

## Conversations to Continue for Laura Street Trio

The Downtown Investment Authority passed an amended resolution last month stating it is 'willing and able' to consider future proposals for a Laura Street Trio redevelopment agreement with development team led by SouthEast Development Group Principal Steve Atkins. [READ MORE ON PAGE 6](#)

## Self-Storage Coming to Southbank

City council votes in favor of controversial PUD rezoning

At its April 23 meeting, the Jacksonville City Council voted in favor of the PUD rezoning request that will pave the way for the proposed Lofts at Southbank project, which features a self-storage component alongside retail and residential, despite continued and extensive community pushback. [READ MORE ON PAGE 8](#)

## Uncertain Times Ahead for DCPS Families

A new Master Facility Plan proposal has sparked a community outcry amid uncertain times as the Duval County Public Schools considers shuttering and/or consolidating several schools throughout the district. [READ MORE ON PAGE 10](#)

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Reggie Fullwood with T-Neisha Tate, Isaiah Oliver and Ali Jaffery | [United Way at 100 Years](#) | [More on Page 25](#)



Heather Creel with Kimberly Wolfson and Kristina Powell | [Women's Board Annual Spring Luncheon](#) | [More on Page 21](#)



Ginny Taylor with Michelle and Phil Sandusky and Elizabeth McGraw | [San Marco Garden Circle](#) | [More on Page 41](#)



Graham and Whitney Riley with Leighton and Ryan Davis | [A Vision for Art](#) | [More on Page 38](#)



Trish Banský with Kara Beth Barber, Carley Jackson, Abby Hiar, Laura Tuck, Maggie Dwyer, Dani Thuston, Julia Lawless and Megan Ortega | [Wine Down in the Parks](#) | [More on Page 20](#)



April Willman with Sarah Minchew, Courtney Taylor and Melissa Gregory | [Junior League of Jacksonville's 100th Anniversary Gala](#) | [More on Page 25](#)



Dan Gallagher with Steve Pajcic and Cherry Gallagher | [Pajcic Yard Golf and Lawn Party](#) | [More on Page 21](#)



Billy Zeits, Tara Dodson, Chandra and Lee Hutchins | [Cummer Sporting Fashion Fundraiser](#) | [More on Page 22](#)



Andy Bell with Nina Waters and Isaiah Oliver | [Community Foundation's 60th](#) | [More on Page 16](#)

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IN HOMES BY MAY 5, 2024

# Duval County Implements New Voter Registration Form

The Duval County Supervisor of Elections (SOE) has announced the implementation of a new, statewide, uniform, voter registration form.

The implementation deadline for the new registration form was April 24; a press release from the Duval County SOE Office announced it implemented the new forms ahead of deadline on April 19.

There are minor changes to the new voter registration forms. The new form includes a QR code

that will take users to the Florida Department of State's Florida Online Voter Registration website, which has pertinent dates and deadlines for the upcoming election. The website also includes features to check whether or not someone is already registered to vote, to submit a new registration or make updates to one's status (i.e. a change of address, party affiliation, name or signature) or request a voter information card replacement.

The new form is available in both English and Spanish.

"The new, state Spanish voter registration form contains a change to the original Spanish form," according to the release. "The language was changed to mirror the abbreviated language more closely in the English version."

The SOE Office will still accept the old versions of the application from voters, but only this new form will be distributed moving forward. These forms are also available at all Jacksonville public libraries.

The deadline to register or change one's party affiliation for the 2024 Primary Election is July 22; the deadline to register for the 2024 General Election is Oct. 7.

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Do you know a dynamic and driven individual under the age of 35 who is making waves in the community? We are seeking nominations for our "Young Independents" feature, celebrating the rising movers and shakers in our community. Whether they're leading groundbreaking projects or making significant strides in their careers, we want to shine a light on these young trailblazers who are shaping the future of Jacksonville. Nominate a standout bachelor or bachelorette who embodies ambition, creativity and commitment. Submission names must be received by April 15. Send nominee's name, contact information, and 100 words or less on why they should be considered to [editor@residentnews.net](mailto:editor@residentnews.net).

## Real Estate Season Springs Into Action

The "selling season" in Northeast Florida has arrived, albeit a bit early this year. For single-family homes, prices, active inventory, and new listings are up, as well as the median number of days on the market. There are only two exceptions: pending sales for single-family homes dropped nearly 20%, and the Home Affordability Index ratcheted down slightly, 2.2%, to register at 66.5 out of 100 – with 100 being the point where a median-income family has the exact amount of income needed to purchase a median-priced existing home.

"The market is moving up in a positive direction each month," said Rory Dubin, 2024 president of the Northeast Florida Association of Realtors. "March saw over a 20% increase in closed transactions despite a slight increase in the median price. In fact, almost a third of sales were above list price, indicating high demand in our more affordable market compared with the rest of and most of the Southeast."

The median sales price for single-family homes in the region in March was \$389,000. For a full breakdown by county, visit [residentnews.net](http://residentnews.net).

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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.

## The Impact of Alford

This is an opinion piece. My thanks to *The Resident News* for its commitment to both sharing and elevating the voices of the residents it serves. The views expressed below belong to me.

Anyone who has spent any amount of time in San Marco is familiar with the triangular intersection of San Marco Boulevard and Hendricks Avenue, at the south entrance of San Marco Square. It's thrilling, but not at all in a fun way.

Merging south onto Hendricks from the Square keeps drivers on their toes, having to stay alert for quick-merging cars. Turning left into the Square from the northbound lane of Hendricks is frustrating at almost all times of day. Crossing this intersection as a pedestrian is terrifying and does not feel safe. And, not one of these harrowing flows of traffic even considers the illegal left and right turns into and out of nearby Mitchell Avenue, Alexandria Place and Arbor Lane.

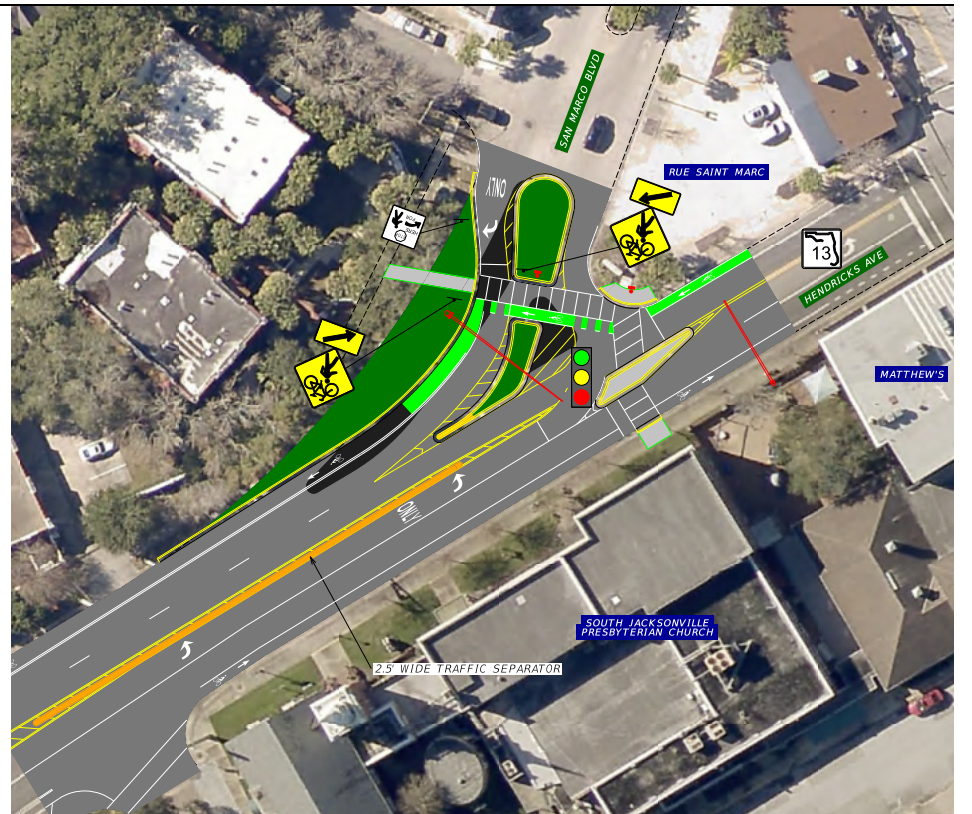
The horrific headlines tell the story. July 2022: "Jacksonville is No. 6 in highest U.S. pedestrian fatality rates as deaths rise nationally."<sup>i</sup> July 2023: "100 traffic deaths in just over 200 days in Jacksonville highlights need for improved bicycle, pedestrian safety."<sup>ii</sup> And just in March 2024: "Florida has the 3rd most pedestrian deaths..."<sup>iii</sup> Over the years, concerned homeowners adjacent to this intersection have collected an anthology of crash footage from their home security systems. In a day and age with incredible data and technology at our fingertips, safety is now more actionable and attainable than ever—but only if we make data-driven and best-practice informed decisions.

Hendricks Avenue is a State road, managed by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). Therefore, they are the entity responsible for the design of this intersection.

The FDOT has correctly identified the need for improvement at this intersection. It's been a focus of conversation with the City and the community for close to a decade, and throughout these years, several different schematic plans have floated around. The FDOT participated in a community town hall event, hosted by former Councilwoman LeAnna Cumber and the San Marco Preservation Society, in September 2021 to discuss this intersection. Not only did I attend this town hall, but I took notes, and I still have them. (I'm an unrelenting note-taker, and apparently a hoarder, too.)

In addition to this town hall, the FDOT met separately with the boards of directors for the San Marco Merchants Association (SMMA) and the San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS).

In every meeting, the neighborhood clearly expressed its desire to see a safer, more



pedestrian-friendly crosswalk at this intersection. This was the loudest of the community's feedback.

Now, the redesigned plans for this intersection are final. The FDOT put the project out for contracting bids in November 2023, and will begin construction June 7. The FDOT is hosting a virtual and in-person hybrid construction open house on June 4 from 4:30-6:30 p.m. at 2198 Edison Ave. to allow the public to learn about the approaching construction. The project's estimated completion is August 2024. The dollars are allocated, and this plan is being constructed.

This new intersection does not prioritize pedestrian or cyclist safety.

While it does attempt to slow vehicular traffic, it prioritizes cars. The cycle lanes will be better marked than they are currently. But the plan introduces two new pedestrian islands, with a zig-zagging, non-linear crosswalk, which is disorienting even from the site plans—almost reminiscent of a game of Chutes and Ladders.

San Marco is THE most walkable neighborhood in Jacksonville, but the introduction of TWO pedestrian islands hampers this achievement. A pedestrian will need to cross this intersection in three distinct steps, with two separate lights and waits.

Although this newly redesigned intersection will not be the preferred path of pedestrians, efforts led by the SMPS are underway to provide a crucial, safe pedestrian link from San Marco Square to East San Marco.

The "Alford Place Corridor" is a project that evolved out of big-picture conversations about the current construction, future design and overall maturation of San Marco. In early 2021, a few planners and SMPS members realized the commercial San Marco Square was at an exciting launch point in its development. With The Hendricks and other nearby housing, numerous restaurants, promised improved intersection, and new Publix all coming online, we realized there was a tremendous opportunity at our fingertips.

Seeing the growth happening on the eastern half of San Marco, local architect Bill Jaycox noted the "experience" of San Marco Square was capped at the Square's south corner, and didn't yet connect in any meaningful way to the development at East San Marco, or to the future community space at South Jax Presbyterian Church. There existed an opportunity to better link these two sections of San Marco, which would 1) make them feel more cohesive, and 2) direct foot traffic from one section of the Square to the other.

Alford Place was chosen because it does not see the same vehicular volume that San Marco and Atlantic boulevards experience. It was also designed that way.

The Alford Place Corridor Project is a big-picture effort that takes into account all that is happening, all that intersects, and all the travel needs of our neighborhood. It will continue the charming and successful pedestrian experience from San Marco Square to East San Marco. Beginning at the front doors of historic Theatre Jacksonville and Underwood's, the experience will extend down the whole of Alford Place, transforming the street, culminating at Preservation Hall in Fletcher Park.

The design and construction elements of this "corridor" will be fairly simple: coordinated tree plantings to create a boulevard feel; matching sidewalk elements to better tie the area together; and other landscaping and placemaking improvements to guide pedestrian traffic to and from East San Marco and the Square. These efforts will also include additional traffic calming, as well as some exciting new public art.

The improvements will be made in phases, starting with the highest volume portions between San Marco Boulevard at Underwood's and East San Marco. In their commitment to working with the community, Regency Centers and The Hendricks both coordinated with the SMPS to choose complimentary landscaping and materials as they finished their projects.

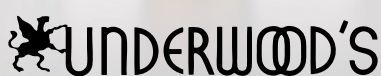
From that first conversation with Bill Jaycox several years ago to talks with the SMPS, SMMA, City Council members past and present, business owners, corporate landowners, and residents, the Alford Place Corridor project has received enthusiastic and unanimous support from everyone. As the neighborhood contemplated the multiple projects, changing cityscape of our urban, walkability, and what we wanted San Marco's future to hold, the project just made sense. Previous District 5 Councilwoman LeAnna Cumber scheduled the project in the City's Capital Improvement Plan for several million dollars, and current Councilman Joe Carlucci is committed to making the project a reality. The SMPS is actively fundraising from private stakeholders to pay for the engineering plans for the project and to contribute towards future public art and beautification.

The Alford Place Corridor project will make sweet lemonade out of lemons and transform our neighborhood into an even more pedestrian-friendly, vibrant community.

- Linzee Ott

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# DIA Still “Willing and Able” to Discuss Negotiations for Laura Street Trio

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The door remains open for negotiations between the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) and the developer for the Laura Street Trio following a pair of DIA board and committee meetings last month.

Conversations regarding funding for the massive historic renovation and adaptive reuse of the three buildings have continued between the City of Jacksonville and SouthEast Development Group LLC Principal and Managing Director Steve Atkins following a January Committee of the Whole meeting which discussed emergency bill 2023-0876 for funding for the project based on a proposal presented to the city by the development team.

The Resident News reported previously on the meeting, during which city officials – including City of Jacksonville General Counsel Michael Fackler, Chief Financial Officer Anna Brosche, Council Auditor Kim Taylor and DIA CEO Lori Boyer – all expressed concerns regarding the legality and constitutionality of the proposed deal.

The emergency was eventually withdrawn, and the city council tasked the DIA Board with finding a viable redevelopment agreement to which all parties could agree.

DIA Resolution 2024-04-10 was introduced at the April 12 Strategic Implementation Committee meeting. In

it, DIA stated, in part, that it found “the proposal submitted by the developer on March 30, 2024, is untenable and recommend[ed] that no further action be taken on said proposal.”

According to the resolution, at a March 29 meeting between the DIA and the development team, Atkins “presented a proposal and delivered multiple term sheets” which included the above-referenced proposal: an “only slightly modified” Capital One proposal requiring an unconditional city guaranty, which did not alleviate the previously mentioned constitutionality concerns.

In its conclusions, the DIA resolution read, in part, “The DIA therefore forwards to the Mayor and City Council its recommendation that the current Developer proposal be rejected and recommends that 2023-876 be withdrawn as no acceptable substitute has been agreed upon that can be considered by the Board.”

Atkins addressed committee members at the April 12 meeting.

“Our interpretation of the resolution is, ‘We’re done. We’re not having any more discussions, period, regarding the project. Only in the last 24 hours have we heard, ‘Well we’re open and willing to listen to listen to other options that you might present.’ I think that is what we need to do,” said Atkins.



SouthEast Development Group Principal and Managing Director Steve Atkins spoke at the DIA Strategic Implementation Committee meeting on April 12 regarding a resolution pertaining to negotiations surrounding the Laura Street Trio.

DIA Board Chair Jim Citrano countered Atkins’ interpretation of the resolution by stating he believed the resolution meant negotiations were over “only if Mr. Atkins doesn’t have any other options because we know the Capital One term sheet is not constitutional.”

After a lengthy conversation, the committee ultimately decided to amend the resolution and defer it to the DIA Board meeting the following week.

“I’m very encouraged by what I heard from the board today,” Atkins said following the meeting. “I really appreciate the board weighing in.”

At the April 17 board meeting, an amended resolution was approved in a 5-to-0 vote with Board Member Micah Heavener abstaining. The amended resolution remained steadfast in the DIA’s opposition to the Capital One proposal presented to the DIA Board at the March 29 meeting, yet kept the door open for future discussions and negotiations. Sections five and six of the amended resolution read, respectively, as follows:

- Section 5: “The DIA therefore forwards to the Mayor and City Council its recommendation that the Developer proposal presented March 29, 2024, is

unacceptable and be rejected.”

- Section 6: “The DIA remains willing and able to evaluate future alternative financing structures that exclude the unconditional Guaranty of the City and are otherwise legally permissible as determined by the City’s Office of General Counsel.”

At the request of City Councilmember Matt Carlucci, the DIA also removed its recommendation to the city council that it withdraw 2023-0876. Carlucci stated that, as a bill sponsor, he should be the one to withdraw it.

“The sponsor of the bill is the one who traditionally withdraws. So, if you recommended that Matt Carlucci withdraw the bill, that might be a different thing. But when you’re talking to the council as a whole, I kinda lose a little bit of control over my baby,” he said.

Following the April 12 committee meeting, The Resident News asked Atkins if he has any plans should the City reach the point where it does cease discussions.

“At this point, I probably wouldn’t even entertain the idea,” he said. “We know what needs to happen and we’ll cross those bridges when we come to them.”

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# Empowering Mothers

## Prioritizing Breast Health this Mother's Day

BY LINDSEY GAST-PESSIA

Being a mother is good news in the fight against breast cancer.

"If you've had a child, and you've breastfed, all of this decreases your likelihood - your risk - of getting breast cancer," said Pink Ribbon Jax Chair Marica Pendjer.

Mother's Day is May 12, and Pink Ribbon Jax (PRJ) is on a mission to remind mothers - and all women and men - of the lifesaving benefits of mammograms, which have been shown to reduce breast cancer death across the board by 22%.

Pendjer said early detection is the key. When caught before it spreads, the 5-year survival rate for breast cancer is 99%.

Because of that, PRJ has two main goals in 2024: to raise \$500,000 to expand access for uninsured and underinsured patients, and to increase awareness through the Light Jax Pink campaign. Pendjer said the idea for the campaign came during COVID when she noticed social media posts of people having to go in alone to breast cancer surgeries while mammography rates simultaneously dropped more than 90%.

"How do you let people know that you're there for them when they can't see you? Lighting!" said Pendjer. "I want to see it keep growing until we have all of Jacksonville pink October 1-8, because 1 in 8 women gets breast cancer in their lifetime."

Since then, PRJ has shifted its funding strictly to free mammograms. Last year, thanks, in part, to large and

in-kind donors, PRJ's expense ratio was zero, meaning 100% of all funding taken in by PRJ went directly to mammograms.

"Mammography rates had fallen so much during COVID, we knew we had to do something to help people get back into the habit, or at least gain access. Until we get these rates back up, we have to fund mammograms. It is our first line of defense," said Pendjer.

Bromberg, gemologist with Underwood's. "This was and always has been a total volunteer effort. We all need to be involved in supporting screening."

In addition to on-site services with Baptist Health, PRJ helps bring mammograms into the community with programs like Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center's Buddy Bus, which provides mobile mammography throughout Northeast Florida.

Pendjer said she is hoping the program can expand to imaging centers, but cited after-care as the largest challenge if someone finds out they have breast cancer. Instead, PRJ is focusing on adding organizations like UF Health and Ascension St. Vincent's, which can enroll women into the Breast and Cervical Cancer Fund to help pay for their treatment.

"Obviously if they can't afford the mammogram, they can't afford the treatment," she said. "I couldn't live with myself if we didn't have a plan for those women and men who get diagnosed with breast cancer."

It costs around \$300 for a mammogram screening, and Pendjer encourages those who can to adopt the "get one, give one" model.

For qualifications and to request a free mammogram, visit [pinkribbonjax.org/free-mammograms](http://pinkribbonjax.org/free-mammograms).



Pink Ribbon Jax helped fund Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center's Buddy Bus, which provides mobile mammography throughout Northeast Florida.



Jacksonville icons turn pink October 1-8 in support of breast cancer awareness.

The community has stepped up in support of the cause. What began in 2006 as one event, the Pink Ribbon Golf Classic, has grown into partnerships with many community businesses - like Underwood's Jewelers, Fields Auto Group and Kendra Scott - for events throughout the year.

"All of us here have had someone we know have breast cancer, including my wife, Christy, plus many others connected to our Underwood family," said Clayton

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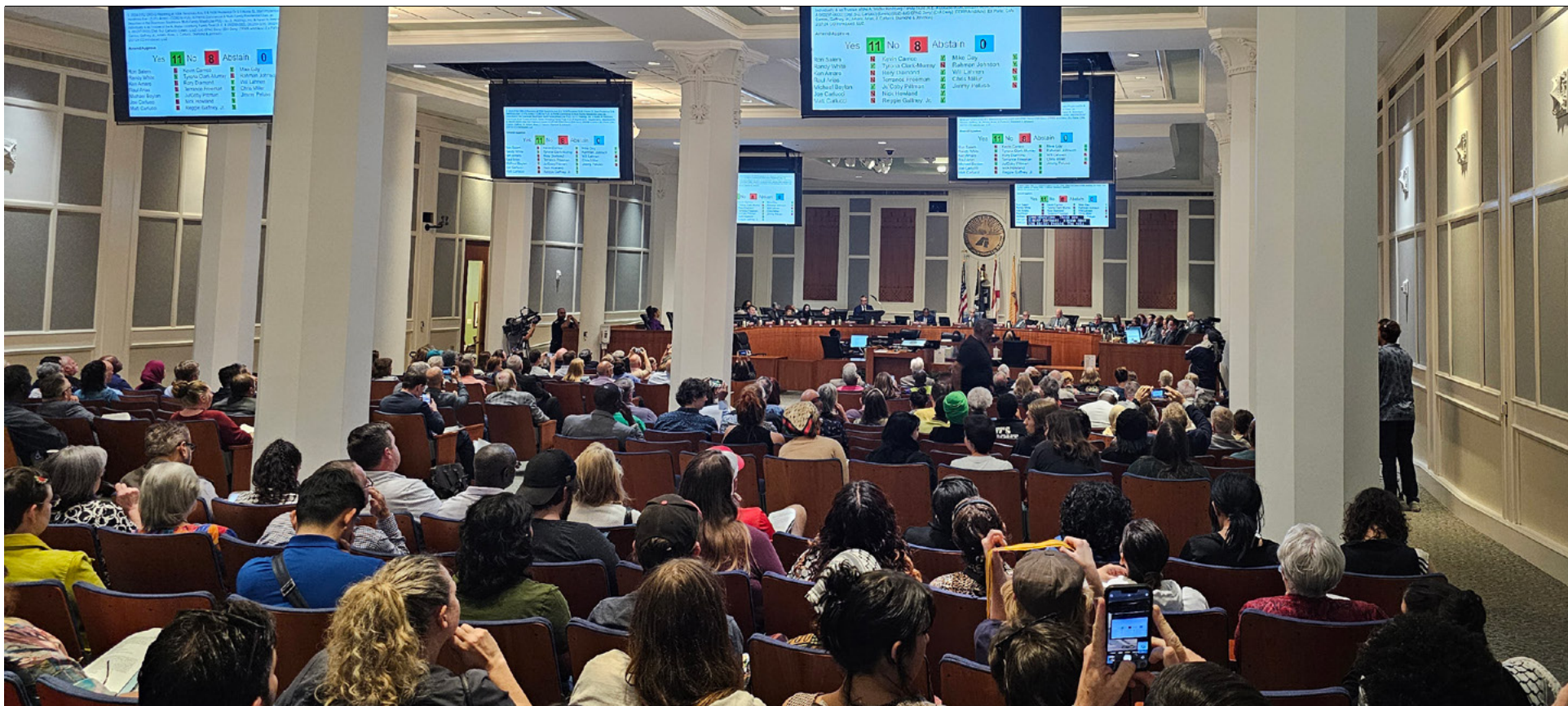
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The City Council voted 11-8 in favor of the PUD rezoning request for the Lofts at Southbank mixed-use development on April 23, before a packed crowd of attendees.

# Self-Storage Coming to the Southbank

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

It came down to a 30-minute discussion at the April 23 city council meeting, during which City Councilmember Joe Carlucci implored his fellow councilmembers to back him in voting against the amended PUD rezoning for the Lofts at Southbank, the mixed-use development that would bring self-storage to the Southbank alongside retail and multi-family units.

Ultimately, only seven other councilmembers — Ron Salem, Ken Amaro, Raul Arias, Matt Carlucci, Tyrona Clark-Murray, Will Lahnen and Jimmy Peluso — opposed 2024-0152, and the rezoning was approved in an 11-8 vote.

Amendments to the PUD included a trio of conditions set forth by the Land, Use and Zoning Committee about retail square footage, ground floor usage and business hours for the self-storage component.

Councilmember Rory Diamond would have been the deciding vote for 2023-0007 — the previous iteration of the PUD that was voted down in a 9-9 vote last year — which he referenced during discussion prior to the vote.

“I wish I had been here so it would have been 10-9 and we wouldn’t be here tonight looking at this,” he said.

Previously voting against the rezoning last year, Councilmember Michael Boylan flipped his vote to in favor last night, calling this revised development “a good compromise and a markedly better product.” The addition of Vestcor to the development team and the addition of a minimum of 100 residential units — no less than 80% of which will be affordable housing — were some of the factors Boylan mentioned in his address as to why he supported the rezoning.

“It was disingenuous to call the prior application a mixed-use,” he said. “This time it is. Mixed-use now is far more balanced.”

Councilmember Matt Carlucci has been a steadfast opponent to allowing self-storage in the Southbank since legislation was introduced in 2021 to do just

that. That legislation was ultimately withdrawn. At last month’s city council meeting, Carlucci said he was “shaking mad.”

“I’ve heard everything everybody said up here to justify their vote to go against the people,” he said. “We’re going against the district council member and the at-large geographical member who have spent our lives in San Marco and the Southbank fighting for what’s best.”

“The overlays are put together by the people to reflect what they want in their neighborhoods,” he added. “Wait till you get an overlay in your district. You’ll see how you feel about it.”

Joe Carlucci, the district council member, inquired about the possibility of future legal action for approving a PUD containing a use not approved by the 2045 Comprehensive Plan. Carlucci referenced a staff report stating two out of three are allowed (retail and residential) while the third (self-storage) is not.

“There’s case law actually from Jacksonville where a single use on a PUD was deemed to be inconsistent with the comprehensive plan and the court invalidated the entire PUD as being inconsistent with the comprehensive plan,” said City of Jacksonville Senior Assistant General Counsel Jason Teal.

Carlucci further argued the sole purpose of the PUD is to allow self-storage while the existing zoning would already allow the other uses in the proposed mixed-use development.

“I urge you, please, upon my recommendation, my ask, to deny this,” he said in conclusion.

In a later phone interview, Joe Carlucci said the vote was “disappointing,” though he hopes to “reengage” with the developer on the design elements as the project continues working through design review with the Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB), which deferred voting on the project’s conceptual approval at a meeting earlier last month.

“I think that there’s a lot of work to do here on the

architecture and I think that it’s got to come from a creative solution,” said DDRB Board Member Trevor Lee.

Fellow Board Member Gary Monahan added, “I appreciate the work that’s gone into this, but I think that the design does slightly miss the mark.”

While Board Member Joseph Loretta said he “was in disagreement with the rest of the group to some extent,” he also “understood where everybody’s coming from.”

Based on board comments, attorney Cyndy Trimmer, representing the applicant, ultimately asked to “table” the conceptual approval.

“I think that we’ve all got a lot that we’ve taken away here today, and I’d like the opportunity to work with [staff] and our team to determine which is the next appropriate step forward,” she said.

Following the city council vote, San Marco Preservation Society Board Member Logan Cross provided the following statement to *The Resident News*:

“The recent vote by the City Council to approve the Southbank self-storage rezoning proposal was the culmination of a multi-year effort to prevent the addition of a self-storage facility at a prominent intersection in the community. Though there have been many variations of the proposed structure, they all included self-storage as a core component. For this reason, the San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS) has been consistent and persistent in its opposition to the development. SMPS board members did participate in discussions focusing on improving the structure, but we remained resolute in our opposition to any version that included self-storage. Throughout this arduous process, the residents of the community were fully engaged and persistent in the opposition efforts. It is that commitment to sustaining the character and quality of the neighborhood that makes San Marco a wonderful place to live.”

*The Resident News* reached out to attorney Steve Diebenow, representing the developer, for comment but did not receive a response by press time.



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# Master Facility Plan Sparks Concern for DCPS Parents

To view "Blueprints for Tomorrow: Strategic Adjustments for a Stronger Future" visit [residentnews.net](https://residentnews.net)

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Communities across Jacksonville are still reeling from a Duval County Public School (DCPS) Master Facility Plan (MFP) proposal that would ultimately see extensive school closures throughout the county.

"I think shock is the first thing that anyone who read that list felt," said Tacoma Perry from the Fishweir Elementary PTA.

The list Perry referred to is found within "Blueprints for Tomorrow: Strategic Adjustments for a Stronger Future," a presentation first given to the DCPS Board in March, which identified a \$1.4 billion deficit between adjusted revenue and costs in a post-pandemic climate where material and labor shortages, material cost increases and longer lead times greatly impacted the bottom line.

This is a series of adjustments from the previously released Master Plan Facility Recommendations ("A Bold Plan for DCPS") that was created to "address the District's aging buildings (among the oldest in the state of Florida), create safe and secure spaces for students and staff, remove most of the district's portable classrooms, decrease excess seat capacity, and increase utilization capacity. Additionally, this plan removes over one billion dollars in deferred facility

maintenance over the next 15 years."

According to the presentation for the new MFP proposal, the "revised plan assumptions" include: "continue overall goal to right-size the district;" "enhance school safety at elementary and middle schools;" and "maximize operational costs by reducing the small school premium," among others.

### New Feeder Patterns

The presentation featured 12 proposed feeder patterns which detailed potential plans for each school within that boundary, including replacement, renovations/additions, deferred maintenance and closures (potential swing or demolition).

In our *Resident News* communities, the proposed high school feeder patterns are the Riverside High School and Englewood High School patterns.

While the feeder pattern for the Riverside Avondale area doesn't change — elementary schools would still feed into Lakeshore Middle School and then on to Riverside High School — the proposal for this area's feeder pattern calls for the closure of six elementary schools, making it the third-hardest hit feeder pattern in the MFP, behind Terry Parker and Raines



DCPS Vice-Chairman Charlotte Joyce speaking at an April 16 John Stockton Elementary School Advisory Council Meeting.

high schools, both with eight proposed closures.

The proposed closures in the Riverside High School feeder pattern are Bayview Elementary, Fishweir Elementary, Hyde Grove Elementary, John Stockton Elementary, Ortega Elementary and West Riverside Elementary.

Students from John Stockton and Ortega would consolidate into Venetia Elementary. Fishweir students would be absorbed into Ruth N. Upson; West Riverside into Central Riverside.

The original Bold Plan actions (which still proposed closing Ortega, but suggested a renovation and/or addition at Fishweir and John Stockton, and deferred maintenance at West Riverside) had an escalated cost of \$217.1 million. This modified proposal, with the additional closures, would save an estimated \$64.3 million.

Families in the San Marco area are not impacted as strongly in this new proposal, save for an adjustment to the split in feeder patterns rerouting students from both San Jose and Hendricks Avenue elementary schools to Englewood High School via Alfred I. Dupont Middle School.

The existing feeder patterns split them into Atlantic Coast or Terry Parker high schools. The proposed Englewood High School feeder pattern does still suggest closing two elementary schools — Kings Trail and Windy Hills, to the south and east of San Marco, respectively. These, and all other proposed actions for the Englewood High School feeder pattern would save nearly \$8 million from the escalated Bold Plan cost of \$434.8 million.

Alternate feeder patterns were presented for Englewood, Terry Parker, Sandalwood, Fletcher and First Coast high schools.

### Community Reaction

Since the MFP proposal was released, there has been immense pushback from communities across the district, particularly from those whose schools are slated for potential closure. "Save our school" Facebook pages have popped up on social media, relaying information to, and gathering questions from, concerned parents.

An April 16 DCPS board meeting was filled with parents ready to speak in support of their schools, including

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

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West Riverside Elementary parent and Riverside area resident Andrew Murdoch, who said neighborhood schools, like West Riverside, are places where division is “leveled,” opportunities provided, diversity celebrated and learning goes beyond textbooks and grades.

“It’s not just about getting the grades,” he said. “It’s about growing individuals who have the ability to realize that things are greater than themselves, to invest in their community, to explore ideas with each other from different cultures, different backgrounds. That’s how we get a great educated person – the love of learning. We have that in our local schools.”

“People are thoroughly, thoroughly scared about what you are looking to do,” he added. “There is fear amongst households.”

At a John Stockton Elementary School Advisory Council meeting that same morning, before the DCPS board meeting, DCPS Vice-Chairman Charlotte Joyce emphasized that this MFP proposal is “a very high-level, analytical synopsis” and, in its current form, she believes, “1000% will not be what we actually are voting on. It will change, pieces will move around.”

Joyce also touched on some of the existing problems of the area’s grade A schools — Fishweir, Ortega, Venetia, John Stockton and West Riverside among them — feeding into Lakeshore, which has “a lot of issues” around it.

The MFP proposal would call for a rebuild of Venetia Elementary.

“The thought process was rebuilding that as a K-8 and then consolidating Ortega, Venetia and John Stockton, so now you have a brand-new K-8 with just these

three attendance zones and your families may choose to stay in the K-8 arena. That was what they said and that was the logic behind it,” said Joyce.

She added that there are many other pieces of the puzzle to consider.

During that same meeting, John Stockton Elementary School Principal Stephanie Brannan said, “I will be very honest with you, I’m not nervous right now.”

Fishweir Elementary School held an event the following week, during which parents and community members were brought up to speed on the situation as



DCPS Superintendent Dr. Dana Kriznar speaking to Fishweir Elementary School student Oscar B., who asked about the likelihood of Fishweir closing.

it stands and were able to ask questions. It was standing-room only while Valerie Boote, an admin for the SOS Save Fishweir Facebook group, provided answers when she could and wrote down questions still needing them.

DCPS Superintendent Dr. Dana Kriznar was also in attendance and shared what details she could with the auditorium. Fishweir student Oscar B. asked the one question everyone was wondering: “What are the chances of Fishweir closing?”

Kriznar responded, “I would say the chances of Fishweir closing depend on voices like you because when I see students come to board meetings...you know, board members are really busy, but when a student comes up to the podium, every single board member looks up and listens. So, I think that students have really powerful voices.”

**Next Steps**

Following the Fishweir Parent Meeting, *The Resident News* spoke with Kriznar, who explained that while nothing will be voted on until later this fall, there will be a lot of activity between now and then, including the formation of another revised proposal from the DCPS board itself. This revised proposal, she said, will consider the intangible factors of each school.

“When the revised plan comes out, it’s going to take into consideration all the comments that we received, all of the questions, all the intangible things,” she said.

Kriznar said the board will begin working on its revised proposal later this summer, after it’s had an opportunity to gather all the questions and recommendations from the community meetings it intends to host throughout

May and June.

These community meetings were discussed during a board workshop on April 16. DCPS plans to host a series of seven public meetings — one for each district, with dates to be determined — to ensure parents have every opportunity to learn about the proposed plan, ask questions, share feedback and voice concerns. These meetings will not be district-specific and will discuss the proposed plan as a whole, so parents can

attend any meeting. Also included in its plan for community engagement is a DCPS website sharing proposed feeder patterns that will allow comments and questions.

In a telephone interview, DCPS Board Chairman Darryl Willie said first and foremost, he wants to ensure the community “understands the why behind everything we’re doing.”

“I think when you’re making any decision, that’s going to be critically important,” he said.

For some time, DCPS has been considering selling its administrative headquarters on Prudential Drive and relocating. *The Resident News* asked Willie if that sale could help the current situation.

“I think it could, a bit, but it would be a small amount because if we sold this building at a certain amount, we would then have to get into another building,” he said. “So, then we would be kind of almost at a break-even point or maybe a small sort of profit from selling the building. So, it would not help to offset the amount of deficit that we have in some of the capital projects that we’re anticipating with the Master Facilities Plan.”

Like Kriznar, Willie also emphasized that further analyses will be done to take into consideration school ratings, existing school programs and success rates while also factoring in the impact consolidations would have on communities.

“What does it mean to close or consolidate one, what does that do to traffic patterns, what does that do to community empowerment and thriving communities? There’s a lot of factors that will come into play as we move into making further decisions,” he said.

*The Resident News* will continue to report on this situation as it develops. Next month, we will explore the impact that charter schools have hand on the landscape and climate of the DCPS system.

*The best is yet to come.*

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# Neighborhood Associations to Receive Micro-Grant Funding

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Neighborhood organizations Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP), Springfield Preservation and Revitalization Council (SPAR) and Murray Hill Preservation Association (MHPA) are the recipients of a cumulative \$80,000 in city funds through an initiative spearheaded by their District 7 City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso.

The funding was already approved in last August's budget meeting with \$75,000 set aside for a Neighborhood Investment Micro-Grant program proposed by Peluso and an additional \$5,000 coming from a designated contingency of \$100,000 for Community Development Corporation capacity-building grants.

Now that term sheets have been worked out for each organization, the funds were passed as an emergency in bill 2024-0254 to get them to the organizations as quickly as possible. They will have until the end of the year to use these dollars.

The city council passed 2024-0254 in an 18-to-1 vote at its April 9 meeting with Councilmember Rory Diamond opposing.

Diamond shared his reasoning behind opposing the bill at an April 1 Neighborhoods, Community Services, Public Health and Safety Committee (NCSPHS) meeting, prefacing his statement with an appreciation for these neighborhood organizations and a recognition that "what's happened [in these neighborhoods] is special."

"Neighborhood associations are all over Jacksonville and most of them are paying for themselves," he said. "I'm not sure why this is a responsibility to taxpayers for

the rest of the city."

"Everything that I can do to help empower our neighborhoods and our small businesses and our small commercial areas is really what kind of drives me," Peluso said in a later interview. "If we just do that all throughout the city, really empower our neighborhoods and our neighborhood associations, people start to believe and want to put in the effort and show that they've got a sense of community pride. That's what really starts rebuilding neighborhoods."

Of the \$80,000, RAP will receive \$50,000; SPAR \$20,000 and MHPA \$10,000.

RAP's funding will address improvements and enhancements in the Five Points and Park and King merchant districts.

RAP Executive Director Shannon Blankinship later said that more than \$30,000 will go to addressing the continued issue of trash and litter in the Five Points area by installing new trash cans. These receptacles will be the same fully enclosed, larger-capacity Bigbelly Element trash cans recently installed in San Marco Square, though Blankinship said RAP is looking into getting an artistic wrap around these cans to match the existing banners in Five Points for a more "artsy" look.

These cans will be large enough to hold empty pizza boxes, she added, which has been an issue for Five Points merchants and residents as the current trash cans are continuously topped by pizza boxes too large for them.

"It only takes one person to put a pizza box on top of [a trash can] and then to have all the litter sort of spill

over into the street for days without being able to go into the trash," she said. "We're hoping that, although different and although more expensive, these are really going to solve the biggest litter issues that we have in the area, while also sort of keeping the city accountable for regular waste pickup and merchants accountable for not using these trash cans for their own business purposes."

Funding will also be used to install banners in the Park and King merchant district, similar to the banners other neighborhoods or districts have already installed.

New banners will also be going up on the historic light poles on Main and Eighth streets "celebrating preservation" in Springfield, thanks to this new funding, said SPAR Executive Director Michael Haskins.

According to MHPA's grant proposal, the \$10,000 will be used for communications and branding, including a new association website, brand identity and collateral, including marketing booths, signage and light pole banners along Edgewood Avenue in the heart of Murray Hill.

"The overall impact of this project is multi-fold, but really comes down to better communication," reads the MHPA grant proposal. "MHPA's goal is to share our community with as many people as possible, not only supporting Murray Hill as an amazing place, but also supporting Jacksonville as a whole."

Each organization will pay for their respective projects up-front and seek reimbursement from the city through this allocated funding.

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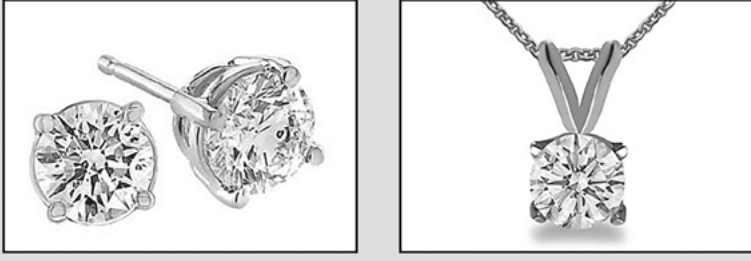
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# An Ounce of Prevention Can Be a Pound of Pain

## Annual backflow preventer tests irritate some JEA customers, but offer worthwhile prevention for safe drinking water

BY LAURA PHELPS

In a time when neighbors are often sharply divided in their opinions and beliefs, there is at least one issue upon which we can all agree: drinking water should be safe.

For residents and business owners that live and work in the historic districts, the responsibility of ensuring safe, uncontaminated drinking water falls mainly on JEA. But JEA customers also have an important role to play by maintaining backflow prevention devices on their properties.

If you don't know what a backflow prevention device is, and you own property, keep reading. This may save you time, money and trouble down the road.

Backflow occurs when water flows in the wrong direction from a customer's water system into the public water supply. It may be caused by back-siphonage or back pressure, according to JEA.

A backflow prevention device, or backflow preventer, is a mechanical device that prevents water from entering the public water supply. These devices are required on properties that have an irrigation system that uses reclaimed, pond or well water.

The issue of testing, repairing or replacing backflow preventers emerges every few years here in Northeast Florida as property owners are unexpectedly notified that they must pay hundreds of dollars to repair or replace their malfunctioning backflow preventer.

Estimates vary from just over \$500 to more than \$1,400 to replace the devices – a not-so-insignificant investment for small businesses or homeowners on a fixed income.

Why such a wide range of cost estimates? Who performs these tests? And is it ethical for them to offer repairs on a backflow preventer they tested? Why are these notifications catching property owners by surprise? And are any properties exempt from this requirement?

The Resident News went searching for answers to help inform readers and here's what we found.

### Testing and Compliance

Since 1990, the Florida Building Code has required that residential irrigation systems have a backflow preventer. According to JEA's website, the City of Jacksonville and JEA both require that all commercial water services install a backflow preventer device "unless specifically exempted."

In 2014, to further protect drinking water from possible contamination, Florida updated the code, requiring utilities to establish and implement a cross-connection control program using backflow protection. This update created more stringent rules for the frequency of testing and reporting to the Department of Environmental Protection.

According to JEA and publicly available state codes, backflow preventers must be tested every year for commercial properties and every two years for residential properties. For residential

customers, this process is automatic. The devices are tested by JEA contractors, "unless [customers] choose to opt out and have their own vendor perform the test," according to a JEA spokesperson.

However, commercial property owners "are responsible for maintaining their own compliance," the JEA spokesperson said. According to its website, JEA sends emails and automated phone calls to remind commercial customers that their backflow preventer is due for testing.

"Whether or not you receive a courtesy reminder from JEA, you need to contract to have your backflow preventers tested before the due date," the JEA spokesperson said. Commercial property owners may also opt-in to JEA's backflow testing program to have a JEA-approved vendor test their devices.

### Qualified Vendors

On its website, JEA offers a list of qualified vendors with phone numbers, though the utility does not recommend one vendor over another.

JEA states on its website: "JEA Qualified Vendors also may contact you to schedule testing. While you're not required to hire any vendor that contacts you, the vendor you select must be a JEA Qualified Vendor," though the spokesperson added they "recommend" customers contact several vendors before making a decision.

JEA does not prohibit its qualified vendors from offering to repair or replace the same backflow preventers those vendors have tested. In fact, it's common practice for vendors to follow up with a cost estimate after they have notified that customer that their backflow preventer failed.

Mike Barker, who owns several commercial properties in Riverside and is a JEA customer, believes this is problematic.

"In my opinion, it is a conflict of interest," Barker wrote in an email regarding his experience with JEA vendor Fire Sprinkler Services FL (FSS), which inspected several of his properties. "Shortly after alleging the failure, FSS sent us a repair quote of \$1,100 to remedy the violation."

"FSS positioned themselves to benefit from their own report, and quoted twice what our plumber did for a repair," Barker stated. Barker provided The Resident News with a similar quote from FSS for \$1,445, dated November 15, 2021.

According to Rosie Ailstock with FSS, the company performs thousands of residential and commercial backflow preventer tests every year for JEA and other direct customers. Ailstock said the company notifies customers that they are not required to use FSS for repairs.

"We sometimes have this stated in quotes, emails and we let people know over the phone. We believe it's good business to get multiple quotes to keep companies honest with their pricing," Ailstock said.

The November 2021 quote from FSS

shared by Barker, states "We appreciate the opportunity to provide you with our price for the following scope of work." However, the quote does not contain any statement notifying him that he is not required to use their services.

JEA's spokesperson said, "Vendors contracted with JEA to perform backflow preventer testing are required to communicate that the customer does not have to use their services for repairs."

The Resident News also reached out to Bob's Backflow and Plumbing Services, another JEA qualified contractor that performs thousands of backflow preventer tests every year.

Kari Gardner, who serves as vice president and runs the company with her husband, said they take a more direct approach. After performing a test, they leave a JEA-supplied door-hanger that summarizes the results of the test, and they attach an additional note to customers stating "you are not obligated to use our company for repairs." Gardner said her employees then follow-up with customers via phone and offer a cost estimate on the repairs.

"We're just very up front with people that they don't have to use us," Gardner said. "Our business model is we're just honest. If we've screwed up, we tell people."

### A Range of Costs

Gardner said Bob's Backflow and Plumbing Services charges approximately \$560 to replace a typical residential backflow preventer on a 1-inch water supply line. That estimate includes cutting out the old device, installing the new one and weatherizing it for added protection.

Ailstock estimated approximately \$595 to "several thousand" for a replacement with FSS. She said variables include size, type, whether it's surrounded by concrete, whether the work must be done after hours, etc. – "not to mention the cost of materials that keep going up."

The cost of the devices themselves ranges from around \$150 to more than \$500. Gardner said her company orders parts in bulk to help keep costs down for customers. "[Backflow prevention] is all we do, so we buy large quantities for better pricing," she said.

There are additional costs for failure to comply. If a commercial property owner neglects to get their backflow preventers tested by the annual deadline, JEA may schedule a test and add that cost – roughly \$35 – to the customer's next utility bill.

Failure to repair or replace a backflow preventer could result in additional fines and the discontinuation of utility services, though JEA's website states it "only uses these actions as a last resort to ensure the safety of the public water supply."

### Exemptions

In a statement, JEA said it has an "exemption program" and only "low-risk commercial premises are eligible," citing an example of a low-risk commercial

property as an accounting office in a converted home.

"The customer must apply for the exemption and be approved by the Cross-Connection Control team. The guidelines are on the application," JEA said. However, when asked for a copy of the application, the JEA spokesperson did not send it before our print deadline.

JEA said it tracks exempt properties, however, the utility requires property owners to reapply for exemption every two years regardless of whether they were granted exemption in the past.

JEA's Cross Contamination Control Policy states that JEA "requires backflow preventers to be maintained on all commercial facilities built since 1990. Commercial facilities built prior to 1990 that present a hazard to the public water system must also maintain a backflow preventer."

In the policy, JEA lists nearly 50 types of facilities that present a "hazard" to the public water system and, therefore, are not exempt. These categories include medical offices, hospitals, restaurants, schools and dozens of various industrial facilities.

For more information on exemptions, JEA customers can contact its Cross-Connection Control Team at (904) 665-6250 or email [backflow@jea.com](mailto:backflow@jea.com).

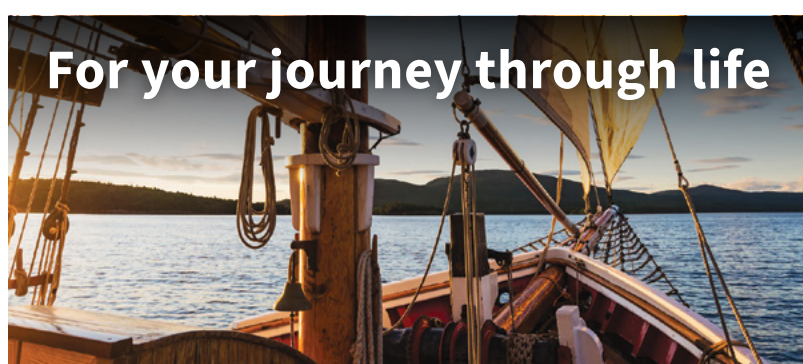
### Caught by Surprise

Some JEA customers appear to be surprised when it's time for their backflow preventer test. For some, this may be an entirely new issue to navigate, whereas customers like Barker are irritated by the "absurd" and complicated process for exemptions and the lack of clear communication from vendors.

JEA appears to have taken a proactive approach to informing its customers of its policies and notifying them of imminent deadlines. The utility has created several pages worth of educational material and resources on its website. It has published, in full, its Cross Contamination Control Policy and its full list of qualified vendors. The site also says JEA has sent annual reminder letters to all commercial water customers for the past several years. A JEA spokesperson confirmed that by 2016, the utility was contacting all commercial customers annually and "most of our customers with JEA residential irrigation services biennially."

"We are also working to increase awareness through customer education programs," the company states.

For many, backflow preventer maintenance might seem as appealing as filing federal taxes or getting a colonoscopy. It's certainly not something you look forward to doing. However, it's an obligation that won't disappear anytime soon. And like a colonoscopy, this ounce of prevention may be worthwhile if it keeps drinking water safe for the broader community.

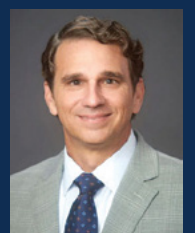


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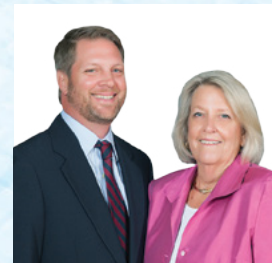
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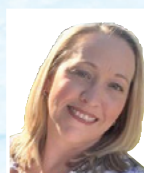
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Sculpture by Placzek Studios  
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A young Meredith Boulos Haag with her father, Zim



Boulos receives his mayoral proclamation  
from District 5 Councilman Joe Carlucci, Jr.



Boulos standing next to his favorite San Marco sculpture:  
A Joyous Ride



Zim and grandson Bennett Haag

# Three Cheers for Boulos: A Retirement Well-Celebrated

*It's a name you don't forget: E. Zimmermann Boulos - the man to whom the name belongs is even more unforgettable*

Article sponsored by the San Marco Preservation Society

## Family and Early Life

Known as Zim to most people, he's Jacksonville through and through—specifically, San Marco. He's enjoyed nicknames such as the “King of San Marco,” and is lovingly called the Godfather of San Marco's public art. Back when Taverna was another delicious neighborhood favorite, Café Carmon, he even had a sandwich called “The Zimmer” named after him. He lives for his family, a smart suit, soccer, plants of all kinds, fairness, service, beauty, and his faith.

Zim's family moved to Jacksonville when he was six months old. In 1955, his father, Edward, realizing that workplaces should be both efficient and inspiring, founded Office Environments and Services (OE&S). OE&S has remained a pillar in the San Marco community.

He graduated from Bishop Kenny High School in 1973 and Jacksonville University (JU) in 1977, and was captain of the men's soccer teams at both schools. Later, Zim was chosen as one of eight U.S. referees to be licensed by FIFA to officiate international soccer matches. He officiated Major League Soccer, the 1983 Men's College Soccer championship game, the 1996 Olympics preliminary tournament, and the preliminary rounds of the 1994 and 1998 FIFA World Cup. Through his soccer connections, he convinced the U.S. National Team to hold the 2012 USA vs. Scotland game in Jacksonville, which drew a crowd of nearly 47,000. Since this match, they've played in Jacksonville frequently. Prior to his referee retirement, he had officiated in more than 100 international matches,



Referee Boulos holds back an angry Alexi Lalas as he awards a red card to a player on Israel's team in the 1997 match-up in Jacksonville

including ones involving the USA men's and women's national teams. For 25 years, he required fairness and respect from some of the best athletes on the planet—a way of life that resonates in all of his endeavors.

Zim married his college classmate, Terry Walker, in 1983. They are the proud parents of Meredith, a board-certified neonatologist. Meredith and her husband, Carter, a dermatologist, live in Oregon with their son, Bennett. They are expecting their second child in July.

## OE&S

The original OE&S office was also located on San Marco Boulevard, across the street from today's Bistro AIX. The company, which moved to its current location in 1960, chose a storied location, formerly an automobile dealership for the long-defunct DeSoto car company.

Zim began working for the business when he graduated from JU, and became its president in 1982 when his father passed.

For 40 years, Zim led OE&S as North Florida's premier provider of business furniture and adaptable workspaces. It supplies furniture, project management, move management, installation, refurbishing, maintenance, repairs, upholstery, ergonomics, and so much more to organizations small and large, which have included Baptist Health, GATE Petroleum, Gulfstream Aerospace, FIS, Florida Blue, Mayo Clinic, Northrop Grumman, and the Bryan Simpson United States Courthouse.

He served two terms on the five-person Haworth Dealer Council. He was a founding board member of the Workplace Alliance, a peer group composed of Haworth's top 30 dealers, and he has been a featured speaker on three occasions at the national conference for Ownership Thinking, which teaches the end of entitlement and creation of a culture of accountability, purpose and profit, encouraging employees to think and act like business owners.

Many customer relationships forged in the earliest years of OE&S have endured throughout the company's history.

## San Marco

You cannot travel far in the San Marco area without spying something Zim has influenced. From our tree canopy to our Little Theatre, now called Theatre Jacksonville, Zim has undeniably shaped the community we enjoy today.

In his younger years, he used to ride around and see something that needed better design or improvement, and would say to himself, “Somebody should do something about that.” Then, he said he realized, “That could be me.”

Fervent supporters of the arts, he and Terry have raised more than \$600,000 to fund the acquisition and installation of eight works of public art in San Marco Square and the Southbank. Terry's master's in fine arts positions them as the perfect pair. Their combined artistic eye is frequently consulted on pending works, too.

In 1997, when San Marco's fountain was refurbished by the San Marco Preservation Society, it was Zim's idea to hold a citywide art competition to choose its design and replacement. The design needed to replace the large, wrought-iron finial of the fountain with a new design that was tied to San Marco. Avondale architects Angela Schifanella and Alan Wilson incorporated statues of the Lion of St. Mark to create the iconic three lions sculpture that now anchors San Marco Square. Familiar with the

history of San Marco Square and its Venetian inspiration, Zim knew instantly this design was the victor. Tallahassee sculptor Hugh Nicolson oversaw foundry work for the fountain's felines. Finally, the wrought iron finial was moved to its newly constructed campanile pedestal in the San Marco Boulevard and Naldo Avenue roundabout, which was designed to invoke the architecture of the campanile (bell tower) located in St. Mark's Piazza in Venice.

At the same time, as San Marco Square was being renovated, Terry and Zim helped lead the fundraising efforts that allowed for the creation of the San Marco Square we know and love today.

In addition, Zim arranged for art installations such as *A Joyous Ride*, located along Balis Place next to the historic movie theatre building; *The Entertainer*, the jester located in front of Theatre Jacksonville; *Journey of the Imagination*, where a young boy soars atop a paper airplane in front of the San Marco Bookstore; *Kite Kids* careening through Balis Park; the monolith sculpture and sign in front of the San Marco Library and Balis Community Center; and *Stiltwalkers*, suspended in the traffic circle outside of the MOSH. And, as a tribute to Zim's career and community service, Office Images, Inc. CEO Bryan Roberts announced the purchase of a monarch butterfly sculpture to be installed in the butterfly garden in Landon Park.

However, his influence reaches far beyond aesthetics. Zim cares deeply about protecting and improving this neighborhood's sense of place.

One of his proudest San Marco accomplishments is the creation of the San Marco exercise loop, which designates a three-mile pedestrian loop encompassing the Southbank Riverwalk, Cedar Street, and the eventual perimeter of the River's Edge development—all the Southbank extension of the Emerald Trail. Although it might not be complete for another few years, he's proud of the project that hatched two decades ago during his time on the Jacksonville Economic Development Commission (JEDC).

When a chain restaurant wanted to knock down and develop the historic ice plant facility that served the old City of South Jacksonville in the early 1900s, Terry and Zim rallied several investors to purchase the building and see it adaptively reused. Today, it's home to Aardwolf Brewing Co., where visitors can enjoy a taste of San Marco's history, as well as award-winning beers.

He understands the importance of preserving and protecting what we have for future generations to be able to enjoy what we do. A Chinese proverb is both his favorite quote and one that perhaps best sums up his disposition: One generation plants the trees, and another enjoys the shade.

## Other Involvement

Locally, Zim was a founding board member of Greenscape of Jacksonville, Inc., a local nonprofit that plants, protects, and promotes trees in Northeast Florida. As of next year, it will be the oldest tree advocacy group in Florida and the second oldest in the country, having served five decades of planting trees and advocating

for a healthy urban forest.

In 1984, he created Greenscape's Great Tree Giveaway, an initiative that continues to give away thousands of trees each year to the public. Greenscape's executive director, Lisa Grubba, notes the significance of the giveaway because “it's the only project in our area that actively increases the tree canopy on private property.” More than 200,000 trees have been added to Jacksonville's tree canopy as a result of this prolific program, which will return in the fall.

He has also served as Chairman of the JEDC, as well as a board member for the Airport Art Commission and the Jacksonville Arboretum & Gardens. He's a national board member for both the Commission on Aging with Dignity and American Forests, the nation's oldest forestry nonprofit.

## Retirement

OE&S was acquired by Office Images, Inc., of Atlanta, Georgia, in January 2022 and Madelen Salter was named its Market President of North Florida. OE&S remains a full-service office furniture and architectural products dealership in San Marco with an additional warehouse on the Westside. A Haworth furniture Preferred Dealership, OE&S continues to create customized workplace solutions for commercial, government, education, and healthcare clients.

“Zim has an unparalleled capability to envision how a place can be improved or transformed, and we celebrate him for his extraordinary commitment to the experience of the San Marco neighborhood,” said Salter. “OE&S has been a friend to the community and a provider of beautiful workspaces for more than six decades, and we remain dedicated to our rich and impactful legacy. We look forward to continued engagement, growth, and success in our wonderful community.”

Zim officially retired in January of this year, after nearly 50 years of service to his family's successful San Marco business. His many contributions to his industry, San Marco, and the greater Jacksonville community were recognized on April 9 by the Jacksonville City Council and a proclamation from Mayor Donna Deegan. The San Marco Preservation Society will be further celebrating his successful career at its annual meeting on Wednesday, May 15, to which the community is cordially invited.

Terry and Zim Boulos continue to enjoy their historic home in San Marco. When he's not attending board meetings, you can find Terry and Zim loving their very-soon-to-be two grandchildren, exploring national parks, kayaking, biking, or walking their dog around the neighborhood.

Please join the San Marco Preservation Society in congratulating Zim on his retirement and wishing him joy and fulfillment in his next chapter.



Feeding Northeast Florida President and CEO Susan King explains the floorplan for the organization's forthcoming, expanded facility during an April 17 hard hat tour.

# A Sneak Peek at Feeding Northeast Florida's New Digs

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Feeding Northeast Florida hosted a hard hat tour of its new food bank and community distribution center on Wednesday, April 17.

This invitation-only tour offered a behind-the-scenes look at the new center, which is currently under construction, and "provide[d] insight into how this expansion will transform our fight against hunger in North Florida."

The new facility is located at 5245 Old Kings Rd. in Northwest Jacksonville.

Feeding Northeast Florida announced its plans to move into its new campus at the end of 2022. The new warehouse complex will allow the nonprofit to consolidate its operations – two warehouses, multiple cold storage trailers and a temporary office trailer – into one location. The new facility will double cold storage capacity, allow for larger food donations, simplify receiving and distribution, triple the space for food pantry partners, increase volunteer capacity by 400%, and facilitate future growth with a commercial kitchen, culinary center and learning space.

According to county records, the organization purchased the property in December 2021 for \$3.47 million.

The Jacksonville-based nonprofit organization is the largest food bank serving Baker, Bradford, Clay, Duval, Flagler, Nassau, Putnam and St. Johns counties. According to the organization, 1 in 10 adults and 1 in 7 children within their service area are affected by food insecurity.



The only three presidents in The Community Foundation's history – Isaiah M. Oliver, Andy Bell and Nina Waters – talk at the 60th anniversary.



Ted and Nancy Powell with Glenn Ullmann and Lisa Landwirth Ullman



Ellen Wiss with Mary Pat Corrigan, Jim and Susan Towler, Terri Florio

# Community Foundation Celebrates 60 Years of Impact

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida honored both its, and Jacksonville's, philanthropic leaders April 17 during its 60th anniversary celebration at the Garden Club of Jacksonville.

Created in 1964, the Foundation manages assets of more than \$630 million and has made more than \$695 in grants since its inception. Board Chair Michael DuBow welcomed fund holders, friends and invested partners to the event, which included a Q&A session. In attendance were all three – and, notably, the only three – of the organization's presidents throughout its long, 60-year history: Andy Bell, Nina Waters and Isaiah M. Oliver.



Martha Baker with Beverley Brooke and Sherry Magill



Courtney Weatherby Hunter with Kacie Smythe

The evening also honored Dolores Barr Weaver with its Prize for Civic Engagement. For the full story on her award, turn to page 19.

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# MOVERS & SHAKERS



Tasha Brooks with Alyson Fouracre, Stephen and Christopher Joost



(Top row) Susan Currie, Jennifer Newman, Susie Miller, Art Shults and Rev. Canon Beth Tjoflat with (Bottom row) Martha Davis, Paula Moore, Beth Leavitt and Beth Kirwan

## Yoga Den Opens New San Marco Location

Yoga Den opened its newest location at 1628 Hendricks Ave. on April 13 with a grand opening celebration and ribbon-cutting that included complimentary classes and refreshments from fellow San Marco neighbor Good Dough.

Yoga Den San Marco offers six different classes to suit varying yoga practices: Mind Body, Sun Power, Sun Power Flow, Restorative, Yin, and Yogalates Sculpt.

“Our motto is ‘Grow Stronger, Live Longer.’ That, in a nutshell, is what Yoga Den is all about,” said Stephen Joost, owner of the Hendricks Avenue franchise location. “Anything that brings better physical and mental health to the Jacksonville community is a great thing, and that’s why I’m proud to be a Yoga Den Studio owner.”

Since 2002, Yoga Den has been a sanctuary for wellness enthusiasts and yoga practitioners. It began franchising in 2016 and has 12 locations throughout Northeast Florida.

## San Marco Ladies Sow Seeds in Springfield

A group of conscientious ladies from the Rose Garden Circle, most of whom hail from San Marco and the San Jose areas of town, were out to make a difference outside of their local area. Leadership came to a consensus to reach beyond the beautification of San Marco by providing assistance and a blessing to the Springfield community.

Volunteers and members of the Circle delivered a check April 10 to the clergy at St. Mary’s Episcopal Church and Outreach, located at 1924 N. Laura St., on a campus that’s budding with beauty – from flowers to vegetable gardens for residents to enjoy – the gift will help with not only the gardens but the food pantry ministry at the church.

“We appreciate your enthusiasm and that our mission resonates with your hearts,” said The Rev. Canon Beth Tjoflat, who serves as vicar for St. Mary’s and Canon for Urban Ministry for the Episcopal

Diocese of Florida. “Today is tremendous because we’ve been gradually growing our mission, which is to provide food for folks that don’t have access to it, so our gardens mean that people who are in a food desert can eat healthy, fresh organic food. We grow our plants from seeds, and we provide extra plants for our pantry visitors so they can grow food at home as well. Our campus is open for anybody who wants to see what we’re doing.”

“This is our happy place now, I may just have to come over and just walk through. You can feel the love and Christ’s spirit. Thank you for what you’re doing; we really hope you can use [the donation] for the community,” said Beth Leavitt, president of the Circle, who handed off the \$1,000 check during the ceremony.

Interested in giving or learning from the mission? Readers can visit [StMarysjax.org](http://StMarysjax.org), give online or call (904) 354-5075 to plan a tour.

## Baptist Health Goes Blue

A ribbon-cutting award ceremony was held at Baptist Health on Thursday, April 11 to celebrate Baptist Health’s designation as a Blue Zones-approved worksite.

Baptist Health is the first health system and the largest Northeast Florida employer to receive this designation.

“This is distinctive, and especially meaningful, to us because we were part of the original team that helped bring Blue Zones to our community,” said Baptist Health President and CEO Michael A. Mayo.

Various benchmarks must be met during the Blue Zones approval process, which assigns points for “evidence-based actions and lifestyle principles” workplaces have, or plan to implement, in employee resources and programs. Baptist Health offers several resources to provide physical, mental, spiritual and social support for its employees.

“I think the history of Baptist is one that creates a work environment that people want to belong to and improve their life and their lifestyle,” Mayo said after the ceremony. “And so not only [are we] providing a place that people can earn a living and carry out their mission of caring for others, we need to be healthy, too.”

Following the ceremony, Blue Zones Project Jacksonville Executive Director Nicole Hamm said it was “validating” to see an employer as large as Baptist Health – with more than 14,000 employees – achieve this approval.

“I think it’s just such a message that we’re ready to do this work, and we’re doing it together,” she said.



Nicole Hamm, Carla Reddick, Mary Beth Torres, Michael A. Mayo, Brittney Camps, Hannah Reese and Scotty Robinson celebrate Baptist Health’s Blue Zones Project approval.

Several other smaller businesses have already received their Blue Zones approval, among which are KraVegan in San Marco and European Street Cafe in Riverside.

The Blue Zones Project is a worldwide research initiative devoted to studying and improving well-being in cities across North America. The Blue Zones Project Jacksonville is a six-year project that will focus specifically on neighborhoods that are “typically and historically underserved” in Jacksonville’s West-, North- and Eastside as well as the city as a whole.

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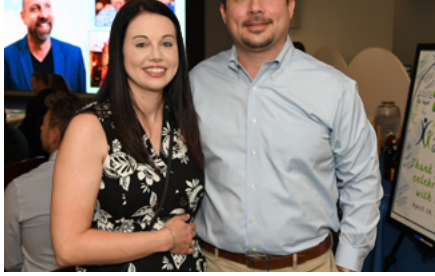
*Dr. Pathak is Board Certified by the American Board of Dermatology and a Fellow of the American Academy of Dermatology*



**Swetha Narahari Pathak, MD**



Speech pathologists Lia Richardson, Giselle Feliciano and Melissa Vincent



Amber and Joshua Davis

# A Diamond Anniversary for Jacksonville Speech and Hearing Center

The Jacksonville Speech and Hearing Center (JSHC) held a birthday reception on Friday, April 19 at the Jessie Ball duPont Center to celebrate 75 years of serving the communication needs of Northeast Florida residents.

Since its founding in 1949, the organization has spent three-quarters of a century fulfilling its mission “to provide the highest quality professional and compassionate care to all individuals in our community with speech, language, and/or hearing disorders, regardless of ability to pay.”

Notable guests included Mayor Donna Deegan, who spoke at the April celebration, city officials and corporate leaders from the Jacksonville community, including members from Haskell, Florida Blue and BDO Jacksonville.

JSHC Board Chair Jim White led a toast to the organization’s future while President and CEO Michael Howland made an address sharing “snapshots and gratitude” for the nonprofit’s milestone anniversary.



Jackie Culver with Erika Hooper



Scott Wohlers with Kyle Dorsey



Andy King

# King Elected Chairman for Gator Bowl Sports

The Gator Bowl Sports board of trustees recently elected its 2024-25 volunteer leadership and announced Andy King as chairman for the 2024-25 season. King has served in a variety of volunteer roles with Gator Bowl Sports since 2008, including hospitality and vice chairman of game and team operations.

King is the vice president at GFL (Green for Life) Environmental, a diversified environmental services company. He has lived in Jacksonville since 2006 with his wife, Jessica, and children Grace, John, Mary-Kate and Andrew. In addition to his service with Gator Bowl Sports, King has served for numerous years on the board of directors for the Jax Chamber, THE PLAYERS Council, Cathedral Arts Project and the Tony Boselli Foundation. He is also a Leadership Jacksonville alumni.



Bruce Chappell Sr. stands next to a rendering of Bolles baseball's forthcoming Jerry and Bruce Chappell Fieldhouse.

# New Fieldhouse for Bolles Baseball

During the Agnes Cain Painter & Glynlea and Heritage Society reception April 4, Bolles announced that a gift from Bruce Chappell Sr. and the Chappell-Walker Family will bring a newly designed baseball fieldhouse to the Upper School San Jose Campus in honor of Chappell's late wife, Jerry “Poppy” Chappell.

The Jerry and Bruce Chappell Fieldhouse will feature a player locker room and training room, coaches’ offices, an entrance lobby and a tribute plaque. Construction on the project will begin this fall.

Chappell said his family is “thrilled to death” to dedicate the fieldhouse to his wife and pleased to be part of the future of Bolles.

“There are two things you can give your children or grandchildren that no one can ever take away: love and a good education,” Chappell said. “And let me tell you, this institution offers a pretty good education.”

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Florida Blue's Susan Towler and Charlie Joseph with Candace Hodgkins, holding her 2024 Sapphire Award.

## Hodgkins Receives Sapphire Award

\$50,000 in support will be directed to Gateway Community Services

The Florida Blue Foundation recently honored nine statewide nonprofit programs, organizations and individuals working to improve health outcomes and healthcare access in their local communities during its Sapphire Awards ceremony April 3 in Orlando.

Among the 2024 Sapphire Award recipients was Candace Hodgkins, president and CEO of Gateway Community Services, who received a second-place award and \$50,000 in support, which will be directed to Gateway Community Services to provide addiction treatment for adults and adolescents in Northeast Florida.

"Our Foundation recognizes the important role community-based initiatives play in strengthening neighborhoods and improving overall health and well-being," said Susan Towler, executive director of the Florida Blue Foundation. "We applaud these nine recipients for their commitment to improving health outcomes and ensuring families have the resources, support, and care they need to live their healthiest lives."

For more information and the full list of honorees, visit [residentnews.net](http://residentnews.net).



The Hightower Emerging Leaders Class VIII

## Chamber Welcomes Hightower Class VIII

Program Namesake Mike Hightower and several board members welcomed Class VIII of the JAX Chamber Hightower Emerging Leaders Fellowship in a March 25 ceremony on the 22nd floor of the VyStar Credit Union Tower. The Hightower Fellowship brings together a class of talented professionals with prominent and influential Jacksonville leaders. Fellows build relationships and learn from Jacksonville leaders who are giving back to the next generation.

The members of the new class are Leah Adams, PRI Productions; Dane Bennett, Baptist Health; Brian Bush, Tom Bush Family of Dealerships; Lucy Chen, Cathedral Arts Project; Lauren Eakins, Walmart Health; Maya Francis, Blue Zones Project Jacksonville; Michael Haskins, Springfield Preservation and Revitalization Council, Inc.; Andrew Holley, England, Thims & Miller; Darian Jackson, Dapper D's Cigars; Sarah Mannion, King & Mannion, P.A.; Eric Miller, Downtown Vision, Inc.; Derod Moody, VyStar Credit Union; Brittany Norris, City of Jacksonville; David Paulk, Jacksonville Jaguars; Andrea Reyes, Reyes Legal, PLLC; Nemiah Rutledge, Body Paradox.

# Weaver Receives Prize for Civic Engagement

The Northeast Florida philanthropist is the first woman and only third person to receive the honor

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida honored Delores Barr Weaver, philanthropist and activist, with its Prize for Civic Engagement at The Foundation's 60th anniversary celebration April 17.

The Prize for Civic Engagement pays tribute to Weaver's record of speaking out courageously for the common good on matters of civic importance. It has only been awarded twice before: in 2014 to William E. "Bill" Scheu, past chair of The Community Foundation's Board of Trustees, and in 2007 to Bill Brinton, founder of Scenic Jacksonville.

"I am truly honored to accept the Prize for Civic Engagement on the occasion of The Community Foundation's 60th anniversary," said Weaver. "I often say that it's the nonprofits who make it possible for me to play a part in building a better community. So, to all who are

involved in their work, whether as a volunteer, a board member or supporter, thank you for all you do."

Weaver has shown her leadership through many programs, including the Jaguars Foundation's Straight Talk program, and has shown her support for people with intellectual and development disabilities, the LGBTQ community, and, especially, women and girls. She jumpstarted the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center and co-founded the Women's Giving Alliance.

"Delores Barr Weaver is nationally renowned for her unprecedented philanthropy in our region," said Michael DuBow, chair of the board of trustees of The Community Foundation. "The prize recognizes her equally remarkable legacy of using her voice and platform to spark thoughtful community dialogue around important and under-

recognized issues."

Weaver indeed has an extraordinary legacy of philanthropy in Northeast Florida since moving to Jacksonville as co-owner of the Jacksonville Jaguars in 1993. After her historic \$50 million gift in 2012 to establish the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund, she went on to provide numerous multi-million-dollar gifts through her partnership with The Community Foundation, including the Foundation's largest-ever gift of \$61 million in June 2023. She has established permanent endowments for more than four dozen nonprofits, including 20 that receive ongoing annual support through the Delores Barr Weaver Forever Event Fund. Today, her grantmaking exceeds \$209 million to more than 300 organizations in Northeast Florida and beyond.



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Show-goers admired Wayne Torbett's beautiful 1960 Corvette, which won Krispy Kreme's People's Choice Award.

Chief judge Dan Scanlan checks out Rob Raulerson's stunning and award-winning 1978 Volkswagen Puma GT sports coupe, built in Brazil.



Jason, Mitchem, owner of a 1957 Ford Thunderbird convertible, receives the Best American - Pre 1980 award from Alma Ballard and Dan Scanlan.



Eddy Vega's sleek 1972 De Tomaso Pantera mid-engine sports car earned Best of Show honors at the San Jose Car & Truck Show.

# Car Show Raises \$12K for Senior Community Center

GUEST CONTRIBUTOR **JOE DESALVO**

FOUNDER AND HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF THE SAN JOSE CAR & TRUCK SHOW

The 9th Annual San Jose Car & Truck Show shined on Saturday, April 6 at Dupont Station Shopping Center to generate a record \$12,152 for the Bishop John J. Snyder Community Center at the nearby San Jose Apartments for seniors. Since its 2016 inception, the show has generated \$72,312 in sponsorships and donations for the cause.

The event, presented by Key Buick GMC Hyundai Genesis and North Florida Lincoln, surpassed the 100-car mark for the second-straight year as 103 vehicles of all types and eras, competed in nine classes. Dan Scanlan, along with two volunteers from Jacksonville Car Culture, judged the competition. A 1972 De Tomaso Pantera, owned by Eddy Vega of Jacksonville, took home Best of Show.

"It was a great show - great volunteers, great people just walking around, looking at the wonderful field of cars and trucks," said Alma Ballard, executive director/management agent of Family Housing Management Company, which manages the Bishop John J. Snyder Community Center. "I felt the love of the people there for our mission. They were there for the residents and supporting the Snyder Center. It just gets bigger and better in the hearts of the people who come; it just makes you feel good."

For a full list of winners, visit [residentnews.net](http://residentnews.net).



Jason Pratt with Andrew Kisz, Andrew Lohman and Joshua Nelson



Erik Kasper with David Paulk and Joe Carlucci



Duke and Penny Addison with Beth and Chris Leavitt



Denise, Eric, Marianna and Violet Gaiser with Caroll Sanchez

# Neighbors Step Up for Wine Down



Sarah Taylor with James Robison representing Good Dough



RJ Caster with Linzee Ott, Leah and Corey Drake



Holly Grossman with Lauren Carlucci and Margaux Barnes

The San Marco community showed up in droves Saturday, April 13 to support the San Marco Preservation Society's (SMPS) spring showcase, Wine Down in the Parks. Patrons toured Whatley and Davin parks before wrapping the three-park tour at Balis Park, in the heart of San Marco. Each stop played host to local food and beverage vendors - most of whom call San Marco home - and featured a different theme and flavor. Guests dined al fresco and sipped on craft beer, wine and cocktails amid the live-music-filled breeze in support of the continued maintenance, preservation and improvement of San Marco's historic parks.



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The Women's Board Committee leaders



Beverly Brooke with Carla Newton



Meredith Guess with Courtney Taylor

# Women's Board Hosts Annual Spring Luncheon

## Awards announced, service honored

The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital held its Spring Luncheon April 24. Over 150 members gathered alongside hospital leadership at the annual meeting to celebrate the past year's accomplishments. President Kendra McCrary announced the combined fundraising efforts 2023 First Coast Design Show and the 2023-24 Florida Forum, which totaled \$848,000. "I am grateful to the 2023 Design Show co-chairs Emily Magevney and Gracie Register and 2023-24 Florida Forum co-chairs Meg Folds, Drew Haramis and Robin Love for their leadership and all of the members, volunteers and donors who made this past year a wonderful success," said McCrary. Chris Heib was named the 2025 Incoming President and will serve as Women's Board President 2026-27. This year's event leadership was introduced: Kelly Novak will chair the 2024 First Coast Design Show. Randy DeFoor and Maxine McBride will co-chair the 2024-25 Florida Forum.



Anna Catherine McCrary with Kendra McCrary and Lillian Morgan



Gracie Register with Allegra Jarros and Emily Magevney



Kimberly, Karen and Erin Wolfson

The Abbie Award, named for The Women's Board Founder Ellen Cavert's twin granddaughter whose early passing inspired the organization's founding, was presented to member Jean Watson for outstanding commitment and service. June Duncan, Director's Assistant at The Women's Board, was also honored for her 20 years of service.

New members Margot Althuis-Wrenn, Jessie Drew Hawkins, Anna Catherine McCrary, Lillian McCrary Morgan, Liz Parks, Alexa Quaritius, Macy Rising, Lizzie Roth, and Stephanie Verlander were also welcomed to the board.

The mission of The Women's Board is to raise awareness and funds for Wolfson Children's Hospital to ensure the finest available pediatric health care. For more information, visit [womensboardwch.com](http://womensboardwch.com).



Curtis Jackson with Kenyon Booker and Caleb Jackson



Dan Gallagher with Steve Pajcic and Cherry Gallagher

# Pajcic Yard Golf Drives \$1M for Legal Aid

Since its inception a decade ago, the annual Pajcic Yard Golf and Lawn Party has raised more than \$1 million for Jacksonville Area Legal Aid (JALA). The 2024 kid-friendly event teed off Saturday, April 6, with dual nine-hole courses at the Avondale homes of Steve Pajcic, and Michael Pajcic and Katy DeBriere. Local celebrities, attorneys and community members played a round on the Yard Course and Back Nine while enjoying surprise appearances, food, entertainment and a day of fundraising. All proceeds from the event went to support JALA's mission to provide civil legal services to those who cannot afford an attorney.



Hank Coxe and Donna Deegan with Michael and Katie Fackler



Latoya Williams-Shelton with Jim Kowlaski and Darlene Richburg

"It is really just a big lawn party, and we happen to golf and raise money for a most worthy cause. Generous, kind-spirited people stepped up even more this year," said Steve Pajcic.

The event boasts its famous "island green" hole-in-one competition, a nod to the 17th-hole island green at Ponte Vedra's TPC Sawgrass, where a hole-in-one wins the golfer \$6,000 and sends a matching \$6,000 to JALA. This year, a similar \$7,000 hole-in-one prize, sponsored by the Schultz Family Foundation, was added on the back nine's 7th hole. Curtis Bai was the inaugural winner. In the celebrity shoot-out, former Jaguar kicker Josh Scobee landed closest-to-the-pin to win \$6,000 for his chosen charity of Guardian Catholic Schools, with the match going to JALA.

"One of the best features of the event is that every donation and sponsorship is matched by the Pajcics dollar-for-dollar, so every penny raised is doubled for those in need at Jacksonville Area Legal Aid," said JALA President and CEO Jim Kowlaski.



Alice Morris with Michele Waddell



Ryan Sharrit, Jim Terrell, Artis Gilmore and Judge Mike Sharrit

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Celebrity Chefs Henry and Sue Turner, Mike and Karen Eddy



Alma Shirley with Corkie Gooden



Stephanie Dixon, Eric and Ashley Prisby with their baby, Libby, and Henry Turner



Captain Julia Chamberlain, Captain Mike Chamberlain and Francisco Romero



Jackie Clauser with Karen Hawk



Ward Lariscy and Debbie Johnson



Jeremy Holloway with Alex Saar



CSX Executive Vice President/COO and Celebrity Chef Mike Cory with Marilyn Carpenter



Diane Guy with Betty Landin, Sally Ellis, Debbie Atlee and Terri Guy



Jacksonville Sheriff's Office Chief Deloris O'Neal with Assistant Chiefs Adrian O'Neal and Petena Tillman

# A Serving of Philanthropy

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

More than 800 tickets were purchased for the 38th Annual Celebrity Chefs Tasting Luncheon and Silent Auction, hosted by the Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary of Jacksonville, on Thursday, April 4.

The event was held at the Prime Osborn Convention Center. It is one of the largest annual fundraising events for the Salvation Army of Northeast Florida.

This year's lineup of celebrity chefs included Jacksonville Beach Sea Turtle Patrol Supervisor Kevin Brown; CBS47/Fox30 Action News Jax Chief Meteorologist Mike Buresh; St. John's Episcopal Cathedral Dean Kate Moorehead Carroll; CSX Executive Vice President and COO Mike Cory; Beacon Fisheries, Inc. Owners Mike and Karen Eddy; HS Turner Real Estate, Inc. and Emeritus Salvation Army Board Member Hank and Sue Turner; The Bearded Pig Owners Michael Schmidt and Chad Munsey;

Northeast Florida Fellowship of Christian Athletes Multi-Area Director Matthew Roof; Stellar Properties, Inc. President Ernie Veale and Jacksonville Sheriff T.K. Waters.

Waters walked away with the People's Choice Award for his Cajun-style turkey and smoked sausage chili.

Before or after dining, guests were able to browse and bid on items in the silent auction, which had more than 100 contributors.

"It's always an honor for us to collaborate with community partners and businesses when we work to serve our community's needs," said Major Keath Biggers with the Northeast Florida area command. "We appreciate the tremendous support of The Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary, who have organized this event for the last 38 years."

This year's Celebrity Chefs Tasting Luncheon and Silent Auction was co-chaired by Rita Cannon, Susie O'Quinn and Debbie Veale.

# Fundraiser Elevates Exhibit, Women in Sports

Sports attire was in fashion at the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens Saturday, April 20. Titled Sport Your Fashion: A Curated Experience & Fundraiser, the event featured live music from The American Sirens, food from Chef's Garden, art, putt-putt, table tennis, shuffleboard, a costume contest, scavenger hunt and auction.

The night's host committee consisted of Gina Donahoo, Barbara English, Whitney Meyer, Velma Montiero-Tribble, Marsha Oliver, Donna Orender, Heather Wingard and Ellen Wiss.



Ozzie and Sharon Cuffie with Andrea Barnwell Brownlee and Michael Munz

Garrett Ho with David Thone

Ben and Katie Sharkey with Gina and John Donahoo

Jim and Ellen Wiss



Selma Eklund with Helena Rafnsdottir and Sarah Taub



Bella Xu with Marsha Oliver, Whitney McGuire and Cass Gavaghan



Ted Alexander with Heather and David Wingard



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Buck Williams with Susan and Jim Towler

Bryan Fogle with Shannon Brosonski, Caitlin Doherty, Leigh Fogle and Laura Schepis

Judy and Jim Hardwick

Kelly Kunz and Joanna Lewis

Maria G. Vogt with Erica La

Betsy Geary and Jenny Cocanougher

Alya and Moez Limayem

# Triple Triumph: The 100 Years of Compassion

## MOCA TAKES A WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

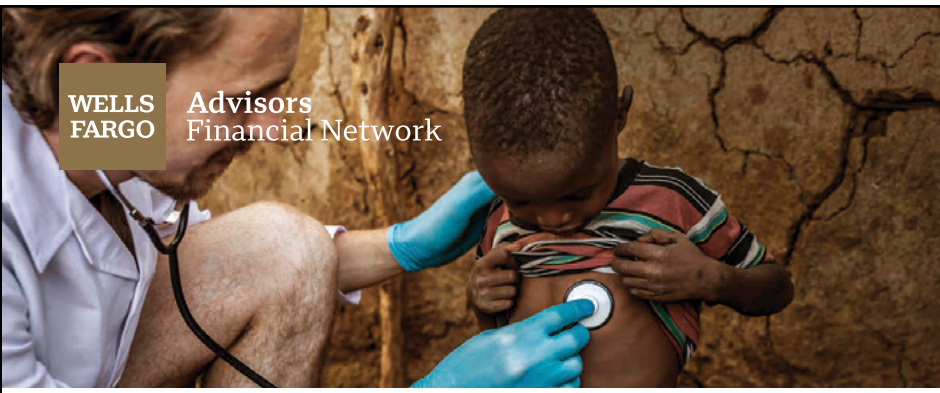
The Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville (MOCA) celebrated its 100th anniversary with a Centennial Gala themed for its latest exhibition, *A Walk on the Wild Side*. Held April 6 at the museum, the event brought the spirit of the '70s alive with music, art, dancing and artful moments that celebrated the beauty MOCA has brought to Jacksonville since 1924. Funds raised at the gala will enable the museum to present new exhibitions, public programs and educational initiatives that help elevate our city as an arts and culture destination.

Benham Bishop with Spring McManus, Krista Eberle and Chase Zimmerman



Jennifer Joy with Max Dempsey, Gabrielle and Bruce Dempsey

Michelle Scott and Teresa Nichols



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Nancy Lantinberg with Maia Oberholtzer, Hannah Oberholtzer, Eliza and Stephanie Garfunkel

Heather Schatz with Jason Roth, Melanie Patz, Mark Hodges and Bill Hodges

Stephanie Castro with Ashley Volz, Emily Inman and Leigha Tipley

Alexis Kainz with Ellen Love

Spada

Jerome Baltazar with Leon Baxter

Joshua and Meredith Collins with Elizabeth Harris

Meredith Guess with Sheila Collier and Sue Stepp

# Three Charities Mark on, Impact and Service

## A CENTURY OF UNITY



Sheila Murthy with Vasant Nayak

The United Way of Northeast Florida and CSX presented Uniting for Tomorrow: A Community Concert Celebration April 13 at James Weldon Johnson Park, featuring live music throughout the decades in honor of United Way's 100th anniversary of impact in Northeast Florida.

The event, held at the location of the first-ever United Way rally in April 1924, brought headliners John Lumpkin and The Covenant, The Katz Downstairz and Mama Blue with additional special performances by Reese the Poet, Jacksonville Dance Theatre and Dr. Doom. It also hosted a Jacksonville Jaguars Kids Zone, activities, food, drinks and prizes.

The United Way's milestone was underscored by its mission to give hope and opportunity to those who need it most through providing basic needs, strengthening financial well-being and advancing racial equity.

## JUNIOR LEAGUE CONTINUES SUPPORT OF WOMEN



Suzannah and Jamie Holway

The Junior League of Jacksonville turned in a centennial of service in 2023, marking the occasion with a 100th Anniversary Gala at the Garden Club of Jacksonville Saturday, April 13, 2024. Attendees, including dozens of the organization's past presidents, gathered to enjoy the evening's elegant offerings of a plated meal, open bar, silent auction and dancing.

The mission of The Junior League is to advance women's leadership for meaningful community impact through volunteer action, collaboration and training.



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# Jacksonville University at 90: Welcoming a Future Decades in the Making

Nearly 90 years to its founding on April 16, 1934, Jacksonville University leaders, students, alumni, faculty, staff and community partners celebrated on the banks of the St. Johns River. It was fitting that Charter Day 2024 was marked by acts of service from hundreds of university volunteers across more than 35 northeast Florida non-profit organizations.

After all, building a better tomorrow — for students and our community — is what Jacksonville University does. As the University enters its ninth decade, a groundswell of fresh progress emanates from the Arlington campus.

In the last two years alone, Jacksonville University has realized several noteworthy achievements:

- Active and ongoing development supporting **Renew Arlington** alongside the City of Jacksonville, community organizations, citizens and other interested stakeholders working collectively for the betterment of Arlington.
- Launched the **Jacksonville University College of Law** and received provisional accreditation while expanding its Downtown presence through a 50,000-square-foot buildout in the historic Atlantic Bank Building.
- Established the city's **first-ever four-year medical school** which will welcome its inaugural class by 2026.
- Forged an **exclusive partnership with OCEARCH** offering students unprecedented opportunities for experiential learning and high-caliber research while affirming Jacksonville University's environmental stewardship through the Marine Science Research Institute. In addition, OCEARCH and Jacksonville University break ground this year on OCEARCH global headquarters in Mayport.
- Developed the **STEAM Institute** — a first-of-its-kind in the U.S. — 30,000 sq. ft. facility dedicated to interdisciplinary studies including animation, computing sciences, cybersecurity, data science, engineering, film, fintech, game design, geographic information systems, robotics, sustainability and visual design.
- The largest fundraising campaign in school history. **FUTURE. MADE. will raise \$175 million** to prepare students and our community to tackle the greatest challenges facing our world: climate change, cybersecurity, access to quality healthcare services, the value of artistic expression in an AI world, a shortage of nurses and pilots, a growing mental health crisis, and respectful, civil discourse that promotes a stronger democracy.

“ Jacksonville University has been a beacon of knowledge, innovation and philanthropy, serving as a catalyst for positive change in the lives of its students, the Arlington community, the City of Jacksonville, and the world. ”

– The Honorable Mayor Donna Deegan  
Charter Day Proclamation, April 16, 2024

Across the U.S., many higher education institutions face compounding challenges such as cost, inequities, and accountability. Jacksonville University is agile, eluding these trends: doubling down to ensure the quality of its academic and immersive learning experiences while growing strategic partnerships that create a pipeline of opportunities for graduates and employers alike.

In our region, that includes aligning students' interests with the market needs of leading industries — healthcare, business and technology. The university leadership engages in routine conversations with its corporate partners including Baptist Health, Brooks Rehabilitation, Florida Blue, Mayo Clinic, Black Knight, and FIS among others, to maintain a proactive stance and forge new paths for the University's growth.



Student volunteers at Tree Hill during Charter Day 2024.



The Honorable Mayor Donna Deegan with President Tim Cost celebrating 2024 Charter Day.



President Tim Cost, Doug Baer and Michael Mayo announce Jacksonville University's four-year medical college.

“Collaboration is key to our approach,” notes University President Tim Cost. “We actively engage with various boards, advisers, and industry leaders to stay informed about market trends and to ensure our programs remain relevant and responsive. This collaboration extends to regional organizations like the Civic Council and Chamber of Commerce, and JAXUSA where we play an active role in economic development discussions and initiatives.”

Furthermore, the university prioritizes students' needs and aspirations. Students can customize their education with the Pathways of Distinction (POD) program, allowing them to create a unique degree path with real-world application based on their specific interests by blending various majors and minors.

**Why is this important?** Our city will achieve more than we ever imagined possible as we develop and retain high-quality market-ready talent, attract and support the growth of industry-leading businesses, invest in a thriving culture that celebrates and serves our community, and consciously create global citizens and stewards of our future.

For 90 years, Jacksonville University has maintained a reputation of excellence and expanded the legacy of the leadership it produces and retains to the benefit of our community. According to President Tim Cost — they're just getting started.

Indeed, the future is made by those who invest in it.

You can learn more about Jacksonville University's vision for the future at [ju.edu/futuremade](https://ju.edu/futuremade)

# Mental Health Video Visits for Kids and Teens

## Quick Access to Care and Support

### Nemours Children's Health, Jacksonville Pediatric Acute Telemental Health (PATH) Program

We provide video visits to Jacksonville, Florida, area families for many mental health issues affecting children, including depression and anxiety. If your child is age 2 to 17, our program offers multiple sessions with a mental health provider.

#### We also provide:

- Access to mental health professionals quickly, usually within a week (Sometimes same-day appointments can be scheduled.)
- Assessment and treatment recommendations
- Crisis intervention for a child engaging in self-harm, high-risk behaviors, or having suicidal thoughts
- Referrals to community providers
- Brief treatment options

#### Conditions We Assess

The PATH program offers online support for many conditions and problems, including:

- Academic concern
- ADHD
- Aggressive behaviors
- Anxiety
- Bed-wetting/soiling accidents
- Behavior problems
- Mood issues
- Bullying
- Depression
- Divorce/separation
- Impulsivity
- Obsessive compulsive behaviors
- Oppositional behaviors
- Risk-taking behaviors (e.g., sexting, substance use, excessive use of social media/gaming)
- Sadness
- Extreme shyness or selective mutism
- Self-harm behaviors
- Self-injuring behaviors
- Sleep problems
- Social anxiety
- Concerns about suicidal thoughts or tendencies
- Eating concerns
- Feeding concerns
- Fears/phobias
- Grief/bereavement



Well Beyond Medicine



#### Patient Story

"There is no way we would have made it without this program. It saved our lives," says one Jacksonville mom. PATH helped this family work through a stressful life event that was causing mental health symptoms in the children. "Everything we were experiencing is no longer there, and that's due to the Nemours Children's PATH Program."

#### How It Works

Request an appointment by calling **904.697.3600, option 2**. You may also schedule through the **Nemours app** or scan the **QR code** below. Appointments are scheduled within a week, Monday-Saturday with early morning and evening times offered. Same-day appointments may be available. The parent or guardian and child must be present for the first appointment. A visit can cost as little as \$0 or a copay, depending upon your insurance. Ask your insurance about coverage for telehealth.



#### Nemours KidsHealth

For more resources, visit **KidsHealth.org** from Nemours KidsHealth — a pioneer and leader in pediatric health content, trusted by millions worldwide for more than 25 years to help keep families healthy.

# RESIDENTS Junior



Davis Johnson

## Johnson Named to Florida Dairy Farmers Academic All-State Team

Bishop Kenny senior Davis Johnson was named to the 30th Annual Florida Dairy Farmers Academic All-State Team by the Florida High School Athletic Association (FHSAA). This is a recognition program that honors 24 graduating student-athletes, 12 girls and 12 boys, who excel in both athletics and academics. The honorees will be awarded a total of \$50,000 in scholarships.

Johnson, who runs cross country and track, was a member of the FHSAA 2023 State Championship Team. She maintains a 4.0 GPA and ranks third in her senior class of 314 students. She is a National Merit Semi-finalist Scholar and a member of the English, Mu Alpha Theta, Rho Kappa, Science, Spanish, and National Honor Societies. She is the secretary of the St. Vincent de Paul Society, an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion and is involved with the Campus Ministry and Spanish Clubs.

Davis will attend Emory University and plans to continue her athletic career at the next level.



Will Law volunteers at the Black Hammock Island trailhead through Timucuan Parks Foundation's Spring Self-Guided Volunteer Cleanup Program.

## Timucuan Parks Foundation Offers Self-Guided Volunteer Options

Timucuan Parks Foundation (TPF) is offering students and others community service hours through participation in its Spring Self-Guided Volunteer Cleanup Program. From now through the end of June, students and community members can pick up litter at Jacksonville's wilderness parks and preserves to earn two hours of community service per event.

To participate, visit [timucuanparks.org/parks](http://timucuanparks.org/parks) to choose one of the Jacksonville-area parks for cleanup. Parks not listed on the site are also eligible. Participants are required to pick up litter for 1½ or more hours, and the work must be documented through photographs. For the registration form, full list of instructions and link to submit volunteer hours, visit [timucuanparks.org/self-guided](http://timucuanparks.org/self-guided). Earned community service hours will be confirmed through email.

The Spring 2024 program runs from April 1 through June 30.



Madeline Ferretti of Green Cove Springs stands next to her Essential Cupboards/Blessings Box project, which yielded her a 2024 Girl Scout Gold Award.

## Girls Scouts Honored with Gold Awards

Girl Scouts of Gateway Council recognized 13 members of the 2024 Girl Scout Gold Award class who earned the highest award in Girl Scouting, the Gold Award, on Sunday, April 21 at the Florida State University Alumni Center Ballroom.

The 2024 honorees identified issues in their communities, took action, and found or created solutions to earn their awards, addressing real-life problems such as environmental sustainability, racial justice, mental and physical well-being, and gender inequality in STEM.

The Council's 2024 Gold Award Girl Scouts are Laney Clark of Cantonment, Ryan Clark of Cantonment, Kristen Cooper of Gainesville, Kendal Coreil of Panama City Beach, Kyra Creech of Palm Coast, Augustina DeLapp of Gulf Breeze, Madeline Ferretti of Green Cove Springs, Claire Fisher of Gainesville, Ann Harbert of Saint Johns, Anna Lucas of Ponte Vedra Beach, Abigail Minchin of Gulf Breeze, Paloma Rambana of Tallahassee and Sierra Steffen of Gainesville.

"I am honored to be working with such an amazing group of individuals who truly live out our mission and inspire others each and every day. Working with these 13 Gold Award Girl Scouts has been one of the highlights of my year, and I know they will continue shine bright wherever life takes them," said Gaby Fraxedas, Girl Experience Manager.



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# Debate Students Earn D.C. Trip



Will Waller and Ayla Geoghagen in Washington, D.C.

Will Waller and Ayla Geoghagen, from Samuel Wolfson School for Advanced Studies, were awarded a civics immersion tour of Washington, D.C., after placing in the Top 5 in their respective events at the FDI National Civics and Debate Tournament in November 2023.

The tournament had more than 400 students competing in speech and debate events. Waller won seventh place in extemporaneous debate, first place in impromptu speaking and fourth place overall. Ayla won fourth place in impromptu speaking.

Their trip included visits to the Capitol building, Arlington National Cemetery, the American History Museum, The National Archives, Library of Congress, the Supreme Court, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, and Florida House on Capitol Hill.

# Watson Realty Hosts Easter Event



Mason Bridgers-Morgan, 5, chatted with the Easter Bunny and made a picture frame during the March 9 event at Watson Realty San Marco.

The Watson Realty San Marco office opened its doors March 9 for a free, community event with Easter Bunny photos, crafts, raffles and refreshments. Children, and pets, of all ages posed for Easter Bunny photos with photographer Dan Harris and had a chance to craft their own commemorative picture frames. The event also included gift card raffles and refreshments from Kona Ice.

The event was sponsored by Juley Henry of Watson Mortgage, Mirlene Collier of Watson Title Services of Northeast Florida, Florida Insurance Concepts and AmeriPro Inspection Corp. Watson Realty intends to make the event an annual tradition.



Five students were inducted into the Chinese Honor Society April 18 at Episcopal School of Jacksonville.

# Honoring Language Excellence

Students from Episcopal School of Jacksonville's middle school and upper school grades were inducted into their respective language honor societies during a special ceremony in the Sikes Theatre April 18. Latin, French, Spanish and Chinese language students were given certificates for their achievements. Faculty also presented certificates in recognition of the Global Seal of Bilingualism, which has quadrupled at the school since last year. For this recognition, students demonstrated their proficiency in Chinese, French, Italian, Russian, Portuguese and Spanish by earning qualifying scores on Advanced Placement or AAPPL exams.



Event Chairperson Danielle Caplin with her daughter.

Jacob McCrea with his daughter at San Jose Episcopal Day School's The Father Daughter Dance.

# Wonderland Waltz

San Jose Episcopal Day School (SJEDS) hosted its much-anticipated annual event, The Father Daughter Dance, at World Golf Village in St. Augustine Saturday, April 14. Themed for "Alice in Wonderland," the night brought together fathers and daughters from the school for a night filled with games, laughter, food, fun and an enchanting evening of dancing. The night was organized by the SJEDS Parents' Association and spearheaded by event Chairperson Danielle Caplin.



*Congratulations!*

#CLASSOF2024

"Take courage! Get up, Jesus is calling you!" Mark 10:49

# Sensei Dedicated to Shaping Real Confidence

Colby Nelson is a 12-year, seasoned karate expert whose journey into martial arts began with his own personal story of defeat and triumph. During his sixth grade year at Arlington Middle School, Nelson struggled with being bullied before discovering a karate dojo just down the road from the school. He started competing in 2014, winning or placing in seven major tournaments along with numerous local and regional events. Now, this black belt international champion is returning his lessons to the community to offer every child and adult a sense of self-confidence and achievement that translates into all aspects of life.

Nelson opened Kolby's Karate Club in 2018, which currently meets at Unity Church at 634 Lomax St. in Riverside. He has shaped beginners through expert levels, including winners and finalists at the U.S. Open World Karate Championships in Orlando, Florida. While many karate schools might say they teach confidence, Sensei Colby emphasizes the difference between self-confidence and self-esteem in his dojo, understanding that there's more than just moves at the heart of karate.

"Too often we hear about the young people who are bullied and how bad they feel about themselves, and the negative stuff it could drive them toward," said Nelson. "I think it's important that we make people feel like they can be successful at something. I want them to come to the dojo and say, 'This is my area, this is my niche,' and then they can grow from there."

Kolby's Karate Club teaches what is called American Freestyle Karate, an eclectic mix of martial arts that blends traditional karate and Chinese Kenpo with elements of boxing, Wing Chun kung fu and jiu jitsu.

"If it works, we use it," said Nelson.

In addition to the customary weekly karate classes, Kolby's Karate Club offers self-defense seminars for women, "schoolyard" self-defense classes for kids to learn

how to effectively and ethically defend themselves against a school bully, as well as unique anti-abduction classes to teach viable techniques if a stranger is trying to grab a child walking alone. They serve children as young as 5 years old through teenagers and adults.

Nelson explained that people are interested in learning to defend themselves in a practical, simple way, which is why he makes sure his students understand why they're doing what they do.

"Each time somebody comes into class, they leave having felt like they've accomplished something," he said. "Unlike team sports, gymnastics or yoga, we can give your kids the ability to not only protect themselves but protect the life of another kid. We can give them real confidence."

But he assured that most people will never need to utilize their karate skills in that manner, being that those who start to train and get proficient in the arts "won't even walk like someone who's a target." Giving rise to that better sense of self is core to the principles at Kolby's Karate Club.

"You're going to feel better about yourself; you're going to notice you're stronger, you're in better shape. You're going to hang your head a lot higher when you're out there. You're going to speak a lot more clearly and a lot louder. That's something that I think everyone would agree is priceless and worth an hour out of your week," said Nelson.

Nelson's goal is to grow awareness in the area and increase his number of students in order to be able to open up a physical storefront for the karate school, which he said would be the only one in all of Riverside and Murray Hill.

"The more people we help, the greater we can grow and hopefully we can accomplish that goal of getting a storefront open for everybody in the community," he said.

To start gaining confidence and to schedule a free trial class, call Kolby's Karate Club at (904) 452-3194, or schedule online at kolbyskarateclub.com.



Two Kolby's Karate Club students demonstrate a side kick.

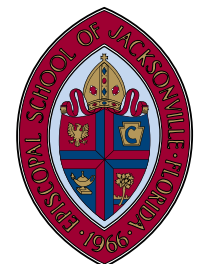


Sensei Colby Nelson in 2018 in his last tournament as a brown belt, the Pan-American Internationals in Miami, holding his brown belt mens fighting championship trophy and second-place trophy in the brown belt point fighting division.

**Kolby's Karate Club | 634 Lomax St.  
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The inaugural Bolles Middle School tennis team.

## Middle School Serves Up Tennis Team

The Bolles School is serving up a new level for the 2024 tennis program with the addition of an inaugural middle school team. Led by Coach Francesca Fusinato, who also serves as the varsity girls' coach, the 2024 coed team included 12 players. The season produced a 3-1 record, highlighted by an 8-0 win over Episcopal in the program's first-ever match.

"Our first season as a Bolles middle school tennis team was a true success," Fusinato said. "The passion, dedication and commitment they brought to the program was outstanding during both practices and matches. Their sense of belonging to this team fueled each practice with positivity and great work ethic."

Bolles now offers tennis from the PreK to upper school levels.



William Holland

## Bittner, Holland Earn All-State, Scholarships



Hannah Bittner

Hannah Bittner and William Holland, both seniors at Episcopal School of Jacksonville, were selected to the Florida Dairy Farmers Academic All-State Team and will each receive a \$1,700 scholarship. Bittner plays varsity basketball and varsity lacrosse. Holland plays varsity football, varsity baseball and has been a member of the basketball team.

To be eligible for this award, students must be a graduating senior with a minimum 3.5 unweighted grade point average and earned a minimum of two varsity letters in at least two different sports during their junior and senior years. The 2024 Florida Dairy Farmers Academic All-State Team selection committee evaluated scholarship nominees based on their athletic participation, academic record, extracurricular activities, community service and essay.

## Members of Bolles Debate Advance to Semis

Five juniors from the Bolles debate team competed at the Debate State Finals April 5-6, hosted on the Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus. Amir Chahlavi, Brody Mills, Dhruv Pandya, Avinash Sagi and Andrew Sharkey faced off against students from across Florida, North Carolina and South Carolina, with two rounds held Friday night and four more on Saturday.

More than 160 students, judges, coaches and parents attended the rigorous competition, which was filmed by PBS throughout the weekend. Mills and Sharkey advanced to the semifinals, and Pandya won second place in the runner up TownSquare.



Debate coach Marie Kervin with members of the Bolles debate team at state competition.



Fifth graders ready themselves for a ropes challenge course through Pathfinder Outdoor Education.

## Students Embark on Overnight Adventure

Bolles Grade 5 students from the Lower School Whitehurst and Ponte Vedra Beach Campuses traveled to Starke, Florida, April 4-5 for an overnight field trip with Pathfinder Outdoor Education. This organization's mission is to deliver fun, challenging adventures that help people learn about themselves, others and the environment. The students participated in a challenge course, climbed trees and rock walls and hiked through the wilderness before roasting s'mores over the campfire.



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PHOTO: HANNAH SCHAEFER

Testicular cancer survivor and team owner Ken Babby greets the crowd at a Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp game.

## Striking Out Testicular Cancer

During April's National Testicular Cancer Awareness Month, Baptist Health and the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp launched a campaign to raise awareness about urological cancers, with a specific focus on testicular cancer, which most commonly affects men between the ages of 15 and 40.

The campaign included two family-fun home games, April 14 and 21, and five additional home games during the week in between. Attendees donated toward the Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center to benefit urologic cancer patients, and all donations were matched by the Jumbo Shrimp.

"Some health issues can be uncomfortable for people to discuss, so we want to make it easy to learn about testicular cancer," said Ken Babby, owner of the Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp.

Babby was diagnosed with testicular cancer in April 2023 after he noticed an unusual lump.

"I was instantly scared. I knew it wasn't supposed to feel or look the way that it did, and I knew I needed help," said Babby.

He sought that help at Baptist MD Anderson Cancer Center with urologist Dr. Lael Stieglitz. Thanks to early detection and treatment, he was back in the ballpark in short order.

Dr. Stieglitz encourages men to pay attention to anything that feels different, like asymmetry. Self-exams can help detect those changes, and early detection – before the cancer has spread – can yield a greater than 95% cure rate.

"Small tumors can be subtle. Sometimes they are just a change in texture, like a hardened area of the testicle, and not a mass or lump," she said. "If you feel something, say something!"



Wanda J. Willis, Gregory Owens, Velma Monteiro-Tribble, Irvin "Pedro" Cohen, Judge Brian Davis and Barbara Darby at the check presentation to LISC Jacksonville.

## A.L. Lewis Black Opportunity & Impact Fund Grants \$275,000

The A.L. Lewis Black Opportunity & Impact Fund announced its first competitive grants, totaling \$275,000, designed to help Black communities thrive in Jacksonville.

Fruit of Barren Trees Pipeline, INC, (FBOT) will receive \$90,000 for affordable housing, workforce development and community resiliency in the Moncrief Park neighborhood.

\$85,000 is slated for Kappa Alpha Psi Jacksonville Foundation to assist with the construction of the Dr. C. B. McIntosh Community Achievement Center, a community health and education center in Northwest Jacksonville.

LISC Jacksonville was awarded \$50,000 for its down payment assistance program through Project Boots, focusing on first-time home buyers located in the ZIP codes of 32206, 32208, 32210 and 32216.

The Fund also awarded 25 small grants of up to \$2,000 each.

"These grants would not have been possible without the volunteer time and financial support of the A.L. Lewis Fund members and donors, and we want to thank them for their commitment, passion and support," said Velma Monteiro-Tribble, chair of the Fund. "We also wish to congratulate our grantees on their important work to make a difference in the lives of individuals and communities in Jacksonville."

As a collective giving initiative of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, the A.L. Lewis Fund launched in 2022 with a focus on health, education and economic development in Jacksonville. It is named after Abraham Lincoln Lewis, a local entrepreneur, humanitarian and philanthropist who became Florida's first African American millionaire.

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Notes written upon paper suns dot the Impact Zone at the 2024 walk event.



More than 1,500 walked in the Hubbard House's 15th Annual Stand Up & Stride Domestic Violence Awareness Walk.

## Walk Exceeds \$100K Goal to Support Domestic Violence Survivors

More than 1,500 people gathered March 30 to show support for local survivors of domestic violence at Hubbard House's 15th Annual Stand Up & Stride Domestic Violence Awareness Walk. The event raises awareness and funds for Hubbard House's shelter and services.

The event exceeded its \$100,000 goal; it costs around \$75 to provide one night of shelter and services to one person, and Hubbard House provided 36,635 shelter nights last fiscal year.

"To see the passion here at this event, to feel your energy, and to know how strong your support is for local survivors of domestic violence and of Hubbard House... thank you!" said Hubbard House CEO Gail Patin. "When we stride together, as a community, the story of one survivor's strength becomes the courage for us all to stand up and say, 'No more domestic violence.'"

This year's walk featured a Family Fun Zone, with family-friendly games and prizes, and the Impact Zone, an interactive display where event attendees wrote notes to honor the 4,828 survivors and children Hubbard House served last year.

Hubbard House provides 24/7 hotlines for anyone needing support in a domestic violence situation. Trained advocates are available through Hubbard House Hotline at (904) 354-3114 or Textline at (904) 210-3698.



## Salvation Army Launches New Golf Tournament

The Salvation Army of Northeast Florida kicked off its inaugural golf tournament and silent auction Monday, March 25 at Queens Harbour Yacht and Country Club. The shotgun-style tournament raised \$13,000 in funding for year-round support of Salvation Army programs, which assist the area's most vulnerable communities with basic needs like food, housing, counseling, rehabilitation and disaster relief.

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The extended holiday 2023 visit by our tortoiseshell grandkitten, Bean & Cheese Taco (also known as Bean, Kibbles, The Kibs and Kibby), reminded me how terrible it is I've left neighborhood cats off my Resident Community gratitude list for so long. It's time to change that. This month, I am grateful for the feline friends in our midst – the Jellicle ones that keep rodents at bay and bring purrrrrfect joy into our lives.

While Kibby was staying with us in December and January, she used our backyard trees and fencing like the expert-level parkour training center it was always meant to be. I've always thought our big oak tree in the center of the yard was beautiful, but Kibby helped me see it was actually another kitty-ecosystem out there. Each morning, I'd let her outside to charge up the tree like a coked-out Braveheart and pounce from limb to limb

with crazed confidence. When that got boring, Kibbles moved to the fence tops and the neighbor's bamboo. She loved it. And I loved it when I could get her back inside safe and sound, because – what was I going to tell her adoring, world-traveling mother if I couldn't?

On one occasion, Bean explored “the other side of the fence” and met Romeo, the Barakats' nomad feline. Tails puffed, they greeted each other with long stares and throaty concerns.

Romeo makes lots of friends in our little corner of the neighborhood. He's a frequent guest at Granada Park, where he welcomes children and their parents. He also has been known to come inside homes to share his hospitality. One evening, I had some guests over for a presentation and Romeo let himself in for a listen, too. He checked everything out quietly, then left when nothing much interested him.

Romeo reminds me of our old cat, Charley. She's now buried under a tree in our side yard. You can see the little wooden cross coming out of the weeds if you look – and make snarky comments to yourself about how weedy and gross our beds are – hard enough on a stroll down Granada Boulevard. Charley was neither defined nor confined during her 10 years with us in Granada. She lived her days at the park and her evenings inside, where she enjoyed scaring young visitors with surprise hind-leg-paws-up attacks from

under the entry table. She killed stuff, too. We never had rodents when Charley was on the scene. An accomplished huntress she was. One night, I discovered a wet hamster carcass in front of our bedroom door (long, gross story). Thinking it was dog poop, I bunched up some toilet paper and picked it up to throw it outside before I realized it was one of the kids' hamsters – and threw it out into the corner of the yard anyway. The next morning, Charley had hunted up that hamster and proudly delivered its pitiful little remains to the backdoor mat. Dead or alive, no rodent was taking up residence in our backyard when Charley was around.

There are so many Charley stories, and so little time to unpack them all. She, like many cats in our community, has been the subject of “lost cat” flyers nailed to park trees, though most felines around here find their way back home eventually. They have starring roles to play in our little neck of the woods. They are legendary, star-quality beasts. The Stapleton's cat, Blaze, even has followers on the Gram. He lives at the beach now, sadly.

Of course, the same is true for cats all over town and on both sides of the river. Felines are the crazy characters that keep us all entertained whether we're in the 32207 or 32210. My husband, David, and his siblings grew up in Ortega with a cat named Woemmage (Meow backwards, because that's the way he spoke), aka Rad(ical) Cat. That poor cat went through the wringer. Various car and driveway incidents rendered him tail-less and with a malformed skull and eventually a urinary tract condition made things, well, messy. In the last months of his 20-year existence, Woemmage's claws got very long and klickity-klackity, and when I met him at my brother-in-law's house on Pine Street in the late-1990s, he just klickity-clackitied around on the hardwood floors, weomming and missing the litter box. Not the fairytale ending

for such a neighborhood luminary! In his heyday, however, he was quite the celebrity, prowling around his Yacht Club Road tree kingdom. At one point, there was talk of getting Wommage stuffed in a tree-leaping position, but I don't think those plans ever materialized. Thankfully, because I guarantee you it would be featured prominently in my brother-in-law's house – or ours, geez.

Our friends, the Aucters, have cats aplenty – and they always have funny stories about their kitties' misdeeds and acts of bravery. Though, their brood stays close to home, where they have been extraordinary emotional support animals to the fine young people who have grown up there.

I'm grateful our communities appreciate the feline friendliness so many cat neighbors have demonstrated over the years. Can you imagine a neighborhood without them? We'd be overrun with mice and rats and pretentious dogs. It would be so boring and poo-bah and pest-ridden. Blech! So let's put our paws and toe-beans together for the Jellicle kitties who add a lot more “Memory” to our neighborhoods because “Because Jellicles are and Jellicles do, Jellicles do and Jellicles would, Jellicles would and Jellicles can, Jellicles can and Jellicles do.”

Susanna Barton does not like it when cats leave morsels in the yard because it contributes to her anxiety-ridden canine's chronic halitosis. 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 mygrandplans.com.



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Lee Hutchens with Matt Allen, Tom Harris, Andy Allen and Michael O'Neal

## River Garden Classic Tops \$2M

River Garden Senior Services hosted its 28th River Garden Classic, with title sponsor Hardage-Giddens Funeral Homes & Cemeteries, on April 10 at Deerwood Country Club. Since its inception, the tournament has raised more than \$2 million to benefit the residents of River Garden.

"We should all be proud of supporting an organization that excels in providing the highest quality of care for seniors with dignity and compassion," said Tournament Chairman Tom Harris.

The 29th River Garden Classic is scheduled for April 28, 2025.



Brian Croke with Chip Greene



Betty Sorna with Mauri Mizrahi and Bobbie Jo Mentz



Emily Manning with Karis Kodatt, Alina Kodatt and Gracie K



Bryn Kriedel with Courtney, Zeph and Kai Studard Sara Buckley with Stacy Lasonde and Macy Lasonde

## Biscuits and Bubbles for Foster Care

Fun bubbled to the surface for the first annual Biscuits and Bubbles 5K and Fun Run supporting Haven Retreats. The run kicked off at the San Marco Postage House Saturday, April 13 at 8:30 am. After the run, participants celebrated with a mimosa bar, beer and breakfast biscuits, a bubble machine and DJ.

The funds to Haven Retreats went in support its mission of sustainability for foster and adoptive families. The nonprofit hosts therapeutic retreats and provides wrap-around services for foster and adoptive caregivers.



Greg and Beville Anderson



Rebecca Sale with Callie Sprague, Adriana Cantville, Claire Pulignano, Dr. Elaine Koziol, Jessica Michaud and Bonnie Melin

## An Installation of Inspiration

### A Vision for Art blends an elevated canvas of artists, collectors

Community support for Episcopal School of Jacksonville (ESJ) came into focus during A Vision for Art, ESJ's annual art event, presented in 2024 in conjunction with Northern Trust. The five-day art shopping experience kicked off with an opening night celebration on April 19 at ESJ's St. Mark's Campus, where attendees had a chance to meet the 42 established and emerging artists from around the Southeast, including featured artist EMYO. Proceeds from the event supported the community of artists as well as the enhancement of the fine arts program and projects on ESJ's St. Mark's Campus.



Jessica Bryan with Adam Greene, Patton and Larry Weber and Carlton Hobgood



Chris and Chloe Wood with Travis and Laura Smith



JDRF 2024 Walk Corporate Chair and Firehouse Subs President Mike Hancock, second from left, joined fellow speakers Colleen Morris, Jean Bobin and Chris Shee at JDRF's Community Leaders Breakfast in February.

## JDRF, Firehouse Subs Connect for Type 1 Diabetes

JDRF supporters will pound the pavement during its 2024 Jacksonville One Walk with a little extra power from some familiar Jacksonville names. The Jacksonville-based Firehouse Subs has signed on as presenting sponsor for the 2024 Jacksonville One Walk, held May 4 at the J.B. Coxwell Amphitheatre on the University of North Florida Campus.

Mike Hancock, Firehouse Subs president and One Walk Corporate Chair, is all too familiar with the work done by JDRF. During JDRF's Community Leaders Breakfast in February, he shared his story of being diagnosed with Type 1 Diabetes (T1D) at age 23, having first been told he was "too old" for T1D, but later being properly diagnosed.

"I am excited to serve as the Corporate Chair for this year's Jacksonville One Walk," said Hancock. "Firehouse Subs is proud to support our local community here in Jacksonville and join other teams and corporate sponsors to turn Type 1 to Type none. It's because of them, that JDRF is able to continue its mission to cure, prevent and treat T1D. We've never been closer to a cure than now, and I'm excited to celebrate with everyone on Walk day."

T1D is an autoimmune disease in which a person's pancreas stops producing insulin, a hormone that enables people to get energy from food. There is no way to prevent T1D, and presently no way to get rid of it.

The Jacksonville One Walk has a fundraising goal of \$382,000 to power more research, enable more advocacy and fund more support for those living with T1D. To register for the JDRF Jacksonville One Walk, visit [walk.jdrf.org](http://walk.jdrf.org).

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Sid Spano with Emma, Anthony and Frances Jabbour, Sam and Olivia Jabbour, Selena Spano

## Catholic Charities Celebrates Service with Soiree

It was an evening of simple elegance as supporters flocked to Catholic Charities' flagship event, the Black and White Soiree. Held at the Adam W. Herbert University Center Saturday, April 20, the night comprised of dinner, a wine pull, fundraising and a keynote speech by State Attorney Melissa Nelson. Funds raised went toward empowering the Catholic Charities initiatives and the vital, behind-the-scenes work at Catholic Charities Bureau. Attendees also celebrated the contributions of honorees Frank and Marisa Martire and Anthony and Frances Jabbours.



Barbara and Dr. Michael Bredehoft



Sid Spano with Emma, Anthony and Frances Jabbour, Sam and Olivia Jabbour, Selena Spano



Lou Larmoyeux III and Stacy Larmoyeux



Youth Crisis Center board members Cathy Hurst, Bill Joel and Katie Krisher



Gwen Yates, former Jacksonville City Councilwoman and founder of the Transient Youth Center that would become the Youth Crisis Center

## Boogie to Benefit Youth Crisis Center's 50th

Youth Crisis Center (YCC) celebrated a milestone 50 years of service with a vibrant, 70s-themed party complete with bell-bottoms, platform shoes and dazzling disco attire. Guests danced the night away with drinks, refreshments and a look-back at five decades of impact since 1974. The night included



Youth Crisis Center President and CEO Kim Sirdevan and Board Chairman Landon Strickland look on as Founder Gwen Yates gives a speech on the creation and legacy of the organization.

heartfelt speeches, joyous moments and the incredible legacy of support the YCC has provided to countless young people. The organization's emphasis on care is for those who have been exposed to traumatic situations such as divorce, homelessness, relocation, loss of life, bullying and abuse.

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# Inside, Outside, All Around the Town



Lisa Lofton, Cookie Davis, Peggy Harrell Jennings



Stephen Dunn, President of FCPAP, with artist Randy Pitts



Woodworker Don Penny

## BY PEGGY HARRELL JENNINGS

### Inside

Jacksonville Artists' Guild members brought the outdoors inside at the recent reception for "My Town" at Happy Medium Books Café on Park Street. Lisa Lofton, Peggy Harrell Jennings and Leila Griffith's exhibit drew a cheerful crowd of friends, neighbors and art enthusiasts. Award-winning artist Ann Manry Kenyon was on hand to sign her beautiful book of portraits. The exhibit is up through May 26.

with relief that they were not required to grind and mix their paints with linseed oil before storing them in a pig's bladder sealed with string, as was the practice up until 1840. Thankfully, American artist John G. Rand came up with premixed tube paints, and the French developed the box or field easel, a portable easel with a built-in paint box.



Phyllis Appelby



Happy Medium Books store owner Dana Shuttles with Ann Manry Kenyon



Stephen Dunn, Trish Dougherty, Emily Mitchell, Burkelee Stokes and Doug Johnson



Gail Beveridge and Leslie Kruzicki painting on the front porch of the RAP Art House.



Lori Ann Sweet and Dana Doody



Jeanette Dennis



Dr. Jack Crump and Cheryl Phipps adopt a painting from the RAP Art House.



Gary McCulla with Stellers Gallery Director Claudia Burgi



Chloe Wood with Missy Riley

### Outside

More than 40 artists from the First Coast Plein Air Painters (FCPAP) were off the beaten path at the April 13 Brush with Nature event benefiting the Jacksonville Arboretum.

Although loaded down with brushes, paints, stools, easels, bug spray and other tools of the craft, the artists surely sighed

En plein air, the French term for "in the open air," grew in popularity with the invention of these convenient tools for painting outside. English artist John Constable gave the movement a kick start, then the French - most notably Monet, Renoir, Pissarro and other impressionists - embraced firsthand observations of natural light and the beauty of nature, and the plein air movement grew.

FCPAP is an organized, enthusiastic

community of artists who meet at CoRK Arts District the second Tuesday of each month, with "paint-outs" throughout Northeast Florida and South Georgia at least twice a month.

"By painting outside, our group enjoys camaraderie. We motivate and learn from each other, promote art, and explore nature in different parts of the community," said Jeannette Dennis.

The Brush with Nature event included an exhibit, activities for children, six different art demonstrations for the public and a quick-draw (2 hours) competition for the artists. The crowd enjoyed glorious weather as they meandered the paths, interacted with the artists and listened to music from Darren Ronan.

Learn more about FCPAP on Facebook

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**All Around the Town**

Jacksonville Artists' Guild members participated in the RAP Art House during the 50th Anniversary of the Riverside Avondale Preservation Home Tour with 109 images plus clay, wood and jewelry, which drew more than 1,000 visitors to view the 42-artist exhibit. Art aficionados perused



Martha Brane with one of her paintings

the exhibit, added to their collections, chatted with demonstrating artists and admired the fabulous architecture of the 1918 home on Barrs Street.

Meanwhile, Shoppes of Avondale's Stellers Gallery hosted a reception for 11 artists from the South including Venetia resident Chloe Wood who was on hand to greet viewers and discuss her work. Martha Brane's bluebirds of happiness motif gave a whimsical touch to the interesting variety of work displayed, and Christy Kinard's glorious flowers were showstoppers.

French painter Pierre Bonnard once said, "Art will never be able to exist without nature." These artists' works reflect that sentiment.

# The Beat Goes On:

**DATE - May 1-June** - Dawn Montgomery exhibit at Bold Bean Coffee Roasters, 869 Stockton St.

**May 4** - Under the Oaks music jam, Mandarin Museum at Walter Jones Historic Park, 2-4 p.m.

**May 4** - Ortega Village Arts Market, Cortez Park, 2922 Corinthian Ave., 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

**May 4 and May 18** - Murray Hill Pop Up at Axe Champs on Edgewood Avenue, [mhpopup.com](http://mhpopup.com)

**May 4-5** - Stars of Stage and Screen, 5 p.m., Saturday at St. Paul's by the Sea Episcopal Church, Sunday at Jacksonville Jewish Center, [civicorchestrajax.org](http://civicorchestrajax.org)

**May 8** - Escape to Margaritaville, Alhambra Dinner Theatre, [alhambrajax.com](http://alhambrajax.com)

**May 11** - RAP Garden Tour, 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tour starts at the Garden Club, 1005 Riverside Ave., [gardenclubjax.org/events](http://gardenclubjax.org/events)

**May 11** - Spring Uncorked, sip-and-stroll event with guided painting sessions, vendors and music, 4-7 p.m., [jacksonvilleartboretum.org](http://jacksonvilleartboretum.org)

**May 13** - Presentation by artist Gail Beveridge, Lakeshore Woman's Club, 2352 Lakeshore Blvd. Register at [jacksonvilleartistsguild.org](http://jacksonvilleartistsguild.org)

**May 20-July 26** - Songs of Summer exhibit from Jacksonville Artists' Guild at Main Library. Reception at Art Walk June 5.

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](mailto:editor@residentnews.net) for consideration in *The Beat Goes On*.



Paula Joyner with Phil and Michelle Sandusky

## Garden Circle Honors Local Artist, Plein Air Painter

The ladies of the San Marco Garden Circle held a luncheon at Town Hall in San Marco Square on April 16 to honor Jacksonville native Phil Sandusky for his artistry and contributions to history and preservation.

The ladies illustrated their appreciation for his ability to capture and memorialize the Landon Park rose garden, which was destroyed by the high water caused by Hurricane Irma several years ago.

"We loved our gardens, but Irma had other plans; your painting helps the rose garden live on in our memory," said club President Elizabeth McGraw.



Ginny Stine-Romano with Stacia Dean



Cathy Watkiss with Debbie Barnes

Sandusky's painting of the lost rose garden has become a curated set of note cards that act as a fundraiser for beautification and support of the Circle's initiatives.

"This area is just so pretty," said Sandusky. "I've painted more here in the past month than I did in a decade of living here. Every time I return my vision has changed, which changes my perspective."

The Circle is in the process of having more of the in-demand notecards printed. *The Resident News* will keep you updated on how to purchase them in support of the legacy of the rose garden, the history of San Marco and the San Marco Garden Circle.

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

# THE WAY WE WERE

## Eunice Harris

BY JENNIFER JENSEN

Dressed to the nines, adorned with accessories, and hair in a simple updo, Eunice Harris brings a lively personality and positive attitude to every room she enters. Her eyes are bright, and her smile is warm when she meets new and old friends. When meeting Harris, one might be surprised when they learn her age. She turned 102 years old in November.

Regularly joking that she is “there to stay,” Harris is the oldest resident at Starling at San Jose, although some might say she’s by far the most active.

And she doesn’t feel a day over 19. Besides the use of a walker, she is in great health.

“I feel great,” Harris said. “I feel well, and I sleep well.”

A good night’s sleep is something she attributes to her good health and longevity – that, and daily exercise at the facility’s on-site gym.

“I go to the gym every day. I’ve always exercised,” she said. “I have the gym all to myself. I don’t have to worry that I’ll have to wait, because I go and nobody’s there.”

She also doesn’t believe in taking medication. “I don’t take any medication. None,” she said. “It’ll kill you.”

Instead, Harris tries to eat healthy and stay active in whatever outings are planned at Starling: tours, restaurants, theater, the symphony or lunch. She also plays Rummikub every day and bingo a few times a week.

“I can do most anything I want to do,” she said. “There’s a lot of activity here, and you can do as much or as little as you want to. I do not stay in my room.”

Born on her grandparents’ homestead in a small town in Georgia, she lived on a large working dairy farm with her two sisters, Sara and Ardelia. While living in Hazelhurst, Georgia, she met her “good husband” of 64 years, D Quillian Harris Jr., who was in college and in town visiting a friend.

“I was in a drug store, and they passed the drug store,” said Harris. “He said to his brother, ‘There’s your girl.’ And his brother said, ‘No, that’s just a sister.’”

The two went on a date the next night and married a year and a half later.

“He always adored mother, and she adored him,” said Calhoun Harris, Eunice’s son.

The couple had four children – Dr. D Quillian “Duke” Harris, Calhoun Harris, Dorothy Hightower and Dr. W. Lester Harris – as well as seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Along with being a wife and mother, Eunice Harris was also a teacher for more than 30 years, including to all four of her children. When her son Calhoun was one of her students, he kept accidentally calling her “mother,” like at home, after which everyone started calling her “Mother Harris.” To this day, she still has students who



Eunice Harris with her four children: Lester Harris, Duke Harris, Dorothy Hightower and Calhoun Harris.



Eunice Harris celebrates her 102nd birthday.

send her birthday cards.

“I loved teaching,” she said. “If you didn’t like it, you shouldn’t be there.”

Harris was very active in her community. She was a member of the garden club and was responsible for planting 100 live oaks in her town. All the family were regular churchgoers at McRae United Methodist Church.

“She’s still an inspiration to all of us,”

–Calhoun Harris

“Growing up, we had our certain pew. I call it my pew” Harris said. “Sometimes I wonder who’s sitting there now.”

Harris’ husband passed away in June 2007. She moved to Jacksonville in 2017 – just down the road from her son – after she broke her pelvis and couldn’t live by herself any longer. She accepted the process with grace, just like when the time came to stop driving.

“I drove my car to Calhoun’s house, and I gave him my key, and we never said anything else about it,” she said.

Grace and longevity run in Harris’ family. Her younger sister, Sara, passed away 11 days before her 100th birthday in 2023. Her sister Ardelia lived until 93 before her passing in 2014, and their mother nearly made it to 100 as well – just a few months shy. Harris’ longest-living relative was her great-grandmother who lived to be 109 years old.

For this long life, Harris considers herself to be incredibly blessed.

“Everything has been pretty much smooth,” she said. “I make it sound like it was just perfect, but I guess there were all these challenges, such as deaths in the family. But even then, we can’t change those things, and you make the most out of it. I really have had a good life. Still am, thank goodness.”

“She’s still an inspiration to all of us,” said her son. “And she runs circles around everybody in this building.”

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Marroquin, in his home brewery, brewed beer as a hobby for 18 years before becoming head brewer at Tepeyolot Cervceria.

Joel, Job, Kristen, Jesse and Silas in San Diego.

Joel Marroquin with his son, Jesse.

Joel Marroquin with his girlfriend, Kristen Montiel

BY JENNIFER JENSEN

Love brought Joel Marroquin to Jacksonville, and less than two years later, that love gave him a baby boy and a new career – a whirlwind of change in a short amount of time.

“There was a lot going on,” Marroquin said. “But it’s very exciting for us.”

Originally from San Diego, California, Marroquin moved to the area to be with his girlfriend Kristen Montiel. The pair had dated back in California, when they were in their mid-20s, but went their separate ways for a decade. Marroquin, a molecular biologist at the time, reached out to Montiel, who was now living in Jacksonville, to ask questions about universities in the area, as he had been toying with the idea of doing some research at one of them. The relationship blossomed into a serious one and Marroquin made frequent trips back and forth for nearly two years.

“It became more and more difficult to leave and come back,” Marroquin said. “I didn’t want to leave anymore.”

He decided it was time to call Jacksonville home. Shortly after moving, they discovered Montiel was pregnant.

“We went to the Taco Tequila Fest, and she showed me the pregnancy test, but I thought it was a COVID test and said, ‘Oh man, we got COVID?’ And she said, ‘no,’” he said. “It was a very big surprise to both of us, but it was the happiest surprise.”

Their son, Jesse, is 11 months old now, and they are a happy, blended family with Marroquin’s two stepsons, Job and Silas. The two older boys love being a big brother and they help whenever they can, he said.

After moving to Jacksonville, he immediately started looking for work. He got an interview at Tepeyolot Cervceria in San Marco. Three days later, he was working behind the bar.

“It was the first thing I kind of fell into,” he said. “I wanted to get to work right away.”

Meanwhile, Marroquin had been brewing beer at home – something he had done for 18 years. He decided to bring in a batch of beer he made to share with the head brewer and owner.

“You always want other people’s opinions,” Marroquin said. “Beer is a social thing and is meant to be shared with friends.” They both liked it and asked if he’d be interested in working in the brewery.

“I learned all the ins and outs of the product, and how to brew in a brewery and not at home,” he said. “It’s a big difference. It’s like playing college ball while the other one is like going pro.”

Recently, Marroquin became head brewer. Before moving to Jacksonville, he had cracked open a prophetic fortune cookie with a message that read, “Your hobby will become your career.” And that’s exactly what happened.

His former career as a molecular biologist comes in handy with respect to brewing. He experiments with different flavors and types, and brews different types of beer that appeal to all beer enthusiasts.

“I love the science of it, the chemistry aspect, but you also have the ability to be artistic and creative,” he said.

He also started an organization called the Jacksonville Brewers Alliance, which brings together head brewers in the city monthly to work together, collaborate, and share

tips and advice.

“We try to work together to keep each other afloat,” Marroquin said. “Last year, I think, we lost four breweries. Collectively, we’re the Jacksonville brewing scene.”

He said he’s always trying to improve and considers it a great benefit to be able to tap into such a knowledgeable network.

“It’s not like magic where you can’t, share your secrets. I feel very fortunate because everybody’s been very forthcoming with their knowledge and sharing it with me,” he said.

The family’s older boys are on a wrestling team. As a former high school wrestler and high school coach himself, the decision to help coach their team came naturally for Marroquin. His house is now a “wrestling zone.” Recently, his older son took a family friend down to the ground with a wrestling move.

“I was like, ‘Oh, I’m sorry, man.’ He’s like, ‘No, that was good. I’m impressed,’” Marroquin said. “No one is safe.”

Marroquin enjoys getting out with his family and exploring the city. They frequently visit family-friendly breweries around town and support them. But they also like traveling back to California to visit family or venturing to different places like Daytona Beach, Washington, D.C., and New Orleans.

In his two years here, Marroquin said the city has grown on him – quite different than San Diego.

“I was homesick for probably the first year,” Marroquin said. “Eventually, I stopped missing what I didn’t have, and I started really enjoying what I do have. I’m a family-oriented man and my family brings me peace and joy.”

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# ANIMAL HOUSE



The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office's Anthony Yannuzzi and K9 Patriot, a tracking bloodhound.



Officer Anthony Yannuzzi and K9 Patriot deploy by helicopter.

## Yannuzzi and Patriot: Bringing Home the Missing

BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA

By the time local news stations began reporting that an 11-year-old child was missing, Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) Officer Anthony Yannuzzi and his tracking bloodhound K9, Patriot, were already on the hunt.

"When we arrived, the child's scent was already over an hour old. Once K9 Patriot was given the scent, he took off and trailed for more than half a mile. He found the child between two cars," Yannuzzi said.

Officer Yannuzzi and K9 Patriot are the department's full-time canine tracking team, on call 24/7. They respond to missing person calls: children, senior citizens, other missing or suicidal persons, those with dementia, autism, mental illness, or who are otherwise incapacitated or at-risk.

K9 Patriot is the only single-purpose, scent-discriminate bloodhound at JSO. That means that K9 Patriot specializes solely and exclusively in tracking or trailing, unlike some other law enforcement canines that may be trained for two tasks. Yannuzzi said that his partner was born to track the missing.

"Even as a puppy weighing 10 pounds, he barreled right through the thick brush like a wrecking ball on the scent; he never needed any prompting. Now at two years

old, he goes crazy on the scent and is so stubborn. He's like a heat-seeking missile and does not stop," Yannuzzi said.

K9 Patriot's unusual backstory includes an unintended arrival in Santa Rosa County, Florida, when two police bloodhounds managed to do more than track missing persons. Copper, the female, turned up pregnant and delivered 12 puppies. The department sent a message to all Florida sheriff's departments explaining their unexpected situation and offering a free bloodhound puppy. JSO responded.

On January 17, 2022, K9 Patriot, eight weeks old, arrived in Jacksonville. JSO Sgt. Charlie Byrd took the puppy home to live with him. Byrd immediately began training the newest recruit to earn his certification as a tracker and trailing K9. Byrd said that the training process to locate missing persons is complex, but the puppy caught on immediately. K9 Patriot earned his certifications at six months old and completed seven missions during his first months on the job.

"K9 Patriot's parents, Copper and Champ, were great trackers who had found 50 or 60 runaways," said Yannuzzi. "One of his brothers works in Nassau County, and the other siblings work all over Florida."

As Sgt. Byrd planned his retirement during 2023, he chose Yannuzzi from five applicants to become K9 Patriot's handler and complete the extensive training. It was a difficult transition for Byrd to say goodbye to his partner, but he and Yannuzzi made a pact: Byrd has open visitation with his favorite bloodhound.

When K9 Patriot is off duty, he lives with Yannuzzi, enjoying an everyday dog life and daily fun with the family's other three dogs. Although bloodhounds are born trackers, Yannuzzi said they must learn to discriminate between scents to track

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and locate a missing person. He compared K9 Patriot to a professional athlete who requires daily training to maintain physical conditioning and hone skills.

Scent-discrimination is the ability of the trained tracking canine to locate and follow one scent. The canine is given an article of clothing or an object, such as a key fob, that belonged to the missing person. When the person's scent is given to the canine, the dog ignores all other scents and locks onto the trail left behind by the missing person.

The physical terrain and location of the trail left by the missing person are contributing factors in every tracking mission. Out in the woods or a rural area, there may only be one human scent for the canine to follow, versus a highly populated city with hundreds of competing scents. Weather or other conditions may contaminate, alter or disturb the trail, making the canine's job more difficult.

The time that has passed since the missing person left the trail is another critical factor. K9 Patriot has found missing persons on trails up to seven hours old, including trails that hundreds of other people and animals may have walked on, contaminating the scent. Tracking canines learn to stay on the scent despite any conditions: other people, wildlife, domestic animals, vehicles, garbage, birds and countless competing odors, some of which may be strong or overwhelming.

Even if a person has been missing for 20 hours or more, or the search location is a highly contaminated area, K9 Patriot can still assist. He can at least indicate a direction of travel to the search teams, such as "this way on Baymeadows," Yannuzzi said.

"These dogs serve a critical purpose. If officers had to search for missing persons or runaways in a grid, it would take a massive manpower effort and energy, requiring a huge grid and valuable time, which is so important in these cases. The canines can accomplish a search so much more quickly," Yannuzzi explained.

To help speed response time and better assist missing or endangered persons in an emergency, JSO also urges families to utilize Duval County's new, free, voluntary Registry for Endangered, Vulnerable, or Missing Persons (REVAMP) by visiting [jaxready.com/REVAMP](http://jaxready.com/REVAMP) or calling (904) 255-3172. Individuals can be registered if they have cognitive or memory impairment, sensory disabilities or other challenges that make them vulnerable if they are missing or lost.

The REVAMP registry records critical information that aids in emergency search-and-rescue efforts, like recent photographs, frequently visited locations, known medical conditions, communication needs and other vital details. The secure registry was created by the City of Jacksonville Emergency Preparedness Division, in partnership with the JSO and Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department (JFRD).

Free First Responder Awareness Stickers are also available. These stickers can be placed on a home entrance or vehicle window to alert responders to the presence of individuals with special needs or impairments. Family or caregivers may request three stickers per qualifying individual by calling Jacksonville's Missing Persons Unit at (904) 255-3172 or Jax Ready/City of Jacksonville Emergency Preparedness Department at (904) 255-2712. Stickers are also available from the JFRD.

JSO Officer Christian Hancock, who assists with public information, reminds citizens not to approach police canines; the dogs are on-duty and working. While K9 Patriot is social and does tracking demonstrations for children, Hancock advises that all dogs have distinct personalities, and some may be unfriendly to strangers.

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**I**t's not often that someone lives a life so well and long to find themselves recognized as a legend. Still, Dr. George Trotter had that privilege, and those who knew him would agree that the "Energizer Bunny" was a dynamo of fun-filled activity. Many can attest to his humor, warmth, wit, joie de vivre and loving personality: his patients – many of whom spanned 50 years – his friends, tennis buddies, ballet besties, his loving family, and his devoted wife of 65 years, Ann, to whom he referred to jokingly as Saint Ann for "putting up with him."

Every phone conversation ended with an abrupt "Love ya, bye." (Perhaps even while you were still speaking...) His cheery whistle and "be of good cheer" admonitions will be missed by all who knew him, as well as his oft-outrageous antics and fashion flair. As a former Best Dressed Man in Jacksonville award winner, he was usually spotted with an ascot and matching hanky tucked cavalierly into his jacket pocket.

Dr. Trotter loved the limelight and gave his all to everything he did, including the legendary Trotter family Halloween parties. His dance performances – from classical pas de deux to Captain Hook in "Peter Pan" – as Vincent van Gogh, a dandy in "Bus Stop Boogie," a king or a giant rabbit were endless, and he would don a costume at the drop of a hat (and he had many!)

Dr. Trotter's medical practice of

60-plus years was old-fashioned doctoring at its best. He loved his patients and treated everyone like family. His generosity knew no bounds, and his loving concern did not stay at the office when the day was over; Dapper "Ole Doc Trotter" would happily arrive for a house call with his expert care, humorous banter and antique physician bag in tow.

A native of Jacksonville, Dr. Trotter was born at St. Vincent's Hospital in Riverside, where he later did his medical residency in 1959. He attended St. Paul's Catholic School and was active at St. Matthews Catholic Church. He traveled the world, showed interest in those around him, was enthusiastic, hardworking, dedicated to excellence, and a true gentleman.

A friend remarked, "George lived life to the fullest. He set the bar for all of us for how to live our lives."

Dr. Trotter adored his wife and children George, Junior, Kathleen (Dr. Eduardo Balbona,) John (Kris Fallin,) Susan (Michael Perkey,) Mary Ann (Douglas Moran), and nine grandchildren, and he was proud of their many accomplishments. His influence in the community is long-reaching and multifaceted: Duval County Medical Society, The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Northeast Florida Aids Society, the American Cancer Society and other medical-related boards of directors. He also founded We Care Jax, which

annually gives the George S. Trotter, M.D. Founder's awards for medical professionals, philanthropy and service. He has planted the seeds for many organizations that continue to bring blessings to many people.

His passion for the arts and dance helped establish the Community Nutcracker Ballet in 1992 and the "Dancing Doctor" performed many roles in the Nutcracker, while also serving as president and CEO from 2005-2012, during which he helped move the organization forward and raise funds for the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society, Vision is Priceless, Dreams Come True, and others. He performed the role of Herr Drosselmeyer for so many years that the role became synonymous with his name. A lifelong athlete who enjoyed snow skiing, swimming, basketball, and tennis, he began ballet classes in his 40s. He then performed with the Jacksonville Concert Ballet in classical and comedic roles. His repertoire even included hilarious skits at Ye Mystic Reveller's Ball.

Dr. Trotter was dedicated to walking the walk of his Christian faith by helping the less fortunate and sowing kindness to all. He was beloved by a multitude of people, and his friends and family have wonderful memories to carry them onward. We can all rest assured that Ole Doc Trotter is setting things straight in heaven and "dancing before the Lord with all his might."



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by Elaine Ehrlichman

In our December article, we wrote about grief during the holiday season, and with Mother's Day coming up this month, we wanted to revisit some of the different ways you can handle your grief while also honoring Mom. We have compiled a list of ideas and activities to bring you comfort and help you approach this holiday in a way that feels right for you.

**Honor Mom with her favorite things.**

Participating in small acts is a great way to honor your mother while still being mindful of your grief. Gestures like planting her favorite flower, cooking one of her treasured meals, listening to an album she adored, or watching a favorite family movie are all wonderful and gentle ways to remember your mother.

**Write a letter.**

When someone we love is no longer present, multitudes of ways exist for us to continue feeling connected to that person. Writing a letter is just one of those ways, and it is a beautiful chance for you to tell your mother everything that has been happening in your life. From exciting job news to the new bakery you visited last week, you can share any details that come to mind.

**Take inspired action.**

If your mother supported a charity or organization, spending the day volunteering there can be both a tribute and a significant act of kindness. If your mother wasn't involved with a specific group, try bringing to mind her interests and hobbies. For

example, did she love animals or enjoy the beach? Volunteering at an animal shelter or signing up to remove trash at the beach are both ways you can turn her passions into memorial gestures. Alternatively, if the thought of volunteering is overwhelming, many organizations also accept various kinds of donations.

**Spend time at your mother's gravesite or memorial location.**

Whether your mother is buried or had her ashes placed at a cemetery or other memorial site, many people find visiting their loved ones on holidays and other special occasions to be healing. If the idea of writing a letter didn't resonate with you, perhaps an in-person catch-up will. Many individuals find comfort in talking aloud to their loved ones, updating them on their lives and asking for guidance. Feel free to bring a blanket and a snack if you intend to stay for a while. If you are visiting a cemetery, bringing flowers to decorate Mom's gravesite is another way to honor her and surround her with some extra beauty on this day.

**Get together with family and friends to share stories.**

Spending time with others who knew your mother is a moving way to celebrate her memory. Taking turns sharing heartwarming stories allows everyone to come together and remember their favorite moments. Additionally, try transforming this get-together into a potluck, where each person brings a dish that reminds them of Mom. It can be a meal she used to make or something she simply would have enjoyed.

**Hold a memorial service.**

Holding a service to remember Mom on Mother's Day is another impactful way to honor her. Lighting memorial candles, creating a memory board with photos and inspiring quotes, or inviting family and friends to participate in sharing kind words are all great options. Inviting a leader from your religious or cultural affiliation to attend the service may also be helpful and reassuring.

**Find a distraction.**

Sometimes, engaging in activities that bring attention to a loss might be too painful, or it might be too soon to participate without feeling overwhelmed. If this is the case, keep in mind that these feelings are normal, and it is perfectly okay to direct your attention elsewhere. The grieving process looks different for everyone, so remember to give yourself the time and space you need to heal. Ensure you take care of yourself during this time.

*We hope these ideas for Mother's Day are helpful for anyone experiencing grief during this holiday. You can also apply these suggestions to other occasions, so feel free to keep them within reach whenever you may need them. As always, we here at Hardage-Giddens are available to provide grief resources and support for you at any time.*

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