



Excitement builds across the river as Fuller Warren Shared-Use Path nears completion

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Construction on the Fuller Warren Bridge expansion and its shared-use path — as part of the improvements to the I-10/I-95 interchange — began in 2017. Six years later, work on the bridge’s pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly path is near completion and it is expected to open this fall amid much fanfare on both sides of the St. Johns River.

When the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) first presented its proposal to expand the bridge, Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) Executive Director Shannon Blankinship recalled it being met with opposition.

“Most people who showed up to the public meetings were like, ‘We don’t need an expanded Fuller Warren Bridge; we don’t need any extra lane,’” she said.

Once the idea of also installing a shared-use path along the bridge was introduced, though, Blankinship said the opposition very quickly switched to support for the idea and thus began the six-year process of designing and constructing a separate lane for pedestrians and cyclists to safely cross the St. Johns River from San Marco to Riverside and vice versa.

SEE FULLER WARREN ON PAGE 8

New face for a familiar old place

Plaza renovations underway along Hendricks Avenue



BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Facade renovations are underway for Miramar Plaza on Hendricks Avenue in San Jose.

Longtime residents might recognize it as the once-home of Piner’s Lock and Safe, the former anchor store of the shopping center.

Lead architect on the project, Thomas Duke of Thomas Duke Architect, said he recalls shopping at the neighborhood hardware store back when he and his wife were newly married and said it’s “very rewarding” to be part of this project to renovate the shopping center.

“Whenever you can renovate and alter an existing space and reuse what’s there, that’s

always a good thing,” he said. “...Sometimes the cost becomes prohibitive in renovating buildings, but typically, if you can, you end up with a space that has some character that’s kinda hard to recreate from scratch. So a lot of times renovating a building, you end up with an end product that’s different than had you just started with a project that didn’t have any constraints to it.”

General contractor Edd Langdon of Ticon Commercial LLC said construction on the shopping center has been going on for some time. The facade renovations, which began in early August, includes updating the storefronts and replacing all the glass.

“We’ve re-roofed 90 percent of the building already and a lot of work’s been going on for a while there because it is an older shopping center,” Langdon said. “We love the project... It’s got its challenges but it’s gonna look great when it’s done.”

The shopping center was purchased by Nackashi and Nackashi, LLC — a father-and-son partnership comprised of Joe Nackashi and his son Gabriel. Joe said his son first saw the center for sale and reached out to him about it.

“When he found that building, I thought, ‘You know what Gabriel, that’s a great idea,’” Joe recalled. “So we decided to start our little partnership and buy it and transform it into what I hope to be a landmark building for the historic part of San Jose. My mother lives in the area, my family lives in the area so it was important to me from a personal perspective.”

According to Langdon, the next phase of construction will be focused on the parking lot.

The shopping center is expected to be completed by the end of the year. Milkster, a nitrogen creamery, will be moving in as a new tenant on the north end of the center.



PUBLIX TILLS TURN FIRST DOLLAR

The first customer through the turnstiles at the East San Marco Publix was Reece Livingston, who hustled into the store and was photographed with his mother Samantha.

SEE PAGE 18



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your **OPINION**

We now know how it feels to be celebrities. Since being profiled in Mary Wanser's "The Way We Were" article in August, we have heard from so many of our friends who congratulated us and told us they would save the paper for us. It really was great, how you were able to weave the many years of our life into one interesting short story. We are enjoying hearing from everyone and enjoying their lovely comments. Mary certainly did a good job and told our story well. Thank you for making us a part of the *Resident* and telling 'how we were' in such a lovely, professional manner.

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I also love the paper and how it brings the neighborhood together through the pages. Keep up the great work!

Sincerely,
Michelle McDowell

City Council considers accessory dwelling units for housing relief

BY SAMANTHA FLOM
Resident Community News

Thanks in part to soaring inflation and a spike in demand exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, the rising cost of housing in Jacksonville has left many residents in a tight spot.

According to a recent study from researchers at Florida Atlantic University and Florida International University, the Jacksonville housing market is currently overpriced by nearly 46 percent — the 25th highest percentage in the nation.

However, as additional research from FAU, the University of Alabama and Florida Gulf Coast University indicates that rent increases are on track to slow considerably over the next year, relief may be on the horizon. But with no definitive answer as to how soon that relief will be felt, the question, for many, is what can be done right now?

"We have a housing crisis," local resident Cindy Funkhouser noted at an Aug. 9 meeting of the Jacksonville City Council. "In order to address a crisis, we need tools and we need solutions."

One potential solution currently being considered by the City Council is the Keep Our Families Together Act, which would allow for the construction of "accessory dwelling units" in the backyards of existing single-family homes.

As defined by the Florida Statutes, an accessory dwelling unit, or ADU, is "an ancillary or secondary living unit that has a separate kitchen, bathroom, and sleeping area existing either within the same structure, or on the same lot, as the primary dwelling unit." These can include such structures as tiny homes, carriage houses, garage apartments or mother-in-law suites.

Under the proposed legislation, ADUs would be permitted, provided that they adhere to specific criteria, including that the unit be located behind a "conforming single-family dwelling" and possess a visual relationship to the primary residence, in addition to following other codes and regulations. The property owner would also be required to live inside the primary structure as opposed to inside the ADU or elsewhere.

At the Aug. 9 meeting, Funkhouser was one of a few attendees to share her thoughts on the bill, stating that she believed it was a good alternative for those with family members who either cannot afford their own home or cannot live on their own due to health concerns.

"This is one other solution in the toolbox," she said. "And considering the crisis we're in, I don't think any of us can afford to not be very serious about bringing solutions into the toolbox."

Like Funkhouser, Tim Smith said he was in favor of the bill, noting, "People are going to move here to this city whether we have additional housing units or not — that's the real problem that we're having."

Adding that his family of five could personally benefit from the additional space that an ADU would provide, Smith said he believed the bill had a universal appeal.

"What I love about this bill is that it's something that everyone can get behind, both on the political right and left," he said. "The right wants limited government. This increases actual liberty and the right to property. And the left really cares about marginalized peoples, and this helps — basic economics — lower the price of rent because it increases the supply."


Nevertheless, the bill is not without its detractors. Duchy Stevens, for instance, said she would prefer to see more houses like those built by Habitat for Humanity as opposed to tiny houses in the backyards of existing homes.

"That's not what backyards are made for," she contended.

And Councilman Matt Carlucci, while expressing support for the overall concept, warned that the addition of such structures could potentially create an insurance headache for homeowners.

"If people build these auxiliary buildings ... there will be limitations from their homeowner's insurance as to how much will apply in terms of coverage to the auxiliary building," he noted. "And if it's rented out to a tenant that's not a relative, there may be no coverage at all."

With the introducer of the bill, Councilman Rory Diamond, out of town for military training, committee discussions have been temporarily placed on hold until his return. When conversations resume, *Resident Community News* will provide a comprehensive update.



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GOT NEWS?

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Alford Place streetscape improvements aim to stay true to San Marco character

BY KAREN RIELEY
Resident Community News

San Marco, like other historic neighborhoods in Jacksonville, has been experiencing tremendous growth. With growth comes change, and as it changes, San Marco residents and others who are connected to its history find themselves at the crux between the economic benefits of growth and change and the potential of losing the unique characteristics that attracted them to the neighborhood in the first place.

executive team member, Nate Kunath, along with Yves Rathle, owner of studioYVESinc+, to discuss how the growing number of new businesses and development along the Alford Place corridor could be integrated into the historic character and feel of San Marco.

“These projects were all doing their own thing, and none of them related to the other. I couldn’t stand by and watch that happen,” Boulos said. “I got the San Marco Preservation Society involved because I believe we can take the best elements of San Marco Square and extend that character down Alford Place. We will enhance the entire corridor and make it more vibrant, safe and attractive by expanding the square down Alford Place.”

The goal is to create a pedestrian-friendly alleyway that still includes cars but enhances the experience for pedestrians and creates linkage.

“San Marco Square has a very clear master plan but once it wanders outside of that it dissolves away and looks random. It hasn’t been thought out for the pedestrian. We want to make it safer for pedestrians and increase the neighborhood feel,” said Kunath. “You don’t want everything to look the same, but street planning can tie everything together.”

According to Jaycox, the design for the intersection at Alford Place and Mango Place would become the standard design for all the other intersections.

walking very pleasant. Jaycox envisions vertical art pylons and maybe some cobblestone-like material on the street with more texture to slow down traffic.

“As we expand out into San Marco Proper, pedestrian safety and calming traffic down need to be the priority,” said Jaycox.

The design team is also proposing trompe l’oeil for the blank wall on the AT&T building in San Marco Square. Trompe l’oeil is a technique used in art in which objects are painted their normal size in a very realistic way to make people think that the objects are solid and real.

“The centerline of Alford Place lets you look all the way down to the bronze sculpture of a jester that is front of Theatre Jacksonville, Florida’s longest running community theatre, to celebrate it and the San Marco art community,” Rathle said. “Making communities more walkable with lighting makes them safer and enhances placemaking. Little plaques could tell the story of different aspects of the square.”

Linzee Ott, former president of SMPS, has been working on signal box art for the project.



San Marco Blvd Gateway @ Alford Place: Street Improvements



“If we can have Alford Place be an extension of the square and mimic its architectural elements, we can create more walkability across Hendricks. It will open up more parking, activate different portions of the square that haven’t been as active and connect the new development across from the square.”

- Scott Wohlers
San Marco Merchants Association, president

Several design professionals, business owners and residents involved in preserving San Marco, as well as government officials are working together to navigate this delicate balance of growth and preservation. At the moment, the focus is on Alford Place, a street that begins in San Marco Square at San Marco Blvd., between the AT&T building and Rue Saint Marc restaurant and continues northeast to intersect with Hendricks Ave. and Mango Place. Zim Boulos, owner and president of Office Environments & Services (OES), brought together Bill Jaycox, founder and principal of Jaycox Architects & Associates, and Bill’s

“With so many projects happening all at once, it made sense to look at the bigger picture from a master plan perspective. From that viewpoint, we saw an opportunity to create a unified pedestrian pathway along Alford Place,” said Desiree Bailey, president of San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS).

“The Atlantic Boulevard Corridor is changing rapidly, and SMPS is working hard to make sure that the efforts to create our San Marco Overlay and the North San Marco Neighborhood Action Plan were not in vain,” Bailey said. “The Alford Place project is in keeping with both of those.”

“This is an attempt to expand San Marco to the railroad tracks and eventually to I-95, a bigger San Marco village that can expand all the way to the Southbank and the river as well,” he said. “As people drive in and out of the square, we’re trying to alert them that there’s more to San Marco than just the square.”

The design for the sidewalk includes granite stone pavers and brick pavers, with octagon and hexagon shapes like in San Marco Square. The north side of the sidewalk would be planted with palms and the south side of the sidewalk would be planted with small oak trees to create a canopy for shade and shadows to make

“The idea is to have the art start at Prudential and continue up to San Marco Square to make things feel safer and nicer and to include information so that people can read about the history of San Marco to help them feel like they are in a contiguous space,” Ott said.

“San Marco Preservation Society will continue to be involved in conversations about what growth means in terms of infrastructure

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 ...



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and in protecting what we have," she said. SMPS has helped fundraise privately within the community to procure engineered plans as a visionary springboard to turn over to the City. SMPS' role will be to facilitate any private funding that may be needed in a public-private partnership.

make it easier for people in the nearby neighborhoods to access San Marco," Cumber said. "I am very excited that \$7 million in funding has now been included in the city's capital improvement plan in the Mayor's budget. I am hopeful the budget will pass with this funding intact. And as we go forward,

The San Marco Merchants Association (SMMA) helped with the investment in funds needed to make the redesign happen.

"I think it has such an impact on San Marco as a whole," said Scott Wohlers, president of SMMA. "If we can have Alford Place be an extension of the square and mimic its archi-

the following businesses will be leasing spaces: Publix Liquors, Orangetheory Fitness, Crumbl Cookies, St. Johns Eye Associates, Gemma Fish + Oyster, and Foxtail Coffee.

"We collaborated with SMPS to make sure the design of our project would tie into the community early on in the development process," said Patrick McKinley, vice president, market officer of Regency Centers. "The Alford Place project will continue to enhance the streetscape in the community and should tie in nicely with the multiple projects currently being constructed in the immediate area."

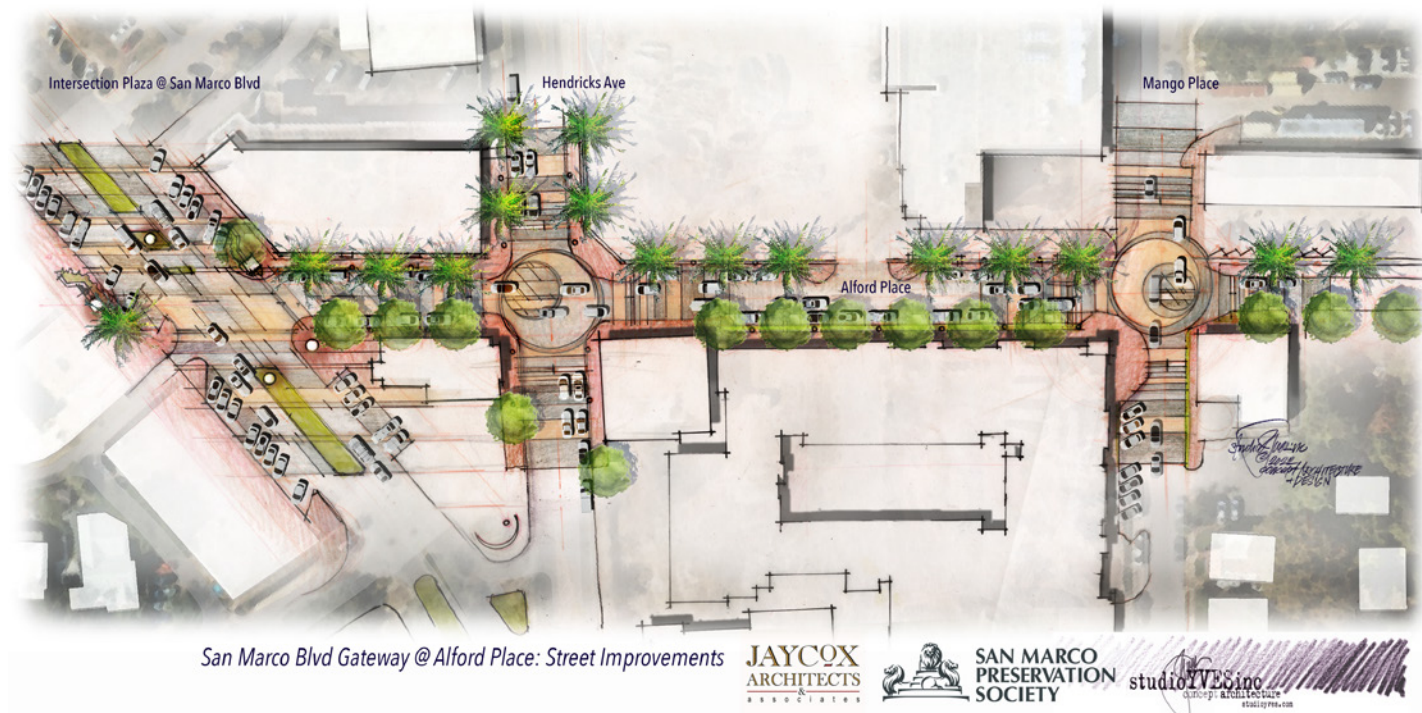
"Our biggest challenge is how to make sure everything goes forward smoothly into our new reality. Do we have enough amenities, restaurants and things for people to do? San Marco will look different in five years than it does today," Wohlers said.

"With the help of people like Lori Boyer and LeAnna Cumber, San Marco has always had a close partnership with the Department of Public Works and the Mayor's Office to help us accomplish our goals over the past 30 years," Boulos said.

Boyer was District 5 City Council member prior to Cumber and now serves as CEO of the Downtown Investment Authority. Boulos also credits John Pappas, director of the City's Department of Public Works, and Brian Hughes, chief administrative officer for the City of Jax, as being key people in making this project a reality.

"We would like to think that within six months we could get the project included in the City's five-year plan," Boulos said.

"There is an ancient proverb that says that one generation plants a tree, and the next generation enjoys the shade," he said. "If we all work together, we can leave our mark on this neighborhood and make it a better place than we found it for the next generation."



"LeAnna Cumber has been very accommodating, so now it's just a matter of working with the City to develop a schedule of work and determine what the City can fund and where SMPS might need to check in," Ott said. Cumber represents District 5 in which San Marco is located on the Jacksonville City Council.

"I definitely think that connecting the greater San Marco area through better sidewalks, more landscaping and safer bike paths will

I hope to be able to move the timing of this project up."

Cumber says that the next step in the project will probably be to hold a town hall to get people's thoughts about the conceptual design.

"With my background in transportation, I look at things sequentially. The design piece is the first thing. Then you build on it, see how it fits in and apply costs," Cumber said.

tectural elements, we can create more walkability across Hendricks. It will open up more parking, activate different portions of the square that haven't been as active and connect the new development across from the square."

Wohlers said that Regency Centers, which is developing the 60,000-square-foot project at Hendricks Ave. and Atlantic Blvd., is in the process of becoming a member of SMMA. The project will be known as East San Marco, and



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Architecture firm renovates 1939 Hendricks Ave for new headquarters

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Construction is nearing completion for the new headquarters of architecture and interiors firm Group 4 Design, Inc. at 1939 Hendricks Avenue.

Urban Partners Construction is the general contractor for the project.

The building has been shuttered since 2019, with a rear addition to the building condemned.

"I'm sure everybody probably thought at some point while they were driving up and down Hendricks, 'Wow I wish someone would do something with that building,'" said Group 4 Design President and Architectural Design Principal Karie Kovacocy. "I think everybody in the San Marco Square area was hoping somebody do it and then when we got the opportunity, we just jumped at it."

Construction and renovations on the building began in January of this year and Kovacocy said she expects the company to move in by the end of October. The firm will be moving from its current location on Prudential Drive.



A rendering of the new Group 4 Design, Inc. headquarters. Courtesy of Group 4 Design, Inc.

"We love the historic neighborhood, the walkability," she said. "And when we found a project that we could rehab, we felt like it was kind of the best solution all around. Being close to downtown, so we still have a presence in the urban core, but having a better work-lifestyle balance for employees, where they can walk to lunch and now they'll be able to walk to the grocery store, we thought it would be a great location."

The acquisition of the building was completed last November with developer Bill Ware, who is a 50 percent owner of the building in partnership with the architecture firm's principals.

As a resident of San Marco, Ware said he is "vested and invested" in the community and its growth.

"I have a real keen interest and love for the San Marco area and being a developer, I'm always looking for opportunities," he said.

Kovacocy said the aesthetic for the firm's new headquarters will be mid-century modern to pay homage to the buildings 1950s origins, adding that construction has taken longer than expected because of unforeseen complications given the building's condition.

"The building was closed up for so long that when we started demo, we found a lot of hidden issues," she added. "So it did extend it but we knew that was gonna happen. Adaptive reuse is one of the disciplines that we're committed to as a firm, so even though we may uncover a structural issue, we were committed to restoring it to its glory."

Veterans assessment survey launched for Jacksonville, Northeast Florida

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Active duty service members, veterans and military family members in Jacksonville and the greater Northeast Florida area have been invited to participate in a "first-of-its-kind" veterans' assessment survey.

Others eligible to take the survey include "a family member of a Veteran, a caregiver of a Veteran, or an employee of a military/Veteran service organization that serves Veterans and/or their families."

To launch the 2022 Northeast Florida Veteran and Family Needs Assessment, the City of Jacksonville has partnered with Endeavors, a Texas-based, national non-profit organization dedicated to providing aid for "vulnerable

people in crisis," as well as the Combined Arms Institute and the University of North Florida's Northeast Florida Center for Community Initiatives.

Florida has the third largest veteran population in the United States, behind California and Texas, according to the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs.

"Specifically Northeast Florida, we have about — let's see, it's about a quarter million, I think, in what we call the Jacksonville greater metropolitan area are either active duty, veterans, retirees or family members," said Bill Spann, director of Jacksonville's Military Affairs and Veterans Department. "As you go about your day and business, picking your kids up from school and filling your tank at the gas station, about one in four people you come across are in that same group."

A press release announcing the survey's launch stated that despite the state's large

veteran presence, "...it lacks the necessary data to accurately serve this community." The information collected through this survey, therefore, will "...provide data-driven insights about the current social services landscape for Veterans. It will also help facilitate funding opportunities and partnerships with the city, state and other service providers. This is the first time research and data will play a critical role in planning and policy decisions."

The survey launched on Aug. 9. It takes roughly 10 minutes to complete and all submissions are anonymous. An open house will be held on Thursday, Sept. 1 at the Salem Centre from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. to answer questions and provide more information.

"Our Wellness Model has been successful in saving lives and enhancing the quality of life for Veterans and their families," said Endeavors Director of Business Operations Ben Miranda in the press release. "The launch

of this survey is laying the foundation for future efforts in Florida."

Local veterans' organizations were consulted during the month-long process of preparing the survey, explained Spann, in order to "to fill all the gaps and ask all the questions and make this as universal as possible."

"This will help Endeavors to identify, fill gaps in services as well as provide data for other veterans services organizations like ourselves at the City or the Veterans Council of Duval County to make a case for resources and grants to fill gaps and needs," he added. "The survey will also reinforce what's being done well and inform which services are used and appreciated and therefore should continue to be offered."

The survey will remain open until Sept. 21. For more information or to take the survey, please visit www.combinedarms.us/northeastfloridavets.

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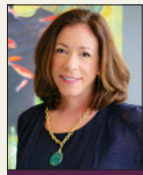
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FULLER WARREN
CONTINUED FROM COVER

FDOT Community Outreach Manager Hampton Ray said the department carefully considers community feedback on every project proposal and, if possible, incorporates public suggestions into that project. Adding the shared-use path to the Fuller Warren Bridge expansion is a prime example of the process of community discourse working, he explained.

“I’m really excited for it — I think it’s gonna be a great community feature,” added Ray. “I’m from Jacksonville and I love Jacksonville... To be able to bike or walk across the bridge, it’s gonna be a really great feature.”

Preserving the space beneath the Fuller Warren Bridge for the Riverside Arts Market (RAM) and ensuring it would not be reduced or otherwise impacted by the construction was a primary concern for RAP and the Riverside community, Blankinship said, adding that “luckily we were able to have compliance with” protecting that space.

“That was very challenging,” she said. “It meant getting barges to hold a lot of the equipment. It meant having lease agreements with nearby adjacent facilities and really making things, I would say, more burdensome on the construction team in order to accommodate every Saturday from 6 to 6 not having any impact on the footprint of the RAM.”

The knowledge that this shared-use path would soon be providing a point of access to Riverside and Avondale for people on foot or bike was the impetus for the newly announced Riverside Avondale Cultural Trail: Knowing people would be dropped off in the

neighborhood, possibly with little or no knowledge of what was within their immediate vicinity spurred RAP to create its own trail for these people to continue to follow and experience the neighborhoods.

“Having this sort of cultural trail right here where people access our neighborhood from the shared-use path and the Post Street Day Dock is gonna allow them to quickly connect

“For the grand opening celebration, we are planning to partner with San Marco Preservation Society and host a market on both sides of the river and then ways for folks on the San Marco side and the Riverside side to both access the shared use path at the same time and meet in the middle for some fun photos and venture to the other side and just experience the shared use path for the first time and have a reason to walk to the other side from wherever your starting point is.”

to the important cultural, historical and artistic pursuits and meaningfulness of some of the sites in the Five Points area,” she explained. “The Five Points Merchant Area, Memorial Park, the Garden Club, Riverside Row, the Cummer, the Riverside Arts Market. These are all things where they’re destinations in and of themselves, but they’re not necessarily connected to each other unless people know about the nearby amenities.”

On the other side of the river, Zim Boulos, an emeritus director of the San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS) recalled initial discussions on where the path would end on the San Marco side. Initially, he said, FDOT’s plans showed the path “connecting to the Palm Avenue intersection, which we felt was too dangerous,” he explained in an e-mail.

river so that more people could experience the pre-dawn beauty of San Marco,” Boulos wrote. “Lori Boyer and LeAnna Cumber worked with Keith Tickell of Baptist Medical Center during the construction of the MD Anderson Cancer Center to build the first segment of the loop along Nira Street. The bike path will connect to the Nira Street segment, then cross Hendricks and Kings Avenue and will eventually connect to a future section that will go past the News4Jax building, then alongside the RiversEdge District development, where it will then connect to the existing Riverwalk.”

Blankinship said both RAP and SMPS have been working to organize celebrations on both ends of the shared-use path once it opens.

“For the grand opening celebration, we are planning to partner with San Marco Preservation Society and host a market on both sides of the river and then ways for folks on the San Marco side and the Riverside side to both access the shared use path at the same time and meet in the middle for some fun photos and venture to the other side and just experience the shared use path for the first time and have a reason to walk to the other side from wherever your starting point is,” she said.

As far as when exactly that will be, it is still unclear.

In an email on Aug. 22, Ray confirmed FDOT is still anticipating a fall opening for the shared-use path “weather and unforeseen circumstances permitting,” although a concrete date is as of yet unavailable.

“There’s an old saying,” Boulos wrote. “One generation plants a tree and the next generation enjoys the shade.’ Hopefully this pathway will be enjoyed for years to come by all those who come after us.”

- Shannon Blankinship

Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) Executive Director

Boulos explained that then-Councilwoman Lori Boyer — now CEO of Jacksonville’s Downtown Investment Authority — arranged talks with SMPS, FDOT, and executives with Baptist Medical Center, Nemours Children’s Hospital to send the path behind Nemours Children’s Hospital, where it would connect to the San Marco exercise loop.

“We thought it would be great to have such an exercise loop on our South side of the

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FDOT rolls out study for I-95 improvements from I-10 to Beaver Street

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) hosted a pair of public meetings last month to present a study featuring proposed improvements to I-95 from I-10 to Beaver Street.

The Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study presented “options to improve safety, capacity, and traffic operations on I-95” including adding two 12-foot lanes in each direction of the interstate and deck replacement and rehabilitation of the Myrtle Avenue Bridge. Additional options include “intersection and roadway improvements at Church Street, Beaver Street, and West Union Street [and] potential changes in access to and from I-95 ramp terminal.”

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS



An excerpt from the Project Handout of Florida Department of Transportation’s (FDOT) PD&E study for the proposed improved to I-95 from I-10 to Beaver Street. Courtesy of FDOT.

“...These projects, we plan them years in advance. Our design year right now is around 2045. So we are designing for the future.”

– Hampton Ray
FDOT Community Outreach Manager

According to the PD&E study, 1999 was the last time I-95 was widened and “no major capacity improvements have taken place in over 20 years.”

The PD&E phase of the project allows for public feedback and community input on the proposed changes, creating an opportunity

for discourse between residents and the FDOT, explained FDOT Community Outreach Manager Hampton Ray.

“We make adjustments in some cases and eventually we move forward with the project or, based on feedback, we may not move forward with the project,” he said. “...These projects, we plan them years in advance. Our design year right now is around 2045. So we are designing for the future. We’re really looking for infrastructure that is going to be resilient for years to come.”

As far as where construction will actually begin on this corridor of the I-95, Ray said, the FDOT is aware of the heavy flow of goods and services passing through that stretch of the interstate.

“We’ll definitely be having those conversations with the contractor as part of the contract to make sure we protect the industries that are there in the Rail Yard [District],” he added.

Jeff Edwards, immediate past president of the Rail Yard District Business Council said the council has maintained a working relationship with FDOT for more than three years, “providing input from the perspective of the

Rail Yard District about the improvements and changes being suggested for I-95.”

“The Rail Yard District is supplied from those interstates by six exits or interchanges and it’s critical to the Rail Yard District as an economic development tool to maintain good access from both I-10 and I-95,” he added. “The Rail Yard District Business Council is very interested in how the exits and I-95 function, in this particular case, in terms of maintaining that value.”

Public discourse and input on these types of projects is important, Edwards said, because “the interstates are the arteries of Jacksonville and they feed all the neighborhoods and beyond. That access to the interstates is critical to the economic welfare to the city and the areas closest to the interstate especially.”

The period to submit public comments ended on Aug. 19.

Construction for this project is not expected to begin until 2026 — barring any unforeseen circumstances — at an estimated cost of \$170 million. Right-of-way procurement — the FDOT process of purchasing any necessary real estate from private citizens “to

accommodate for the additional capacity on the roadway,” Ray explained — is scheduled to begin in 2024, based on community feedback, and \$1.3 million has been budgeted for that phase of the project.

When planning these projects and improvements, FDOT takes its cues from local entities.

“We don’t want decisions being made by people who do not drive those roads regularly,” Ray added.

In this case, that entity is the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO), “the independent regional transportation planning agency for Duval, Clay, Nassau and St. Johns counties” based in Jacksonville.

“They [North Florida TPO] look 50 years ahead and they instruct FDOT where to use transportation dollars,” Ray explained. “These decisions aren’t being made out in Tallahassee, for instance. They’re being made here at the local level in Jacksonville for Jacksonville residents by Jacksonville leaders and policymakers. That was really the purpose of the meeting we had last week is to really engage with the community and maybe make some changes.”

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Efron Family to Introduce Taverna Oceana in Early 2023

Taverna Oceana is a raw bar and seafood-focused restaurant adjacent to Taverna's existing location



Chef Sam and Kiley Efron, the husband-and-wife team behind Taverna, will open Taverna Oceana in early 2023. The new raw bar and seafood-focused concept will be conveniently located next door to their existing concept located in San Marco Square.

Taverna Oceana's dining room will offer a more intimate experience than Taverna, perfect for happy hours, date nights, or evenings with friends. This new concept will offer approximately 78 seats, including a robust private dining space serving as the main focal point upon entering the space. There will also be an exposed Oyster and Champagne bar, with seating in front of the shucking station for guests to enjoy a live show. This buildout will allow the Taverna team to have a larger prep kitchen and enhance their existing catering capabilities for both in-house and offsite events.

To bring Taverna Oceana to life, the Efrons will work with Jacksonville-based architecture, interior, and design firm, Design Cooperative (DCOOP). The design will be an extension of Taverna and the spaces will be connected via an open passageway between concepts. Taverna Oceana will incorporate ambient lighting and rustic finishes to provide a warm and inviting atmosphere with inspired elements such as custom hand-painted oyster shells and modern decorative lighting fixtures throughout.

At Taverna Oceana, you can expect the same consistency and quality that you have come to know and love with Taverna. The thoughtfully designed menu will bring patrons the freshest seasonal seafood from our oceans. Offerings will include a variety of fresh fish and shellfish, as well as plenty of items for non-seafood lovers. While designing the menu, Chef Sam and his team have been inspired by Asian, Latin, Mediterranean and American regional flavors. The menu will surprise and delight while offering a few familiar favorites.

Upon opening, Taverna Oceana will offer lunch and dinner Tuesday through Saturday, Sunday brunch, and daily happy hour. Private dining and special events will remain key service offerings for both restaurant concepts.



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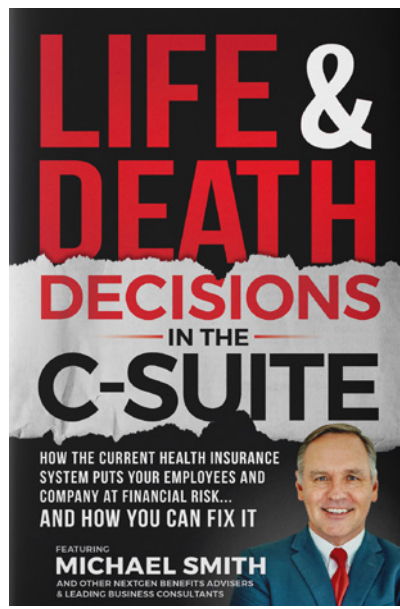
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A matter of “Life and Death Decisions in the C-Suite”

Avondale resident Michael Smith is one of more than 20 consultants from across the country to co-author “Life and Death Decisions in the C-Suite,” which released in December 2021. Photo courtesy of Michael Smith.



Small business owners make decisions every day that not only impact their bottom line, but also impact the lives of their employees and their families.

Selecting and providing a group healthcare plan for their company is one such decision. A group of 21 consultants have recently published, “Life and Death Decisions in the C-Suite: How the U.S. Insurance System Puts Your Employees’ Lives and Health at Serious Risk...and How You Can Fix It,” a book to help business owners approach these decisions with cost-saving results for their companies and their workers.

“It’s a collaborative effort of like-minded strategy consultants,” Avondale resident and contributing writer Michael Smith explained. “...the thought was as we come out of this pandemic, as we go into this inflationary period, we need to put something into the CFO’s hands, the owners hands, to help them understand how to control their healthcare spending.”

Released in December 2021, “Life and Death Decisions in the C-Suite” discusses various strategies, approaches and solutions business owners can implement to “...improve the quality of healthcare for your employees and their families while substantially lowering your healthcare costs.”

Smith’s practice, The Benefits Department, works with small business owners to better navigate the complex healthcare system and “find ways to cut costs, free up capital for more jobs and growth and bring down out-of-pocket costs so these working families can get real insurance.”

A member of Florida-based First Coast Manufacturers Association and executive director of its Florida Manufacturers Health Consortium, Smith is passionate about his work and his book.

“I wake up in the morning and I think about this, about freeing up capital and bringing medical justice,” he said.

“Life and Death Decisions in the C-Suite” is available on Amazon.

Scholarships awarded to twenty special recipients



The Woman’s Club of Jacksonville presented scholarships to 20 area women recently at their luncheon. Each received \$3,000.00 to be used for educational expenses at Florida schools.

Six recipients will be attending UNE, four to University of Florida, two each to FSCJ and UCF, and one each to FL A&M, Florida Southern and Jacksonville University. The young women are studying psychology, chemistry, English, library science, ecology, computer related programs, food science, criminal justice, business, funeral services, pharmacology, nursing, and international studies.

The scholarship winners are Khelsea Boyd, Madeline Clark, Hannah Corbat, Aryana Correa, Zehna Correa, Sarah Crooks, Emily Dougherty, Allyson Exum, NaJa Haynes-Williams, Charlotte Holley, Miranda Howley, Allison Johnson, Jaclyn Pendleton, Janna Rabanal, Jacqueline Small, Jalynn Small, Hannah Vanover, Jazmyn White, Shaunna White and Kanani Wilson.

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ERIC RAGATZ

United Way of Northeast Florida names Melanie Patz as CEO

Current Baptist Health and former United Way executive brings over 25 years of nonprofit experience and community commitment to the role



Melanie Patz

Melanie D. Patz has been named president and chief executive officer of United Way of Northeast Florida. A respected community and nonprofit leader, Patz currently serves as vice president of community investment and impact at Baptist Health and previously served as vice president of community impact for United Way. Patz will assume the organization's top post Sept. 26.

"After a thorough national search, we've identified an exceptional person to lead our United Way, build on the impact of its work and strengthen its relationships with our community, including its business, government and nonprofit partners," said Lisa Palmer, chair of United Way of Northeast Florida and president and chief executive officer of Regency Centers. "Melanie is a proven leader and a natural collaborator who

strives to bring people together. She has a unique understanding of our community's challenges and a history of success in developing solutions to address them. We're so excited to welcome her back to the team and eager for Melanie to bring her innovative vision for United Way to life, changing lives in Jacksonville and the entire region.

"United Way plays a critical role in our community, and its impact throughout its nearly 100-year history is far-reaching," said Patz. "It's an honor to take the helm of an organization that has benefitted so many individuals and families in our region and meant so much to me personally. I am excited to lead this team and, together with our partners, we will continue to innovate and work toward our vision of a community of opportunity for everyone in Northeast Florida."

Patz will replace former United Way President and CEO Michelle Braun, who retired in April. Chief Financial Officer Robin Abbott has served as interim CEO since Braun's departure.

Burney joins Jacksonville Historical Society



Betty Burney

The Board of Directors of the Jacksonville Historical Society announced that Betty Burney has joined the 17 member board.

A Jacksonville native, Burney is founder and executive director of I'M A STAR Foundation, Inc. since 2012. She was a member of the Duval County Public Schools and was executive director of Project Reach Foundation, Inc., 2002-2004.

Burney holds a bachelor's degree in public affairs from the University of Miami and a master's in public administration from Northern Illinois University.

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Galloucis honored in D.C. for 40+ years of service



Denis R. McDonough and Mike Galloucis, Washington, D.C. 2022 (photo by Gene Russell)

Colonel Mike Galloucis, USA, Retired of St. Nicholas was recently honored during a farewell ceremony at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) headquarters in Washington, D.C. Presiding was Secretary of Veterans Affairs Denis R. McDonough, who recognized Galloucis for his 40+ years of service to the U.S.

“On behalf of our senior leadership team and VA’s dedicated workforce who do so much every day for America’s nearly 18 million veterans, thank you for your incredible service to our country,” said McDonough.

In 1980, Galloucis was commissioned a 2nd Lieutenant on the top deck of the USS Constitution in Boston after completing the Army ROTC program at Northeastern University. During his 30-year active Army career, Galloucis moved 13 times, served a total of 8 years overseas, and was selected on multiple occasions to lead Army units at different levels, including a Brigade Task Force in Iraq for 15 months. Earlier in his military career, he was on duty inside the Pentagon in the Army Operations Center on 9/11. In 2010, Galloucis received the Distinguished Service Medal at his Army retirement ceremony. He was inducted into the U.S. Army Military Police Corps Hall of Fame in 2020. From 2021-2022, Galloucis served as a member of the federal government’s Senior Executive Service in a variety of leadership positions in different states.

“I can’t believe how fast the time has gone. The pillars that have served as my foundation all those years are what I call ‘three F’s and a C,’ which stands for faith, family, friends, and country,” Galloucis said.

Leadership Jacksonville Announces 2022-2023 Board Of Directors



Michael Howland, President and Chief Executive Officer, Jacksonville Speech and Hearing Center



Linda Lindenmoyer, Vice President, Relocation, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty

Leadership Jacksonville, an organization that educates, connects and inspires diverse leaders to build and strengthen their communities, announced its 2022-23 officers and new members added to its board of directors. The Leadership Jacksonville Board of Directors is led by President Michael Howland, President and Chief Executive Officer, Jacksonville Speech and Hearing Center.

In addition to the election of Howland as board president, Leadership Jacksonville announced the election of the following officers to the board:

- President-Elect: Linda Lindenmoyer, Vice President, Relocation, Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty
- Secretary/Treasurer: Cynthia Griffin, Vice President, Medicare Pharmacy Programs, Florida Blue
- Immediate Past President: Kathy Miller, Senior Vice President, Tax, Regency Centers Corporation

“Leadership Jacksonville is committed to engaging leaders in a unique forum, inspiring them to expand their understanding, share their perspectives and challenge each other to build better communities in Northeast Florida,” said Howland. “I look forward to working with the board, CEO and staff.”

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Junior Achievement receives \$800,000 from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott

Junior Achievement of North Florida announced that it has received a gift of \$800,000 from philanthropist MacKenzie Scott. It is part of a total of \$38.8 million donated to Junior Achievement USA and JA operations in 26 communities across the country. This is the largest gift from a single donor in the organization’s 103-year history.

“We greatly appreciate the incredible generosity of MacKenzie Scott for this amazing gift to our organization,” said Shannon Italia, president of Junior Achievement of North Florida. “We see this investment as a recognition of all the great work taking place in our community because of the passion and commitment of the business leaders, educators, volunteers, and other partners who support Junior Achievement locally. This donation will allow us to make even better use of other community investments to positively impact the lives of the young people we serve.”

Junior Achievement of North Florida will be using its portion of the gift to scale its impact in the region and accelerate the timeline for launching an integrated program model that provides young people with a pathway to work readiness and financial literacy.

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Tom Caron Named Vice President, Donor Services at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida



Tom Caron

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida has promoted Tom Caron to Vice President, Donor Services. Tom joined The Community Foundation in February 2021 as Director, Donor Services, after more than a decade of donor experience and nonprofit leadership.

Tom has quickly become an integral part of the Donor Services team and has taken on increasing responsibility in recent months. Tom's new position as Vice President, Donor Services includes stewardship of existing donors as well as creating and delivering compelling donor education programming, managing the Donor Services team and nurturing relationships with our giving circles as well as our next generation of donors.

"Tom has demonstrated his full support for TCF fund holders since his very first day on the job, and we are delighted he has embraced this opportunity to grow with our Foundation," noted Nina Waters, president of The Community Foundation. "He is passionate about helping generous people realize their philanthropic vision and has already proven to be a huge asset in helping us maintain our reputation as a leader in Donor Services."



Latrice Wright

Wright promoted to Executive Assistant, Office of the President

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida has promoted Latrice Wright to Executive Assistant, Office of the President, effective August 1, 2022. In her new position, Latrice is the primary support for Foundation President Nina Waters as well as the Foundation's Board of Trustees. Latrice also assists the Foundation's Vice President, Civic Leadership, Wanda Willis in her work, serving as a key liaison for initiatives such as the LGBTQ Community Fund for Northeast Florida and the A.L. Lewis Black Opportunity & Impact Fund. Latrice succeeds Sally Pettegrew, who retired at the end of July.

Latrice has more than 35 years of experience in organizational management in the non-profit sector. She was hired to be the Administrative Assistant for Finance and Administration and was promoted to Office Manager in 2020.

"Since joining the Foundation, Latrice has consistently used her experience and talents to facilitate organizational effectiveness and efficiency," noted Nina Waters, president of The Community Foundation. "As we continue to grow and to embrace more opportunities for leadership, Latrice's abilities will be even more important as we seek to fulfill our mission of stimulating philanthropy to be a better community."

Davis joins Bishop Kenny High School team



Amy Davis

Amy Davis joined the Advancement Team at Bishop Kenny High School as the new Director of Major Gifts and Events. Davis was formerly the Vice President of Philanthropy at Community Hospice & Palliative Care and has worked in fundraising for more than 30 years. Davis is excited about her transition to BK, stating, "I look forward to developing the major gifts program to support the educational and athletic exigency for the students and their families at Bishop Kenny."

Davis is active in the community as a member of the San Marco Rotary, Jacksonville Women's Network, and a sustaining member of the Junior League of Jacksonville. She also serves as the public relations chair at Henricks Avenue Baptist Church. In her free time, she enjoys gardening, traveling with friends and family, and spending time with her two dogs, Kate and Audrey.

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Stars to realign for 2nd annual Constellation FURYK & FRIENDS tournament

BY SAMANTHA FLOM
Resident Community News

Last fall, the inaugural Constellation FURYK & FRIENDS tournament brought golf greats and fans alike to Jacksonville's west side, raising more than \$1.17 million for local charities. Now, with the second annual tournament just weeks away on Oct. 3-9, preparations are underway for yet another stellar event.

"The second annual Constellation FURYK & FRIENDS presented by Circle K will once again feature the top PGA TOUR Champions golfers competing for a \$2 million purse along with a number of unique experiences for attendees," Tournament Director Adam Renfroe advised.

Golfers comprising the tournament's 78-player field include inaugural winner Phil Mickelson and former THE PLAYERS Championship winners Davis Love III and Fred Couples, to name a few. To be held once again at Timuquana Country Club, the event will offer fans an immersive experience with on-site destinations like the Circle K ParTee Porch, Publix Tailgate Village, VyStar Patriots Outpost and FIS First Tee, as well as food and beverage offerings from local vendors and a celebrity golf challenge for charity.

According to Greg Sheara, general manager of Timuquana Country Club, updates have also been made to the course since last fall.

"The club received great feedback from the professionals last year," he said. "And following the completion of the golf course restoration project the last eight months, the club is excited to showcase the course to the Jacksonville community."

Founded by the Jim & Tabitha Furyk Foundation, the tournament aims to raise funds and awareness for North Florida programs supporting the education, health care, nutrition and safety of children and families in need. Charities selected to benefit from this year's event include Boys and Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida, Wolfson Children's Hospital's Family Links program, The LJD Jewish Family & Community Services, the MaliVai Washington Youth Foundation, North Florida School of Special Education, the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund and the First Coast YMCA.

Noting that Timuquana members played an instrumental role in securing volunteers and sponsors for the event, Sheara added, "The tournament is a great weekend of fun and camaraderie with our fellow members, but being able to play a small part in supporting the growing charitable programs of the Jim & Tabitha Furyk Foundation means the most."

While the tournament's three rounds of play will take place Oct. 7-9, the week's events will also include Pro-Ams on Oct. 3 and Oct. 5-6, as well as an Oct. 4 military appreciation concert at Daily's Place featuring country music artists Jake Owen and Jordan Davis.

Although the tournament will be broadcast live on the Golf Channel, those who wish to attend can still purchase tickets. General admission starts at \$25, though kids ages 17 and under can attend for free with a ticketed adult.

Courtesy of Vystar Credit Union, complimentary tickets are also available for active duty and retired military, military reserves, National Guard members, veterans and dependents with valid IDs.

Tickets for the Furyk Foundation Concert start at \$39.99, though a limited number of complimentary military tickets are available for that event as well.

For tickets and additional information, visit the tournament website at ConstellationFurykAndFriends.com.

Publix opens doors, cuts ribbon after 20 years in the making



Leadership and management at the newly minted East San Marco Publix Super Market were on hand to cut the ribbon to align with their motto 'Where Shopping is a Pleasure,' Aug. 7. The store opened to cheers from a line of locals who lined the sidewalk before the crack of dawn.

Two young men, Josh Whipple and Ernest Soles were the first to enter the store,

following a ribbon cutting at 7 a.m. by store manager, Lauren Hindery, with her children by her side. The boys, both 18, had been waiting since 4:45 a.m., both said they had been waiting their entire lives to be a part of the experience.

"We are so excited to have this store open. The community of San Marco has been waiting so long to have their very own Publix and now we have this beautiful 39,000 square-foot store, bright and shiny, we couldn't be more thrilled to open this store," said an elated Chris Norbert, Community Relations Manager for Publix Super Markets Jacksonville Division.

When asked about his loyal shoppers out front, he said, "That just shows how passionate our customers are about Publix, they come and support us, we support them and serve them. So, it's not only about selling groceries, it's about being a part of being part of the community. We sell milk and eggs - but we do a whole lot of other things - it's just awesome to be here."

Local dignitaries included LeAnna Cumber, a mother to two who was juggling her mothering duties. "This is just fantastic, it's what the community has wanted for so long. It's just great that it has finally arrived," she said. With her two kids heading off to school, she made lunches, ran to Publix and was multi-tasking on the day of the christening of Publix, which happened to coincide with the first day of school for her kids Jake and Poppy.

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Beware of standardized care warns independent Riverside physician

Dr. Eduardo Balbona is an advocate for evidence-based medicine with an emphasis on disease prevention and health maintenance through education. He takes a deliberative, proactive approach to lifelong care and is interested in innovations that help patients live better lives, even if those treatments are considered controversial.

He has been practicing medicine for three decades, has served as a naval officer, has been a U.S. Capitol physician, and is in full agreement with the 1990s motto of "Standards of Care." He wants blood pressure to be controlled and sugars within a range of levels. What Dr. Balbona is in opposition to is "Standardized Care," which says that there is only one way to treat a particular malady. "When medical care gets standardized, there are perverse incentives and monetary bonuses distributed behind the scenes," he said.

Evidence of this became apparent when COVID relief funds were paid to medical organizations that followed protocols set forth by the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), a government agency. Any deviation meant denial of disbursement. "The government has no place dictating people's healthcare. Making recommendations is one thing, but enforcing mandates is another. In the pandemic, the greatest failure of many physicians and hospitals was obedience to government guidelines. Their true responsibility was to their patients and not to the government," Dr. Balbona said.

In his treatment of COVID, Dr. Balbona follows a non-standardized plan that may involve the prescribing of pharmaceuticals like hydroxychloroquine or ivermectin. He believes that the government stance on these therapies has overstepped into territory that ought to be reserved for medical professionals.

Dr. Balbona's approaches to coronavirus follow a string of successes in his medical techniques that had, at first, been deemed controversial. Over two decades ago, he was the first doctor in Jacksonville to do heart calcium scoring, a test to find heart disease before it becomes symptomatic. He was also one of the first physicians in Jacksonville to noninvasively help people build muscle and lower body fat with the use of Emsculpt Neo® technology. That, too, is still somewhat controversial but seems to help patients live better lives and feel good about themselves, so he actively promotes it.

As a solo practitioner, Dr. Balbona refuses to be coerced or intimidated. As a pioneer in the medical field, Dr. Balbona is trying to make medicine better, not to stagnate. He brazenly admits to not following CDC guidelines unless they are in a patient's best interest. "The CDC can't treat the patient I am seeing at the bedside. A hospital, a pharmacist, they do not have the license or the education to practice medicine. They should not be doing it. And our Florida governor agrees," Dr. Balbona said.

Doctors who are under the control of corporations or the government are compromised. That's why finding an independent physician like Dr. Balbona, someone committed to treating the individual, is crucial.

"The art of practicing medicine is currently dying," Dr. Balbona said. Many ill people might not ever see an experienced, qualified physician; physician assistants are now tasked with meeting patients in office. Other patients might not ever see an actual person at all now that computer applications are becoming more popular. Users type their symptoms into the system and a prescription is emailed or texted back in response. "I am shocked by what has happened in medicine. We, as a society, need to care more about our health," Dr. Balbona said.

Ever devoted to innovation in healthcare, Dr. Balbona is a founding participating physician of ClienteleHealth and offers his patients the option of membership in this new concierge service. Members enjoy enhanced levels of attention with more timely appointments and confidential e-mail and cell phone privileges for reaching Dr. Balbona whenever a question or medical issue arises. Dr. Balbona's Art of Medicine practice distinguishes itself by emphasizing a personal relationship between him and his patients.

Dr. Balbona has been practicing in his Riverside office since 2007 and is fluent in both English and Spanish. He is also a published author. In his first book, *Open Your Eyes: A Prescription for Change in American Health Care* published in 2019, he shares his expert advice on how U.S. healthcare can be improved so that both patients and doctors can thrive. He is currently preparing a second book for publication, one in which he will share patients' stories of surviving coronavirus.



Find out more about Dr. Balbona and his Art of Medicine practice by visiting www.BalbonaMD.com or by calling his office at 904-388-9202.

The thoughts and opinions set forth in this article are neither denied nor supported by the publisher of this newspaper or by its representatives.

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The Garden Club celebrates 100 years of perennial growth

BY KAREN RIELEY
Resident Community News

In March 2022, The Garden Club of Jacksonville announced a yearlong celebration of its 100th year in existence. From a small gathering of closest friends in March 1922 in the home of Jacksonville benefactor Ninah B. Cummer to this year's ambitious plans to transform their riverfront property, The Garden Club of Jacksonville has continued to grow year after year. On March 25, 2023, the celebration will culminate with a gala event.

The Garden Club is celebrating its 100th anniversary year by developing plans to redesign the club's 1.7-acre property at Riverside Avenue and Post Street along the St. Johns River. In 2020, the club asked landscape architect Rick Pariani to draw an initial design to help members visualize the landscape. In 2022, the club hired Jeremy Marquis with ML+H to do conceptual

drawings and 3D schematic designs. The design will be unveiled on Oct. 16, 2022, during the Ninah Cummer Birthday Brunch.

The new landscape will be an educational demonstration of what a river-friendly landscape should and could be.

"We want to be a resilient landscape for the next 100 years of The Garden Club; a landscape that is ready for the changes, like climate change, that are coming," said Denise Reagan, executive director of The Garden Club of Jacksonville. The redesign includes signage to explain to the public about the various edible, pollinator and shade gardens, making for both an educational and enjoyable experience. There will be a stage/performance space for concerts and events and lots of green space, according to Reagan.

"Throughout the decades, The Garden Club of Jacksonville continues to support Ninah's vision in both small and big ways, whether it is planting bulbs at a local library, holding monthly horticulture programs, encouraging our future gardeners with our Budding Gardener's program or partnering with Scenic Jax and Riverfront Parks Now to help see our city's green spaces grow along the Jacksonville downtown waterfront," said Tiffany Davis, club president.

In addition to 28 Garden Circles that meet at various places throughout the city, the club offers a Friends membership levels for individuals and families. Friends are invited to events and learning opportunities hosted by the club throughout the year.

"Until 2019, the only membership option was a Circle membership. To reach more of the general public, the Garden Club offered



Children and their families learn how herbs can bring flavor to food and pollinators to gardens by constructing a booklet of herb facts and recipes, propagating cuttings of rosemary, and repotting several herb varieties to take home and grow at the Budding Gardeners program. (Photo by Denise M. Reagan)



The following past presidents of The Garden Club of Jacksonville gathered for a lunch in late July: Charlene Hughes (2004-2005), Patsy Gaillard (2011-2013), Virginia Kirby (2002-2004), Bobi McGinnis (2019-2021), Tiffany Davis (2021-present), Carol Waters (2015-2017), Irene Woodworth (2009-2011), Betsy Powers (2017-2019), and Gloria Nunn (2005-2006). (Photo by Denise M. Reagan)

Friends membership levels to the general public. "Programming offered in person and virtually has enabled the Garden Club to reach a broader and more diverse audience," said Bobi McGinnis, the club's past president. The virtual programs are recorded and posted on the club's blog.

The club's rental program provides revenue to support its mission.

"When you rent our space for your event you are supporting our programs, like our free horticulture program and our Budding Gardeners children's program, which are now both held monthly," Reagan said.

An Open House on Sept. 28, 2022, 4-7 p.m., is free to everyone to enjoy the club and learn about its programs.

The general public is invited to the Ninah Cummer Birthday Brunch, 12-3 p.m., on Oct. 16, 2022. Two tiers of tickets are offered: \$100/person for a seated buffet brunch, performances and the unveiling of the landscape design, and a family fun ticket offers activities along the river under a tent.

Jacksonville's Garden Club is the largest in the state. It was one of the four clubs founding the Florida Federation of Garden Clubs (FFGC) on April 24, 1924.

After years of meeting in members' homes, the club was given space in the Public Library

and then Cohens in downtown Jacksonville. On July 9, 1946, the club made a down payment on a lot at Riverside and Post Street to build a permanent home.

The first building was a slat house known as the Exhibition Building which was destroyed by fire. It was replaced with the current Club Room, which opened on Jan. 3, 1948. The distinctive columned main building, which houses the office, library, ballroom and supporting spaces, was designed by Saxelbye and Powell Architects and opened in 1958. This building continues to be the site of horticulture and design lectures, demonstrations, exhibitions, and plant and garden sales. Several major plant societies of the area also meet and exhibit at the Garden Club.

The club's scope has broadened over the years beyond nurturing beautiful blooms and creating attractive arrangements to also include improving neighborhoods, teaching children about conservation, raising money for playground equipment, forging partnerships, and landscaping schools, libraries, churches and homeless centers.

Visit The Garden Club of Jacksonville's website, gardenclubjax.org, to learn more about upcoming events, presentations and membership.

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Prior to joining Pajcic & Pajcic, Meredith worked as an attorney at a boutique appellate litigation firm. Meredith has also served as a judicial law clerk for the Honorable Susan H. Black of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit and the Honorable Patricia D. Barksdale of the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Florida.

Meredith earned her undergraduate degree at The University of Virginia and graduated magna cum laude from Washington and Lee University School of Law. She enjoys spending time with her husband and 3 children. She also loves horseback riding and hiking in the mountains.



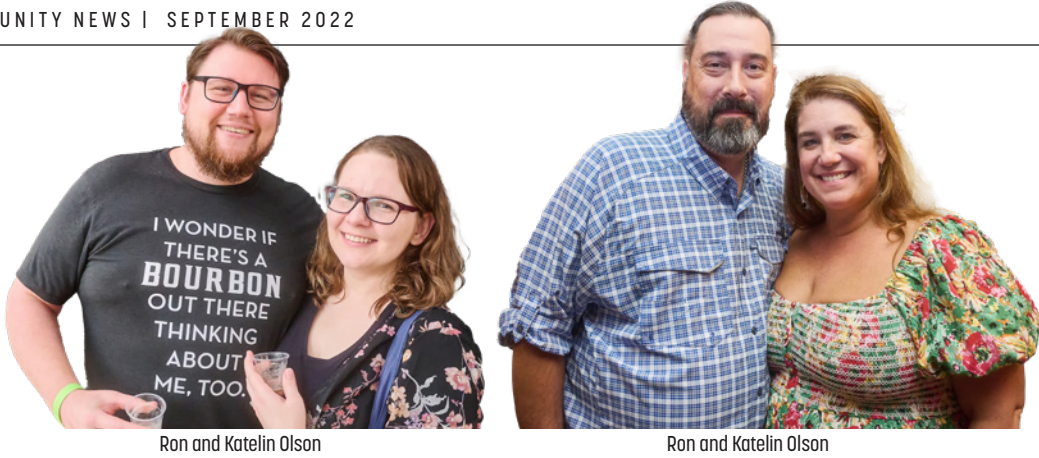
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Blues, Brews, and BBQ raises \$30,000 for Florida Theatre



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Ron and Katelin Olson

The historic, nonprofit Florida Theatre's annual summer fundraiser, Blues, Brews, and BBQ took place Thursday, August 18, at the Florida Theatre.

The weather was rainy, but that didn't stop more than 500 patrons from coming out to enjoy the event and support the Florida Theatre. The Blues, Brews & BBQ Online Auction raised \$13,811 for the Florida Theatre and the overall funds raised at the event was \$30,559.97.

During the event, patrons were given tickets to vote for which vendors they thought had the best BBQ and beer. At the end of the night, votes were counted, and Berndt Ends won best BBQ and Wicked Barley Brewing won the best beer.



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It was a night to remember for the Boys and Girls Club's of Northeast Florida, as the Glass Factory played host to a fun-filled, big money raising auctions – both silent and live – for children on the First Coast.

The event was filled with style and substance, as local children shared their testimonials of happiness and sense of pride and belonging, thanks to the 'good works' of the clubs and their leadership. Many on the leadership board of directors were present and paddles were raised, alongside the funds for a great cause. The evening gala was presented by 121 Financial and was held Aug. 27, at the special event facility off Myrtle Avenue.



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Kickoff for Winter Design Show illustrates eager anticipation

The lobby of the Borowy Tower at Baptist Hospital Downtown played host to the preview kickoff of the 2022 Winter Design Show, formerly known by many as the Art & Antiques Show. The new format will be fashion and design forward, with the debut event set to showcase the best of what Jacksonville's neighborhoods have to offer.

The design lead, Fitz Pullins, is a local with Jacksonville roots. He discussed plans to create a walk through the neighborhoods from the beaches through Mandarin, San Marco, Avondale, Riverside, Ortega; many of which are reflective the unique style of the Bold City. The Winter Design Show theme – Flaunting the First Coast – has been long anticipated, due to setbacks from the COVID pandemic, which canceled the show's original rebranding and debut in 2021.

Leaders from the hospital shared thoughts about the year ahead, what the goals for fundraising will be, and set the bar high to deliver a showstopping event for the theme's 2022 hometown kickoff.

Show chairs Kristina Powell, Kymberly Wolfson and Heather Creel, alongside Robin Albaneze, President of the Women's Board and Michael Aubin, FACHE – President, Wolfson Children's Hospital, Chief Philanthropy Officer, Baptist Health Foundation all shared thoughts during the preview party, Aug. 25.



Women's Board President, Robin Albaneze with Show Chair Kristina Powell, Michael Aubin, FACHE – President, Wolfson Children's Hospital, Chief Philanthropy Officer, Baptist Health Foundation, alongside Show Chairs Kymberly Wolfson and Heather Creel



Sally Parsons with Dr. Gary Josephson



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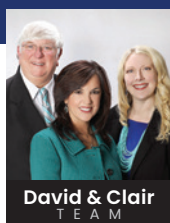
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Pine Castle announces final phase of comprehensive fundraising campaign and prepares for 70th anniversary in November



Pine Castle has announced the final phase of a comprehensive \$2.25 million fundraising campaign. With campus renovations nearly complete and a new curriculum-based learning program in place, the nonprofit now aims to become debt free by its 70th anniversary in November and plans to celebrate with a barbeque party open to the public.

Pine Castle embarked on this three-phase fundraising campaign in 2020 with former Florida U.S. House Representative Ander Crenshaw and retired JAXUSA Partnership President Jerry Mallot serving as co-chairs of the efforts. The first two phases were quiet ones, done during the height of the pandemic. The third phase to eliminate the agency's debt is a public one.

"We are excited to share all the great things that have been happening within the Pine Castle community over the past 70 years, and particularly the past two," said Anthony Sutton, CFRE, Chief Development Officer.

HISTORY

Pine Castle helped pioneer the philosophy that every person has the right to live a full and productive life and that every person has the capacity to do so in a loving, caring environment. Pine Castle was the first organization in Northeast Florida, and remains one of the largest, to provide educational training and support services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDDs) in a non-institutional setting. The Jacksonville campus was established in 1952 by 33 families who were encouraged by a local doctor to buy the land and hire a teacher.

More than a decade later, in 1965 when the school system began serving children with special needs, Pine Castle began serving adults. The organization remains committed to creating a better world for individuals with differences that include autism, Down syndrome, and cerebral palsy. The mission now is to empower this population through opportunities to learn, work, and connect. To accomplish this mission, Pine Castle needs help.

"We can't do this work alone. It has taken a village to get us to where we're at. We are grateful to all the donors who are making our current campaign a success," said Sutton.

PHASE 1 – CAMPUS RENOVATIONS

The first goal was to enhance the entire 70-year-old Pine Castle campus, renovating nearly every area to make it either a learning space or a working space. In

addition to updates on the main building and all classrooms, upgrades were completed on the kitchen and cafeteria as well, thanks to the lead gift from Delores Barr Weaver.

The complete makeover ensures a safe and engaging atmosphere. It set the stage for the organization's most ambitious undertaking thus far, The Pine Castle Academy. "Thanks to generous donors for these projects, we have already raised \$1.8 million," Sutton said. These funds covered the first-phase renovations as well as the second phase of the campaign.



PHASE 2 – PINE CASTLE ACADEMY

The second phase of the campaign was to introduce a new curriculum-based learning program designed by a professional consultant specifically for Pine Castle's population. Launched in August, The Pine Castle Academy simulates a college-like environment that empowers adults with IDDs.

Following intake and assessment, each participant works with an advisor to personally choose one of the two academic Pathways to Possibilities that include mandatory basic courses, extra-curricular activities, and the opportunity to select a focused area of study that reflects the individual's interests and passions, similar to choosing a college major. This revitalized focus on education harkens back to Pine Castle's roots as a school.

The Pathway to Life Enrichment is a non-employment path that concentrates on life skills. The Pathway to Community Employment teaches pre-vocational skills

and helps participants find sustainable work in the surrounding community beyond the Pine Castle campus. Pine Castle also offers independent living opportunities, as the nonprofit operates five group homes at various locations in Northeast Florida.

"What we're most excited about with The Academy is that we will be able to measure progress and see how our adults are mastering skills as they go through each module of the program, pass quizzes, and learn to be more independent as they advance through the curriculum. We have seen over the years how much these individuals are capable of doing when we focus on their strengths and not their weaknesses," said Lori Ann Whittington, CEO of Pine Castle.

To establish the Pathways, donors have already given generously. But additional funds are needed in order to maintain The Academy far into the future and offer it to a wider number of eligible participants. Investing will give Pine Castle participants for decades to come the opportunities and support needed to lead meaningful and fulfilling lives.

PHASE 3 – DEBT FREE

"In this final public phase of the campaign, our goal is to make our nonprofit agency debt free for the first time in over a decade," said Whittington.

Pine Castle has been paying down a \$3 million construction debt that resulted from the financial crash of 2008. Earlier this year, the outstanding balance stood at \$1 million. But "Thanks to the lead gift from Lory Doolittle and generous gifts from other donors during the quiet phase of our campaign, we are now only about \$425,000 away from being debt free," Whittington said. Pine Castle is appealing to the public at large to help them with this remaining sum. Once the debt is repaid in full, the agency can reinvest the monthly principal and interest payments to fund existing and new programs for its participants.

Though Pine Castle serves more than 300 participants every weekday, there is still an overwhelming demand for their services in Northeast Florida. The state's Agency for Persons with Disabilities has a waiting list of 1,700. That number is expected to increase significantly in coming years as children with autism age out of the school system. Additional resources would allow Pine Castle to annually move more adults through the Pathways process of demonstrating skill mastery and graduating into jobs within the community. This, in turn, would allow Pine Castle to accept new

participants into the program each year, ideally 20-25, instead of serving the same adults year after year, thus reducing the waiting list. As the working force is ready to retire from employment in the community, they can return to Pine Castle in a seniors' group. A full life cycle of services is what Pine Castle offers, and it needs assistance from the Jacksonville community and beyond in order to do so.

THE FUTURE

Pine Castle has a vision where persons with IDDs achieve their potential for independence and that while the staff prepares these adults for success through the Pathways of Possibilities, the community readies to welcome and employ them in sectors such as landscape, maintenance, janitorial, manufacturing assembly, culinary, and even communications. "Pine Castle helped me live my dream of being on the radio. They focus on what I can do and not what I cannot do. They understand that this chair does not define me," said one program participant, Percy, a wheelchair user.

It is Pine Castle's hope that the public will join them on their journey of inclusion of individuals with IDDs into the community at large. For inclusion is an issue far greater than charity. It's a win-win solution for employers who need assistance and for individuals who need a chance. It's also a matter of civil rights.

PUBLIC BBQ INVITATION

In honor of its 70th anniversary Pine Castle will bring back the nostalgic BBQ fundraising event on Saturday, November 5 at its campus on Spring Park Road. "This barbeque used to be a big hit back in the '60s, '70s, and into the '80s. But it's going to be way more than just a barbeque this year," said Sutton. It's going to be a public celebration of all the agency has been working on over the past two years, a culmination of their efforts.

From 10 a.m. until 3 p.m. on that day, tour the newly renovated facility, enjoy carnival games, and socialize with participants and their families while savoring a barbeque or vegan meal. An additional activity Whittington hopes to include is a note-burning to celebrate the agency becoming debt free in the final phase of their fundraising campaign. She and the staff are confident that the public will come through generously to help Pine Castle pay off the debt and become truly sustainable for the next 70 years.



Pine Castle, celebrating 70 years of service to the disability community. Donate to the Pathways to Possibilities Campaign via check to Pine Castle, 4911 Spring Park Road, Jacksonville, Florida 32207. Donate online at www.PineCastle.org/70years. On that web page, purchase advance \$5 BBQ tickets. \$7 entry tickets will be available at the campus event on Saturday, November 5, 10-3. For further information, please call Anthony Sutton at (904) 733-2650 extension 282.

First Coast Wind Symphony Continues Work as Cultural Service Organization



The First Coast Wind Symphony and Jacksonville University Wind Ensemble perform together.

BY WINDY TAYLOR
Resident Community News

The First Coast Wind Symphony is tuning up to begin its 33rd season of free concerts for Jacksonville and surrounding communities, with an emphasis on local composers and educational opportunities for students.

“Our last couple of seasons have been affected by Covid, just like everything in this world,” said Ann Carey Holt, public relations manager for the Symphony. “We rehearsed and performed this past season, but I think there were some of us who were rusty. This is our first full year where we’re all back together and in great shape.”

The 55-member ensemble will play seven concerts between October and May. The highlights of the season are two collaborations

between guest conductor/composers and the symphony. In October, guest conductor and Villages resident Lewis Buckley will showcase his own compositions at the Terry Concert Hall on the campus of Jacksonville University. In 1975, at the age of just 27, Buckley became the conductor of the U.S. Coast Guard Band, a position he held for the next 29 years. This makes Buckley the longest-serving conductor of a senior military band in American history.

The group prides itself on working with Florida-based and Florida-connected composers. “We have a new work that was written for us by a local composer that we’ll be performing this year,” said Holt. More information about this collaboration will appear on the FCWS web site when the plans are finalized. Additionally, the group has commissioned a piece from American composer Julie Giroux, which they will debut under her direction next season.

The season will close with the twelfth annual Concerto Competition, which is open to high school and college musicians. The winners of the competition receive a \$1,500 prize and the opportunity to perform with the FCWS in May.

Holt, a French horn player, joined the FCWS in 1993. “I went to a concert in their second or third season,” she recalled. “I was so impressed with the quality of their playing. I started as a sub for a concert, and then I thought, ‘If I just keep showing up, maybe they won’t turn me away.’ And now I’ve been playing with them for 30 years.” After retiring from her position as Chief Information Officer for Ascension St. Vincent’s in 2018, Holt joined the FCWS board.

The FCWS bills itself as a “cultural service organization” by making beautiful music accessible to all. Artie Clifton, Professor Emeritus of Music at Jacksonville University, founded the ensemble in 1990. Seven musicians in the

group are charter members and have performed all 33 seasons.

In addition to its regular concert series, smaller ensembles within the FCWS perform at private events such as weddings or special church services. “We have a polka band!” Holt said. “We’re regulars at the ArtWalk downtown. We play at churches at Christmas.” The Covid-19 pandemic dried up most of the group’s private engagements, although those bookings are picking back up.

Holt’s enthusiasm for high-quality, free public music is evidenced by her favorite unofficial gig. “At Christmastime, Avondale does the Luminaria. I live near St. John’s Avenue, so me and a few of my French horn buddies will put on a little horn concert in the front yard.”

For more information on the First Coast Wind Symphony, including their schedule of events, please see their web site at fcwinds.org.

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400 HEARTS

The Healing Hearts project connects families during tough times, lends understanding



Joy Parman, Donya Marshall, Jennifer K, Stacey Merritt, Amy Shaheen, and Dana Nolan at a board planning meeting



Joy Parman, her daughter Kennedy, and CVICU nurse Kendal Tiffany, recipient of one of The Healing Hearts Projects' nurse training program awards



Joy Parman, Dr. Kathryn Villano, and Stacey Merritt at a 2021 race event for The Healing Hearts Project

BY LINDSAY GAST
Resident Community News

Congenital heart defects (CHD) are the most common birth defect in the United States. One in every 100 children is born with one. For Duval County, that translates into roughly 125 children each year.

Joy Parman's youngest daughter, Kennedy, was diagnosed in 2012 with prenatal complications that included a congenital heart defect. Against odds, Kennedy survived. Roughly two years later, Kennedy had recently undergone a heart surgery and Parman found herself in a position to support and mentor another mother, Stacey Merritt, who was navigating a CHD diagnosis for her own daughter in utero.

"We had this heart-mom bond," said Farifax resident Parman. "For her, it was nice to have someone who's been through this to talk to; for me, it was nice to have someone to share this with who really understood it."

"We couldn't believe that in this big, huge city of ours, there was no type of support for the families that were going through this."

Kathryn Villano, a maternal and fetal medicine specialist with Regional Obstetrics Consultants, had served as the high-risk obstetrician for both Parman and Merritt. She was an advocate for the ladies, helping them find resources to get started, and identifying needs at the hospital. The ladies' bond marked the beginning of what would become The Healing Hearts Project.

Today, The Healing Hearts Project has around 400 families in its support group. 400 hearts. 400 families now one community strong. It has an engaged board, and two annual fundraisers, including the upcoming Roaring 5th Annual Pour Your Heart Out event on October 22 at Friday Musicale.

Dana Nolan, owner of VUE Optical in Avondale, and board vice chair of The Healing Hearts Project, believes that families really relish that sense of connection.

"It helps those families know they are not alone. It helps to talk about it, get it off your

chest, and to have somebody that understands what you're going through," said Nolan.

Fueled by community giving, The Healing Hearts Project provides both online and in-person group support to families affected by CHD, as well as educational series. Its Rylan Fund provides one-time financial relief for families. The organization has a space in the cardiovascular intensive care unit at Wolfson Children's Hospital that it keeps stocked with coffee, snacks and toiletries, offered free of charge to admitted families. It also provides a complimentary meal gift card to families on surgery day.

Parman stressed the importance of the medical teams to the organization. For the first time this year, The Healing Hearts Project bestowed nurse training awards to give back to the healthcare workers for "loving on our heart families." Partnering with the hospital, it is sending two cardiovascular nurses to attend the educational Annual Pediatric and Congenital Cardiovascular Disease Conference.

For board treasurer Donya Marshall, it was actually her daughter's CHD diagnosis led to a career change to nursing.

"We didn't have a clue about the medical system, and insurance, and services, and all the things that come with having a medically-complex child. There were no resources. I felt so lost and alone," said Marshall.

"I went back to nursing school while she was in the hospital to be home and have flexibility. I tried to immerse myself and learn all that I could. When Healing Hearts came along, it was such a great thing that somebody was providing that service that I know myself was not available."

Marshall said the organization's biggest challenge is awareness. Despite its commonplace, few people know resources exist.

"I love being able to help others not feel alone, and be able to navigate the whole system: insurance authorizations, supplemental insurance, all these things that you shouldn't have to think about when you are day-to-day wondering if your child is going to be alive. That's what motivates me every day to keep being involved and keep trying to advance our knowledge as a board and as a community, so we can turn around and help other

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LOCAL FOLKS

Gordon and Kathy Meggison



Kathy, Gordon, and Tinkerbell Meggison



The Meggisons

BY MARY WANSEER
Resident Community News

Many know Gordon Meggison as artist and owner of Free Hand Studios. Many recognize the international influences in his work that come from his travels to faraway lands throughout Asia and Europe. Many have seen at least one of the paintings from one of his largest projects—murals on walls of 70 Olive Garden restaurants throughout major U.S. cities. Many have admired his paintings of the local region on display at a variety of prominent Jacksonville locales. But who is the man behind the brush?

Gordon Meggison is husband to Kathy, who helps promote his work. They have been San Jose residents for as long as they have been married, over three decades. Out back of their home is the barn that's set up as an art studio where Gordon teaches classes to children and adults. "It's a one-room schoolhouse kinda thing," he said. It sits amid another kind of art that Gordon and Kathy tend to. Gardening.

The Meggisons compost. They save all the cuttings from their salads and drop them in piles in the yard. "I turn them religiously until I get a good, black soil," Gordon said. That's when he stops turning for a while. "Whatever pops out of the ground, we let grow." It might be tomatoes or peppers, melons or squash. Kathy even has kale stalks continuously sprouting from scraps she had added to a pile a while back.

Once it's obvious what plant has taken prominent root, Gordon transports any excess rich soil to other areas of the yard to fertilize a variety of different plants already growing. "It's a weird garden because I'm not a farmer. I don't really know what I'm doing," he said. It's a hobby that he does for fun when he's not in front of an easel painting on canvas or on a ladder painting a mural.

The Meggisons' yard has plenty of flowers, too. Neighbors and friends bring cuttings that Kathy finds homes for. "It's like a jungle back here," Gordon said. So, when he's not holding a hoe, he's wielding a weed whacker "to keep it looking elegant."

Kathy raises orchids indoors; they're not fond of Florida heat. She takes care of bromeliads out back and collects the silver vase variety, which are potted. They have a six-month bloom period that comes

once every ten or so years. She has some that are thirty-plus years old. Kathy tends to the ginger plants, too. "They're so beautiful when they bloom," she said.

To enhance their gardens, the Meggisons buy unique ornaments to place. Gordon also adds and arranges a potpourri of lava stones, antique bricks, and marble fragments. He has salvaged many discarded pieces before they were hauled off in dumpsters from affluent properties where he had been commissioned to do wall treatments in newly constructed houses. "Recycling is my thing. I'm kind of an old hippie. Nurturing and caring for the earth and not wasting is important to me," he said.

The Meggison yard is a fun place for Gordon's young students. When art class is over, they often don't want to leave with their parents. They'd rather stay and run through the gardens or investigate the various vegetables. Gordon and Kathy appreciate this youthful activity as they do not have any children of their own. "When I was a kid, I had this vision for my own little paradise. That's what this garden is," Gordon said.

Students and friends often bring with them random clippings that Gordon incorporates with the rest. "That's how we get new members of our garden family," he said. The yard has become a species sanctuary.

There's a roof built over the patio with picnic table and seating. So, when everyone else goes home, the Meggison yard is a

relaxing refuge for Gordon and Kathy. "It's meditative and grounding," Kathy said. Since COVID, they don't go out a lot. They'd rather be home than anywhere else. Their Jack Russell terrier, Tinkerbell, agrees. She, too, was rescued, just like the plants and stones. Seven years ago, someone threw her away. The Meggisons found her in a nearby yard where she had been barking for an entire day.

During family relaxation time, birds have become another hobby for Gordon and Kathy, particularly in spring and fall when the mosquitos are at bay; the Meggisons do their best to avoid pesticides. They have hung three general feeders and one specifically for hummingbirds. It's no surprise that they welcome painted buntings in addition to an assortment of others.

It has taken three-and-a-half decades for Gordon and Kathy's yard to evolve into the eclectic Eden that it is today. The project began with the intentional planting of shrubs for privacy from the view of neighbors. The composting and expansion came over time. "I didn't sit down with an architect and plan all of this," Gordon said. His flair for interior design has made its way out-of-doors.

Kathy describes their yard as "Oriental-looking" with exotic plants and trees. From Gordon's perspective, it's "tropical." Passersby, amazed by the living innovation, have said that it's "European." The Meggisons' yard is all of this and more.



The Meggison's backyard oasis

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A new lion in town:

The Aspire Church San Marco mural project

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

A new lion is watching over the community of San Marco, this time from a mural along Hendricks Avenue.

When completed, the 83-by-38 foot mural titled “Emergence” will depict a bronze lion shedding its outer shell and emerging as a real lion, representative of new beginnings and fresh starts, explained artist Keith Doles, who was selected by Aspire Church San Marco’s rebranding task force to create the mural.

Community landmarks, including the church’s steeple, San Marco’s theaters and local businesses, will also be included in the mural, tying in the community’s unique features, characteristics, style and architecture.

“We knew we wanted something that celebrated San Marco, the community, the historic nature of the community and we knew we wanted the steeple of the church to feature because it’s such an iconic feature in San Marco,” said Dr. Gary Lee Webber, senior pastor for Aspire Church San Marco.

The mural is the final stage of Aspire Church San Marco’s rebranding journey, which dates back to 2019 after a survey of then-Southside Baptist Church of South Jacksonville revealed there was little name recognition between the church and its

location in San Marco. A rebranding task force was formed in 2020 and after presenting name recommendations, the church voted to adopt Aspire Church San Marco as its new name in November 2021.

This mural, Webber said, is both a thank you to the community and a way to further cement the church as a landmark within that community.

“One of the things the rebranding task force wanted to do as part of the rebranding was do a mural on the wall on Hendricks Avenue on the side of the San Marco Community Center just as a way to make our building more noticeable,” he explained. “People drive by it but they don’t necessarily see it. It’s a strange thing to think about, but it’s just this big white building as you drive down Hendricks and it doesn’t have anything remarkable about it.”

Doles began work on the mural at the beginning of August and plans to complete it around Labor Day. Working on the project during evenings and weekends, Doles is joined by his team of fellow artists, who call themselves the “Bridge Muralists.” The group, formed in 2020, is comprised of Doles, Adrian Rhodes, Ramses Spyder Allen, Hanna Hadzic. Khyleah Matthews, Madison Bridge and Sasha Kovalenko are the project’s assistant artists.

“We have this shared passion for creating something positive,” Doles said. “So this mural, or any murals — it doesn’t feel like work at all.”



Doles designed the mural based on task force’s input and worked with them through different iterations before reaching the final design. According to Webber, the planning phase of the mural began in March of this year and included discussions with the San Marco Merchants Association (SMMA) and the San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS).

SMPS President Lauren Carlucci said the society is very excited about the mural and what it will add to the community.

“Public art has always been a focus of SMPS and it really adds a vibrancy to the streetscape that we haven’t had in that area,” she said. “...I think its just gonna add a lot of character to our historic neighborhood.”



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First Lady of Florida unveils Florida Cancer Connect

Ackerman Cancer Center welcomed guests and survivors for kickoff

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Florida First Lady Casey DeSantis announced the launch of her initiative, Florida Cancer Connect, at Jacksonville’s Ackerman Cancer Center.

A cancer survivor herself, declared cancer-free in February of this year, DeSantis created this initiative in partnership with the Florida Department of Health & Florida Agency for Health Care Administration. It is a “a centralized resource hub for cancer patients, caregivers, and loved ones.”

Available resources at its website — flcancerconnect.com — include cancer screening and prevention resources, information on navigating healthcare coverage and assistance finding local healthcare facilities or cancer treatment centers.

“The more you know, the more you know where to go, the more you know about the resources and the medications, the better your chances are of beating this thing,” DeSantis said. “...This was behind the thinking of [Florida Cancer Connect]: We need to do more for the people of this state to be able to be in a position to find the help that they need in these difficult times.”

Ackerman Cancer Center Medical Director Dr. Scot Ackerman spoke of the importance

of cancer screenings and early detection in preventing, diagnosing and treating patients.

“As you know, cancer screening plays a crucial role in preventing cancer and also diagnosing cancer early,” he said. “Diagnosing cancer early makes it easier to treat and gives us as practitioners a better chance to cure our patients. What I’ve seen over the years in treating thousands of people who have been diagnosed with cancer is that those patients who are well-informed and have appropriate support do better.”

Additional Florida Cancer Connect resources for patients and caregivers include stories of survival, which provide those crucial elements while battling cancer: strength, inspiration and hope.

“There’s stories of survival and hope,” DeSantis said. “...People across the state can log on, see what type of cancer they have. They can see other people who have battled those same types of cancers and get stories of inspiration.”

Survivors are invited to share “letters of strength” on the website by submitting a copy of their letter to survivor@flcancerconnect.com with the subject line “Share My Letter of Strength.”

“Florida Cancer Connect hopefully will help Floridians who have to deal with this disease,” said Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Simone Marstiller. “One stop, one place to go, a lot of information, a lot of support. I want to encourage everyone who’s out there who wants to either share

their stories or share support for folks who are going through cancer, please, please send an e-mail to survivor@flcancerconnect.com. These stories mean so very much to the people, the families who are going through this illness and this ordeal.”

In 2018, according to the Florida Cancer Connect website, “more than 132,000 new cancer diagnoses were reported to the statewide cancer registry.”

Florida Cancer Connect was launched on Aug. 3.



First Lady, Casey DeSantis shared her personal story of a cancer journey to ‘cancer free’



Florida Agency for Health Care Administration Secretary Simone Marstiller speaks to the programs formulated for Florida Cancer Connect



Dr. Scot Ackerman speaks about his passion for caring for cancer patients



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11.9.22 – THE BIG COVER UP

In 2024 there will be a total solar eclipse visible across the United States. If you haven’t heard about it yet, you will. Learn the essentials of the 2024 American Eclipse and how it is that solar eclipses in general are scientifically important events. **Featured exhibit: Voyage to the Deep.**

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Group Reservations: Contact Planetarium Director Eddie Whisler at 904.396.6674 ext. 243 or email: ewhisler@themosh.org	9 – 10 a.m. 10 – 11:30 a.m. 11:30 – 12 p.m. 12 – 12:30 p.m.	AGENDA Arrival / Free Exploration Planetarium Program with Intermission, Q&A, Refreshments Exhibit Exploration with Museum Staff Free Exploration
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Eng set to debut photographic exhibit

Delivering the world through the eyes of a master

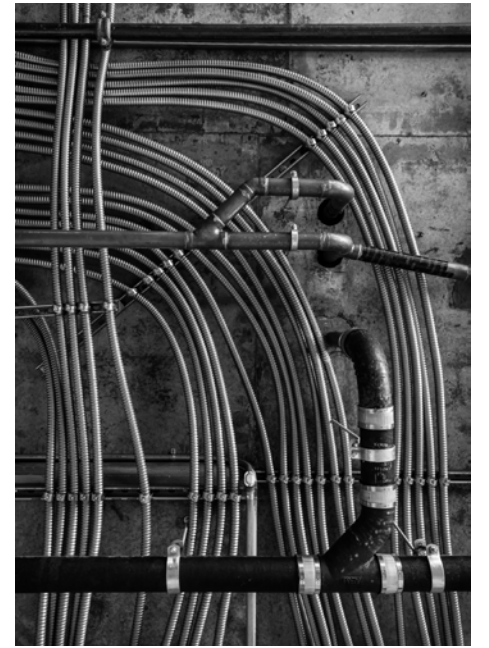
St. John's Cathedral is proud to present a themed exhibition of the photography of Douglas Eng in its Taliaferro Hall art gallery starting September 18 and running through November 13, 2022. The exhibit showcases the masterful works of the local Jacksonville artist and fine art photographer titled; FLOW: Douglas Eng Photography.

The early Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, noted that the world and those who live in it are in a state of perpetual flux, of perpetual flow. But thanks to the medium of photography a moment in that flow can be captured. Indeed, Douglas Eng has set about capturing such images. Like the "spots in time," as Wordsworth described his effort to capture important moments in his life, Eng captures important moments in what we call Nature. The photographs in this exhibition capture the breathtaking beauty of moments in the ongoing flux of the life of our planet.

He captures the long line of waves breaking on the shore. He freeze-frames the gentle flow of a woodland stream. And his images carry you beyond the obvious images of flow in water to the geological flow of windswept sand dunes and the fixed flow of the lines of bark in trees. He even sees images that imitate the flow of nature in the built environment of massed electrical conduits.

The images in this exhibition were chosen with the purpose of illustrating the flow and flux in our environment. But when one steps back from any image in the exhibition, one must also be amazed and delighted by the sheer beauty that Eng captures for us. Moreover, we are privileged in the exhibition to see aspects of our world through Eng's sensitive eye and his mastery of the art of photography that we would miss on our own.

FLOW: Doug Eng Photography is a not-to-be-missed opportunity to delight in the beauty of the lived environment of our planet through the lens of this perceptive Jacksonville photographer. The Gallery in Taliaferro Hall is open to the public throughout the week (M-F 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) and on Sundays (9 a.m. to Noon). All art is for sale through the Cathedral Bookstore and Gift Shop.



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BY SUSANNA P. BARTON
Resident Community News

There's no better time than September — the steamy advent of another scholastic year — to share gratitude for local schools, and our historic neighborhoods' unique proximity to them. The proliferation of top-notch schools in our community is every parent's dream and as residents, we are so fortunate to call this vision our reality. Thanks to all the nearby schools, our neighborhoods will be desirable, valuable, A+ places for families to live now and far into the future.

Real talk, David and I had no idea schools were going to be so important when we moved into the San Marco area more than 25 years ago. We had zero clue. As professional mid-20-somethings, we stayed focused on the more important callings of our day — corralling rogue Springer Spaniels from San Jose Boulevard, going to friends' weddings and hitting happy hour at places like Square One, where we'd enjoy live music, cheap beer and yes, sometimes a cigarette or two. Always socially. Usually indoors. Blech. The arrival of children — first son Ben in 1999 followed by sister Marley 22 months later — (frantically) turned our attention toward where we were going to put them. Like many parents we knew, the topic of schools became the new buzz.

I soon realized just how many options we had for the care and schooling of our babies — all nearby and all checking my list or that of other mommy friends with whom I consulted:

- Safe, close day care for infants? Check.
- Preschools for active toddlers who “needed to socialize” while I hit the Winn-Dixie in peace? Check.
- Elementary, middle and high schools for the kids to commence their journeys to personal excellence? Check, check, check.

- Nationally acclaimed magnet, charter and Montessori schools? And how. Check.
- Internationally known independent schools providing a more personal fit for the fam-jam? Check — and I will add, we are long on these options, both secular and faith-based.
- Homeschool a thing? You'd better believe it. Major check.

The only place of learning we didn't actually have at the time was “Fight Camp,” the fictional jail-school to which I promised my children they'd be sent if they didn't stop being total a-holes to each other in the backseat. No parenting technique ever worked better. The shape-up was immediate when I pointed to seedy, barbed-wire-fenced compounds on our school route and extolled the greatness of Fight Camp's curriculum. Some days, they tearfully believed I had enrolled them — it was excellent (desperate) parenting of the highest order.

We did not, in fact, send our kids to Fight Camp. We ended up enrolling Ben and Marley in some really amazing neighborhood schools that made a meaningful difference in their lives — places I firmly believe developed their character, resiliency and love of learning. Our first stop was Southside United Methodist Preschool right there at “the Point” just south of San Marco Square. Honestly, I would have kept them there through high school if administrators would have allowed it. Ms. Wendy or Ms. Marty would have been their teachers for life and superb adulting would have been the outcome, no doubt in my mommy mind. It was sweet and safe and within walking distance of our Granada home. I loved every minute of it. I loved wearing our son into his classroom each morning and watching our daughter run into hers with excited abandon. They went to chapel, made colorful art for our fridge, performed/gawped onstage in construction

paper hats and learned to respect their peers' personal space. SUMPS is, like so many of the other preschools in our neighborhoods, a sweet place for early childhood learning.

But like many families, we (I) started (needlessly) panicking about our children's future “real school” homes. We chose Riverside Presbyterian Day School in the Five Points area for Ben and Marley's Pre-K through sixth-grade experience. This school, too, is an exceptionally loving community. Our kids learned through a new lens of “The Riverside Way,” which reinforced their intention to stay out of Fight Camp once and for all. They progressed through the curriculum, took their leap onstage during tearful spring Flying Chapels and emerged as well-rounded, compassionate little tweenagers high on life and ready for next steps.

These next steps in schooling — the middle and upper school years — were always well imagined for our children. With every hope, The Bolles School would be their final stop and graduation point, continuing a tradition of mostly behaving Bartons at Bolles. David's father Quinn R. Barton Jr. graduated from the school in 1946 as class valedictorian and the school's very first National Merit Scholar. David and his siblings followed suit in the 80s and 90s. Bolles, of course, wasn't exactly the free or cheapest option. But we worked it out — in the most literal way. Starting Ben's seventh grade year, I was hired to work fulltime in the Bolles Office of Communications and Marketing — a post that brought me great professional joy (and tuition remission!) and great a seat to watch my very own family reality show play out for nearly 10 seasons. I loved it all. Bolles was a near perfect choice for our family because it honed our children's strengths in academics, arts and athletics and their ability to thrive in a competitive, multicultural and increasingly global landscape.

The schools our kids attended do not represent the best or only ones in our neighborhoods

— this path is different for everyone, and that truly is a wonderful thing. How fortunate we are to have so many options! We think our school choices hit the mark just like:

- Our dear friends Lindsey and Ryan Riggs, who think Episcopal School of Jacksonville hit/s all the high notes and checks all the boxes for their four children.
- The many Ortega, Avondale and Riverside families, who have loved John Stockton Elementary School, Venetia Elementary School, West Riverside Elementary School and Westside High School among so many others.
- My neighbor friends, who have enjoyed every minute of their families' Hendricks, Landon, Wolfson school experience.

Susanna Barton, who does not social smoke anymore (gross!), sometimes has PTSD over memories of her children's school shenanigans — though, if you haven't been in in fetal position sobbing over some misdeed or shortcoming, are you really a parent? She has lived in a house on Granada Park with her husband David, their children Ben (The Bolles School '18, Washington & Lee University '22) and Marley (The Bolles School '20, Sewanee The University of the South '24), and their super annoying geri-dogs for 25-plus years. She has written for The Jacksonville Business Journal, The Resident, Jacksonville University and The Bolles School during her professional life in Jacksonville and is now exploring the realms of early retirement. She really enjoys embarrassing-mom-walk exercising later in the morning, napping, reading and catching some rays when she's not watching terrible reality television, particularly Dr. Pimple Popper. Each month, she will share reflections on neighborhood qualities for which she is grateful.

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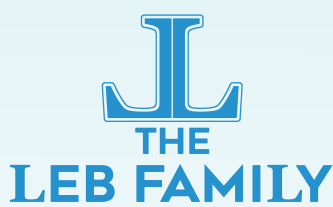
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BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA
Resident Community News

Jessie and her husband, “Farmer Jack” Miller of Epic Farm and EPIC Outreach, chose the correct name for their nonprofit organization. Their epic mission encompasses several projects that model and teach kindness and compassion for all living things. Their goal is to build stronger bonds between humans, animals, and nature by using their farm sanctuary for positive hands-on interaction and education.

Epic Farm offers in-person or virtual tours, and EPIC Outreach offers humane educational programs on or off-site or at events by pre-scheduled appointments through their website. Educational programs focus on topics about pets, farm, marine, and wild animals and offer content that can be specifically targeted for various ages and audiences.

The couple’s animal sanctuary and rescue operation is a safety net for farm and other animals who get a second chance to live, feel safe, and be loved. They firmly believe that all animals in crisis deserve to be saved, not just dogs and cats. They and their contacts coordinate with local, state, and national rescue organizations and law enforcement to save and transport animals to safety wherever they are, whenever they can.

They founded EPIC Outreach to create a ripple effect of compassionate change that they hope will spread far beyond the farm and the animals they save. Through their rescue stories, they hope to inspire others to take action to help others, including animals, using a variety of approaches.

Jessie Miller, therapy dogs and small animals like rabbits and Pumpkin the guinea pig, visits schools, clubs, and after-school programs. She teaches about compassion, how to be kind, serve others and help to create a more compassionate, caring world. That compassion starts with each adult and child and must include the animals and environment we all should protect, Miller said.



Jessie Miller with a donkey rescue

Miller became a self-published children’s book author because her animal rescue stories offered another way to “plant seeds of compassion” in young readers. The books encourage reading, build literacy skills and critical thinking. They have been successfully incorporated into many school curriculums. There is also a Farm Friend Pen Pal Program and an EPIC Book Club.

Each book features one of the farm’s rescue animals and tells its story with a positive message to create understanding, awareness, and change in a developmentally age-appropriate way. The books discuss animal adoption, rescue, species discrimination, and treating all animals kindly, even farm animals like pigs.

The books are often donated to students during classroom visits or directly to schools, and a free copy is available to teachers or animal shelters. Book sales to the public help fund the nonprofit’s animal care and rescue efforts. Interested readers may purchase books for a school, group, or their children and grandchildren by contacting Jessie at Jessie@epicanimals.org or the website.

Jessie Miller has six residents right now at the farm who are urgently in need of adoption. Her sweet pet potbellied pigs have no idea why their owners abandoned them. They represent one of the worst, cruel scams in the pet industry. Miller is outraged at the deliberate deception of potbellied pig breeders who advertise “miniature, mini, micro, teacup, and pygmy-sized pigs” for sale.

There are many breeds of pigs that may be “smaller” than adult commercial farm pigs in the U.S. that weigh from 300 - 900 pounds, but only a few healthy normal adult pig breeds weigh less than approximately 70 pounds. According to the North American Pet Pig Association, healthy adult Vietnamese Potbellied Pigs average from 125-250 pounds.

Breeders often mislead buyers regarding the future adult size of these pigs. They show

the tiniest, youngest piglets possible: those weaned too early, leading to illness or mortality; pigs that are small only because they are drastically underweight from stunted growth caused by starvation; or pigs with health problems from inbreeding. These sellers often give instructions to feed an abnormally restricted diet, deprived of necessary nutrients, in a hopeless attempt to keep the pet pig small as long as possible.

“Tiny pigs that will forever remain ‘small’.. that is just another cruel lie to make money that is inflicted on the unsuspecting, trusting public by unscrupulous breeders who care nothing about the pigs they sell. They know that those adorable eight-week-old potbellied piglets will grow to eighty pounds fast and keep growing!” Miller said. “Then the person who lives in an apartment or a home is wondering what in the world am I going to do with this animal? But it gets so much worse. Adult potbellied pigs weigh from 80 - 200 or more pounds. They will never be the size of a tiny lap dog or even a medium-sized dog.”

Miller said the pet pig industry is poorly regulated, and anyone can breed and sell anything. So breeders collect their money and vanish, ignore phone calls, or blame buyers and tell them they fed the pig too much. What happens to these unwanted pet pigs?

“These poor pigs that had loving, happy homes with families, where they were treated like domestic dogs and cats and enjoyed wonderful lives are suddenly a huge problem. As their weight balloons, owners contact shelters that will not accept them because they do not have the space. Most rescue groups already have too many pigs because of the growing problem and difficulty securing adoptions. The pigs end up abandoned or picked up by law enforcement,” Miller said. “The horrible reality is that these innocent pet pigs that are not adopted or accepted by an animal shelter like ours are euthanized or



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Blake and Blarney

thrown into a truck and shipped to slaughterhouses.”

Epic Farm’s six adoptable pigs include bonded buddies Blake and Blarney,3, both 120-pound, neutered males. They are pink with black patches, are sweet, friendly, and love belly rubs. Lucy, a spayed female, and Stanlee, a neutered male, also three years old and 120 pounds. These best friends do everything together. Portia, 4, is mostly black. She is spayed, weighs 200 pounds, is gentle, sweet, and rolls over for belly rubs. Portia was abandoned at a hotel and got a police car ride from JSO. Twinkle, 2, is spayed and 140 pounds. She is mixed salt and pepper gray, intelligent and loving. Miller said this affectionate cutie desperately wants a family to love.

Pet pigs can be house and crate-trained for indoor or outdoor living, are smart, easier



Portia enjoys a photo session during the Resident News visit

to train than dogs, and can learn basic commands. They are affectionate, clean, and make excellent pets if owners can accommodate their size and space requirements.

Anyone interested in adopting a pet pig should check their local zoning codes to ensure that a pig is permitted. Then contact Epic Farm for an appointment to meet their adoptable pigs or adopt through another reputable animal rescue organization like pigplacementnetwork.org.

Miller said that the blazing pace of local development has had an unforeseen impact

on farm animal rescue. Donkeys are being abandoned by cattle ranchers and farmers. Donkeys have been favored as livestock guardians because they eat the same food, are territorial, and fiercely protect livestock against predators, including snakes. They fight with their teeth and hooves, chasing, kicking, and stomping anything threatening their herd while braying an alarm. After valuable farm or pasture land is sold for development and there is no livestock to protect, the donkeys have no value.

“ACPS called us about five donkeys abandoned on a large property where housing construction was starting. When the bulldozers showed up, there were the poor donkeys,” Miller said. “The donkeys were so fearful it took another week and the help of a second rescue - Peaceful Valley Donkey Rescue from Virginia - to come down and help us before we were finally able to secure them. They were accepted by the Virginia rescue because we already have as many donkeys as we can handle.”

Epic Farms 2022 fundraiser, the 3rd Annual Farm Fun Fall-O-Ween, will be held October 29, 2022, from 11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. The cost is \$48 per car with 25 tickets maximum per car. There will be farm tours, opportunities to meet the animals, food trucks, face painting, games, arts and crafts, plus family activities. Purchase prepaid tickets on their website and see their Wish List of needed items plus ways to donate, volunteer, or become an animal sponsor. Miller said that there are approximately forty rescue animals on the farm at a daily cost of \$7.00 per animal for food and veterinarian care. They welcome regular monthly donors and any donations to help cover animal care and fund their efforts.

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CONTACT:

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 P.O. Box 77479, 32226
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JUNIOR RESIDENTS

Florida heat didn't stop Santa



Not even the Florida heat could stop Santa Claus from making a stop at Wolfson Children's Hospital of Jacksonville to distribute toys donated by generous community members for Christmas in July. The 11th annual toy and donation drive, presented by Subaru of Jacksonville, lasted the entire month of July with Santa making his special visit on July 25, 2022.

During this year's Christmas in July, people from Jacksonville and far beyond donated 1,739 toys, with a total estimated value of \$22,627. Additionally, throughout July generous donors gave \$21,120.25 in financial gifts online. The funds will be used to purchase toys for Wolfson Children's patients.

The Child Life specialists and music therapists at Wolfson Children's Hospital use toys and games to help normalize the hospital experience and teach kids and teens about their conditions and procedures they will undergo. Additionally, toys help babies and younger children continue to develop physically and cognitively on track during their hospital stays.

"The toys certainly help provide entertainment for the children in the hospital, but the benefits extend so much further," said Susan Kinnebrew, CCLS, associate director of Family Support Services at Wolfson Children's. "They provide children with a small sense of normalcy when everything else around them is different, and help introduce them to unfamiliar medical equipment. We're so grateful the community continues to support these children and the outstanding teams that dedicate their lives to caregiving."

Michael D. Aubin, FACHE, president of Wolfson Children's Hospital and chief philanthropy officer of the Baptist Health Foundation, said, "I'm continually astounded by the generosity of our community and the support from organizations and businesses like Subaru of Jacksonville. Every person who donated to Christmas in July can rest assured knowing their gift truly made a difference to a child in the hospital."

MOSH hosts birthday party for Tonca the turtle



Elijah Dyer, 11, wins Tonca Birthday Bash raffle



Tonca Gets A Checkup

MOSH celebrated the 56th birthday of their beloved Alligator Snapping Turtle named Tonca on July 9th. Tonca ventured out from his home in the Hixon Native Plant Courtyard and into the museum for his annual checkup.

Tonca weighed in at 214 pounds and measured 27-1/4" (shell carapace) and 55" (tip to tail). Last year, he was just two centimeters shy of holding the Guinness World Record for the largest Alligator Snapping Turtle. During the party, Tonca got a full spa treatment with a shell cleaning, nail trim, and a medical checkup. Vets say he is in good health.

During the party, kids got ice cream, were able to pet smaller turtles, and asked Dr. Anthony Mortimer, Director of Curatorial Services at MOSH, some questions about Tonca and where he is from.

Here are some facts about Tonca: Alligator snapping turtles have no natural predators in the world. The scientific community divided the scientific names of Alligator Snapping Turtles, based on the areas they used to live. Tonca was found in Mandarin, but DNA testing found he matches the Apalachicola-area turtles (which is on the western part of Florida). No one knows how Tonca arrived in Mandarin. Tonca's favorite food is Tilapia.

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Student interns change campers' lives in summer Grit Camp



Brian Harbin, Grit.org staff member and San Marco resident; first-year interns Kevin Butler and Jack Foster; and Colby Harris, third-year intern, Grit.org staff member and San Marco resident, celebrate Butler's and Foster's \$6,250 summer earnings each, a combination of salary and profit-sharing.

The three students selected to be interns for this year's Grit Camp had a busy and productive summer that made a positive difference in 318 campers' lives. Grit Camp is a summer sports camp in Jacksonville designed to "Build More Grit" by teaching mental, physical and emotional resilience to young people. The eight-week camp offered 53 weeks of no-cost camp to the campers as a result of the \$14,941 raised for scholarship funds from 26 different individuals and businesses.

Kevin Butler, a graduate of Ponte Vedra High and rising junior at Stetson University; Jack Foster, also a graduate of Ponte Vedra High and rising junior at Florida State University; and Colby Harris, a graduate of Fernandina Beach High, three-time summer Grit University intern and now a full-time staff member for Grit.org, led 30 counselors and the campers in generating more than \$80,000 in revenue.

Grit University, now in its third year, helps college-age student interns start and run their own business while learning and implementing time-tested life and success principles. The interns raised start-up capital to cover their room and board at Grit.org headquarters. They led events; learned daily habits including positive reading, journaling and meditating; and presented the impact of Grit Camp to the city of Jacksonville's Mayoral Committee on Health and Wellness in addition to providing a positive experience to counselors.

Visit grit.org/podcast to learn about Butler's and Foster's summer experiences and Grit.org to learn more about the program.

Wolfson hires 9 new faculty members



Wolfson's new faculty members: (left to right) Ms. Hood, Mr. Durham, Ms. Al Rehani, Ms. Wolrich, Ms. Parnes, Mr. Adjevi, Mr. Schemer, and Mr. Fifield

Samuel Wolfson School for Advanced Studies welcomed nine new faculty members to the Wolfpack to aid in Wolfson's continued growth.

- Mr. Adjevi - Chorus
- Ms. Al Rehani - Geometry Honors and Algebra II Honors
- Mr. Dieye, Assistant Principal
- Mr. Durham - Physical Education and Weightlifting
- Mr. Fifield - English I Honors and AP Language Composition
- Ms. Hood - Exceptional Student Education
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THE WAY WE WERE

Rita Danese Taylor

BY MARY WANSER
Resident Community News

On May 4, 2022, Rita Danese Taylor turned 100. For decades, it has been her habit to spend the entire month celebrating her birthday, and this year was no different. In late May, 180 guests gathered at Prince of Peace Parish Hall on Bennett Road for a party. A dozen people had travelled from various states to honor her with their attendance. In the weeks that followed, Rita made many phone calls and handwrote personal notes to say thank you. Gratitude is another habit of Rita's. "I'm happy I'm still living. I thank God for each day," she said.

Rita is a Jacksonville native who was born and raised in the Southside/Mandarin area. Her paternal grandparents left war-torn Italy in November 1885 to spare their sons, one of whom was Rita's father, Alexander Danese, just a young boy then. On the boat ride to America, the family met up with a swindler who left them homeless and penniless in Ocala, Florida.



Mr. and Mrs. Guy Taylor, 1943 wedding

On that boat was another Italian family, the Ghiottos who had a young daughter named Angelina. They, too, landed in Ocala, and they settled there. But the Danese family gathered what goods they could, loaded them into wheelbarrows, and walked 85 miles to Jacksonville.

As Alexander grew, he would travel back and forth from Jacksonville to visit and date Angelina in Ocala. They eventually married there in 1898 and moved as a couple to the Jacksonville area to raise a very large family here.

Rita was born the youngest of 12 children on the second story of a house her father had

built on Greenland Road in Mandarin; the area was considered Loretto at that time. It was off Old St. Augustine Road, close to the railroad and an old graveyard that's still there, Saint Joseph Cemetery. Her dad grew vegetables out back and helped his son at the dairy on Greenland Road. St. Joseph Catholic Church is on part of that land now. Rita's first few years of school were spent in a one-room schoolhouse nearby. Due to economic hardship at the start of the Great Depression in 1929, the Danese family did a land swap for a home farther north on St. Augustine Road in Jacksonville. That's where Rita grew up.

Though her parents were from Italy, Rita never did learn to speak Italian with them. Her dad was a farmer by trade and a painter by choice. He raised vegetables and chickens in their new yard, in the space beside where Rita and her several siblings would play. He had a stall of rabbits, too. "One night, a bunch of dogs came and killed every one of them. After that, he didn't raise rabbits anymore," Rita said. Her mom cooked a lot, mainly spaghetti or homemade noodles. When she wasn't in the kitchen, Rita's mom liked to be outdoors. Angelina Danese Park at the intersection of Danese Court and St. Augustine Road is named in her memory.



Angelina Ghiotto Danese outside daughter Rita Danese Taylor's birth home on Greenland Road, Mandarin

Rita graduated eighth grade from the original Assumption Catholic School on Gary Street. Classes were taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph of St. Augustine. "I liked learning, and my grades all were good," Rita said. She'd walk home along Hendricks Avenue, and there was a corner icehouse near the railroad where she'd go skating. It's gone now. She'd also pass City Hall and the Knights of Columbus, both located a few blocks from the public library. "It was a very long walk," she said. It was more than two miles one way, in fact.

Sometimes, Rita's dad would drive her to school in his old Ford. One particular day, she noticed him paying the nuns at the convent in vegetables and eggs from the Danese's backyard as an exchange for the tuition due. On another day, when she was in 8th grade, Rita was asked by Sister Evangelistic to escort



Rita Taylor and daughter Cheryl, 1949



Rita Taylor, celebrating 100 with children and spouses

her to Gainesville. "I don't know what she had to do there, but she asked me to go with her. I was real happy over that," Rita said. They rode the bus there together.

Keeping within the Catholic school system, Rita completed 9th and 10th grades at St. Paul's in Riverside when they used to include a high school curriculum. After school sometimes, she'd skate in Memorial Park. Rita transferred to the public school system in 11th grade and graduated from Landon High in 1940. "I was a Landon Lionette," she said. She was also part of a program that allowed her to leave class at 12 noon to learn office work. She had typing and mailing duties at a local dairy product machinery company. "I just did ordinary stuff, minor office work, not too much," she said. The stint was brief. After graduation, she was supported by her father until she married.

Rita had been dating Billy Richardson. They frequented a local dance hall on Mandarin Road, which is now a church. One night at the hall, Billy introduced Rita to his friend Guy Taylor, whom she married one year later at the old Assumption Church on Gary Street in 1943.

Guy was a member of the Navy. For a couple of years, he had been stationed in Long Beach, California, and Rita visited him there. Eventually they would have seven children together. All were born at St Vincent's Hospital in Riverside. All seven went to Assumption Catholic School, their mom's alma mater. The two eldest had attended Hendricks Avenue for a time. Some of them went to Bishop Kenny High School, others Englewood High.

The family lived in Baldwin, Florida, where Guy's family lived. From there, they moved to Southside, Jacksonville to 1646 Davidson Street, off Hendricks Avenue. They joined Prince of Peace Parish, to which Rita still belongs. As their family grew, they moved to a bigger house on Luella Street off University by Memorial Hospital.

When the Taylors first arrived there, Luella was a dirt road with only one or two neighbors back then, and University was a simple two-lane street. They had an acre or so of property with cows and horses on it.

Guy worked as a car salesman, including for Ford and Mercury. He ended up at a Volkswagen dealership at the corner of East 8th Street and Talleyrand Avenue, which has since been demolished.

As was the way in those times, Rita didn't work outside the home other than cultivating flowers and plants in the yard, which she thoroughly enjoyed. She was a homemaker who cooked the meals, raised the children,

and made their clothes—by hand, with machine, and even embroidery. She often took her children on picnics, sometimes to Memorial Park in Riverside, the site where she used to roller skate after school years before.

Now, even at 100, Rita continues putting with plants. She enjoys rooting them from cuttings. These days, they're not in a flower garden in the yard but potted plants on her porch. "My children have been so good to me,



Rita Taylor standing at 80th birthday celebration with siblings Leo and Mary Louise Danese

and I appreciate that. But now that I'm older, they won't let me do as much as I used to do. But I'm happy to be here in my old house still," she said. Rita has been on Luella Street for 63 years and has witnessed much growth and expansion of the area throughout the decades.

When asked about how she takes care of herself, how she stays so strong after 100 years of life, Rita said, "My faith. I talk with God all the time. I thank Him for each day that he gives me, and He gives me one day after another."



Rita Evangeline Danese Taylor, May 2022, 100th birthday

IN MEMORIAM

Patricia “Pat” Wood Lee

AUGUST 24, 1932 - AUGUST 8, 2022



Patricia “Pat” Wood Lee of Ortega passed away on August 8, 2022. She was 89 years young.

Pat was a Jacksonville native born on August 24, 1932 to Frank E. and Martha Alderman Wood. She grew up on Jean Court across the street from Oaklawn Cemetery.

Pat graduated from Bartram, now known as The Bolles School, and was a member of Florida State University’s class of 1954. As a proud Seminole, Pat was initiated into the Iota chapter of Alpha Delta Pi Sorority where she had many roles, including founding the Epsilon Omega chapter at Jacksonville University. After graduation, Pat began her career as a home economics teacher at local schools, including John Gorrie Junior High, and became a longtime member of the Jacksonville Alumnae Panhellenic Association.

Pat met her husband of 47 years, Warden “Sperry” Lee, in the lobby of the Grand Hotel in Rome, Italy while she was on tour and he was on leave from the US Navy. They both loved traveling the world and had two children together. Ever organized, Pat managed to have their daughter on their son’s fourth birthday, the present he had requested. Pat and her husband relished time at their mountain house in North Carolina before his passing in 2003. “She enjoyed life,” her son said.

Pat’s lifelong commitment to volunteering began many decades ago as a candy striper at St. Luke’s Hospital. She helped at special events hosted by WJCT (channel 7), at the Greater Jacksonville Open, and at the Players Championship. She was a member of the Junior League of Jacksonville, The Daughters of the American Revolution, and the Stokesia Garden Club. As a devoted member of Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd, Pat was involved with the annual May Fete and served on the Altar Guild.

In addition to her volunteer work, Pat was active socially at Timuquana Country Club and The Florida Yacht Club, where she played tennis and

golf. She was a Pickled Pickler who faithfully hosted every Monday 5 p.m. tea at her home. “My mom was prim and proper from the Old South, but she had fun!” Pat’s son said of her.

Pat is survived by her son, Warden Sperry Lee, Jr. (Sally); daughter, Carlotta Latise “Tisa” Lee Cumbea (Michael); two grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Following a funeral service at Good Shepherd, Pat’s remains were interred at Oaklawn Cemetery, directly across from her first home on Jean Court, completing the circle of her Jacksonville life.

On August 24, what would have been Pat’s 90th birthday, family and friends gathered at Timuquana to fulfill the party plans she had made for herself. No one knew during the planning that it wouldn’t be her birthday celebration they would be attending. Coincidentally, one week before her passing, Pat told her son, “If anything happens to me, you’ll have to have a reception.” And so, he did.

*“My mom was
prim and proper
from the Old South,
but she had fun!”*

– Warden Sperry Lee, Jr.

Betty Jean Saleeba Lewis

MARCH 16, 1931 - AUGUST 16, 2022



Betty Jean Saleeba Lewis, 91, passed away August 16, 2022. Betty Jean, “B.J.,” was born in Jacksonville on March 16, 1931 to Thomas Anthony Saleeba and Beulah C. Sara Saleeba. She graduated from St. Paul’s High School, attended Rollins college, and graduated from the University of Florida. She married A. Noody Lewis in 1955 in Jacksonville, FL. When she met her “sweet” husband, they shared in their passion for all things family and the University of Florida.

She lived her dream by raising a big family as well as being involved in the community. One of her passions, besides her family and the Gators, were her lifelong bridge friends. Influenced by her upbringing, Betty was known to be a nurturing, caring woman, devoted Catholic, a selfless soul and faithful in her mission to better those and the world around her, always believing that everyone deserved to be acknowledged and respected.

She was the matriarch of a large and loving family. She was predeceased by her parents, her beloved husband A. Noody Lewis, brother Raymond Thomas Saleeba and son-in-law Robert L. Maige.

She is survived by her children: Anne Marie Maige, Terrie Wightman, Richard Lewis (Lorie), Mary Helen Sullivan (Keith), Christine Johnson (Joseph), and Michael Lewis (Keith). Grandchildren: Jordan Wightman Totten (Charles), Sara McKay Wightman, Hunter Sullivan, Hart Sullivan, Catherine Maige, Hayden Sullivan, Katie Shannon, and Michael Shannon. Great grandchildren: Charlie and Riley Totten; sister-in-law Mary Lewis and many nieces and nephews.

The family wishes to extend its deepest appreciation to her caregivers Alfreda Wilson, Gwendolyn Duncan, Janet Harris, and the staff of River Garden. In addition, we thank the staff of San Jose Country Club. And lastly to Dr. Louis Akra and his staff for his care and dedication.

The funeral mass was celebrated on Saturday, August 20 at San Jose Catholic Church. Interment in Oaklawn Cemetery. Memorial donations can be made to Catholic Charities and Bishop Kenny High School. Hardage-Giddens, The Oaklawn Chapel, 4801 San Jose Boulevard.

Harry Edwards

APRIL 2, 1942 - AUGUST 13, 2022



Harry Edwards passed away peacefully at his home overlooking the St. John’s River on August 13, 2022 at age 80. He was born on April 2, 1942. He was the oldest of three children born to Harry and Madge Edwards.

Harry was a lifelong resident of Jacksonville, Florida. His mother grew up in Callahan, Florida with 13 brothers and sisters and his father in Starke, Florida with 8 brothers and sisters. Harry had many aunts, uncles and cousins in Jacksonville and the surrounding area, making a wonderful large family.

Harry attended Jackson High School and graduated from Ribault High School in 1960. He was a born leader and was President of his senior class. He was an excellent student and athlete. He played quarterback on the football team.

He continued his education at Palmer Chiropractic College. Upon returning to Jacksonville he opened Edward’s Chiropractic Office where he practiced for over 40 years until his retirement. His brother Dr. Dave Edwards joined the practice and they made a great pair.

Harry’s life was full. He truly was a Renaissance man. He was an avid runner...he completed 25 Marathons, including Boston, New York, Montreal, Marine Corps, and most of the River Runs. He was a member of Timuquana

Country Club and enjoyed playing golf. He built his own home on the St. John’s River where he had a beautiful bountiful garden and a Koi Pond. When he wasn’t running or golfing you could find him in his garden with his dogs Katie and Lucy. He loved to cook and in his early career was involved in the ownership of several restaurants. He enjoyed spending time at the family condo at the beach and at their home in Maine. Harry was a very generous person who loved sharing these homes with his friends and family.

Harry is survived by his loving wife of 41 years, Linda, his daughter Gayle Hemmingway Runion, (John), his sister Carol Clark (Irv) and brother, Dave Edwards (Diane) and sister-in-law Wendy Timberlake (Edgar). He had many wonderful nieces and nephews who he loved dearly. Harry was a father figure and mentor to many young men including Kevin, his cousin, and for the last 20 years, Davor Begic and Vedad Begic, who are like part of the family.

The funeral will be at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Jacksonville, FL. on September 9, 2022 at 10:00 a.m. with burial and greeting at the church following the service. Hardage-Giddens, The Oaklawn Chapel, 4801 San Jose Boulevard, Jacksonville, Florida.

Michele Marie Agee

APRIL 19, 1958 – JULY 20, 2022



Michele Marie Agee died at age 64 on 20 July 2022 at the Mayo Clinic in Jacksonville, Florida after a 17-year battle with cancer. Michele's death comes as a shock because to the last she was beautiful, fit, and active doing what she loved – traveling to be with her family and friends, exercising on a bike, a hike or in the gym, and working on civil engineering projects with her dear colleagues.

"Bring me men to match my mountains." Michele was a mountain girl growing up in an Italian family in Boulder, Colorado. Michele was a member of "80's Ladies," and was justifiably proud to have marched up the "Bring Me Men" ramp in the first class with women admitted to the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, in 1976. A talented athlete and scholar, Michele was recruited to start the women's gymnastics team and she was the team captain. Michele graduated in 1980 with a degree in Civil Engineering and a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force. Michele was beloved by her classmates for her warmth, professionalism, and character. The friendships that Michele formed as a cadet followed her for the rest of her life. The most important of these was with her "Mach One" cadet squadron-mate and best friend, Jim. Michele and Jim's 40-year anniversary in May celebrated a marriage of passion, teamwork, and trust that grew stronger with each precious moment spent together.

Michele served in the active-duty Air Force as a civil engineer for 12-years. On the day the U.S. Congress allowed women to serve in combat

units, Michele joined the 202nd Red Horse Combat Civil Engineering squadron in the Florida Air National Guard. Michele went on to become the first female to command a Florida National Guard squadron, the 114th Combat Communications Squadron. After a total of 22-years of service, Michele retired as a Lieutenant Colonel from the Florida National Guard on the same day as her husband, Jim, in October 2002.

Michele was a registered Professional Engineer in Florida and Georgia. Michele ran a successful civil engineering business with clients including the Department of Defense, Duval County Public Schools, Clay County School Board, and many northeast Florida architects and contractors.

Michele was a lifelong athlete, an avid skier, and an accomplished cyclist participating in road bike events all over the country with Jim. However, it is the joy that Michele brought to everyone who knew her that defines Michele. Michele lit up any room she entered, and her laughter is as unforgettable as it was contagious. Michele's light shines brightly in her children, Chelsea and Mitch. But there was a special connection to her beloved granddaughter, Lucy, who is a little spitfire of energy and joy just like her "Nonna."

Michele is survived by her husband Jim, her daughter Chelsea (Matt Merrill), her granddaughter Lucy Merrill and her son, Mitch. Michele is also survived by her mother Shirley Michaels, sister Mona Pompili, brother Tony Pompili, and brother Joe Pompili (Dora).

Michele's Memorial Service will be held at the United States Air Force Academy cemetery in Colorado on Thursday, 8 September, at 1400. Michele is going home.

In lieu of flowers, please make donations to the Rotary Club of Jacksonville Florida Foundation, P. O. Box 37028, Jacksonville, Florida 32236.

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