksonville on April 9.

Zedillo will present on "A Presidential Look at Latin America and Mexico's Perspective on Hemispheric and Bilateral Relations" at 7 p.m. at the UNF Herbert University Center. The public is invited.

Zedillo can see both sides of the border: He is a Yale-trained economist who was president of Mexico from 1994 to 2000 and now is director of the Program for the Study of Globalization and professor of international economics and politics at Yale.

During his term of office, Zedillo is credited with controlling Mexico's foreign debt, reducing rampant inflation, improving public education and literacy and leading a major effort to restore public confidence in the country's government after a history of corruption scandals.

Still, since he left office, Zedillo has been openly critical of Mexico's development, particularly the crime and drug-cartel problems that have plagued the country and complicated the U.S. border crisis and relations with this country.

"Mexico is missing three things to be a fully developed country," Zedillo told the 2018 U.S.-Mexico Border Summit in El Paso. "The first is rule of law. The second is rule of law. And the third is rule of law."

"We have a long-standing problem of weak institutions" in Mexico, Zedillo said. "We have another problem: the pollution organized crime has created in my country."

Drug trafficking, he said, is linked to government policies from the early

20th century that seek punitive instead of social solutions to drug abuse, the El Paso Times reported.

"The policy has failed," Zedillo said.

Mexico's crime problem can be solved in part by having "stronger institutions and stronger human resources."

Zedillo's address in Jacksonville is part of the annual series of Global Issues Evenings sponsored by the World Affairs Council. Previous speakers this year included best-selling author Walter Isaacson on his new biography of Elon Musk, China expert Robert Daly, U.S. Russia Foundation president Matthew Rojansky, former Israeli Ambassador Michael Oren and U.S. Ambassador to South Africa Reuben Brigety.

In addition to the Global Issues Evenings, the World Affairs Council offers a series of Global Business Luncheons at The River Club, Leading EDGE Dialogues for young professionals, and the Great Decisions educational program in 20 high schools across the First Coast. Members can also take advantage of international travel opportunities.

To guarantee seating, general membership for the World Affairs Council is \$140 per year for an individual or \$225 for a couple, with lower rates for students, educators and military. Premier members are also invited to special events, including receptions with speakers.

To learn more about membership and to register for this event, please scan the QR code.



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Ernesto Zedillo, President of Mexico (1994-2000)

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LOCAL FOLKS

Kathryn D. McAvoy



Kathryn McAvoy on stage with the participants of The Performers Academy's Just Like Me Cultural Arts and Educational Experience.



Michael and Kathryn McAvoy

BY JENNIFER JENSEN

Kathryn McAvoy has always had a love for the arts and helping others find their passion. Fifteen years ago, she had been driving her three daughters – Ava, Jessica and Kendall – all over the city to different art programs when she decided to combine those loves through the opening of The Performers Academy (TPA), a center for arts education and development that provides a safe place for teens in Jacksonville to express themselves.

“I put everything all under one roof,” she said. “It provides arts for all, particularly using arts as healing.”

McAvoy later became involved in the foster care system and learned about the struggles foster children go through. She shifted her focus to helping those children, as well as those in detention centers, moving TPA to a nonprofit in 2012.

“When I was a teenager and my parents got divorced, the arts really saved me,” said McAvoy. “It was a way for me to be able to express myself when I was in pain or hurting mentally. And these days, with mental health being such an issue for so many kids...the kids need a way to be able to express themselves. And so that’s what we do. We teach them how to express themselves through poetry, singing, music, creating beats, dance, fashion and design.”

TPA now offers a free after-school program for middle and high schoolers, as well as an onsite therapist and tutor. It does outreach into schools and detention centers to use the arts as a form of self-expression, behavioral diversion and intervention. It also has a program called Project Poem that blends classical literature with pop culture.

“To be able to say Shakespeare’s relevant, we show how there’s an overlap with Tupac,” said McAvoy. “To get teenage boys to learn how to rap without using profanity is nothing short of a miracle.”

McAvoy grew up in the arts. Her mother was a professional dancer before marrying her father and starting her own dance studio. Her father, a surgeon by trade, was a concert pianist. McAvoy plays the flute, saxophone and oboe, and was also a dancer and actress.

Originally from New Orleans, she went to school in Chicago, worked in Los Angeles, then for IBM for 13 years, which brought her to Jacksonville, where she has been for 40 years.

After leaving IBM, McAvoy became a serial entrepreneur: a training company, internet business, co-owner of the Jacksonville Tomcats arena football. She’s started more than 25 businesses, including Acme Barricades. Anyone who has been in Jacksonville for five minutes is familiar with the famous orange barricades.

“You can’t get away from those,” she said. “They’re all over the Southeast now.”

Currently, she is trying to help get a new project off the ground that involves 3D printing of houses.

“I think when you get to a place that you’re comfortable with yourself and your family, then it’s time to take care of other people,” McAvoy said. “And if you can do that in creative ways, like The Performers Academy and 3D construction, then I think that’s our obligation to humanity.”

McAvoy lives on a horse farm with her husband of 13 years, Michael. They have four horses, pigs, cows, chickens, cats, dogs and ducks.

“I thrive on chaos, but the farm is my quiet place,” she said. “It’s a place of rest and relaxation, even though it’s work.”

McAvoy also enjoys riding and showing horses, a childhood hobby that she shared with her daughters before they went off to college. She and Michael further support the arts through seeing shows at the Florida Theater and FSCJ Broadway series and helping produce films for local filmmakers.

“I love the farm, but I need to know that I’m making a difference,” McAvoy said. “My hobby is helping other people make their dreams come true.”



Kathryn McAvoy jumping her show horse Romeo.

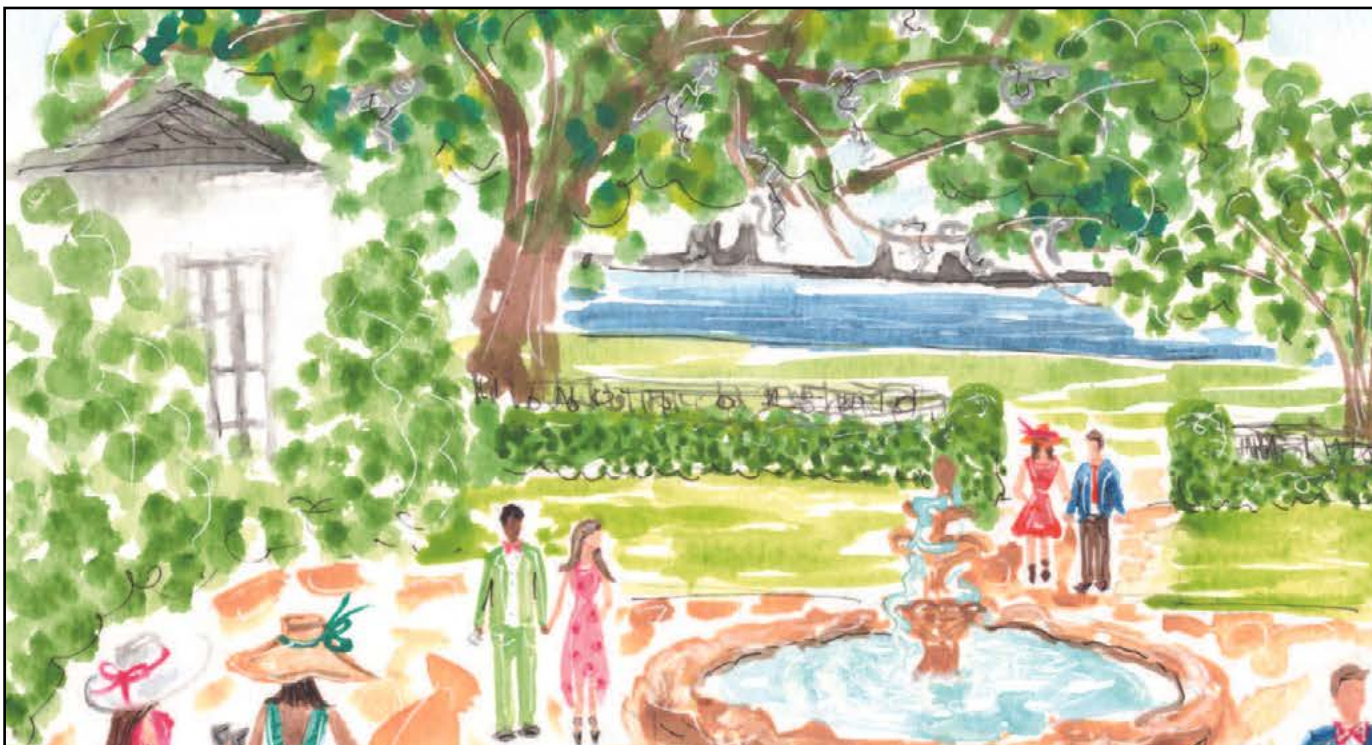
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Troy Winn with John Bunker



Teresa Cook

BY PEGGY HARRELL JENNINGS

It's spring! The world is bursting with azaleas, camellias, dogwoods and flowers of every kind, enhancing the landscape with colors highlighted by a cerulean blue sky. A drive or stroll through local neighborhoods is a journey into a beautiful canvas worthy of Monet's garden. Vincent van Gogh once said, "I have nature and art and poetry and if that is not enough. What is?"

Jacksonville artists, buzzing like bees after nectar, have embraced the season with enthusiasm, producing work in multiple genres and exhibiting in various venues all over town.

- Ortega resident Dawn Montgomery took first place in the Jacksonville



Dawn Montgomery



Susan D. Brandenburg

Artists' Guild juried show at North Point Dental with her painting "Fences Make Good Neighbors." The exhibit is up through June 23.

- Lisa Lofton's painting of VyStar Tower, commissioned by the Jacksonville Children's Chorus as a surprise in appreciation for VyStar Credit Union's continued support of the Chorus, was revealed during March's Art Walk. Check it out during April's Art Walk, along with other paintings, near the SING sculpture at 62 N. Main St.
 - The First Coast Plein Air Painters are flitting around like butterflies capturing nature on their canvases. Check them out on Facebook for more info.
- Hope McGrath's "Legacy Interrupted" exhibit at the Yellow House on King Street was enhanced by her collaboration with Barbara Colaciello of Babs Lab for storytelling with the theme "Tethered."
- A crowd of art lovers, old friends, neighbors and former students buzzed into John Bunker's happy and colorful



Darren Daily, Jacksonville Children's Chorus president and artistic director, with Lisa Lofton

pop-up exhibit at the new Flip Flops Shops in 5 Points - a fun affair with a casual, celebratory vibe. How could it be anything but joyful with owner Troy Winn and Andrew Paul Williams in the mix?

- Teresa Cook was on hand at the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens to discuss her show "Women's Rights Movement," which is up through June 19. Put on your traveling pants to visit her Aug. 5 at the Turner Center for the Arts in Valdosta, Georgia, from 7-9 p.m.
- The Resident News writer extraordinaire, Susan D. Brandenburg - who is also teacher, publisher, biographer, board member of the Stetson Kennedy Foundation, the National League of American Pen Women and author of 80 books - was selected as one of eight "Women with Heart" honorees by Volunteers in Medicine.

"I am honored to be chosen for this award," said Brandenburg. "It is one more blessing resulting from using my God-given gift of words, which has taken me into the lives of remarkable people and given me a full and rewarding life."

- "Justice," Women Writing for A Change's exhibit at FSCJ South Gallery, showcased many noted local artists, including Annelies Dykgraaf, and invited writers to a reception and community read-aloud.



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The Beat Goes On:

April 6 – Walk on the Wild Side, MOCA's 100th Anniversary Centennial Gala; moca-jacksonville.unf.edu/gala.

April 7 – Reception and opening of "Our Home" exhibit with Jacksonville Artists' Guild featured artists Leila Griffith, Peggy Harrell, Jennings and Lisa Lofton; Happy Medium Books Café, 2724 Park St., 2-4 p.m.

April 11 – Stellers Gallery is back in Avondale with featured artists from throughout the Southeast. St. Johns Avenue; 5-8 p.m.

April 12 – Riverside Presbyterian Day School's 75th Anniversary Gala at the Glass Factory. Visit rpsds.com.

April 13-14 – 50th anniversary of the Riverside Avondale Preservation Society's Home Tour. Visit the Art House at 1504 Barrs St. to see great art, chat with artists and see woodturning demos by Kat McCall and Don Penny. Riversideavondale.org/events.

April 19 – A Vision for Art event at Episcopal School of Jacksonville St. Mark's Campus. 7-10 p.m. Visit avisionforart.com for info and tickets.

Through May 10 – "In the Style Of..." exhibit up at TAC Gallery, 320 E. Adams St.

Do you know of an upcoming event or accolade that helps pump the rhythmic Artbeat of Jacksonville? Send the announcement to us at editor@residentnews.net for consideration in *The Beat Goes On*.



Families enjoy the museum gardens during Summer at the Cummer.



Barbara English

English Sponsors Summer at the Cummer, Free Fourth Fridays

The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens announced the continuation of its popular Free Fourth Fridays and Summer at the Cummer programs, thanks to a generous sponsorship from Jacksonville businesswoman Barbara English. English's donation will provide for free public admission to the Cummer every fourth Friday of each month from 4-9 p.m. as well as every Friday from July 19 through August 9, as part of the museum's Summer at the Cummer program.

"The Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens is a tremendous gift to this city and Free Fourth Friday has become a longstanding tradition," English said. "I am so pleased to help ensure that all of Jacksonville experiences all that the Cummer Museum offers."

After a long and successful career with the Department

of Defense in Washington, D.C., English retired, moved to Jacksonville's San Marco neighborhood and started her own company, English-El Enterprises, which she now leads as CEO.

She said she fell in love with the Cummer Museum about three years ago when she came to see the world-renowned exhibition "Zanele Muholi: Somnyama Ngonyama, Hail the Dark Lioness." Her favorite exhibitions are those that give unique perspectives on the Black experience.

Free Fourth Fridays and Summer at the Cummer Fridays include live music and the opportunity to purchase food and beverages to enjoy in the garden. During Summer Fridays, the museum also presents dynamic art experiences, outdoor games and activities for all ages. These programs have provided free admission to more than 100,000 visitors since 2019.

Cross-Stitch Artist Exhibits at Grace Gallery

Cross-stitch artist Terrie Lee has been selected for her first public exhibition at Grace Gallery, located at Riverside Park United Methodist Church, 819 Park St. The collection features detailed depictions of gardens and architectural buildings, with such intricate needlework that the stitches resemble painting strokes.

Ron Richardson is chairman of the committee that selects artists to exhibit at the Grace Gallery. He said Lee's talent provided an opportunity to present a unique and different type of art to the community.

In addition to cross-stitch, Lee also donates her time and talents as a volunteer quilter for Margaret's Memories, a nonprofit that provides bereavement memory boxes to parents who have lost a baby before, during or after birth.

Grace Gallery is interested in supporting and exhibiting support emerging and amateur artists of all ages, media types and styles. Potential artists should email Ronald.j.richardson@gmail.com for an exhibition interview.



Terrie Lee, cross-stitch artist, with her artwork.

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ANIMAL HOUSE

Michael Bricker: Animal Care & Protective Services' New Top Dog

BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA

Florida newcomer Michael “Mike” Bricker’s optimism and positivity was as welcome as his arrival in September 2023 when he took over as the new chief at Duval County Animal Care & Protective Services (ACPS).

When Bricker first arrived, he noted the shelter’s lobby donation bins were often empty. While they are now overflowing with much-needed pet supplies, he still recognizes all of the work still to be done, including a need for transparency inside and outside of the shelter.

In other large cities, the best results have been achieved when the municipal shelter communicates and works cooperatively with its community and interested groups. Bricker said that citizens who feel informed will respond when their help is needed. He called Jacksonville’s caring, supportive animal community, city government, staff, volunteers and fosters the “invaluable” foundation upon which everything else must build. He said they are the resources ACPS needs to help as many homeless dogs and cats as possible.

With that in mind, a fresh start for ACPS is underway. Bricker is deploying new ideas to re-energize those working behind the scenes and encourage citizens to “get every dog and cat possible out of cages and into someone’s home.” His strategies have proven successful at previous shelters to increase live release rates and lower euthanasia statistics.

“When I arrived in Jacksonville and met people, I was surprised about one misconception. There is confusion about who ACPS is,” he said. “When I introduced myself, frequently someone would say, ‘I volunteered there. You’re on Beach Boulevard, right?’”

Bricker said his most important job has been implementing effective, consistent ways to distinguish ACPS and its downtown location from the Jacksonville Humane Society on Beach Boulevard. From a visual standpoint, ACPS can be identified by its use of bright red, from its volunteer and event t-shirts to its dog bandanas imprinted with “I am available for adoption.”

Local animal rescuers and advocates

Mike Bricker holding a kitten, Skittles, at the ACPS facility.



ACPS Chief Mike Bricker with Sleepy, who was adopted in 2023.

know how important it is that the community understands the differences between the local shelters. ACPS does euthanize when necessary, while the Jacksonville Humane Society is a no-kill shelter. Therefore, adoption and fostering are crucial at ACPS, which remains overcrowded and far above its capacity for dogs and cats.

The shelter has 264 kennels and more than 300 dogs. Additionally, every day, the shelter receives approximately 30 or more dogs brought for intake as lost, stray,

owner surrenders or abuse confiscations. Two dogs were already housed in single-dog kennels before its recent emergency confiscation of 56 abused dogs and puppies.

ACPS is located at 2020 Forest St., on the corner of Margaret Street in the Brooklyn neighborhood. The shelter has ample free parking and a large public reception area with spacious visitation rooms for meeting adoptable animals.

“We want the community to know that ACPS is the city’s downtown shelter

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

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on the Forest Street exit off of I-95. Our website provides information, needs and ways to help," Bricker said.

Bricker hopes that better community awareness and outreach will help attract more adopters, fosters and volunteers, who are always needed. Volunteers can walk dogs, play with cats, or work on events, marketing or social media efforts, even if only for a few hours. While there are age restrictions for volunteers, free training and dog handling classes are provided, including ongoing support. ACPS will be holding special events during Volunteer Appreciation Week, April 21-27; details will be posted on the ACPS Facebook page.

Volunteers and fosters say Chief Bricker has brought fresh energy and a clear mission to make ACPS the best animal shelter it can be. His goal of high animal-save rates and obvious concern for people and shelter animals reminded volunteers of why they came to help ACPS in the first place.

"I started volunteering with the Kitten Army six years ago to bottle-feed orphan kittens during the spring kitten season,"

Pamela Love said. "Michael wants to bring everyone together. He wants people to feel like this is 'our shelter,' and we are truly welcome at ACPS."

While he readily acknowledges it will take time to achieve results, Bricker focuses on solutions. He has already taken decisive moves to implement improvements: the Duval Dog Adoption Squad visiting 8-10 events every weekend; an increased frequency at PetSmart and Subaru dealership pet showcases; Space Force volunteers holding space for high-priority fosters; and animal control officers providing more free, donated supplies to citizens.

Anyone wishing to get involved through adoption, donation, fostering or volunteering can visit the ACPS Facebook community page or jacksonville.gov/departments/neighborhoods/animal-care, call (904) 630-2489 or email acpsfosters@coj.net.

The shelter is closed on Mondays. ACPS provides all veterinary care for foster pets free of charge at the shelter by appointment.

ACPS Wish List

These supplies can be ordered online for delivery to ACPS or dropped off during shelter hours.

Dogs:

- Dry dog food
- Velveeta-style soft cheese (for giving medications)
- Spray cheese
- Soft or hard dog treats
- Adaptil spray/calming spray
- Adaptil/Sentry calming collars
- Large to extra-large Kong toys
- Medium to extra-large

- Nylabones
- Durable toys
- Edible chews: pork chops, collage chews, bully sticks (Please no rawhide as it is a choking hazard.)
- Medium and large quick-release collars
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Cats:

- Dry cat food
- Cat treats
- Feliway cat calming spray
- Calming collars
- Catnip



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Colonial Dames Celebrate Continued Operation of Centuries-Old Ximenez-Fatio House

BY KAREN RIELEY

When the Florida Society of the Colonial Dames of America gathers May 1 for its annual fundraiser, it will celebrate 85 years of owning and managing the 226-year-old Ximenez-Fatio House Museum in St. Augustine. The house, one of the few coquina-and-tabby houses remaining in St. Augustine, is on the National Register of Historic Places and is a Florida Heritage Landmark.

The historic Ximenez-Fatio house, built in 1798, at 20 Aviles St., sits on America's first platted thoroughfare, which was completed in 1572 under the auspices of King Philip II of Spain and in use 35 years before the Jamestown colony was founded in Virginia.

The Ximenez-Fatio House has a unique history of being mostly owned and managed by women. Margaret Cook purchased the house in 1830. Prior to that, its original owner, Don Andrés Ximenez, built the house in 1798 and lived in it until he died in 1806. From then until 1830, the house was rented to various tenants.

Cook converted the home into a boarding house and hired Eliza Whitehurst to manage it. In 1838, Whitehurst died, and Sarah Petty Dunn Anderson purchased the boarding house. She and her family lived in the house for more than 15 years and, when space was available, rented rooms to visitors.

In 1851, Louisa Fatio became the manager of the house, and in 1855, Anderson sold the property to Fatio, who is remembered for having kept the house afloat during times of economic uncertainty, secession from the Union, reoccupation by Union troops and Reconstruction.

After Fatio's death in 1875, the house remained in her family until 1939. The National Society of The Colonial Dames of America in The State of Florida purchased it and began the decades long process of meticulously restoring and furnishing the home to become an historic house museum. While, historically, women have been



The "Dressing Louisa" exhibit, on display now through May 8, features 100 years of clothing fashion that Louisa Fatio would have worn.

the silent partners of the men who built communities, they have been at the forefront as owners, entrepreneurs and managers of the Ximenez-Fatio House.

The house has more than 3,000 artifacts, and all of the furniture is authentic, including three pieces that were actually owned by people who lived in the house. Each guest bedroom is decorated in a different fashion to celebrate the different types of people who stayed there, for example, an ailing woman, an author or a sea merchant.

"Every room has a story," said Payson Tilden, Ximenez-Fatio House executive director.

Visitors can view many interesting artifacts. Archaeologically, the house sits on one of the most frequently dug sites in St. Augustine. During a dig in 2002, a rare cross from Caravaca, Spain, was discovered and is on display for guests to view in the museum's Visitor Center.

"The Caravaca Cross was commissioned by the Spanish church in the early 1600s as a thanksgiving for the end of the Black Plague," Tilden said.

Two large, framed pieces of Punjab material from East India are hung in the dining room. Children used to gently pull the material back and forth to keep flies and other insects away from the food during meals.



Children enjoy the scavenger hunt at the Ximenez-Fatio House.



The 226-year-old Ximenez-Fatio House Museum is located at the corner of Aviles and Cadiz streets in St. Augustine.

The cheval mirror still seen today at the Ximenez-Fatio House Museum in the "owner's bedroom" is a piece originally owned by Anderson. Participants in the museum's monthly "A Night Among Ghosts" event are invited to stand in front of the mirror to see if one of the house's ghosts will appear.

The museum hosts a number of other events – in addition to regular viewing hours – such as student field trips and tours, scavenger hunts, holiday tours, "Everyday Life" audio tours and the "I Lived Here as Well" tour of those who lived and served in the house but were often unseen. It has an archeological table with screens and shovels for digging and a colonial garden that includes a monarch preserve. Every first Friday of the month, the museum hosts an artisan nights market in the house's courtyard.

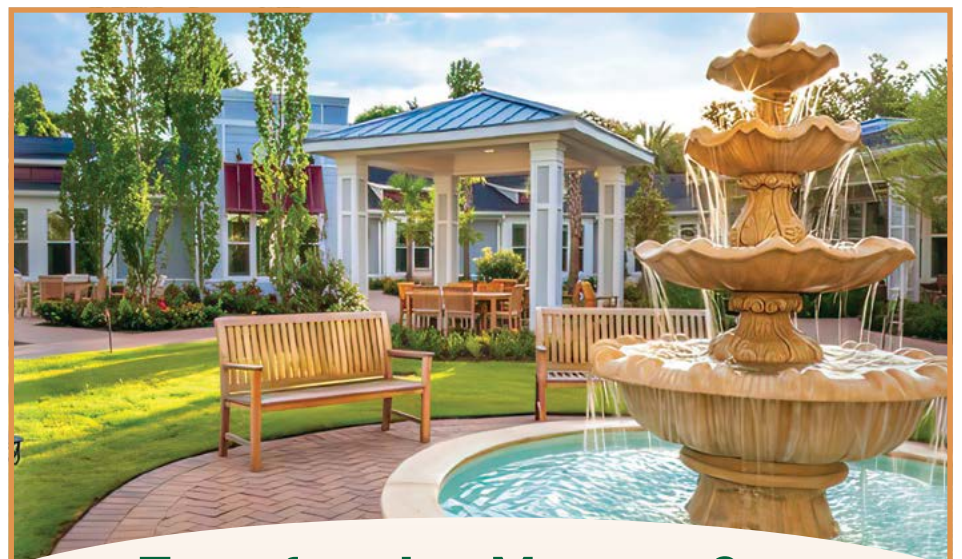
“Every room has a story.”

– Payson Tilden
Ximenez-Fatio House Executive Director

The Colonial Dames will host "Belles, Beaux and BBQ" May 1 at Timuquana Country Club to raise funds to support the Ximenez-Fatio House. All Colonial Dames in Florida are invited to attend with their guests.

"The funds will help with the costs of restoring the pianoforte and L'Engle family portrait, as well as other projects in the house," said Ellen Stark, co-chairman of the fundraiser, who serves on the board of managers with co-chair and society historian Allison Crisp. Crisp is a fifth-generation native of Jacksonville who grew up in Ortega.

To learn more about the Ximenez-Fatio House Museum and various options for visiting or supporting the continued operation of the house, visit ximenezfatiohouse.org or call (904) 829-3575.



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THE WAY WE WERE

John Curington

Former San Marco Re-developer Finds New Passions in Croquet, Founding of Ponte Vedra Croquet Club

The side view of San Marco Theatre and the San Marco Square clock.



John Curington in front of the San Marco Theatre, circa August 1981.

BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA

John Curington is a tall, athletic Southern gentleman whose intellect and CEO energy make it easy to imagine the drive he applied to his goals – first in San Marco, then in Ponte Vedra. From 1973 to 1993, his quiet intensity centered on investing and re-developing San Marco real estate with his business partner Keith Kimball, saving an iconic boulevard district. Since then, he has focused on the Ponte Vedra Croquet Club, which he founded in 2015, a world-class venue for the sport and Jacksonville.

Chapter 1: The Savior of San Marco

Curington was born in Riverside in 1949 but grew up in Neptune Beach. He attended St. Paul's Catholic School, then Bishop Kenny before graduating from the former Eckerd College with a business degree in 1971. He worked for Prudential Insurance Company's real estate department for three years. Then, after a year with a Jacksonville builder, he obtained his real estate broker's license.

Curington had moved to San Marco's River Road in 1973 because he liked the neighborhood and its proximity to his job at Prudential. He laughs now, recalling that he was unemployed after going into real estate until he discovered the immense satisfaction and pure enjoyment of investing, renovating and developing property.

It sounds almost accidental how he became a property owner, multi-business owner and single-minded community advocate for the next 20 years in San Marco. In 1979, Curington and Kimball bought most of the San Marco Boulevard buildings, including the Theatre and centerpiece St. Marks Building (a.k.a. the San Marco). The two-story Mediterranean Revival structure, designed by famed architects Marsh & Saxelby, was the boulevard's first commercial building. Its most famous tenant was the rowdy Town Pump Tavern (1933-1983).

The San Marco Theatre they bought from attorney Eli Fink was derelict; duct tape held the carpets together. The 1938 Art Deco single-screen movie theatre designed by nationally known architect Roy Benjamin was a marvel when it opened in 1938. Still, by 1979, it was a financially risky dinosaur in an era of multi-screens. Its location and potential, however, were five-star.

After a costly, six-month total renovation, Curington and R. Ward Lariscy – another longtime resident, merchant and San Marco advocate – resurrected the theatre's interior design. Other improvements included innovative amenities: at-seat tables, food, beer and wine. The transformation elevated the experience for movie-goers when the theatre re-opened on August 14, 1981.

"The buildings we bought were badly run-down. The theatre was terrible. Besides no maintenance, the Rocky Horror Picture Show fans had destroyed everything and damaged the screen," Curington said.

During the 1970s and early '80s, San Marco's challenges made news beyond the boulevard. Its regional reputation suffered from news reports that sometimes focused on the problems. Many Jacksonville residents thought San Marco's only shops were Pic N' Save and Peterson's Five & Dime discount stores.

"It was a worn-out strip center, not an inviting place where anyone wanted to go. Everywhere you looked, it appeared neglected," Curington said.

Commercial rent in San Marco in the 1970s averaged \$2 to \$5 per square foot, lower than elsewhere, Curington said, but affordability was irrelevant. There were few reasons to visit the area. Shops struggled as the storefronts and surroundings declined. Urban sprawl contributed, offering shoppers more options at Regency Square Mall (1967) and Orange Park Mall (1975).



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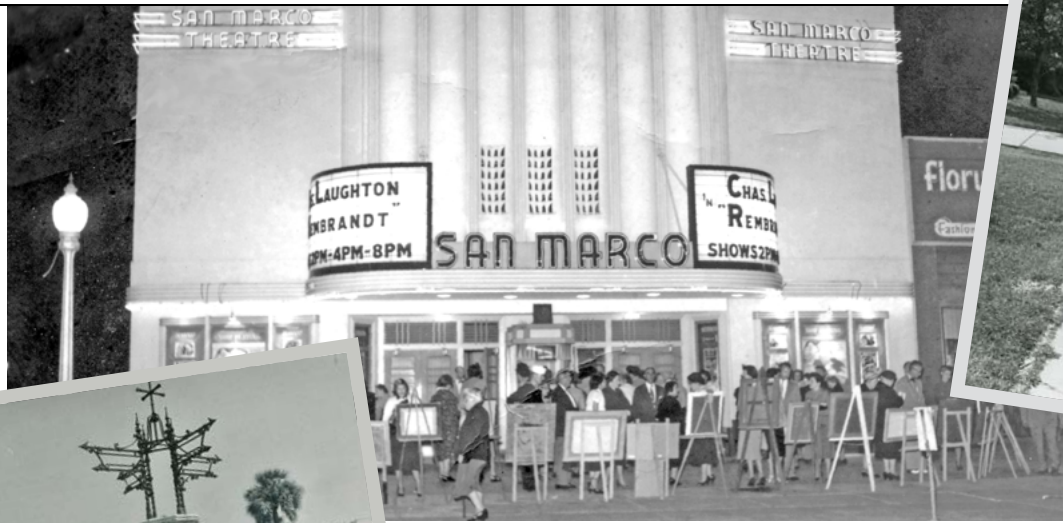


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John Curington and Helen Covington with the Ponte Vedra Croquet Club Flag



A historic photo of the San Marco Theatre lit at night.



San Marco Merchants Association member John Curington and San Marco Preservation Society Vice President Yvonne Corey inspecting broken sidewalks, May 1989.

San Marco's prime location at the juncture where Atlantic and San Marco Boulevards meet Hendricks Avenue, and the history and architectural importance of the area demanded better, Curington believed. He thought the boulevard's atmosphere should match the beauty of its neighborhood. He was convinced that San Marco could rival any other upscale retail center given the right opportunity.

"I wanted to improve San Marco by renovating one building at a time, including sidewalks and landscaping. There was so much to do," he said. "People wanted improvements; many merchants and residents helped."

Curington began renovating the buildings, working side-by-side with tenants who received a lease discount for their labor. His businesses opened in the St. Mark's building in 1984: Café on the Square downstairs and St. Mark's Restaurant above.

There were hiccups along the way, but the forward momentum continued. They sold the theatre after a year, and St. Mark's fine dining – despite earning rave reviews – proved unprofitable and closed. The Café, however, became San Marco's robust local hotspot. Curington sold it to Wayne Davis in 1992.

New businesses leased Curington's other freshly renovated spaces, including the flagship Peterbrooke Chocolatier. Founder Phyllis Lockwood Geiger was urged to open in Ponte Vedra and admits she knew nothing about San Marco.

"When I saw that quaint little village and John described its history, I loved everything about it. I bought my home nearby and opened my first shop in a 700-square-foot space, which I leased from him in September 1983. We were both there every day, renovating, covered in dust and dirt, working simultaneously. That's John, totally hands-on, doing whatever needs to be done," Geiger said. She also owned Café Carmon, another now-closed San Marco favorite.

Curington nurtured and valued that small-town atmosphere. He wanted residents to feel comfortable walking from their homes up to the square for dinner or shopping, with ample opportunities to mingle. He knew that various unique boutiques, quality services and excellent restaurants, all within a well-defined, appealing area, would draw people to San Marco.

While Curington is deeply respected, remembered with thanks and credited for many things he did in San Marco, it was his legal action stopping a 1985 public works project that may be most important. Public reaction was swift when the city announced plans to excavate the San Marco Square area and streets for a reconstruction and drainage improvement project. It was expected to last up to 18 months and would overlap the entire holiday season.

Merchants and residents were blindsided and concerned about the logistics of such a plan in an already tightly spaced historic area if the main thoroughfares were blocked and traffic re-routed. A year and a half of noise from heavy construction equipment and mountains of dirt and concrete in a retail area would compound the misery. Equally damaging was the proposed elimination of 35% of parking spaces when parking was already at a premium. Merchants protested and threatened legal action to no avail.

Curington filed a legal injunction against the city that stopped the project and forced a complete re-evaluation. Merchants credit him for saving them from what could have been a catastrophic loss of business for months during a successful redevelopment renaissance. That construction project would have also ruined the crucial holiday retail sales season in San Marco, a time of highest annual sales revenue for many businesses.

Today's thriving San Marco Square and environs owe much to those merchants and longtime residents who persevered during the challenging years. Curington commends the San Marco Preservation Society, San Marco Merchants Association members, Keith Kimball, the late Jim Rink, Lee Mercier, Zimmerman Boulos, and many other community and city supporters. Their dedication and critical improvements during the 1970s, '80s, and '90s paved the way and continue to champion San Marco.

Chapter 2: The Champion of Club Croquet

During his San Marco years, Curington usually said he had no hobbies other than his businesses; once, he mentioned sailing. Therefore, it is fascinating to learn that he had discovered the sport of club croquet and began lessons in 1989 at the age of 40. The man who never played organized sports, other than swimming in high school, said there was "no accounting for my fascination with and enjoyment of croquet."



San Marco's original concrete fountain topped with an ironwork motif.



San Marco Boulevard storefronts



The Town Pump



John Curington amid renovations.

Curington had played the typical backyard recreational croquet games Americans recall. But as an adult, three fortunate events led him to discover the sport of croquet. He saw a cast iron croquet wicket on the cover of Harper's Magazine and wondered why a kids' game was featured on a national magazine cover, sparking his interest.

Then, while visiting his sister in New York, he decided to find the U.S. Croquet Association's New York City headquarters. It was located inside founder Jack Osborn's advertising agency in a tiny office at that time. Osborn wanted to promote the sport and encourage new clubs in the U.S. He later sent Curington a letter inviting him to visit the West Palm Beach U.S. Croquet Association.

"Osborn invited me to the U.S. Croquet Association in West Palm Beach to watch 'real' croquet, and I went. I saw Nigel Aspinall play, one of the most successful croquet champions of the 1970s-80s. I didn't know how to play croquet then, but I began lessons," Curington said.

He began playing the sport of croquet as often as he could and wherever he could find a court. When Chester Stokes developed Deercreek, he included croquet courts, and Curington played there. His natural talent led to a passion for the game, where he worked his way to playing at the top level and won some tournaments. Because of his intellectual curiosity and focus on excellence, Curington studied all aspects of the game, becoming an in-demand croquet court consultant and designer.

In 2000, he moved to West Palm Beach for a year and a half when he was hired to apply his expertise to the planning, design and construction of the National Croquet Center. He was elected and served as the Croquet Foundation of America president from 2005-07. His achievements and definitive contributions to the sport led to his induction into the 2006 Croquet Hall of Fame.

Since moving to Ponte Vedra Beach in 1993, he repeatedly tried working with St. Johns County to fund a croquet facility through a public/private partnership. Those attempts all failed. He also approached private clubs without success, except for the Florida Yacht Club (FYC). There, in 2015, Curington designed and built two regulation-size waterfront croquet courts and began teaching lessons to residents like Avondale's Helen Covington.

Covington came from an athletic family and played tennis for thirty years at FYC before developing knee problems. The low-impact, non-twisting exercise of croquet drew her to the sport. She was in the original group of FYC members who started croquet lessons with John in 2015 and played regularly.

"John offered lessons, and designed and built those wonderful yacht club croquet courts. About twenty of us took lessons, played often, and we just kept getting better together. It's a very social sport where you make friends easily. We also met and played with people from other clubs during interclub play when we formed our league, Florida Yacht Club Croquet," Covington said.

Covington praised Curington as an ambassador of the sport and for his promotion of croquet in Jacksonville. She described Curington as a remarkable person and excellent teacher, who could teach anyone to play and love the sport. In fact, she stands as a shining example of it. Despite starting the game at age 60, she rose through the game, becoming the Female Golf Croquet Grand Prix Winner of the Year, ranking as the No. 1 woman golf croquet player in the U.S. and playing in the Women's World Golf Croquet Championship and the 2024 U.S. Women's Open Championship Semi-Finals.

When his attempts at a public/private partnership had failed, Curington finally had to proceed privately or give up his dream of a permanent club croquet facility. Buying land was the next obstacle because Ponte Vedra was already nearly 100% built out. Although it took Curington 20 years of searching for the perfect property, he found the ideal four acres just a mile from the ocean. There, he designed, built and founded the world-class Ponte Vedra Croquet Club (PVCC). PVCC is considered state-of-the-art within the sport and by professionals.

The PVCC club is a gem of a property, now home to seven impressive croquet courts, described as tennis-court-sized lawns, perfectly flat with a putting green surface. The South Lawn has four three-quarter-sized courts, and the North Lawn has three full-size courts.

The Players' Pavilion has 3,000 square feet of open air, a lounge and facilities. An outdoor deck overlooks the lawns, moss-draped oaks and picnic area. The club property is available after-hours as an event venue.

PVCC is a membership club with annual dues. It is open daily except Mondays, with free introductory sessions, beginner to advanced lessons, recreational and inter-club play, events and tournaments. PVCC is a member club of The United States Croquet Association and participates in the First Coast Croquet League interclub play.



I love that there are more bridges in our Resident Community than any other place in town. And when I say bridges, I don't mean stupid flyover, or access road, or highway ramp bridges, I'm talking about real, over-the-waterways bridges – the ones that provide connection to places we love and pristine views of our city in all its natural glory.

This is a unique point of gratitude, one not many people in Northeast Florida can claim. I'm bad with numbers, but I can count more than 10 real, actual, over-the-waterways bridges in our neighborhoods, from big ones like the Fuller Warren Bridge and the Henry H. Buckman Bridge to the Ortega Bridge and the stretch of San Jose Boulevard between Baymeadows and

Rubin roads. That's not even counting all the footbridges that provide safe passage over the small creeks and river fingers in our public spaces, like Brown L. Whatley Memorial Park and River Oaks Park in San Marco, and Boone Park in Avondale. Whether it's by foot, automobile or bike, ample bridge access is something for which we should all be grateful in our neighborhoods.

Beyond the obvious reasons – connection and perspective – bridges are wonderful resources, and here's why:

- Bridges provide helpful momentum if you happen to be on the right part of the slope. I learned this about 15 years ago while driving my RPDS carpool on an empty tank of gas one morning. Much to the embarrassment and horror of my passengers, the car

turned off and lost power steering at the highest point of the Fuller Warren Bridge right there in the Park Street exit lane coming from San Marco. They thought I was kidding. I wish I had been. But thanks to the bridge and my car's fortunate placement on its crown, I was able to float effortlessly down the exit ramp and wrench my car to the right and into the storage facility there on the corner. Thank you, bridge!

- Bridges sometimes have cool markets under them. I mean, aren't we fortunate to have the Riverside Arts Market (RAM) under the Fuller Warren in Riverside? You can get all sorts of goodies there – fresh food, fried food, art, music. It's all there. Plus, you can take your boat there to enjoy a Saturday under the bridge. And if memory serves, RAM will one day be connected to nearby Riverside Park with more cool, under-the-bridge, art additions.
- Well, I won't say this too loudly as not to inspire any ideas in the yoots out there, but let me just say that bridges were sources of horseplay back in the day. One of my brothers-in-law can tell you about his legendary Ortega bridge status. I however, will not.
- Bridges mean your friends in Ortega or San Marco or San Jose really are not that far away. You may think, because you have to use the bridge, that getting together is too hard, or too far or wah wah wah whatever. It's not. Bridges actually make it easier to see the people you love. Can you imagine not having so many bridge options? It'd be like living a "Little House on the Prairie" life or in more modern terms, an "Outer Banks" existence where you have to take wagons or john boats to have a mano-a-mano conversation with your buddies. Thanks to bridges, that isn't the case for us in the neighborhood. It takes 15 minutes – tops – to connect to your friends across the river.
- Beautiful, wild animals sometimes live under bridges in our neighborhoods. This fall, many residents who utilize River Oaks Park warned of the gigantic alligator that made its home under the footbridge. His name was Pennywise, for obvious reasons ("It"). People could actually see his beady little eyeballs warning everyone how they were "all the better to eat you with, my dear." Pennywise also may have been seen at a kinda-bridge there at old San Jose Boulevard and Rio Lindo Drive not too long ago. I'm not sure if I'm grateful for these sightings, but I'm definitely thankful no one got hurt or gobbled up by them.
- Bridges are great fishing sites! If you can't get out on a boat, weather the ocean waves or find a charter, you can always find a bridge nearby

that works hook, line and sinker. Personally, I have never caught a fish on a bridge, but I don't fish at all, so what do I know?

- You can work out under some of our bridges. Have you been on the North Bank Riverwalk between the YMCA and the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts? There's a place called Corkscrew Park, and you can get beefy and pumped up there with all the equipment. Plus, whoever mans the office on Sundays plays some seriously zesty beats that make you feel righteous and amped when you pass through.
- You can also walk the bridges, to boot. If you're ready to level-up your walking or running routine, hit the bridges! All of the major downtown bridges – Main Street, Acosta and Fuller Warren – have safe foot paths. The Fuller Warren is the newest, and though loud at the top, it is beautiful and takes you to some nice spots on the Northbank and Southbank riverwalks.
- Bridges make our running events unique. What's the best part of the annual Gate River Run? Dragging yourself up the Hart Bridge, known as the Green Monster, then flying back down the other side. Again, bridges provide momentum – and a sense of major accomplishment!
- I'm going to try to weave this one into a source of gratitude: we are fortunate to have train and draw bridges because they give us time to sit, often for excruciatingly long periods of time, and reflect on the important things in our life. We all need time to practice patience and peace. The train bridge, and the bridges that go up for boat passage, provide us an opportunity to do this – often.

Whether you're clicking your heels, buying fresh produce or going motor-off down the other side, bridges will get you where you want to go and connect you to what's good and healthy in our neighborhoods. Thank goodness we are long on them!

Susanna Barton did not enjoy that time she ran out of gas on the Fuller Warren at all, it's barely even funny. It was actually pretty scary. 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 encourages healthy conversations about aging and preparing for it on www.mygrandplans.com.



Liam Austin, who was born with spina bifida, spent four years working with Developmental Learning Center, left, to learn to walk. Today, right, he walks independently using only leg braces.



throughout Jacksonville, filling the community with awareness, special needs resources and opportunities, and DLC's signature orange T-shirts. Orange is the color of Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

The organization recognized days of observance like the March 13 Good Samaritan Day, where it recognized the unselfish actions of those who provide help; March 26 Epilepsy Awareness Day, where it showcased the successes of a young man born with a seizure disorder; and March 23 National Puppy Day, in which it recognized the power of service dogs in assisting children and youth with developmental disabilities. It collaborated with local partners and celebrities to spread the word about the DLC programs available to the community.



Developmental Learning Center honored the importance of service dogs during its Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month campaign.

"The Nonprofit Center believes in the good that DLC is doing to serve all children of all abilities so that families have the opportunity to reach their maximum potential. By providing support to these families, DLC is helping create a more vibrant and inclusive community to live in. I'm proud to support DLC and the work they are doing to raise awareness for Development Disability Awareness Month," said Dawn Lockhart, CEO, Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida.

Kenneth Darity, the chief administration officer at Kids Hope Alliance, echoed the praise for the faith-based inclusion nonprofit.

"DLC has been providing invaluable support for children and families in Duval County for many years. The dedicated team at DLC provides hope and resources to our most vulnerable population. It is an honor to celebrate the great work of DLC," he said.

All Things Are Possible

Nonprofit, community bring awareness to developmental disabilities

George Liam Kohl Austin is an active, vivacious youngster who loves Rubik's cubes, collecting Pokémon cards, ziplining, basketball, hockey, golfing and running in the Junior Gate River Run.

Austin also has spina bifida. When he was in utero, four out of five specialists advised Austin's mother to end her pregnancy.

Instead, his mother chose to repair the open spinal cord in utero, which would stop further nerve damage and give Austin a chance to walk one day. At 18 months old, she brought him to Developmental Learning Center (DLC) in Jacksonville.

Today, thanks to the determination of Austin and his family, and four years of dedicated work at DLC, Austin walks independently with just leg braces and is on his own journey to becoming a surgeon. He feels sorry for people who look down on him for his disabilities and has but one message for those who hear his story:

"Never let your disability stop you from doing what you want to do."

DLC, which provides education, care and therapies to children of all abilities, celebrated successes like Austin's, and others, during March's Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. It launched a month-long, grassroots campaign



Dawn Lockhart



Kenneth Darity

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Aariz Zuberi, Charlie Russell, Adi Yadav, Aiden Pereira and General Grissom sported Shakespeare-inspired suitings for Bolles' annual eighth grade event.

Shakespeare is "To Be" at Bolles

Eighth grade students on the Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus donned their best period costumes on March 7 for Shakespeare Day, an annual rite of passage filled with on-stage prose and friendly competitions between bitter rivals House Capulet and House Montague.



Morgan Fink, Lilybeth Posick and Zara West adorned maidenly attire for Shakespeare Day.

English teachers Deborah Carney, Tim Creter and Morgan Teichert organized the event, which, in addition to the themed competitions, included film adaptations, a trivia game show and theatrical performances of scenes from Shakespearean classics like "Romeo and Juliet" and "Macbeth."

"It was a phenomenal afternoon for our eighth graders," said Bolles Middle School Head Josh Bauman. "I know they will remember Shakespeare Day for many years to come."

RESIDENTS Junior



Ryan, Kate, Dean, Rory and Devon stand in front of the remembrance image of their daughter and sibling, Reese Avery Eberling (12.11.18-5.12.20).



Emily Webb, Finley's mom, with Sawyer Webb.



Finley's grandparents, Gary and Barbara Johnson, with Anne and Gary Emig, who volunteer and fundraise for SUDC.



Heidi Loughman, Alison Loughman and Maddie Webb tie their remembrance ribbons on Finley's tree in Boone Park.



Friends, classmates and family members remembered Finley by participating in this third annual fundraising event.

Remembering Finley

Webb Family holds third annual Finley's Fast Feet Walk/Run

Friends, family members and the community gathered at the Webb family home to kick off the third annual Finley's Fast Feet Walk/Run on Saturday, March 16.

Held in honor of Finley Webb, who passed away four years ago, the event raises funds for the SUDC Foundation. This nonprofit organization "is the only organization worldwide whose purpose is to raise awareness, fund research and serve those affected by sudden unexplained death in childhood (SUDC)."

SUDC is a category of death assigned by a medical examiner or a coroner for children ages one through 18 when no other cause of death can be found following an investigation, including an autopsy. Currently, there are no known causes of SUDC, nor are there known ways to prevent it.

Participants in Finley's Fast Feet walked to Boone Park, where they tied remembrance ribbons to Finley's tree.

March is SUDC Awareness Month. More information about SUDC and the foundation can be found at sudc.org.



Assumption Catholic School seventh grader Josie Kapadia shows off her dissection skills.

Dissecting Scientific Curiosity

Assumption Catholic School seventh graders got an opportunity to "stay curious" in science teacher Bill Hawthorn's biology dissection lesson in March. Known for engaging curiosity, Hawthorn emphasized to students that experience goes beyond science. The students worked collaboratively to guide each other through the dissection process and the discovery of biology and anatomy elements. Hawthorn hoped the lesson would inspire future doctors, veterinarians and scientists.

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The Sanctuary on 8th Street girls basketball team, sponsored by Riverside Presbyterian Church.

Finding Hope in Hoops

For the first time ever, The Sanctuary on 8th Street was able to provide its mission of hope through girls basketball, thanks to a team sponsorship by the Riverside Presbyterian Church. The girls developed teamwork, leadership skills and showed emotional growth throughout the season. To celebrate the conclusion of the season, the team attended the River City Rumble for the Jacksonville University vs. University of North Florida women's basketball game before dining at Springfield locales Crispy's and Scoops.

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Deesha Philyaw

Nicole Sealey

Douglas Anderson Hosts Writers' Festival

Douglas Anderson's (DA) Creative Writing Department is hosting its biannual Writers' Festival Saturday, April 6, led by acclaimed authors Deesha Philyaw and Nicole Sealey. Philyaw is a New York Times bestselling fiction writer and Jacksonville native, and Sealey is an award-winning poet and author.

"The guest authors we have invited to this year's festival have a special tie to our writing community, either as current or former residents of Florida, or alumni of our creative writing program. Our goal is to provide access to artists working at the highest levels of their craft to be an inspiration to our young writers and to the writers of our community," said DA Creative Writing Director Tiffany Melanson.

The festival starts at 9 a.m. with readings, interviews, a Q&A with author Nikesha Elisa Williams and a full day of hands-on writing workshops that cover fiction, poetry, creative non-fiction, playwriting and publication. Proceeds will support educational programming and guest artist experiences for the Creative Writing Department.

Creative writing student Lawson Lewis said, "I think a lot of the time we're told as young artists that the careers we see for ourselves aren't practical or possible, no matter how passionate we are. And what's valuable about events like Writers' Fest is getting to spend concentrated time learning from people who have achieved what we dream about and are doing it in a way that serves them and their goals while defying the starving artist stereotype. It makes it feel more possible."

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit dawriters.com/writers-festival.



Exchange Club of Jacksonville's Students of the Month Mary Clare Stinneford and Franco Chaluja

Chaluja, Stinneford Honored by Exchange Club

The Exchange Club of Jacksonville has selected Bishop Kenny High School (BK) seniors Franco Chaluja and Mary Clare Stinneford as its Students of the Month. Chaluja and Stinneford were selected based on outstanding scholarship, leadership, character and community service. The Exchange Club recognizes one male and one female student from a different school each month throughout the school year. All monthly winners are eligible for its Student of the Year scholarship competition.

Chaluja is a member of the English, Mu Alpha Theta, Rho Kappa, Science, Spanish, and National Honor societies, as well as the starting catcher for the BK baseball team. He serves as a BK Student Ambassador and an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion, in addition to volunteering nearly 300 hours since his freshman year.

Stinneford is a National Merit Commended scholar and member of the English, Thespian, Mu Alpha Theta, Science, Spanish, and National Honor societies. She is the captain of her cross-country team, a BK Student Ambassador and a philharmonic violinist with the Jacksonville Symphony Youth Orchestra. Stinneford has also donated 845 service hours in her high school career.

The Exchange Club of Jacksonville interviews as many as 200 Duval County students annually as part of its Student of the Year youth program. The male and female Student of the Year winners each receive a scholarship of \$2,000 and will qualify for the Florida District to compete for another \$2,500.



Sophomore Annie Adams' ceramics entry earned her a Gold Key award at the 2024 North Florida Scholastic Art Awards.

Students Earn Key Awards in Art Competition

Sixty-seven students from Episcopal School of Jacksonville (ESJ) received a total of 29 Gold Key awards, 27 Silver Key awards and 64 honorable mentions at the 2024 North Florida Scholastic Art Awards, presented Feb. 17. Students who received a Gold Key award qualified to participate in the national competition and had their work exhibited at the Jacksonville Main Library.

"It's an honor to see so much great work created by the students in the Northeast Florida region on display together and having ESJ students be such a big part of that student success," said Bob Kirk, ESJ ceramics instructor.

The following ESJ students received Gold Key awards in the Ceramics and Glass category: Annie Adams, Mcrae Busey (two awards), Catie Hodges, Colton Kellogg, Carolina Martinez, Claire Miles, William Moore and Audrey Vermillion (two awards). In photography, Noelle Bateh, Katherine D'Arienzo, Aliana Freel, Emily Hammond (two awards), Chloe Korn, Emory Nelson, Lilly Reed, Anabelle Rockwell (two awards), Chase Stephens and Myla Turner (two awards) all took home a Gold Key Award while Declan Hammerling won six Gold Key awards in both the Drawing and Illustration, and Architecture and Industrial Design categories.



Eight of the 13 students selected from Samuel Wolfson School for Advanced Studies for The Jacksonville Joe Berg Seminars program.

13 Selected for Joe Berg Seminars

Samuel Wolfson School for Advanced Studies had 13 sophomores selected to participate in The Jacksonville Joe Berg Seminars program: Caitlyn Dockham, Anna Claire Eubank, Adam Francesconi, Ayla Geoghegan, Graham Glasheen, Grace Letvaranurak, Kai Okada, Adriel Perez, Tula Reisinger, Catherine Shore, Alex Tek, Grady Wilkins and Sofia Woods.

The students were selected from a pool of Duval County high school students that tested into the humanities or sciences programs. The Jacksonville Joe Berg Seminars is a year-long program that provides outstanding high school students with unique seminars and experiences from professionals who work in the sciences and humanities fields.



"For Christ the Lord is risen, our joy that hath no end."

- SAINT JOHN OF DAMASCUS

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French, above, and Spanish language students from Episcopal School of Jacksonville competed in their respective state competitions, the Florida State Spanish Conference and the Congrès French, both held in Orlando.

Laurels for Linguistics Leagues

Two groups of language students from Episcopal School of Jacksonville (ESJ) competed at the state-level competitions in Spanish and French. The Florida State Spanish Conference was held in Orlando March 7-9, with 32 schools competing. All 15 ESJ students received awards for their performances in events like impromptu speeches, poem recitations and a play. The Spanish conference teams were led by instructors Lucia Allen and Carolina Collins.

The Congrès French competition was also held in Orlando the same week. The ESJ French language student team emerged as the first-place winners in their division. Federica Smith-Vicentini earned a spot on the board for the 2025 Congrès French competition. She was selected as a member-at-large, sponsored by Bouchra Benchaaboune, ESJ French instructor, who has also become a member of the Congrès.



Students from The Bolles School participated in the Northeast Florida Regional Science and Engineering Fair Feb. 12-14.

Students Advance in Science Competitions

Sixteen students from The Bolles School competed at the Northeast Florida Regional Science and Engineering Fair (NEFRSEF) Feb. 12-14 at Episcopal School of Jacksonville with five advancing to the State Science and Engineering Fair of Florida April 2-4 in Lakeland: Christina Dovellos, Simran Naval, Sarah Park, Krish Patel and Dylan Schwartz. Naval and Park were also selected as International Science and Engineering Fair alternates.

Naval and Dovellos won first and second place, respectively, in the biochemistry category. Naval was awarded the Johnson and Johnson Outstanding Research Award and Dovellos the Johnson and Johnson Excellent Research Award and JU Excellence Scholarship.

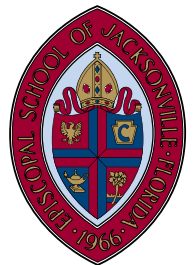
Park and Patel took home first and second place, respectively, in the medicine and health category with Park receiving a Johnson and Johnson Outstanding Research Award. Patel was also honored with a Johnson and Johnson Project Excellence, Regeneron Biomedical Science Award and UF College of Medicine First Place Medicine and Health Project Award.

Schwartz won the Johnson and Johnson Project Excellence Award, Society of American Military Engineers to a Project with Potential Military Application, Haskell Award for First Place Mechanical Engineering Project and an invitation to the Haskell High School Internship Program. Other winners included Thomas Catto, Inspiring Excellence in Physics; Sloane James, Society of American Military Engineers Award in Environmental Science; Madeline Kaiser, Florida Association of Science Teachers Award; and Riya Kar, Johnson and Johnson Excellent Research Award in zoology.

Bolles science teacher Brad Bullington was also honored with the NEFRSEF Inspiring Excellence award, which recognizes “untiring dedication, selfless commitment and continuing support of science.”



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The Torres family at the Chicago River on St. Patrick's Day.



Members of the water polo team enjoy dinner out after the game.

Torres Competes at Water Polo Nationals

Alex Torres was selected for the Olympic Development Program (ODP) Southeast Zone National Water Polo Team last month. He, along with 12 other players from Florida and Georgia, represented the Southeast Zone at the ODP National Championships March 15-17 in Chicago. The team finished with one win and four losses in the six-zone competition.

Torres tested his game skills against the elevated competition,

contributing scores, assists and steals. Outside of the pool, he was able to explore Chicago with his family, including the famed St. Patrick's Day-themed green dyeing of the Chicago River.

Locally, Torres and others hone their skills through the Jacksonville Water Polo Club, with upcoming competitions including the Rise Up tournament in Clermont, Florida, April 5-7 and the Florida International Tournament in Ocala, Florida, April 26-28.



Alex Torres with members of the Southeast Zone ODP Development Team.



Alex Torres with his Olympic Development Program certificate.



Cadets from Bishop Kenny's National Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps volunteer to feed the needy at Sulzbacher.

Cadets Commit to Lenten Service

The Bishop Kenny National Junior Reserve Officers Training Corps (NJROTC) cadets started a new service endeavor during Lent. The cadets have dedicated their Tuesdays to preparing and distributing food to the homeless and needy for the evening meal at the Sulzbacher's downtown location. This is the second time the cadets have participated in this effort, and their plan is to make it a monthly endeavor.

"The BK cadets embrace service, and it is even more meaningful to provide for our local Jacksonville community in such a positive and impactful way," said retired U.S. Navy Cmdr. Brian Morrill.

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IN MEMORIAM

Linda Fontaine Crank Moseley

Linda Fontaine Crank Moseley of Jacksonville passed away on Feb. 28, 2024. Born Sept. 3, 1927, in Louisa, Virginia, to William Earle Crank and Phyllis Fry Collins, Linda graduated from Vanderbilt University in 1948 with a Bachelor of Arts in history and married Dr. Thaddeus Mortimer Moseley in Virginia in September of that year.

After moving to Jacksonville in 1950, she embarked on a dual career as a doctor's wife and community volunteer. She was instrumental in various charitable organizations, including the United Way, March of Dimes and the Women's Auxiliary at Duval County Hospital, for which she spearheaded fundraising endeavors to expand its mental health facilities. Her involvement with the Junior League led her to representation on the Speech and Hearing Clinic and Child Guidance board, eventually becoming president of the Jacksonville League and serving on the International Board and as chair of the Regional Nominating Committee. She was the first woman vice president of United Way and provided caring guidance on the boards for the Women's Auxiliary, Jacksonville Symphony and Salvation Army, where she helped found the Salvation Army Auxiliary.

Linda's passions led her community work as well. Her love of flowers and environmental issues inspired a decades-long involvement with the Watsonia Garden Circle. Her dedication to literacy led her to become a tutor and founding member of Learn to Read in 1969, president of the board and a champion for literacy throughout the community. She was actively involved with the organization and board of the Colonial Dames as well, utilizing her passion for Florida history and historic preservation. A devoted member of Riverside Presbyterian Church since 1953, Linda served in various capacities including Girls' Choir Mother, committee member and Trustee.



Forever a loving matriarch, Linda was predeceased by her husband of 54 years, Thad, in 2002. She is survived by their three children, Thaddeus Maury Moseley (Fiona Strathern), William Armistead Moseley (Margaret Cravey) and Stacy Fontaine Moseley Scherer (Joseph Scherer); five grandchildren, Virginia Fontaine Moseley, William Walker Moseley, Robert Armistead Moseley, Thaddeus Nicholas Scherer and Fontaine Lillian-Laura Scherer; and four great grandchildren, James Armistead Moseley, Frances Claire Moseley, Thomas Walker Moseley and Natalie Rae Moseley.

Linda balanced motherhood, marriage and community service with a grace and mastery few can match. She was a brilliant beauty, a thoughtful host and unyielding champion for her family and those in need. Her ability to see and draw out the good in people around her made her a charismatic leader, and one that Jacksonville will not soon forget. Her legacy lives on in the loved ones she leaves behind and the countless people her kindness has touched.

In lieu of flowers the family asks that donations be made to The Ximenez-Fatio House in St. Augustine, Florida.



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A Career with Hardage-Giddens



by Elaine Ehrlichman

Having a job in the funeral field can be a wonderful and rewarding experience. There are many benefits to pursuing a job with us at Hardage-Giddens, and countless reasons to do so! If you have ever thought about joining the ranks of our skilled and dedicated funeral professionals, keep reading!

Why choose this occupation?

- **You have personal experience.** Sometimes, experiencing a loved one's death and seeing the level of care that surrounds them is the catalyst for joining this field. Witnessing firsthand the extreme dedication and compassion that funeral associates provide can open the door to realizing that this is the right career choice for you.
- **You have a calling.** If you have a deep, insatiable desire to help others, you may have a calling for this line of work. At its very core, this profession centers around assisting grieving families through their hardest times. If you enjoy helping those in need, this career path presents an amazing opportunity for you.
- **You seek fulfillment.** Working in funeral service can be emotional, but it is also enormously rewarding. Knowing that you have done right by the families you serve is a notion that is difficult to put into words, but one that each of our associates can attest to. You are making a personal difference in others' lives during their greatest time of need.

Who is Hardage-Giddens right for?

- **You are curious about working with us, but are unsure where to begin.** If you have considered pursuing a job in this field but are uncertain where to get started, we encourage you to reach out to us! We can guide you and help you discover which position will be the best fit.
- **You know you want to work in the funeral profession.** If you already know that you want a career in funeral service, our tuition reimbursement program can help you reach that goal. Not all positions require a degree, but if your dream role does, we have remarkable employee benefits to help you get where you want to be.
- **You are creative, analytical, and caring.** Whether you are interested in designing funeral and memorial displays or you lean more toward assisting during funeral services, we will help you find the right placement. With our multi-department job opportunities, we know you will find a perfect fit!

What is the reality of working in this field?

- **It can be emotionally intense.** Of course, having a funeral career means being around death. Whether conceptually or literally, death is at the forefront of our work and is exactly why we approach our roles with such care and compassion. Though the nature of our work can be emotional, knowing that you have made a difference in a family's life is what will help guide you through the harder days.

- **Having a flexible schedule helps.** Working in the funeral profession means having a schedule that best suits the families we serve, and that means you may not always have standard working hours. This element does not apply to all roles, but it is something to keep in mind.

- **You have a direct impact.** It is essential to remember that your actions will have a direct impact on the families you serve. This is why we take painstaking care to ensure that all of our associates are respectful, informed, and thoroughly prepared to handle assisting families in need. Remember that when you go home for the day, you have had a positive impact on a family who may be experiencing one of the most difficult times of their lives. You helped them through that.

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