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COMMUNITY NEWS



Will the high housing market bubble burst
SEE PAGE 8

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JANUARY 2023, VOL. 16, ISSUE 01



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note from the PUBLISHERS

It seems that just the other day we were contemplating what to name this newspaper. That was 16 years ago.

Sixteen years of delivering your local paper with pride. Sixteen years of fostering our deep love for local news and the print medium. And since the launch of Resident News in January 2007, we've never missed an issue. That's 360 straight publications hitting the press on time, and we're grateful you've given us the opportunity to continue this publishing tradition in 2023.

We have worked tirelessly to be the reflection of your good works, to shine the light on our shared value of a deeper connection to community. And you, the reader, have dug in, shared your news, and spent your hard-earned money with our advertisers. There isn't a day that goes by when we're not thankful for those who have been with us along this successful journey. This relationship helps make our community a fantastic place to call home. As entrepreneurs and

publishers, we remain humbled by the grace and courtesy shown to our fledgling venture, which has grown exponentially through these many years.

As we shift gears toward 2023, we are pleased to see the return of annual events, parties and celebrations with family and friends. It is nice to recognize the good in this world, starting right here in our local neighborhoods.

With less division, more cohesion, and a goal to strengthen ties between neighbors, Resident News is thankful to be part of a community that appreciates the value of what we do.

We wish you a Happy New Year full of prosperity and success!

Pamela and Seth Williams

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Grants, awards and opportunities ahead in the New Year

BY KAREN RIELEY
Resident Community News

Several significant grant opportunities and awards are coming available for local nonprofits. The Community Foundation of Northeast Florida has announced the opening of applications for two significant grants. The Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville requests Letter of Intent (LOI) for its 2022-2023 Cultural Service Grant Program. And, the City of Jacksonville is requesting completed applications for the Mayor's Strategic Partnerships Initiative Award.

THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA

Women's Giving Alliance (WGA) is an initiative of The Community Foundation of Northeast Florida. The group of diverse women who pool their philanthropic giving make a lasting impact on the lives of women and girls in

Northeast Florida. WGA is offering one-time grants for agency workforce support and for client basic needs support. Organizations may apply for a one-year grant up to \$50,000, for only one of the two opportunities available.

Eighty percent or more of the population served by the program for which the nonprofit is requesting funding must be women/girls. Grant size cannot be more than 20% of the organization's overall budget.

For more information, visit www.wganefl.org/apply-for-a-grant or contact Nikki Sabol, WGA director, nsabol@jaxcf.org, (904) 356-4483. Deadline to apply is Jan. 30, 2023, 5 p.m.

The Community Foundation's 2023 Competitive Small Organization Grants applications are now open to nonprofit organizations in Duval, Clay, St. Johns, Nassau, Putnam and Baker counties with annual operating budgets of \$200,000 or less. Grant requests up to \$2,500 will be considered for funding.

Focus is on community projects and ways to help organizations become stronger. Priority in funding is given to projects that build community (neighborhood improvement projects, community engagement), provide support for unmet basic needs (hunger, clothing and other basic items), strengthen the nonprofit (training, planning, coaching), support under-resourced children or youth (mentoring,

enrichment activities, afterschool supports) and support diversity, equity and inclusion.

For more information and to apply, go to www.jaxcf.org/receive/small-organization, or contact Reagan Bass, program associate, rbass@jaxcf.org. Deadline to apply is Feb. 1, 2023, 5 p.m.

THE CULTURAL COUNCIL OF GREATER JACKSONVILLE

2022-2023 Cultural Service Grant Program The Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville is now accepting Letters of Intent (LOI) for the 2022-2023 Cultural Service Grant Program (CSGP). The deadline for receipt of Letters of Intent is Tuesday, March 1, 2022. Letters of Intent must be submitted online through the Cultural Council's website: <https://www.culturalcouncil.org/foundant-online-grant-system.html>.

Submission of a Letter of Intent is a required first step in the grant process. CSGP, which is funded through the City of Jacksonville and administered by the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville, provides support to Duval County arts and cultural organizations which contribute to the quality of life of Duval County residents.

Visit <http://www.culturalcouncil.org/cultural-service-grant-application-information.html> for application guidelines.

THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE

Mayor's Strategic Partnerships Initiative Award previously named the COJ/HUD Public-Philanthropic Initiative Award, is an annual award sponsored by the City of Jacksonville with the purpose of recognizing excellence in partnerships that have both transformed the relationship between sectors and led to measurable benefits for low-and moderate-income individuals and families in Jacksonville. This award highlights the power of collective impact that can be achieved through strategic partnerships.

Awardees are selected by an independent jury panel for completed or ongoing initiatives that are executed in collaboration with cross-sector community partners. The application should be submitted by the lead 501(c)3 applicant, and the agency must be in good standing with their philanthropic and government partners.

Completed applications must be submitted via email no later than 11:59 p.m., Monday, February 15, 2021.

Visit <https://nonprofits.coj.net/partnershipsaward.aspx> for more information and for links to the Mayor's Strategic Partnership Initiative brochure and application. Email www.COJPartnershipsAward@coj.net or call (904) 255-5021 for questions.



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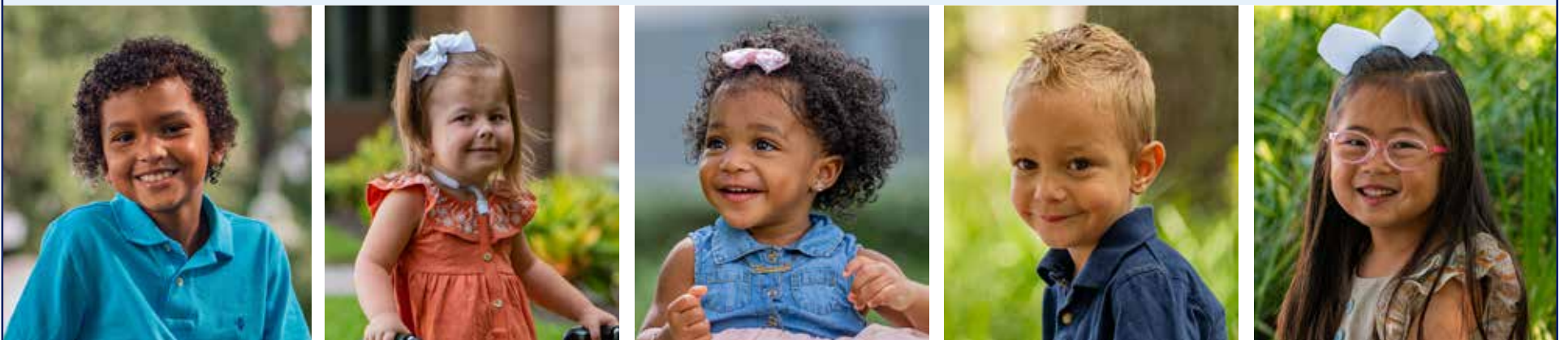


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LETTER *to* EDITOR

The following letter is a response to a letter, written by a reader, regarding a story in the November edition of Resident News titled “Demolition Ahead for Old Ford Motor Company Plant”, written by Michele Leivas. We felt it deserved a response from the Publishers’.

We firmly believe the article took a balanced approach allowing the case of passionate preservationists to be heard alongside legal representation for the owners [of the Ford Plant] arguing very opposite positions. We find Michele’s story to be carefully curated; any conclusions drawn from the piece were left for the reader to decide.

While Mr. Poechmann has an opinion about the ‘arc’ of the story, as Publishers, we believe Michele did a fine job reporting the facts. Whether it is interpreted as unenlightening and ends with a ‘disturbing conclusion’ about the preservation of structures, or lack thereof, is quite personal in nature.

At Resident News, we serve a portion of the community that’s rich in history – from buildings to parks and interesting people as well. We do our best not to take a position on issues. However, we are also reflective of our community’s values and traditions and report on related debates when they arise.

The process that plays out between legislators, developers, lobbyists, preservationists, City Council, and LUZ [Land Use and Zoning] representatives is often difficult to follow; it’s not always easy to capture the breadth of the situation at hand.

We are thankful that Mr. Poechmann took the time to share his knowledge and opinions. We hope more feedback from readers inspires others to share ideas, curate change, organize and set goals to engage in the legislative process in the New Year.

I found the arc of Michele Leivas’s piece “Demolition Ahead for Old Ford Motor Company Plant” led to a melancholy and disturbing conclusion for our city. The piece left me with a distinct feeling Jacksonville remains unenlightened in identifying opportunities to make Jacksonville a destination.

Albert Kahn was a great architect. I studied him and his buildings in graduate school at the University of Michigan, where he is revered for being an expert in industrial design. Henry Ford was a pioneer of modern manufacturing and Kahn was Henry Ford’s architect. It is hard to overstate the impact of that relationship on the United States in

the 20th century, and the automobile revolution led by the Ford Motor Company.

Jacksonville has an Albert Kahn Ford building. This is like owning a Picasso. It is not an imposter, or someone veering from their lane of expertise—say Michael Jordan playing baseball or Taylor Swift designing pottery. This building is a classic vintage of

a famous architect in his prime doing what he does best. And Jacksonville owns one.

Austin, TX is a hot location now; I visited recently. Austin is booming and ‘keeps it weird’ in part by being open minded and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5 ...



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pushing hard for new businesses to move into old structures instead of tearing them down—where a bbq joint will open in a former Quonset hut, a taco stand in an old gas station. Austin will demand fifty-foot trees be balled and moved with cranes to be replanted. Austin allows food trucks to set up in unused gravel lots the size of postage stamps. Austin’s sign ordinance encourages vintage neon in certain neighborhoods, instead of backlit plastic and garish LED, and they don’t guarantee parking for all.

I recently traveled to Washington, D.C., which is upgrading in many neighborhoods. Still, D.C. holds a firm grasp on historic structures and insists on adaptive reuse. If an owner wants a seven-story apartment building, they must incorporate the four-story historic boarding school already on site, and build around and over the existing. I walked by a church that was a former night club (sign of the times) on its way to its third use, but the exterior walls, stained glass, and unique wrapper were a must-keep demand by the City for the new project.

There are also medium-sized cities doing well cashing in on existing historic infrastructure, creating great neighborhoods by not allowing solid industrial stock to be razed. Raleigh’s Warehouse District is enjoying a renaissance and comes to mind.

I was in Baltimore in August and their highest rent luxury hotel is not a high rise, but an adaptive reuse success very similar to the Ford Motor building on a pier in Fells Point. Baltimore’s Harbor East, Fells Point, and Canton neighborhoods command high rents because they salvaged much of their abandoned and vacant 100+ year-old wharf architecture, including uneven cobbled streets that are not car-friendly. City Council member Nick Howland’s rationalization for

the Ford building demolition hints that historic preservation and economic viability (read: jobs, class A real estate) are mutually exclusive. Not true. Jacksonville can have both. Don’t think “either-or”; think “both-and”. St. Augustine makes economic successes of buildings from the 1890s, but Jacksonville gives up on buildings from 1920s.

Authenticity is a key desire today because our world is getting more generic. Generic is cheap, imported plastic junk and bulldozing the unique to put up something that can be found anywhere. Jacksonville keeps getting more generic. The Doro project is an example of this. Jacksonville cannot allow the Doromatic Building to be demolished and expect to get anything with one-quarter the design quality, charm, or character back in return. The same thing will happen with this Ford Assembly Plant building.

The developer targeting the Kahn building says it’s not structurally sound or won’t fit the use. I serve on a community Architectural Review Board. Our Board is constantly approached by citizens and builders who are uncreative and lazy, who would rather pull a plan out of a book and slap it on a lot and plead ‘there’s no other way’ than to spend a little money on creativity for a superior product. They want cheap, quick, and easy. They would rather have an arborist (paid by the landowner) say a tree is “forked and uneven” and needs to be taken than to design around something beautiful, imperfect and irreplaceable. Which one of us will be a perfect specimen at 100+ years old? It’s no wonder we flee suburban, clear-cut neighborhoods and flock to Fort Clinch or Caroline’s forests of forked and uneven 150+ year old trees.

I don’t know the Kahn building intimately, but as an architect, I know whatever structural

deficiencies exist in a single-story building are relatively easy to fix---this is not a high-rise---and there are multiple ways to do it. I have been involved with both urban infill in tight sites, and with projects on the St. Johns River in Jacksonville. Architects, engineers, and contractors are skilled enough to build without bringing down neighboring buildings as was suggested by the developer. Keep in mind: it’s not easy or cheap to build on the river—new or renovation. Whatever failings the Ford building may have, the new developer will be dealing with the same type of disruptive, expensive, and difficult-to-execute foundations in new construction: driven piles, caissons, soil stabilization, cranes on barges.

Jacksonville has a real asset now in the Ford Motor Company building, but only vague promises of ‘300 high paying jobs’ in the future. Thinking as an economic development agent for Jacksonville, the existing building and its future replacement are inextricably linked. It shouldn’t be ‘first A, then B.’ I’ve seen too many trees cut, buildings razed, and lots left vacant after the economics for future plans didn’t work. Too often, the demo happens first, with no recourse for a project that stalls later. We, the community, should see the exact quota of jobs. We should see the salaries. We should see the design for what will be built: what do we get for what we are about to give up? And only when the glossy rendering is actually designed, engineered and approved for permit (the built product always disappoints compared to the sexy renderings the City approves) should the Ford building be taken down.

Council Member Danny Becton’s idea to accept up to \$10,000 from the developer to capture the building’s demolition must be a joke. Who will receive any benefit out of the euthanasia story of the Ford Assembly

Plant building? It’s actually quite perverse to think the City would memorialize its mistake by documenting the building’s demise, as if that somehow makes up or provides a lesson-learned for such a travesty. Note well: this is not being perpetrated in ignorance, but with full knowledge the City is allowing a designated landmark structure to be torn down. In this arm-wrestling match, Jacksonville has had the upper hand from the beginning, and are slowly watching their arm get bent back for the loss by the property owner. The owner’s attorneys stole the City’s girlfriend and are going to send the City a video of their evening together at the prom!

In Jacksonville, we continue to trade authenticity for easy. The Ford Motor Company building is a building, like the Doromatic before it, you cannot replicate and you cannot get back. Can the building be saved and incorporated into a unique project that satisfies all parties? Most likely. Austin, Washington, D.C., Raleigh, St. Augustine, and Baltimore all prove it can be done. Will it be a challenge? Yes. Will it take money and creativity and patience? Yes.

The Ford Assembly Plant building is the hidden treasure pulled out of the attic and marveled at on Antiques Road Show or Pawn Stars. If City leadership lacks the vision to identify and protect prospects like the Doromatic and Ford that could make Jacksonville a destination through authenticity, we will never draw interest from developer and investor dreamers who can execute ambitious ideas with these properties. Can we in Jacksonville finally have some courage and bold ambitions, and draw a line to stop provincial concessions like this? Please do the work. Find a way.

— Lee Poechmann



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Looking back, looking forward

BY MICHELE LEIVAS



Jacksonville residents celebrated their city's bicentennial last summer.

The start of a new year is a combination of closure and anticipation. In that blink of a moment between 11:59:59 and 12:00:00, we bid farewell to the old year, sometimes closing the door gently behind us, other times slamming it and embrace the beautiful (terrifying?) unknown of a fresh 12 months.

It is also a time for reflection and we at The Resident are taking this opportunity to look back at some of the events of 2022 while turning a keen eye to some of what we can look forward to in the coming year.

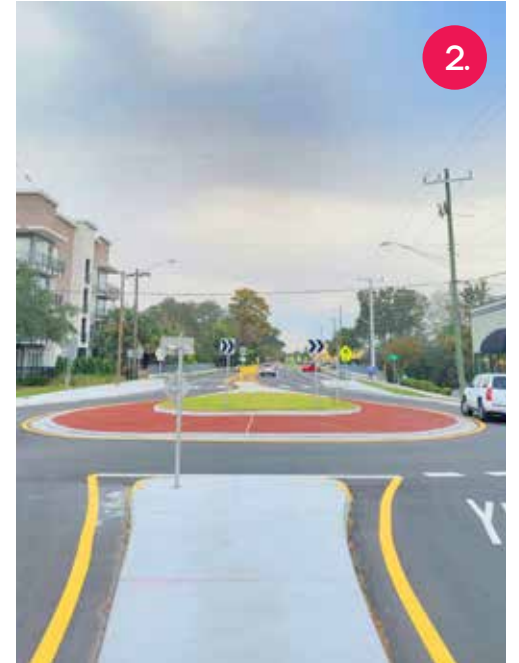
LOOKING BACK:

1. Jacksonville's Bicentennial

It's been a big year for our city. Your 200th birthday only comes once and the City did not miss the opportunity to celebrate in style. The Resident reported, "Thousands of Jacksonville residents lined the streets downtown on June 11th to celebrate 200 years of the River City's rich history." These celebrations included fireworks, a parade, and live music. Local institutions, like the Museum of Science and History, hosted historical exhibits showcasing our city's first two centuries. Happy birthday, Jacksonville!

2. The Herschel Street Roundabouts

These roundabouts stretch back beyond this last year — back to 2020, in fact, when The Resident first reported discussions about the traffic features — but 2022 can lay claim as the year the roundabout construction officially began and ended. This past November, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) completed the asphalt stamping on the roundabouts' truck apron and, after a series of inspections, wrapped the final component of the State Road 211 (St. Johns Avenue) from Herschel Street to Canterbury Street Intersection Improvements Project.



The Herschel Street Roundabouts are now complete, with the last work on them being completed in November.

3. Shoppes East San Marco

If medals were being handed out for most anticipated construction, the Shoppes East San Marco would probably take home the gold. Discussions about the Herschel Street roundabouts may date back to 2020, but the recently-opened Publix at the new shopping center at Hendricks Avenue and Atlantic Boulevard have been talked about since 2002. At the Aug. 11 grand opening event, The Resident interviewed a pair of 18-year-olds who said they'd been waiting for that day

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3. Publix celebrated the grand opening of its long-awaited San Marco location at the Shoppes East San Marco in September.



6. The Borowy Family Children's Critical Care Tower opened in April.



4. Per its "Master Plan," the Memorial Park Association oversaw renovations of the iconic park last summer to restore it to its original grandeur.



5. The USS Orleck officially opened to the public in September.

quite literally their entire lives. More businesses will soon be joining Publix in the new shopping center, including Orangetheory Fitness, Crumbl Cookies, St. Johns Eye Associates, Gemma Fish + Oyster and Foxtail Coffee.

4. Memorial Park Restoration

Memorial Park pays tribute to Florida's fallen soldiers in World War I. "Spiritualized Life" the famous sculpture by Charles Adrian Pillars, stands before the St. Johns River, the park's guardian and icon. This year, in anticipation of its own centennial anniversary in 2024, Memorial Park underwent restorations to bring back its original, early 20th century grandeur. The Resident reported on the construction last August as part of the Memorial Park Association's "Master Plan," established in 2013. The construction gates were removed later in the year and now park visitors can do their own small time traveling by visiting this beautifully restored park.

5. USS Orleck

A proud military city, Jacksonville celebrated the highly anticipated arrival of the USS Orleck, retired destroyer turned museum. The Orleck arrived in Jacksonville in March and officially opened to the public in September. As The Resident reported in its October issue, the opening of the Orleck was like a dream come true for Jacksonville Naval Museum President Daniel Bean.

6. Borowy Family Children's Critical Care Tower

Wolfson Children's Hospital and Baptist Health celebrated the opening of the new Borowy Family Children's Critical Care Tower in April last year. The tower consists of five floors for "dedicated intensive care for the region's children," The Resident reported. It was made possible through a "landmark donation" from the Borowy Family Foundation, received in 2021. In November, the Borowy Family was recognized at the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) FL, First Coast Chapter's National Philanthropy Day Luncheon and awarded its Outstanding Philanthropist award.

LOOKING FORWARD: *forward*

7. One Riverside Groundbreaking

Last year marked the end of an era for Jacksonville as it bid farewell to the Florida Times-Union building at 1 Riverside Avenue. Demolition of the building took place last spring and September saw a groundbreaking ceremony for the incoming mixed-use development named, aptly, One Riverside. In its October issue, The Resident reported the first of three constructions phases will include a restaurant and 270 residential units "while also enhancing connectivity and access to the Riverwalk." Retail space, a Whole Foods Market and a city park are also planned for One Riverside.



7. One Riverside celebrated its groundbreaking ceremony in September.



8. A rendering of the completed RiversEdge: Life on the St. Johns. Render provided by Preston Hollow Community Capital, LLC.

8. RiversEdge - Life on the St. Johns

Excitement continues to grow for RiversEdge: Life on the St. Johns, the Southbank project currently under construction at the vacant lot once belonging to JEA. After the project ceremoniously broke ground in May 2021, infrastructure work has been underway for much of 2022. In a June article last year, The Resident reported vertical construction will begin once the infrastructure is completed. Preston Hollow Community Capital, LLC is the project's developer. The Resident reported, "Once completed, the 32-acre expanse is expected to offer 200,000 square feet of office space and 134,000 square feet of retail space as well as 950 residential units, 147 hotels rooms and a 125-slip marina."

9. Jacksonville Historical Society's Music Museum

Last year, the Jacksonville Historical Society (JHS) shared conceptual renderings for the Jacksonville Area Music Museum (JAMM), to be housed in what will be the converted and refurbished Florida Casket Company building. According to the JHS website, the Downtown Development Review Board gave final approval for the design plans and "construction will begin immediately upon issuance of building permits." The historic, 100-plus-year-old building will be the perfect venue to showcase Jacksonville's rich, musical history for residents and visitors.



9. A conceptual rendering of JAMM's exterior (though not the final design). Rendering by DooWell Design and Consulting.

10. The HUB - Brooklyn

Plans to transform a former Studebaker warehouse into the HUB - Brooklyn, a "pedestrian oasis," are more than two years in the making, but architect Joe Cronk said site work was expected to begin by the end of 2022, early January with hopes to be open by the end of the year. Cronk is part of Cronk Duch and CD+urban, the project's architecture firm and development group, respectively. Also involved with the project is partner Southern Grounds & Co., which will open a new coffeehouse there along with several other dining options with the bulk of the seating al fresco.



10. A rendering of The HUB - Brooklyn, provided by Joe Cronk (Cronk Duch Architecture/CD+urban).

11. RD River City Brewery Apartments

Jacksonville bid farewell to another landmark locale last year as the shuttered River City Brewery was demolished to make way for the RD River City Brewery. The restaurant closed in July 2021 and a year later, demolition began to clear the site for the incoming apartments and restaurant development. In August, The Resident reported, "Miami-based developer Related Group plans to replace the former restaurant with RD River City Brewery, an eight-story residential complex with on-site restaurant space." Downtown Jacksonville's website states, "The City will finance the restoration of a 29-slip marina and boat ramp at the site."



11. Jacksonville's landmark River City Brewery was demolished last summer to make way for RD River City Brewery, which will include apartments and a restaurant.

Don't expect the high housing price bubble to burst in 2023

BY MARCIA HODGSON

Communications Director
Northeast Florida Association of REALTORS®

If you are a buyer hoping that the housing prices might take a dramatic dive in 2023, you are probably going to be out of luck. Today's housing market conditions are fundamentally different from when the "bubble" burst in 2008, according to National Association of REALTORS® (NAR) Chief Economist Lawrence Young, and housing experts in Northeast Florida tend to agree.

"While there have been some talk suggesting a 'bubble' may burst in 2023, none of the indicators in Northeast Florida are pointing in that direction," said Mark Rosener, president of the Northeast Florida Association of REALTORS®. "The median price in our region has remained stable, heading up or down 2-3% month to month for the past six months or so, and it appears that will remain the case throughout next year. Sellers will need to turn for advice from a trusted REALTOR® and to be realistic in their pricing strategy. Meanwhile, buyers have some wiggle room to negotiate, again with the counsel of a REALTOR® who best understands the hyper-local marketplace during these extraordinary times," he said.

"There is no indication of a widespread 'bubble burst' on the horizon," Rosener continued. "Inventory is still restricted with new construction slowing down the pace of new builds. Homeowners are reluctant to

give up desirable low mortgage rates to list their homes unless there is a significant need to do so. In short, demand has stabilized and inventory still somewhat restricted. All this points to a stable median sales price," he said.

November's market statistics seem to bear this out. According to the Northeast Florida Builders Association, 698 permits were issued across the region in November, and this is a significant reduction from the 1,132 that were issued in October.

November, with the median days on the market at 51, a 20% increase since October and an active inventory of 103 homes, a mild 1.9% decrease since the previous month.

In the Murray Hill, Lakeshore, Hyde Grove, and Wesconnett neighborhoods, November's median sales price for single-family residences was \$250,000, virtually no change from the month before. Homes spent a median of 40 days on the market, a 25% jump from October.

In San Marco, San Jose, and Mandarin the median price of single-family homes was

all the major metrics in the Northeast Florida point to a more stabilized housing market in 2023," Rosener said. "There is no question that the spike in mortgage rates throughout the spring and summer of 2022 along with other macro-economic factors, such as high inflation and severely limited housing inventory, resulted in decreased buyer demand in the last half of 2022. However, over the past several weeks the mortgage rate has come down from highs in the mid 7% range to the mid 6% range," he said, "noting that economists project that mortgage rates may settle in the mid 5% range by the middle of 2023. As mortgage rates stabilize so should buyer demand resulting in stabilized median price."

As 2023 begins, buyer demand most likely will settle into a sustainable rate of home sales both in terms of closed and pending unit sales and this should continue into 2023 with normal seasonality fluctuation month to month, he continued, adding that he anticipates a normal uptick in sales activity in the spring and summer of 2023 with a pullback in fall and winter as is normal.

"In 2023, we expect that days on the market will continue to stretch to perhaps 45 days and months of supply to move into the four-month range," he said.

"In general, 2023 should be reflective of more historical seasonality as it relates to the Northeast Florida real estate market. This should be a welcome relief to both buyers and sellers as we settle into a more stabilized market. Real estate is still local, in fact, hyper-local. The expertise of a NEFAR REALTOR® is the consumers best friend in navigating the process and market in 2023."

"In general, 2023 should be REFLECTIVE of more historical seasonality as it relates to the Northeast Florida real estate market. This should be a welcome RELIEF to both buyers and sellers as we settle into a more STABILIZED market. Real estate is still local, in fact, hyper-local."

—Mark Rosener

President of Northeast Florida Association of REALTORS®

Meanwhile, Northeast Florida's median sales price for single-family homes weighed in at \$376,385 in November, a marginal 2% decline from the previous month. Locally, the median price for Riverside, Avondale and Ortega shot up 15.4% to \$525,000 in

\$376,385 in November, a 2% drop from October. Meanwhile, the median days on the market soared 18.4% to 45 days.

"After the frenzied nature of the real estate market throughout late 2020, all of 2021, and early 2022, the past six-month trendlines of

DCPS approves sex ed supplemental curriculum

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Resident Community News

The Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) Board recently approved "supplemental health education materials for reproductive health and disease prevention" for the 2022-23 school year.

At a Dec. 6 meeting, board members voted five-to-two in favor of these supplemental materials for the district's elementary, middle and high schools to complement the state-approved textbook adopted in 2007.

DCPS Superintendent Dr. Diana Greene fielded several questions posed by board members regarding the lessons included in

the supplements and whether or not an opt-out (or an opt-in) option would be made available to parents.

Greene confirmed there will be an opt-out option for parents who do not want their children participating in the class, emphasizing, however, that it is a blanket opt-out, not — as Vice Chairwoman Cindy Pearson (District 3) inquired, an "à la carte" option to select which specific lessons are withheld from a child.

"We cannot just say, 'pick and choose,'" Greene said. ".You're opting out of —Yes, it is all of it, the reproduction, the instruction on STDs, HIV. You're opting out of that."

Greene emphasized these are supplemental materials, from which certain lessons will be pulled to complement the textbook already in use in the district's health classes and, she added, not every lesson in those supplemental texts will be taught.

Greene said, "There are lessons in the book that we will not teach in our district. That information will be clearly defined on our website and, as I stated, parents will know it" when the opt-out forms are uploaded to their parent portals.

"I think we have to pass this comprehensive sex education," said Board Member Darryl Willie (District 4). "Our kids are talking about

it, they're experiencing it, they have questions about it. This is our responsibility and obligation to make sure we are educating our youth to make sure they make healthy decisions and respect each other for the decisions that other folks make. That's the reason why we have this education and we have professionals to do it."

Board Members Charlotte Joyce (District 6) and April Carney (District 2) both opposed the supplemental curriculum, expressing concern regarding the discussions of gender identity included in the texts.

"I don't believe in the state of our world right now that we need to add this to our curriculum," Carney said. "Our children are already being inundated through social media, through corporations that are advertising these types of things. We are creating more confusion and more mental illness by continuing to promote something that's not factual. So for me, I believe that we can be all-inclusive for every student by sticking to reproductive health and HIV and STD prevention."

When Board Member Lori Hershey (District 7) asked specifically whether gender identity would be taught from the supplemental material, Greene responded, "No, we are not teaching gender [identity] in the middle school. Do we teach about LGBTQ students

that can be connected to HIV? Yes we do, because that community of individuals can have a high risk of contracting HIV. So no, it is not taught as a standalone...It is taught related to possibly contracting a disease."

The adoption of supplemental materials must be revisited annually. Typically, it is introduced in the spring to allow for discussions into the summer, if necessary, before the beginning of a new school year. Greene added the DCPS Board will be revisiting "a statewide health curriculum adoption" for the 2024-25 school year.

"Our kids are talking about it, they're experiencing it, they have questions about it. This is our responsibility and obligation to make sure we are educating our youth to make sure they make healthy decisions and respect each other for the decisions that other folks make. That's the reason why we have this education and we have professionals to do it."

—Darryl Willie
Board Member (District 4)



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Groundwork Jacksonville awarded major grant for waterways restoration

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation issues huge sum for local projects

BY KAREN RIELEY
Resident Community News

Groundwork Jacksonville has been awarded \$5,848,900 through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) National Coastal Resilience Fund. The grant will complete the design and permitting for the ecological restoration of Hogans Creek.

The project's goal is to reduce flooding, improve water quality, create habitat for fish and wildlife and provide nature-based recreation along the planned Emerald Trail.

"The Emerald Trail Project and the restoration of Hogans and McCoys creeks are going to be game changers for the downtown experience and economy," said Mayor Lenny Curry.

Preference was given to nature-based projects that show clear benefits in terms of reducing current and projected threats to coastal communities, improve habitats for fish and wildlife, benefit underserved communities, directly engage community members in project design and implementation and can be scaled for broader impact through integration into other government plans, programs or policies. Groundworks Jacksonville's was among the largest grants awarded.

"We are thrilled to receive this major grant award from NFWF as it will enable us to accelerate and complete the Hogans Creek

restoration design," said Kay Ehas, CEO of Groundwork Jacksonville.

Groundwork Jacksonville is the City's of Jacksonville's nonprofit partner in building the Emerald Trail and restoring Hogans Creek and McCoys Creek.

Hogans Creek is a 2.6-mile tidal and freshwater urban creek that begins at the CSX Railroad, just north of the S-Line Rail Trail, and flows south to the St. Johns River at the Shipyards. Hogans Creek frequently floods and is a top priority for the City's Local Mitigation Strategy, just behind McCoys Creek.

The stream restoration work will restore organic beds and banks and return the creek to a more natural meandering pattern and flow. Additionally, two sections that are currently buried in culverts will be daylighted. The plan also proposes the addition of two city parks along the creek.

Throughout the design process, Groundwork actively engaged residents of Springfield, Historic Eastside and the Cathedral District, and other stakeholders in Task Force meetings, creek walks, public meetings, and the Hogans Creek Fest to gather community input that was incorporated into the restoration plans.

The restoration of Hogans Creek is expected to attract a wide variety of birds. It also will provide habitat for various amphibians, reptiles and mammals. Likewise, restored wetland and marsh areas along the creek will provide foraging and nursery habitat for many saltwater gamefish and baitfish.



Hogans Creek restoration design



Hogans Creek near the Vital Statistics Office in Downtown Jacksonville at 1217 N Pearl St

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Chance Partners redevelops Southgate Plaza as The Jack on Beach Apartments

BY KAREN RIELEY
Resident Community News

Southgate Shopping Center, one of Jacksonville's first suburban shopping centers in the St. Nicholas neighborhood, is being reincarnated as The Jack on Beach — a 295-unit multifamily housing community consisted of three four-story buildings. Located just east of St. Nicholas Town Center, South Gate Plaza — as it was originally known — was completed in 1957 and was located at 3428 Beach Boulevard. Its initial tenant list included W.T. Grant, F.W. Woolworth, Winn-Dixie, Toy Town and Morrison's Cafeteria.

Over time, the shopping center declined, like so many in Jacksonville, as the suburban sprawl moved throughout the Southside and into northern St. Johns County. Eventually the plaza, which was owned by Jacksonville-based Demetree Brothers, Inc., was largely vacant, its future in question.

After Southgate Manager and President J.C. Demetree Jr. sold the property to Chance Beach Owner LLC, part of Jacksonville-based Chance Partners, the 65-year-old, 149,042-square-foot shopping center was demolished this past spring. Its redevelopment by EJP Capital and Chance Partners as The Jack on Beach is expected to be completed in 2024.

The Jack apartments will sit on 9.96 acres and feature more than 400 parking spaces for one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments. It will also feature state-of-the-art fixtures, finishes and modern amenities, integrated smart home technology, Energy Star-rated appliances and smart key access control, as well as co-working spaces, indoor and outdoor social areas, an outdoor pool and sundeck, a 24/7 fitness center, dog park and pet spa, and a bike pavilion with a branded bike share program.

"We've always targeted the historic neighborhoods, because they are so close to employment centers, retail, and other historic neighborhood hubs," said Jeff Rosen, principal of Chance Partners. Rosen moved to Jacksonville about 10 years ago from Los Angeles. He now lives in San Marco.

"It's an overall great, welcoming community with great schools," he said.

His first project was the demolition of the Commander Apartments along Fishweir Creek in Avondale and the property's redevelopment as RiverVue apartments.

"We hope the quality of The Jack project will help revitalize the St. Nicholas neighborhood and act as its catalyst for redevelopment," he said. "We were excited about taking an eyesore that was not supportive of a burgeoning community and then enhance that location."

The property is located in a Qualified Opportunity Zone (QOZ), which means it has been designated as an economically distressed community in which new investments, under certain conditions, are eligible for preferential tax treatment. QOZs are designed to spur economic development and job creation in distressed communities.

"QOZ is a federal program that gives us long-term tax breaks if we invest long-term

in the project. We intend to hold the asset for many years," Rosen said. "We worked closely with City Council Member LeAnna Cumber and the City's Planning Department on the entitlements for the project."

The Jack is the fourth project in Jacksonville developed by Chance and EJP, following the opening of San Marco Promenade in 2019, The Exchange and Barlow in 2021 and Eastborough, which will open in early 2023. All of these developments are located in

Jacksonville's St. Nicholas and San Marco neighborhoods.

"There's such a diversity of communities, businesses and service sectors in this city. The Jack is not only ideally located near the Baptist Medical Center and Wolfson Children's Hospital, but it will also provide housing for the local workforce of major employers in Jacksonville's growing financial services, advanced transportation, logistics, biomedical and manufacturing industries, as well as the military," said Rosen.



Aerial photo of the site of the former Southgate Shopping Center after demolition



Rendering of The Jack on Beach Apartments

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Sarah Schwartz and Tabitha Vazquez

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty announced that Sarah Schwartz and Tabitha Vazquez, The Sarah Schwartz Group, has joined its metropolitan office with locations in Avondale and San Marco. Schwartz and Vazquez come to Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices from another local brokerage.

"Sarah and Tabitha are a dynamic powerhouse. Sarah is the ultimate marketing expert who knows how important it is to nurture meaningful relationships with her clients. Tabitha has a strong legal background and her focus and determination to help her clients succeed is just remarkable," said Josh Cohen, broker/manager of the metropolitan office of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty.

For more information, Sarah can be reached at 904-207-1209,

Sarah@SarahSchwartzGroup.com and SarahSchwartzGroup.com. Tabitha can be reached at 904-814-1129, Tabitha@SarahSchwartzGroup and SarahSchwartzGroup.com.

The metropolitan office of Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida can be reached at 904.296.1737, Josh.Cohen@FloridaNetworkRealty.com and through floridanetworkrealtycareers.com. The offices are located at 3627 St. Johns Avenue and 1983 San Marco Boulevard.

Literacy Alliance honors volunteer tutor with Linda Moseley Award

PHOTO COURTESY OF THE LITERACY ALLIANCE OF NORTHEAST FLORIDA.



Volunteer and AmeriCorps Coordinator Clara James (left) with volunteer and Linda Moseley Award recipient Nancy Walker.

The Literacy Alliance of Northeast Florida recently honored volunteer tutor Nancy Walker with the inaugural Linda Moseley Award "in recognition of going above and beyond the call of duty" as a tutor.

Linda Moseley is one of the founding members of what was then known as Learn to Read Jacksonville. It was launched in 1969 and since then has become "the largest adult literacy program in the community and one of the largest in the state..."

Chief Executive Officer Marcus W. Haile explained that volunteers, like Walker, are the organization's "lifeblood,"

the vital component needed to fulfill its mission to the nearly 600 students it serves each year.

"Nancy, she has always been a wonderful example of volunteer tutors in the sense that she will always step up when needs go out," he said. "[She's] very good with the students just on a personal level, very good about understanding where they're coming from, what their challenges have been and what their goals are and that was what we really wanted to try and highlight and recognize in giving her this award."

Walker received the award at a student and tutor celebration event held at the Jessie Ball duPont Center on Nov. 17. This was the first time the Literacy Alliance has held the event since before COVID, Haile said, and the first time the Linda Moseley Award had been given.

"Volunteers are a big piece of what we do here — it was pretty much all we did was work with volunteers," he said. "...[We] decided it kind of made a lot of sense to have an award specifically for our volunteer tutors and naming it after Linda in light of her role growing everything, even as a volunteer herself."

Walker has been volunteering with the Literacy Alliance for roughly four years now, she said, and receiving the award was "overwhelming."

"Just seeing the different people that I work with: the coordinators, the director of the Literacy Alliance," she said. "It was just overwhelming and it was much to my surprise, it really was."

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Bishop Kenny Adds to Academic Team



(L to R) Michael Broach, Jennifer Whitford, Ashleigh Bradley

Bishop Kenny High School (BKHS) added three new members to its academic team: Michael Broach, vice principal of Academics & Student Services; Ashleigh Bradley, academic dean; and Jennifer Whitford, assistant academic dean. The academic team works collaboratively with department chairpersons and teachers to shape the school’s curriculum, maintain instruction, and support student learning.

Broach, M.Ed., is a 1999 BKHS graduate. He returned to the school in a teaching capacity in 2002 and has held multiple, often simultaneous, teaching and administrative positions throughout the last two decades. As vice principal of Academics & Student Services, he will oversee the school’s curriculum, academic services, programs and student support systems. He helped launch the AP Capstone Diploma Program in 2019, and started the Bishop Kenny Bus Transportation Program in 2004, which he continues to manage as the director of transportation.

Bradley, M.Ed., joined the team as academic dean, bringing both teaching and administrative experience from her time at San Juan Del Rio Catholic School. She is a 1996 graduate of BKHS, is the Kenny Angels sponsor, and continues to teach English in the BKHS classroom. Her father and all five of her children are also proud Crusaders.

Whitford, B.A., M.A.T, is a veteran of the BKHS English department. She will continue teaching creative writing class during her new role as assistant academic dean, where she will support teachers with instruction and professional development. Whitford also served as the School Improvement Team Chairperson from 2017-2022.

American Heart Association names Caitlin Brunell executive director of First Coast



Caitlin Brunell is the First Coast executive director of the American Heart Association.

The American Heart Association First Coast has named Caitlin Brunell as its new executive director. Brunell, who has been serving as the American Heart Association’s vice president of development, brings 15 years of nonprofit experience to increase community heart and brain health awareness on the First Coast.

Brunell will lead a staff of 12 who are responsible for the organization’s initiatives in the First Coast community, including advocating for healthier policies and laws, improving access to food and healthcare, promoting the association’s funded research and increasing awareness of heart disease

and stroke. Additionally, she will oversee revenue, field operations, board of director development, volunteer recruitment and fundraising and community engagement initiatives to reduce health disparities.

“Heart disease and stroke run in my family. I recently had a family member undergo open heart surgery and I’m thankful the surgery performed was research funded by the American Heart Association,” Brunell said.

Brunell joined the American Heart Association as the Heart Ball director two years ago, running one of the largest campaigns on the First Coast after working as marketing and engagement coordinator for the Tim Tebow Foundation.

“Caitlin is a thought-leader, an innovator and a colleague who truly creates impact in every role she plays. We are excited to see her step into this leadership role as we continue to build a healthier First Coast community,” said Julie Taylor, senior vice president of the American Heart Association in the Southeast Region.

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Created in memory, by memory

Bolles School installs “Flukes” sculpture donated by artist and philanthropist Gordon Gund



Gordon Gund donated his sculpture, “Flukes,” to The Bolles School in memory of his late wife, a '58 Bartram alumna.

Artist and philanthropist Gordon Gund donated a sculpture inspired by his late wife, Llura “Lulie” Liggett Gund (Bartram, class of '58) — titled “Flukes” — to The Bolles School. The sculpture, a recreation in cast bronze of a whale’s tail, now stands in the Bolles Reflection Garden on the Upper School San Jose Campus.

Gund created the sculpture using only his hands and his memory as he lost his sight more than 50 years ago.

According to a Bolles School press release, “Flukes” was installed

the Bolles garden on Dec. 7 “via a large crane and many expert hands.”

The sculpture was inspired by a “powerful experience” Gund shared with his sons one Fourth of July weekend when they and their friends worked alongside Nantucket fishermen and neighbors to rescue a pod of pilot whales that had gotten beached on an exposed sandbar with their alpha, also beached and dying. Thanks to the group’s efforts, many of the whales survived.

“The sculpture has so many facades of inspiration for our Bolles Community, whether drawing from the history of the artist (Mr. Gund), the partnership between Mr. and Mrs. Gund in relation to the art and life, the story of what inspired the sculpture, or the exposure our students have to seeing a piece of art on campus that is part of a collection that has been celebrated at a multitude of private and prestigious public institutions,” said Carol Nimitz, Bolles chief advancement officer in the release. “It is a tremendous gift that will serve as a reminder to students that no matter where they roam, they always have a home to return to here at Bolles.”

Pajcic donates to The Lead Block Foundation



Early last month, Jacksonville law firm Pajcic and Pajcic presented former Jaguar Greg Jones with a \$6,000 check for his charity, The Lead Block Foundation.

Founded in 2012, The Lead Block Foundation was created in memory of Jones’s grandmother as a charity “that helps those in need, including single mothers, giving toys to kids or paying for them to attend sports camps.”

Jones also participated in the 2022 Pajcic & Pajcic yard golf event and was the “closest to the pin.” The annual fundraising event benefits Jacksonville Area Legal Aid. Each donation is match dollar-for-dollar by the law firm. This year’s event saw more than \$100,000 raised.

Bar Molino brings Spanish culture to San Marco



Vadim Akimenko, Kurt Rogers, Alfred Young, Robert Raccapriore and Dustin Wigglesworth stand before Bar Molino’s Spanish wine offerings.

Bar Molino, a new Spanish wine and tapas bar in San Marco, opened in September and owners Kurt Rogers and Alfred Young said the opening was “emotional.”

“..Opening in this environment, with supply chain issues, with employment issues, all those things going on, is just a huge relief,” said Young. “I think we were all pretty nervous there for a little bit with the timing of it all. I’m super proud of the people who have been willing to come work here and put everything into it; our team is absolutely outstanding.”

Bar Molino offers happy hour and dinner menus and more than 200 labels of exclusively Spanish wines. Young explained they brought their service staff in a month early for training to ensure it not only understood the level of hospitality they wanted Bar Molino to embody but also possessed the knowledge to provide educated recommendations for guests who may not be familiar with Spanish wines.

All the wine at Bar Molino is priced for retail, so guests are able to purchase a bottle to take home or select a bottle to share over a meal for an additional \$10 corkage fee.

Right next door is The Swinerie, a “farm-to-table charcuterie market,” under the same

ownership, offering charcuterie boards of dry cured meats “crafted in-house using locally-sourced heritage pigs,” a selection of imported and domestic olive oils and cheeses and seasonal fruits and vegetables.

To combat the limited onsite parking, Bar Molino offers complimentary valet parking Tuesday through Saturday, from 5 p.m. to closing.

Rogers explained the goal going into this venture — with fellow owners Young, Robert Raccapriore, Dustin Wigglesworth and Vadim Akimenko — was to create something San Marco hadn’t seen before.

“I think for us it was important to bring something to the neighborhood that it didn’t have,” he said. “We didn’t want to do just another version of what somebody else was doing...It’s just important to do something different, help elevate the scene, not ride the status quo to the end of time.”

Bar Molino is located at 1538 Hendricks Avenue; its hours are Tuesday through Thursday, 3 to 10 p.m. and Friday and Saturday 3 to 11 p.m. The Swinerie is right next door and its hours are Tuesday through Saturday, 11 a.m. to 7 p.m.

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Passing the baton:

The Community Foundation bids farewell to Susan Datz Edelman, VP, Strategic Communications, welcomes Stephanie Garry Garfunkel to position

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida (TCF) is bidding farewell to Susan Datz Edelman, its vice president of strategic communications, as she prepares for her retirement at the end of the year after nearly a decade of service.

Stephanie Garry Garfunkel will be taking the reins from Edelman beginning Jan. 1, after a three-month transition period during which she trained with and worked alongside Edelman before officially stepping into her new role.

"I don't know that I've ever had the opportunity at a job to train with the person who you're taking over for and I would say that it's a sign of how planful The Community Foundation has been about the quality of the work, that they created the opportunity for us to overlap so I really can learn before doing it on my own," Garfunkel said. "That's just a testament to how seriously we take the work here."

While Garfunkel may be new to TCF, the organization — and Edelman — are not new to her. A Boston transplant, Garfunkel moved to Jacksonville four years ago to work with the Jacksonville Public Education Fund. It was there that her path crossed with Edelman, who quickly became a mentor for her.

"[Susan] really helped guide me and steer me through understanding the local issues, understanding the local context, getting to know the media, thinking through — the blessing and the curse of communications in this day and age is there's so many ways to do it, so you have a lot of good possibilities but you have to pick and choose when you're a team of one, which we both have been for a lot of our time, so we've just found that we have a lot in common with the way that we approach the work," she said.

According to Edelman, a "robust search" for her successor began in July, which resulted in nearly 90 applicants from Jacksonville and beyond. Once the foundation narrowed potential candidates down to a group of "all local and all fantastic...semifinalists," it became clear that Garfunkel possessed the

skills and qualities the foundation was looking for in its next vice president of strategic communications.

"I really had a wonderful selection of possibilities, but Stephanie has a quality that The Community Foundation looks for in terms of being able to be very agile, have incredible background, be able to think deeply about the strategy of communications and how it intersects with our donors, our nonprofits, the leadership position that we've taken in the community," Edelman explained. "She just had exactly the right formula — equation, if you wanna be chemical about it — and yes, we knew her. We knew some of the other semifinalists as well and they're all great people but Stephanie really had just the right alchemy to make this all happen."

In an e-mail, TCF President Nina Waters expressed her gratitude for all the work Edelman has done as the organization's "first full-time communications staff member:"

"...Her extensive experience in both the corporate and nonprofit sectors has been invaluable as she built and implemented a robust and successful communications strategy that has contributed significantly to the growth and impact of the Foundation," she wrote. "As her final act, she assisted in the selection of a stellar successor in Stephanie, who will continue to build on the strong foundation that Susan created. We have been twice blessed!"

Edelman's retirement comes during a season of change for TCF. This year, the organization has welcomed several new faces to various leadership positions. U.S. District Court Judge, the Honorable Brian J. Davis was appointed Chair of the Board of Trustees this past January. In March, Wanda J. Willis joined the organization as its new vice president of Civic Leadership. Tom Caron was promoted from his former position as Director of Donor Services to the Vice President of Donor Services in August.

The transition period will continue as Waters has announced her own plans to retire in 2023, providing the organization a year-long window to select and prepare her successor. Garfunkel said she is grateful for the opportunity to join the organization at this particular juncture.

"Change is inevitable," she said. "No one serves in a position forever. We will accept that after all this hard work, these amazing ladies in leadership deserve their retirement. What you can do is put the organization in

the best possible position for that transition and I think we're there and I'm really really honored again to be chosen to help with this next chapter."

To that end, TCF has been preparing as best as possible for these changes to its leadership structure as Edelman and Waters both announced their retirements. Edelman said succession planning was a factor in the organization's recently-released Strategic Plan, ensuring the groundwork had been laid to provide as smooth a transition as possible when it was time for new leaders to step into these positions.

"The Board said, 'We can see, looking down the road, that these things are gonna happen. How do we do this in a way that not only protects The Community Foundation that we've built so far but positions us so that we can grow further?'" Edelman said.

Traveling, gardening and "organiz[ing] my photo files" are in Edelman's future as a retiree, though she also looks forward to becoming a more civically engaged citizen now that she'll have more personal time to devote to it. Knowing Garfunkel will be at the helm of communications for The Community Foundation is making her departure from the organization "easier," she said.

"...It's really exciting for me to know that she's got so many wonderful things and qualities that she's bringing to this job and



Susan Datz Edelman (left) will retire from her position as VP, Strategic Communications at the end of the year and will spend her remaining time at the organization working alongside and training her successor, Stephanie Garry Garfunkel (right).

it's making my exit — which will be difficult personally, I have so much of my heart in The Community Foundation — it's making that exit much more - it'll be easier," she said. "It won't be easy, but it'll be easier knowing it's in such good hands."

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Downtown Vision announces 2022 #DTJax Awards winners



Downtown Achievement Awardee Dawn Lockhart

Downtownner of the Year Jason Hunnicutt

Downtown Ambassador of the Year Duan Thompson (center) with Jake Gordon and Austin Collins

Julie Simmons representing Downtown Project of the Year FIS Headquarters

Downtown Vision, Inc. (DVI), Downtown Jacksonville's nonprofit business improvement district (BID), has announced the eighth annual #DTJax Award Winners. The #DTJax Awards recognize community leaders, organizations, businesses and entrepreneurs that worked to create a vibrant and dynamic 24-hour, pedestrian friendly downtown in 2022. Award winners are not only excellent advocates for downtown but have also shown their dedication by supporting economic revitalization efforts, creating jobs, operating beloved amenities and maintaining a clean and safe #DTJax.

The 2022 #DTJax award winners are:

- Downtown Ambassador of the Year: Duan Thompson, who first joined the Ambassador team through the Life Builders Program in partnership with City Rescue Mission
- Small Business of the Year: Dos Gatos, the legendary cocktail bar, now in its 13th year, across from The Florida Theatre and known for its hand-crafted drinks
- Retail Project of the Year: Ruby Beach Brewing, which was originally located at the Jacksonville Beach formerly known as Ruby Beach and now is known for its unique and inspired craft beers using locally sourced ingredients
- Downtown Project of the Year: FIS Headquarters, which opened recently and offers flexible workspace, an onsite gym and cafeteria, as well

as having been built to withstand hurricanes on a site raised to a 500-year predicted flood level

- Downtownner of the Year: Jason Hunnicutt, music venue, bar and restaurant operator, who is a pioneer of The Elbow entertainment district and owner of the 1904 Music Hall, Spliff's Gastropub, Underbelly and Ocean Street Tacos
- Downtown Achievement Award: Dawn Lockhart, City of Jacksonville, who as the director of strategic partnerships for the City of Jacksonville leads the development of a shared civic agenda for the private, public and philanthropic sectors to help result in better outcomes for all citizens and has launched Jacksonville Community Land Trust, the city's first land trust, which advances affordable housing opportunities, as well as playing a key role leading the Mayor's Downtown Homeless Task Force

This year's #DTJax Awards also posthumously honored Robert "Mark" Rimmer for his 30 years of commitment to Downtown's growth and development. Rimmer served as Downtown's parking expert to put parking solutions together for businesses looking to move Downtown, and for brokers, property managers and building owners.

The 2022 #DTJax Awards were made possible by VyStar Credit Union, First Baptist Church of Jacksonville, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority, JEA, Steve & Betsy Crosby, Iconic Real Estate Investments and The Lark.

ElderSource recognizes award winners during annual "A Night with the Stars" event



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELDERSOURCE.

ElderSource CEO Linda Levin (left) and Humana's Principal Population Health Strategist for Humana's Bold Goal Initiatives Paul Sapia (right) present the 2022 Delores Barr Weaver Elder Advocate Award Winner to Glenn Miller, representing The Community Foundation's LGBTQ Community Fund for Northeast Florida.

It was an evening of celebrations and recognitions at "A Night with the Stars" — ElderSource's annual event celebrating "individuals and organizations that work with seniors and their caregivers as well as other outstanding senior advocates."

ElderSource is a Jacksonville organization devoted to empowering "people to live and age with independence and dignity in their homes and community."

Presented by Humana, the event was held at Jacksonville's Museum of Science & History (MOSH) on Wednesday, Nov. 16. In a press release, ElderSource noted, "The highlight of the event was the presentation of the 2022 Delores Barr Weaver Elder Advocate Award given to The Community Foundation's LGBTQ Community Fund for Northeast Florida for its work supporting seniors and caregivers in the LGBTQ community."

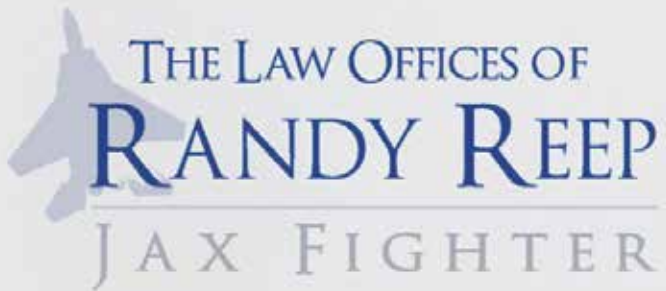
This is the 11th year this award has been given. Its namesakes is noted philanthropist Delores Barr Weaver, who herself was a "devoted and passionate advocate for seniors."

Further recognition was given to the Luminary Award winners — businesses and individuals from agencies providing "essential services and support to seniors in seven Northeast Florida counties."

Proceeds from the evening benefitted ElderSource's Senior to Senior Fund. This fund provides financial aid to seniors "experiencing unexpected financial crises" — everything from electric bills to avoid power disconnections or rental fees to avoid eviction as well as financial assistance installing wheel chair ramps, heating or cooling units and refrigerators for the proper storage of medicine, among other financial needs and emergencies.

The press release noted "A Night with the Stars" was "supported by the Delores Barr Weaver Forever Event Fund."

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Inspired giver helps fund oncology support program



Andrea Laliberte with Oncology Support Services Program manager, Ruby R. Soriano, MSN.

A normal day going to chemotherapy turned life-changing for Andrea Laliberte. In 2020, Laliberte was undergoing treatment for breast cancer. It was a second-hand story from an Ascension St. Vincent's oncology nurse that inspired her to take on a new challenge in life.

This nurse told Laliberte about one of her former patients, an older gentleman, who had been going through extensive chemo treatments. One of his appointments was scheduled on his birthday. On that day, she said he arrived at the hospital's chemotherapy center with 20 \$50 gift cards. He handed the cards to the nurse and asked her to give them to patients who needed help.

Laliberte thought to herself: What can \$50 do?

The nurse explained to Laliberte that often she hears patients waiting to go in for chemotherapy ask about smaller monetary items, such as validated parking. To some patients, those \$3 ticket adds up. Aside from insurance deductibles and copays, patients are responsible for routine bills like transportation, food, rent and more. And many cancer patients can't work while in treatment. Laliberte could see how those gift cards would go a long way for someone living paycheck to paycheck while fighting a deadly disease.

That small conversation led to a big idea, and Laliberte reached out to the hospital's CFO to learn what she could do to help patients - even in a small way.

Laliberte ended up assisting on a much bigger front - donating \$50,000, with \$10,000 earmarked for the Foundation's mobile mammography unit and \$40,000 dedicated to developing a new Oncology Support Services fund to help oncology patients pay non-medical bills so they could fully focus on healing. In 2022, she donated \$400,00, which led to the formal launch of the Oncology Support Services Program. She hopes the Oncology Support Services Program will inspire others and continue to grow years down the road.

"I wanted to help develop this idea into something long-term," Laliberte said. "I wanted to provide seed funding to create a program that would be ongoing - a program that others will want to give to."

This new fund will help cancer patients with everyday costs that may get neglected while they undergo treatment. These costs range from rent to childcare to transportation.

Laliberte hopes her philanthropy will end the vicious cycle for patients struggling to make ends meet. Just as the story about the gift card inspired her, she hopes her gift will inspire others to give what they can.

For more information about the Oncology Support Services Program at Ascension St. Vincent's, please visit givestvincents.org.



Andrea Laliberte



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River Garden celebrates in style, shines during a big night

It was an evening to remember for the River Garden Foundation, as the organization played host to a celebratory crowd that helped usher in its 30th Anniversary Gala. The ballroom at the Sawgrass Marriott played host to 'A Time to Shine', Sat., Dec. 10, where guests paid tribute to the almost 77 years of progress that has made River Garden one of the most sought-after facilities in the country.

Thanks to committed supporters and gala Co-Chairs Sue Eaglstein, Debbie Parker, Debra Setzer, Jeanine Rogozinski and Stacie Wilf, River Garden continues to deliver superior service and care to seniors in our community. During this special evening, a tribute was paid to Kathy Osterer, the former chief development officer of the River Garden for more than 23 years. A friend to many, she not only volunteered for the first River Garden Gala in 1993, but played an integral role in planning and implementing all the subsequent events for the Foundation and organization.

The night wouldn't have been complete without the special thanks and gratitude for all the committee members, alongside recognition for the new chief development officer, Christina Levine and her staff of Michelle Branly and Gabrielle Margol, who helped with their planning expertise and collaboration for this year's special anniversary.



Ken and Michelle Baker



Debra and Leonard Setzer with Debbie and Jeff Parker



Jeanine Rogozinski with Mariam Feist and Jackie Goldman



Gene and Brenda Wolchok with Lisa and Barry Ansbacher



Paige Wajzman with Matt Gittleson, Bunny Witten, Lara Gittleson and Meredith Dragon



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Winter Design Show debuts new look, tradition

The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital rolled out a fresh Opening Night Party to celebrate the festivities of the Winter Design Show, which made its official launch this year Dec. 2. The party celebrates the holiday season and rolls out one of the finest galas of the year, kicking off a weekend of activities. From lectures and book signings to the children's fashion show — complete with a visit from the Jacksonville Zoo and Garden's penguins — all ticket sales and funds raised benefit the children at Wolfson Children's Hospital.

"The Women's Board is very excited about all of the changes," shared Robin Albaneze. After a two-and-a-half-year hiatus for one of the Women's Board's top fundraising events, there was much anticipation for the next steps and new approach to the gala. According to Albaneze, "...it gave the [Women's Board] a chance to regroup and restyle the show. It was a very successful weekend, and all the proceeds will go towards the final pledge for the new NICU (Neonatal Intensive Care Unit) located in the Borowy Tower. As outgoing president of The Women's Board, I could not be prouder of the efforts of our membership."



Robin Albaneze with Kendra McCrary and Grace Martin Wooten



Winship Dowell with Kate Buschini



Brooke Roberts with Sarah Foster and Elizabeth Roth



Owene Courtney with Laura Magevney



Hampton and Cheree Graham with Kate and David Johnston



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Start the New Year Off Right... by Making Better Resolutions

BY KERRY SPECKMAN
Resident Community News

It's 2023 and that can only mean one thing ... It's time to start breaking the New Year's resolutions you just made and swore you were going to keep this time!

Not to sound like a cynic (which has never been one of my resolutions, for the record), but making resolutions is a losing proposition for those who make them—91% of them, to be exact, according to inc.com. By no means am I trying to discourage anyone from making resolutions. I'm merely suggesting that you think of them in a different way. That said, here are 10 resolutions you can keep, if you just try. I believe in you.



1. LOSE WEIGHT/GET MORE EXERCISE.

Jacksonville is, by no means, a pedestrian—or cyclist-friendly city. However, you, my friends, live in one of the most walkable neighborhoods in the country and the best in the city of Jacksonville. So, get off your duff, lace up your sneakers and start incorporating strolls around our beautiful, diverse and colorful neighborhoods into your regular routine. Of course, you could always join a gym, but we all know how that usually turns out. If that doesn't appeal to you, try EMSculpt, it's like doing 20,000 sit-ups in 30 minutes.

2. STOP SMOKING.

Newsflash: Smoking kills people, it's expensive and makes you smell like an ashtray, none of which I see as a positive. Why not take a tip from the sober curious movement (shout out to Wildcrafters in Riverside, Jacksonville's first booze-free bar), and explore the possibility of maybe cutting back on the cancer sticks—and vaping too, for that matter? And if you can't,

could you at least stop throwing your cigarette butts all over the streets?

3. SUPPORT LOCAL BUSINESSES.

I realize shopping online is convenient and getting to a brick-and-mortar store can be hard when you're busy. But you know what else is hard? Running a small business. Our neighborhoods are blessed with so many incredible locally-owned businesses—San Marco Books and More, Edge City, Missy Riley Art, Grassroots, Underwood's, Amara Med Spa, Anita's Garden Shop, Hair Peace Salon, the list goes on and on. Why not make an effort to support them when possible? (Bonus of shopping local: No porch pirates stealing your precious Amazon orders.) And don't even get me started on supporting local restaurants (talking to you, folks crowded outside a certain steakhouse on Roosevelt).

4. LEARN A NEW SKILL.

These days, there is no excuse for not pursuing a passion. Between the internet and apps, your smartphone is a never-ending source of knowledge whether you want to learn basketweaving or Klingon. If hands-on instruction is more your thing, you can study floral design at the Garden Club of Jacksonville or painting at the Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens; discover your musical talents at the Ronan School of Music (where I'm working on connecting with my inner drummer but that's another story); and take a stab at stand-up at open mic nights at local bars. Seize the knowledge and opportunities around you, my friends.

5. CREATE LESS WASTE.

Recycling is a start, but there are heaps of other ways to declutter your life without filling the city dump. Donate used clothes, furniture and other household items to local charities; share or trade hand-me-downs with friends; shop at stores that specialize in gently used items (Fans & Stoves Antique Mall, The Snob, Chamblin's Bookmine and Tomato Vintage, to name a few); and if you're feeling really ambitious learn how to compost. (I'm sure there's an app for that.)

6. SPEND MORE TIME WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS.

Self-explanatory.



7. VOLUNTEER.

Giving back is one of the best ways to be a good community steward, and there are so many ways to do it. Volunteer your time at your neighborhood library, local nonprofit or school. Donate money or, better yet, become a member of a non-profit organization like RAP, SMPS or MOSH. Pick up trash on your block. Donate blood. There are no limits to how your efforts can benefit the neighborhoods.

8. REDUCE STRESS.

Sounds impossible at times, but you can alleviate a lot of stress in your life by practicing basic principles of meditation and yoga, learning breathing techniques and mindfulness (definitely apps for that), keeping a gratitude journal, seeing a mental health professional, or just talking to a good friend. I know of these might sound like corny (I thought so myself a couple of years ago), but I do every single one of them now and have never been more at peace.

9. SAVE MONEY.

You already know you can save money by bringing your lunch to work and not spending \$7 on a cup of coffee every day. Yawn. There are so many other budget friendly ideas—that are a heck of a lot more fun—if you just look, like free admission nights at Cummer and MOCA, \$5 Movie Tuesdays at Sun-Ray Cinema, happy hours (Orsay and European Street Cafe have two of the best), and free live entertainment at Riverside Arts Market and Friday Musicale. And for the love of Suze Orman, take advantage of frequent customer programs and sign up for emails or texts from your favorite businesses to learn about special deals.

10. BE MORE CONSIDERATE.

I admit: This one's not so much of a resolution as it is a plea. Allow me to start you off with a few. Stop littering. Don't park on the sidewalk or block people's driveways. Refrain from going through the 10 items or less lane when you have 23. Quit playing on your phone when someone is talking to you. And knock it off with the boomer bashing already.

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Artist honors Jacksonville history, completes Cowford murals

BY KAREN RIELEY
Resident Community News

The Cowford murals may have had their origin as a solution for covering graffiti, but with the creative genius of local artist David Nackashi, they have become a visual history lesson. This fall Nackashi completed the last of the murals beneath the Acosta Bridge that he started in 2021. The large murals, 40 feet wide and about 32 feet high, portray four Florida Cracker cows.

The models for the murals – Eunice, Esther, Prudence and Harmony – are descendants of the breed that Spanish conquistadors brought to Florida from Malaga, Spain, centuries ago. They live on a farm owned by Lisa Harmon in Live Oak. Harmon keeps the breed for historical purposes.

“Jim Draper, a former professor of mine from the UNF art department, did a series of Florida Cracker cow paintings that he displayed in Malaga,” Nackashi said. “When this project was presented to me, I knew the cows would be the perfect subject for the setting. He introduced me to Lisa, and I took hundreds of photos of these cows.”

Downtown Vision and Downtown Dwellers funded the project and handled the approval process for the art. The City of Jacksonville Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department of Transportation reviewed and approved the project, a process that took about three years.

The murals pay homage to Jacksonville’s history prior to its founding in 1822. Natives

called the narrow St. Johns River crossing at today’s downtown Jacksonville, Wacca Pilatka, meaning “place of cow’s crossing,” according to the Jacksonville Historical Society. The area became known as Cow Ford, or Cowford, the place where it was possible for ranchers’ cows to ford, or cross, the river.

“I enjoy the challenge of making a mural meaningful to the area,” said Nackashi. He has noticed that, while the murals seem widely loved, people who don’t know the area’s history seem confused.

“I think that is perfectly fine, because then they can learn. I kind of hate being too obvious,” he said. “The Cowford murals are some of my favorite works that I’ve done and in one of my favorite parts of the city. Since the [bridge] columns were in the water, the cows, given our history, made the most sense.”

The murals face out toward the St. Johns River. They can be seen from the Main Street and Fuller Warren bridges and from across the street.

Nackashi painted the murals in two phases. The first phase was started late December 2021 and each column took about a week. The second phase began mid-September of this year and also took a week.

“There was a lot of waiting for scaffolding to be constructed and moved, but the actual painting took a week for each side of each column,” Nackashi said. “The location was a very peaceful place to work, and it was bittersweet to finish the project. I painted the murals with the best paint I know of and with the best UV clear coat I could find, so these murals should stay vibrant for a long time.”



Local artist David Nackashi photographs the Florida Cracker cows on Lisa Harmon’s farm to use as models for his Cowford murals



Eunice on the farm



Eunice as Nackashi painted her on one of the Cowford murals

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LOCAL FOLKS

Lisa & Scott Lofton

BY MARY WANSEER
Resident Community News



Lisa and Scott Lofton



From the collection of Lisa and Scott Lofton

Lisa Lofton is a known artist around town. She is on the boards of two local nonprofits, serving as president of the Art Center Cooperative and as vice president of the Jacksonville Artists Guild. She's also a member of the Art League of Jacksonville. She met her husband, Scott, at the University of Florida. On school breaks, they worked together at Jax Liquors. Now, Scott works for the Bank of America. What most residents don't know about these local folks is that they are avid collectors of antique memorabilia.

Scott is a Jacksonville native born at Old St. Luke's Hospital on 8th Street. As a preteen, Scott would come in behind city projects after heavy excavating had been done, after the workers left, and he and his cousin would rummage around and find treasures that Scott kept. "A lot of it was done on Bay Street along the parking lots that were put up near the Haydon Burns Library," he said. They found a wide array glassware—soda bottles, whiskey bottles, medicine bottles. The colors range from cobalt blue to amber to clear. A few of the nicer pieces, he and Lisa now have as decoration throughout their home. Many are sitting in boxes in a storage unit because the collection is so large.

The Loftons enjoy visiting national parks, so they've done a lot of domestic travel. "We collect license plates from every state we've visited," Lisa said. They now have 46 hanging on the fence in their backyard. "There's a couple we don't have yet, but we're working towards that," she added.

There's something else hanging on that fence, too: a huge metal Coco-Cola sign that the Loftons consider one of the best finds ever. Scott dragged it out from underneath an old train station in a small city outside of Gainesville. He and his college roommates had been urban exploring out of sheer boredom. He admitted, "Lisa was far more studious than I was." Lisa and Scott have other commercial signs of the day in their collection as well, like ones that used to hang in old ma and pa country stores.

"We find signage in various places," Lisa said. While renovating their Murray Hill home, they came across an old handicap parking sign in the wall between a closet and the bathtub. It's on the back fence now along with the old Florida license plate that they had found under a floorboard. Beneath the house were a few soda bottles from the 1950s that Scott was happy to add to his glass bottle collection. The entire reno project was like unearthing a time capsule. While digging in the backyard to plant flower beds, they also discovered a bag of someone's old family photos. "That was a little creepy," Lisa said. They still have some of them, the ones from the center of the pile that had been shielded from the moisture of the elements, but most had to be thrown away.

Though they thought the buried bag of photos was a bit creepy, Lisa and Scott didn't mind too much, as they both like Halloween happenstance and touring old cemeteries. As a teenager growing up in Clifton, the place to go on Halloween was a small family cemetery on a plantation near the river that had been forgotten,

grown over, and rediscovered. A group of ladies drafted Scott and his friends to assist with the clearing away of overgrown brush so that the headstones and markers could be revealed. Scott was enchanted. Today, visiting old cemeteries is something he and Lisa like to do because of the historic perspective. By reading headstones, especially the ones that include the manner of death, "you can get a good sense of how people lived," Lisa said.

Another of the Loftons' collection is comprised of old cameras. One had belonged to Scott's mother. It's the folding kind, and its leather case still has her name stenciled on it. They have a Kodak Brownie and some vacation color cameras. Some of the cameras are the silver and black ones that still have flash cubes attached. Later models, like the Polaroid Instamatic, are part of their collection as well. They've gotten most of them from antique stores in a variety of locales—sometimes in Riverside, sometimes in High Springs. It's the workmanship that had gone into the cameras that intrigues Scott. "It took some engineering in those days," he said. "I really just love the way they look," said Lisa.

The Loftons also collect coins, movie theatre posters, and more. "I include the antiques in my paintings. There's a lot of undiscovered stuff here," Lisa said of Jacksonville. "You just don't know what you're going to find."



Vintage sign from the Loftons' collection



The Loftons' back fence, Murray Hill

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ANIMAL HOUSE

JSO Police Dogs – Working & Retired Protected By Senate Bills & Dedicated Nonprofits

BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA
Resident Community News

There was a collective sigh of relief among those who understand the costs of veterinary and continuing care for retired law enforcement canines when Governor Ron DeSantis signed Senate Bill 226, Care for Retired Police Dogs. Bill 226 has allocated \$300,000 to fund an annual Florida Department of Law Enforcement state contract.

“In Florida, we back the blue, and that includes the K9s that are often the first to go into a dangerous situation,” said DeSantis. “After dedicating their lives to protecting and serving our communities, it is important that we ensure that these K-9s are cared for.”

During debate on the bill, which passed by a 117-0 vote, Senator Bobby Powell, D-West Palm Beach, spoke of the canines’ extraordinary physical and intellectual capabilities. He noted that the abilities of these dogs far exceed those of any human being or technology available to fight crime, including their extreme cost-effectiveness.

Bill 226 further extends the safety net for retired police canines following the passage of Senate Bill 388 in 2021. That bill permitted medical care by emergency technicians and transport by emergency ambulances or helicopters for critically injured canines.

Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office K9 Huk, a member of the Swat Team, was saved by Bill 338’s emergency aid and transport provisions. Last July 22, 2022, K9 Huk and his handler, Officer Cheth Plaughter, were part of the JSO SWAT team involved in a high-speed chase and shootout outside the Jacksonville Zoo.

After three suspects wrecked their vehicle and ignored police commands, Plaughter released Huk, who raced to the car. Huk was shot in the neck, hindquarters, and wrist and the suspects then fired at police. Two suspects died in the ensuing gun battle; another was taken into custody.

Plaughter and Huk appeared at a Dec. 4th K9s United fundraising event. The event also honored JSO law enforcement officers, their canines, the helicopter pilot Officer Jeff Klebert, emergency technicians, and First Coast Veterinary Specialists who saved K9 Huk’s life.

Plaughter said that it was only because of the lifesaving actions of JSO officers, emergency



From left, Debbie Johnson with First Coast Veterinary Specialists staff Madison Rummel, Leah Matthews, Raynn Wilson, Michelle Larson, Officer Cheth Plaughter, his wife Cheryl, and K9 Huk.

medical technicians and the police helicopter pilot that Huk survived. The critically wounded dog was airlifted to First Coast Veterinary Specialists, who saved his life. Plaughter praised the emergency veterinary and continuing care that First Coast Veterinary Specialists staff have provided to Huk. Clinic employees were introduced following a loud, enthusiastic greeting from Huk and were presented with a large, framed photo collage of their most famous patient.

Other speakers told attendees that these officers and canines have the most dangerous jobs on the street. When most people flee from danger, these dogs run straight at the threat without hesitation to save lives and protect citizens.

The all-volunteer K9s United was founded in 2015 by Debbie Johnson. She was distraught after a fleeing suspect killed JSO K9 Baron on Oct. 7, 2014. Johnson enrolled in a JSO Civilian Law Enforcement Class to learn more about the K9 unit.

Inspired to action, along with her husband BJ and daughter Emma, she channeled her grief over K9 Baron’s death into building a nonprofit organization. K9s United fundraises to provide the best protective equipment and emergency veterinarian first aid training to JSO handlers and canines. The organization supports and promotes the needs of law enforcement officers, handlers and their canines during and after their service, including memorializing canines killed in the line of duty.

They provide canine safety equipment, including bulletproof vests that cost \$3,000, tracking harnesses, car heat alarms and monitoring, canine first aid kits, and other equipment. Visit their website for tax-deductible ways to donate or to pre-order K9s United specialty Florida license plates to help reach their requirement of 3,000 orders. Sales of the license plates would contribute \$25 per plate to K9s United mission.

JSO Lieutenant Commanding Officer of Canine & Mounted Units Jason Bailey said that JSO is fortunate to have such support for their 22 canines. JSO canines are mostly German shepherds and Belgian Malinois selected and trained by JSO trainers. While all are trackers, JSO’s top three trackers are a bloodhound and two dual-trained tracking/narcotics detection dogs: a golden retriever and one Labrador retriever.

Nine JSO canines specialize in narcotics detection; 12 are explosive detection canines that sweep events, or anywhere large crowds gather. In 2023 JSO will add four more dogs because of Jacksonville’s size and numerous large venues and events.

Every year law enforcement canines must be re-certified for duty by outside certifying officials. Detection canines are certified by the National Police Canine Association (USPCA). Patrol canines are certified by the Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

USPCA Region 1 President Sergeant Aaron Peterman said that most civilians have no idea of the constant dangers canine officer handlers and their canines confront. These highly intelligent, athletic dogs are continuously trained for specific jobs within law enforcement. Peterman said that their presence is a significant crime deterrent and can cause suspects to immediately surrender without incident.

Peterman said that the cost of an untrained police canine averages \$12,000. Add training or titles, and the price increases by approximately \$5,000. JSO canines retire at eight years, but Peterman said that the national average ranges from five to 10 years of service. Peterman is a 22 year veteran and canine trainer at the Lakeland Police Department, where he serves with his partner, K9 Blizzard. He is a UNF adjunct professor of Canine Management for the Institute of Police Technology and Management.

While all law enforcement canines train to track and maintain perfect obedience, they specialize in tasks: patrol, apprehension, evidence recovery, search and rescue, narcotics, contraband, or bomb detection. Electronics-trained detection canines can search any building or car for jump drives, external hard drives, or secure digital cards.

The Florida-based, national nonprofit Retired Police Canine Foundation (RPCF) administers the new Senate Bill 226 funds to support retired canines. The program is now part of its efforts to raise awareness of retired law enforcement and military canines’ needs.

Most law enforcement officers adopt their retired canines to live out retirement as family members. However, this best-case scenario for retired canines can be difficult for adopters. Veterinary bills for a retired canine range from \$2,000 to \$3,000 annually, plus higher food costs for large dogs. They often face rental and housing restrictions or eviction. Only active duty law enforcement canines are legally permitted and cannot be restricted from most rental or other accommodations.

RPCF Executive Director Richard Geraci said that police canines apprehend thousands of criminals yearly and protect U.S. law enforcement officers and citizens against crime or terrorism in communities of every size. Each year approximately 10,000 of these highly trained canines retire from agencies that are not required to, and have no funds to provide continuing care for retired canines.

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Geraci described tragic cases across the U.S., where, because of cost and adoption obstacles, some retired police dogs end up in shelters or are euthanized. These issues keep Geraci busy fielding calls from officers across the nation asking for help providing for their retired canines. He also reviews Florida officers' applications and eligibility for financial assistance from Senate Bill 226 funds.

Geraci said that one JSO officer and retired canine have already received financial assistance from the new bill; two others have been accepted. Senate Bill 226 provides reimbursement of up to \$1,500 of the annual veterinary costs for a retired police dog, including yearly wellness checks, vaccinations, parasite prevention treatments, medications and emergency care.

For eligibility, retired police canines must have five-plus years of law enforcement service with a Florida police department. A dog that served three-plus years, then suffered an injury



K9 United Founder Debbie Johnson with JSO Officer Cheth Plaughter, his wife Cheryl and K9 Huk.

in the line of duty and retired is also eligible. The dogs must have been tested and certified for duty by the State of Florida or the United States Police Canine Association (USPCA). The USPCA is the nation's largest organization that promotes quality trained and certified canine law enforcement teams.

Retired police canines experience more severe physical issues and complications than typical senior pet dogs. They can be compared to military soldiers and NFL players whose rigorous physical activities and injuries take a heavy toll on their bodies.

Geraci retired to Florida after 20 years with the New York City Police Department (NYPD). He was a 9/11 First Responder so affected by the police canines he saw in action during that national tragedy, the street cop became a canine handler and trainer with 30,000 instructor hours. His constant companion is K9 Ace, his retired six-year NYC Transit Police canine who celebrated his 10th birthday in December.



Retired Police Canine Foundation Executive Director Richard Geraci and his retired K9 Ace.



Sergeant Aaron Peterman with K9 Blizzard.

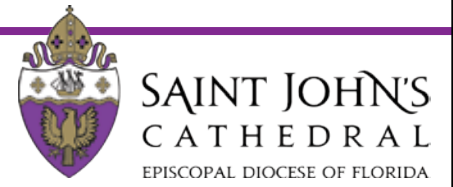
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JUNIOR RESIDENTS

Angels for Allison hosts annual Holiday Open House

The Allison Brundick Haramis Foundation — or Angels for Allison, together with the Miller Company, welcomed more than 100 guests at its Holiday Open House on Nov. 30 in Ortega Village. This annual event recognizes the winners of its angel art contest, which had more than 200 entries from local third to fifth graders. From those submissions, 12 are then selected to be featured on limited edition stationary sold during the year.

According to a press release from the foundation, “Guests enjoyed hot cocoa, sweet treats, and shopped with Anita’s Garden Shop, C. Pulignano, Meg Grimes Jewelry, Whole Hands and local author Peggy Harrell Jennings.”

The Ronan School of Music played live music throughout the evening and the night was kicked off with a cheer performance by cheerleaders from Episcopal School of Jacksonville, St. Mark’s campus. Santa and Mrs. Claus also made a special guest appearance.

A portion of the evening’s proceeds went to the foundation.



Ted Miller with Santa and Mrs. Claus.



Art contest winners with Board President Drew Haramis.

Laurel Valley of BKHS named Florida Dairy Farmers Coach of the Year



BKHS head swim coach Laurel Valley has been named Florida Dairy Farmer Coach of the Year for the second consecutive year.

Laurel Valley, head swim coach for the Bishop Kenny High School (BKHS) Crusaders, has been named the 2022 Florida Dairy Farmers Coach of the Year. This accolade is icing on the cake following an already outstanding season for both swim teams: The boys’ team brought home back-to-back FHSAA Class 2A state title at the 2022 Swimming and Diving State Championships in November last year. The girls’ team finished strong in third place, drastically improving from its seventh place finish the year before.

“It’s surreal to be at BK as a faculty member versus as a student and experiencing life from the other side,” said Valley, a BKHS alumna herself, in a press release. “It’s fascinating.”

This is the second year in a row Valley has been awarded this title; it is also her second year as head coach. She was aided by assistant coaches Dennis Candalora and Stephanie Jaeger, both of whom “were instrumental in the team effort during practices and on the pool deck for all meets.”

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Bishop Kenny's boys/girls swim teams celebrate end-of-season victories



(Bottom row) Assistant Coach Stephanie Jaeger, Head Coach Laurel Valley and Assistant Coach Dennis Candelara. (Top row) Evan Gardner, Barrie Snyder, Owen Kerkezi, Evan Larson, Carter Wright, Zach Jones, Graham Evans, Matthew Leitheiser, Nick Leitheiser, Christian Grden.

Bishop Kenny High School's boys' swim team has cause to celebrate after winning the FHSAA 2A state title at the 2022 Swimming & Diving State Championships for the second year in a row.

A press release stated, "The combined results of Barrie Snyder's individual first place finish in the 50 Freestyle and the three first place relay performances in the 200 Free, 200 Medley, and 400 Free secured the back-to-back title for the team."

The championships took place in Stuart, Florida on Nov. 19.

"I am so proud of this team," said Head Swim Coach Laurel Valley in the release. "At the beginning of the year, they set the lofty goal of repeating as state Champions. Through their hard work and dedication, they made that a reality. Our returning swimmers led the way, and we had a surprising addition of a freshman and two juniors, to round out a well-balanced team that was able to work together and bring back our second consecutive State Title. I am truly blessed to be able to coach such a great group of young men."

Additionally, the girls' swim and dive team ended its season as District and Regional champions. The team placed third in State — "a tremendous improvement over their 2021 seventh place finish."

'To be or not to be'

Episcopal School sophomores hold Shakespeare Festival



Sophomores at the Episcopal School of Jacksonville hosted a Shakespeare Festival, celebrating some of the Bard's most classic works.

Tenth graders at the Episcopal School of Jacksonville celebrated the Bard and some of his most cherished plays at a Shakespeare Festival, held last month at the school's Munnerlyn Campus.

"Othello," "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Antony and Cleopatra" were among the works performed for sixth thru ninth graders on the 20 outdoor stages arranged throughout the campus. Other performances included "King Lear," "As You Like It" and "Hamlet." In addition to performing, the participating students worked on the production side as well, working on costumes, posters and other preparations that went on behind the scenes.

"Tenth grade English instructor Carson Strohecker made this event come to life," said English Department Chair Cathy Kanaday in a news release. "With his amazing vision, combined with patience and attention to detail, this project gave us true Community Theater. Sixth through tenth graders and faculty all across campus were sharing and learning alongside each other."

"In addition to the celebration of Shakespeare's inherent, timeless brilliance, this event was also a celebration of how very much our students can accomplish," she added. "The sophomores all worked with plays which were outside of our curriculum. Really, they wound up being teachers as much as performers, figuring out how to share their research, discoveries, and creativity with each audience."



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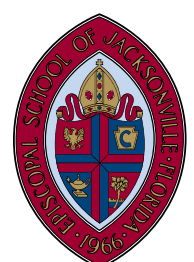
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JCDS Sharks run in Light Up the House to support Ronald McDonald House



Jacksonville Country Day School's Sharks on the Run participate in the Light Up the House 5K to benefit Ronald McDonald House.

Thirty students, six faculty members and 17 parents from Jacksonville Country Day School (JCDS) participated in the "Light Up the House" 5K on Dec. 3 to benefit Ronald McDonald House. The students and faculty are members of JCDS' afterschool enrichment program called Sharks on the Run.

"During each of the Sharks on the Run sessions we try to weave in the mindsets of Passion First, Everything is Possible, and We Are Connected," said Kathryn Krawiec, Lower Elementary School team lead. Krawiec and Emma LeComte, fourth grade teacher, lead Sharks on the Run.

"When looking for our end-of-season run, we tried to find one that would also provide a teachable moment for our participants," said Nathan Renstrom, JCDS's director of auxiliary services, who ran the race with his daughter. "By selecting a run that supported the local Ronald McDonald House, our students and their families were able to not only

learn about the important mission of the organization but also help peers in need."

Six students from JCDS' Sharks on the Run program took home "Age Group Winner" trophies for finishing top 3 in their age group. Two faculty members and one parent also placed.

Two other faculty members completed the race while pushing their young children in strollers. Kamryn St. Thomas, JCDS PE specialist, had twins at the beginning of this calendar year and placed first in her age group while pushing her twin boys.

"It's important to me to be healthy and be a good example for my students and my boys," said St. Thomas. "It was such a great feeling being to be able to run with my students and encourage them to do their very best."

JCDS students are looking forward to their next race after the winter break and a new season of afterschool fun.

A sweet nod to history

Episcopal School Students recreate the Seminole Club for Gingerbread Extravaganza



Third graders at Episcopal School of Jacksonville recreated the city's historic Seminole Club for their annual submission to the Gingerbread Extravaganza.

The Jacksonville Historical Society (JHS) celebrated the 20th anniversary of its annual Gingerbread Extravaganza last month at Old St. Andrew's Church and third graders at the Episcopal School of Jacksonville's St. Mark's campus joined in on the festivities.

As with every year, students paid homage to their city's history by selecting a historic building for their creation. Their 2022 selection was downtown Jacksonville's Seminole Club.

An honored annual tradition was made even sweeter with a surprise field trip to Sweet Pete's — housed in the same building where their gingerbread construction once stood — to "make candy and decorate their masterpiece."

"My class has been participating in the Gingerbread Extravaganza for 10 years," said Drew Haramis, third grade instructor in a news release. "When I run into former students, they always ask whether or not we still make a gingerbread house! It is a wonderful way for students to learn about and retain information about the history of our wonderful city."

The Gingerbread Extravaganza ran from Dec. 8 thru the 27th, with proceeds benefitting children's programs at JHS.

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Local Youth of the Year receives free car through Boys & Girls Clubs

Laniya Flowers, a local Jacksonville teen and 2022 Youth of the Year for Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida, recently received the life-changing surprise gift of a Nissan Altima for her 19th birthday. On Dec. 1, an unsuspecting Flowers arrived at Greg's Auto Collision Center in St. Augustine with her mom who had convinced her to stay home longer from her Thanksgiving college break. In addition to the car, she also received a \$1,000 gift card and a complete car wash kit from Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

"I was amazed to receive this generous gift. My Boys & Girls Club experience has taught me that you're bigger than any obstacle. The mentors I found at the Club taught me how to turn obstacles into benefits and use them to become a more wise, influential person," said Flowers.

The car donation was made possible by the National Auto Body Council's Recycled Rides Program, GEICO,

The Florida Alliance of Boys & Girls Clubs, Greg's Auto Collision Center, and Enterprise Rent-A-Car.

Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida chose Flowers as the recipient of this surprise car giveaway because of her shining example of the organization's mission to enable all young people to reach their full potential.

"We are so proud of Laniya and how well she has represented Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida," said Paul Martinez, President & CEO, Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida.

Currently a freshman at Florida State University, Flowers was named the 2022 Youth of the Year for Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida in February following a rigorous selection process including public speaking, personal essays and panel interviews. Local Youth of the Year winners like Flowers represent the organization for that year in additional regional and national Youth of the Year competitions through Boys & Girls Clubs of America.



Laniya Flowers, 2022 Youth of the Year for Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida, is shown with her little brother after receiving a surprise life-changing gift of a Nissan Altima for her 19th birthday through the Recycled Rides Program.

Assumption 1st graders perform annual Nativity play

Assumption Catholic School first graders performed a Nativity play for students and families. The annual performance was held at Assumption Catholic Church.



First graders performed their annual Nativity play at Assumption Catholic Church.

The spark of innovation:

The Bolles School hosts science and technology expo

The Bolles School celebrated innovation and creativity at its Bolles Science and Technology Expo last month.

More than 100 students from Honors and AP biology and other science and technology clubs and classes participated in the expo — a "more comprehensive approach to an annual science fair." Participating students also included 2022 SPARK Scholars Riya Kar ('24), Krish Relan ('23) and Sara Wasserman ('24). That same week, these scholars also presented their projects at the Mayo Clinic.

SPARK — the Science Program for the Advancement of Research Knowledge — was launched at Mayo Clinic in 2017 for students in Duval and St. Johns counties. The SPARK Research Mentorship Program, as it is known, "provides high school students with unparalleled mentored research experience in world-class laboratories at Mayo Clinic."

Kar, Relan and Wasserman are three of the 20 SPARK Scholars for 2022.



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EXTRAVAGANZA 2023

Friday, February 10, 2023

Moran Theatre in the Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts
Art Exhibition, 6:00 p.m. / Performance 7:00 p.m.

In celebration of the arts, Douglas Anderson School of the Arts (DA) proudly presents EXTRAVAGANZA in beautiful downtown Jacksonville for one night only! Please join us for our annual production at the Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts, Moran Theatre on February 10, 2023.

For more than 30 years, DA's annual Extravaganza has successfully promoted the best of what Douglas Anderson students have to offer, highlighting a wide range of styles and moods of music, writing, film, dance, and theatre, as well as a stunning display of visual art. Those of you who have attended previous Extravaganzas know how special and professional this evening is, and this year promises to be better than ever! Over 580 students will participate in the production, which will include several collaborative works as well as some surprises.

As always, we thank you for your gracious support and look forward to you joining us as we showcase some of Douglas Anderson's finest! Come and be a part of the excitement.

—Tina Wilson, Principal

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Cummer Museum and the Caring Tree *A December snapshot at RPDS*

Last month, sixth graders at Riverside Presbyterian Day School (RPDS) got firsthand experience comparing art and literature during a visit to the Cummer Museum, where they studied “End of the Festival,” a painting by Hughie Lee-Smith and analyzed it for similarities in “thematic and atmospheric elements” with “coming-of-age” novel, “Okay for Now.” By getting a firsthand, up-close look at the painting, students were able to “deepen their analytical skills as they engaged in a slow look at artwork” versus the digital versions they’d previously examined in their language arts classroom.

RPDS also hosted its annual Caring Tree Chapel last month. PreK 3 thru sixth graders worked with their community to collect more than 200 gifts for Lutheran Social Services to distribute to refugee families in need.



RPDS hosted its annual Caring Tree Chapel last month and collected more than 200 gifts for Lutheran Social Services to donate to refugee families.

Dancers shine at SJEDS Winter Dance Recital



Dancers with the SJEDS After School Dance and Hip Hop Class wowed the audience with their moves at last month’s Winter Dance recital.

Dancers with the San Jose Episcopal Day School After School Dance and Hip Hop Class showed off their moves at the Winter Dance recital last month. “Our students worked so hard to prepare for this recital and it was obvious from the crowd’s reaction [that] the students did not disappoint,” said Amy Blumstein, director of auxiliary programs.

Assumption Catholic School Glee Club earns top level trophy at Orlando Music USA Festival

Singers with Assumption Catholic School’s Glee Club earned a “Superior rating”— top level trophy — for their performance at the Music USA Festival at Universal Studios Orlando last month.

This is an annual trip for the school’s seventh and eighth graders and music teacher Katie Rewa said she is “so proud of our students for pulling off high school level harmonies!”

Rewa shared “extra congratulations” to soloists Erin Trull and Alex Weed and thanked parents for their continued support.



The Assumption Catholic School Glee Club.



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“The Butcher’s Boy” tells his story

The autobiography of Harmon Wages

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Growing up delivering groceries from Pinegrove Market Deli, where his father was the butcher, Harmon Wages knew everyone and all their stories. The December release of his autobiography, “The Butcher’s Boy,” is a way for people to learn all of his.

While many will recognize him as the former NFL player for the Atlanta Falcons, others who have never heard his name will now get to know the “stray bullet,” as he calls himself, who’s had ups and downs and has come out the other end stronger for them.

It was a reconnection with former classmate, Martha Kavanaugh Hunt, that led Wages down memory road, revisiting youthful memories and catching her up on the 50-plus interim years since they’d seen each other.

“He just told me what he’d been doing and a lot of things I didn’t even know because I had not myself followed Harmon’s entire career,” Hunt recalled, “and I said, ‘You’ve gotta write a book, you’ve just gotta write a book.’ I said, ‘What else do you have to do, really? You’re retired, let’s put it on paper.’”

With the help of Atlanta journalist and co-author Stan Awtrey, he did just that and, with Hunt editing, “The Butcher’s Boy” came to be. In it, Wages revisits his childhood, delivering groceries on his 26-inch Higgins,

spending time at his beloved creek behind the market — “Every boy should have a creek,” he says — his NFL career and the years following it up to present day. Being able to share the book in Jacksonville, his hometown, is an incredibly sentimental experience for him.

“I just wish that some of my buddies that I grew up with were still around,” he said. “... The guys that I went to the creek with and fished with off the top of the Fishweir Bridge. Having this come out in Jacksonville is just a real treat because that’s my home.”

Putting these stories to paper has allowed Wages to relive some of the greatest moments of his life, including the 1969 game against the New Orleans Saints during which he became the fourth player in NFL history to complete what he called a ‘hat trick’ — throwing, catching and rushing for a touchdown. Today, that list is comprised of 11 people, with San Francisco 49er Christian McCaffrey becoming the most recent player added to that list this past October.

While the accomplishment itself was indeed something to be proud of, Wages was even prouder of the fact that he achieved it with his father watching. Earlier that week, he’d learned that December game would be the last his father would ever be able to attend in person because of a severe heart condition.

To this day, Wages said, he can still remember the sound of his father’s voice when they spoke after the game.

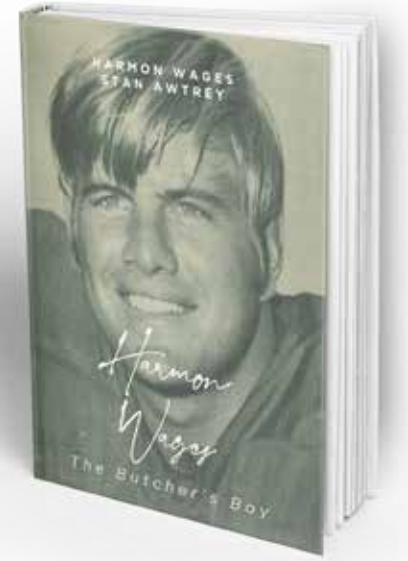
“My daddy comes up to me after the game in that old man shuffle,” Wages recalled, “he comes up to me and says, ‘Sonny boy, I didn’t know you could do that.’”

Wage’s father is buried with the game ball from that day.

It’s stories like these and more that Wages looks forward to sharing with his hometown community and beyond once his book is released.

Having read the book more the 20 times as its editor, Hunt said, “I think that no matter — whether someone has followed Harmon and has known him all of his life or someone is young and doesn’t even know his name, I think this story is going to engage the reader no matter what the background is, no matter whether they know of Harmon personally or not.”

“The Butcher’s Boy” was released last month. Wages plans to arrange events and book signings in the Jacksonville area.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF HARMON WAGES.

Harmon Wages fondly remembers his childhood in Jacksonville, revisiting it in the stories shared in “The Butcher’s Boy.”



Harmon Wages



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A closer look at giving

BY SABEEN PERWAIZ

Guest Columnist
President and CEO of Florida Nonprofit Alliance

Some may not realize that Florida's nonprofits are **6%** of the state's workforce and employ over **600,000** people.

This year, in partnership with Jessie Ball duPont Fund and Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Florida Nonprofit Alliance (FNA) released a first-of-its-kind survey of giving patterns and practices of Florida households.

The research debunked long-held myths about Floridians not giving of their time and treasure. Floridians of all ages and backgrounds are generous and that generosity is wide-ranging. Almost 70% of households in the state reported giving to charity in 2021, with the majority of funds going to Florida nonprofits. The top three priorities for statewide donors were poverty and income inequality; health; and climate change and environment/animals.

The research release was followed by a statewide tour helped us leverage the power of data to help nonprofits make informed, strategic decisions about how to best engage their donors. As you can imagine, some recurring themes began to emerge as we discussed the implication of the research in nearly 30 different communities. Nearly three years after the COVID-19 pandemic first forced nonprofits to drastically adapt in the face of severe economic hardship, the nonprofit sector is still navigating how best to move forward. One thing was clear, everyone knows they need to fund the infrastructure of their organizations. But they also recognized the challenges in getting donors to see the importance of this line item, otherwise known as overhead.

We learned a lot about why donors might stop giving to an organization, and it relates primarily to trust. Sixty percent of donors stopped because they thought too much of their donation was going to overhead. Now no nonprofit says that they spend too much on overhead. But clearly there is a disconnect between what a donor sees versus what the nonprofit is doing. We need to find a way to have honest conversations that build trust while also funding this important cost that helps advance our missions.

If nonprofits want to attract new, younger donors and keep them engaged over the long term, they need to invest now in technological tools to meet these donors where they are. This is an overhead cost. The study showed that Floridians under 40 are significantly more

likely to give through online mechanisms such as an app, a nonprofit's website, or a crowdfunding campaign organized by a nonprofit. That is the next generation's preferred form of giving. However, most nonprofits are not currently equipped to fundraise with two different strategies for two different age groups.

Some may not realize that Florida's nonprofits are 6% of the state's workforce and employ over 600,000 people. But now, the sector is dealing with burnout, a wave of resignations and an inability to hire qualified staff because we are competing with a national job market and higher wages at employers like Amazon. Our staff are our heart and soul, their passion is what fuels the work. They are often underpaid without adequate benefits and deserve the ability to provide for their families.

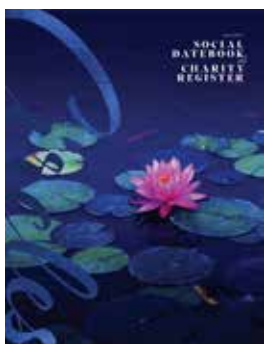
Florida's nonprofits have been named Floridian of the year for all of their contributions to our communities. We need to remember that there is a cost associated with running nonprofits as well. The great resignation has impacted us all. Cyber security challenges are a real threat. Inflation is impacting all our costs. The difference is that nonprofits don't have the ability to fund these new costs of doing business and are constantly expected to do so much more with so little. And somehow, they always step up and deliver. The sector needs champions to help us advocate for the strategic need for funding overhead costs. Can you imagine, what our communities would look like without nonprofits? We can't afford to find out.

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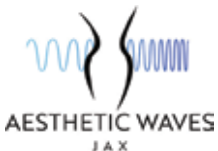
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Discovering a lost family

San Marco author chronicles reconnecting with family she'd never known in memoir

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News



Amy Gilbert and her husband Mark at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Seoul — the trip that started it all.

San Marco resident Amy Gilbert had no memory of a life before her adoption from a Korean orphanage in 1974. She was raised in Alachua County, roughly an hour and a half southwest of Jacksonville, where her parents still live today.

It wasn't until a casual suggestion by her husband to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary at the 2018 Winter Olympics in Seoul that she'd even considered returning.

It was an opportunity for some answers, though, Gilbert reasoned. She simply wished to see the orphanage from which she'd been adopted. While the orphanage had closed down by then, the Korean social services, which now occupied an office in that same building alongside apartments, was happy to provide photos of the orphanage, a gift bag containing a pair of porcelain coffee cups — and an unexpected promise, which she learned from their tour guide after departing the building.

"The tour guide said, 'They're gonna look for your birth family,'" Gilbert recalled. "[I thought], 'What? No that wasn't the purpose of this. I never wanted to find my birth family.'"

Still, shortly after returning from her trip to Korea, Gilbert received an e-mail from social services. They had located records of a biological brother who had searched for her in 1987. Gilbert was shocked. She had a brother — a brother who had searched for her more than 30 years ago. She had a few months to process that revelation until, on Aug. 1, 2018, she received another message from social services saying they'd located her brother and passed on her e-mail address to him. Not only that, but they'd included several short messages from him to her, translated through an app since he didn't speak English. Pieces of the message were lost in translation, spurring doubt in Gilbert's mind that they'd found the wrong person, but then he sent over pictures and all doubt vanished.

"I knew right away," she said. "That's me. That was me. He looks like me."

From that point on, Gilbert's world grew as she discovered, got in touch with and met not only her biological brother, but two older

sisters as well. After her brother and a sister traveled to the United States to spend Thanksgiving week 2018 with Gilbert and her family, she decided to travel to Korea the following spring to meet more of her family. It was at a family meeting with her sisters, an aunt and two uncles that she discovered more about her birth mother.

"The aunt and uncles told me pretty much everything I wanted to know about my birth mother," she said. "Her name, her birthday, what kind of person she was. What her hobbies were. They said she was a good mother, she took care of not only me but the other siblings — their mother had died. She was a good mom. I left that meeting like, 'This is good. I have filled in the blanks.'"

One of her uncles had more in store for her, though. He had her birth mother's telephone number.

"He had not talked to her in eight years but he had a number. So he called it and she answered," Gilbert said. "He said, 'Your daughter is in Korea, do you want to meet her? She said yes.'"

Another family meeting was arranged, this time including her husband, who flew over from the States, and her birth mother.

"I wrote her a note and wanted to set the tone that I forgive her, I've had a good life and I just want to get to know her," Gilbert said. "So we have formed a relationship."



Amy Gilbert's memoir, "Becoming Korean," released in November of last year.

It would take Gilbert three years to put her story to paper in her memoir, "Becoming Korean," chronicling not only her journey getting to know her biological family but her experience immersing herself in a culture she'd hitherto never identified as her own.

She did this, in part, by watching K-dramas (Korean dramas), which she said actually taught her quite a bit and her own travels and research has taught her a lot as well, but not without internal challenges as she'd lived much of her life "as basically a cultural white person."

"It took a lot of processing," she recalled. "I had buried it all, had never dealt with it. I



Baby Amy and her birth mother at the orphanage in 1974.

wanted to be a white American and it was pretty easy for me to act that way, [though] sometimes I wasn't treated that way."

Whenever she traveled, Gilbert had always kept daily travel logs — "what did we do, who did we meet, what did we eat, what was good, what was bad" — and she was able to use those as a foundation for her memoir's timeline but faced challenges when it came to describing her feelings in words.

"I had to sit there and think about, 'Okay how did it make me feel?'" Gilbert said. "It really was a struggle to get in touch with that part of me."

Since her book released on Amazon this past November, Gilbert said she's received messages from readers who've read her book,

including another Korean adoptee from Texas who asked if they could schedule a Zoom meeting to "meet." That is who Gilbert wrote this book for, she said: People who are still wondering and still searching.

"There's over 7,200 Korean adoptees, just on Facebook," she said. "...After being on that Facebook group of Korean adoptees for several years — I've read their stories. There are a lot of hurting people. Some of them found family and got rejected again. Many of them never found family. I want to give hope to people who are searching for their family and it's never too late."

Gilbert is hosting a book signing event at San Marco Books and More on Monday, Jan. 28 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.



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FROM MY EMPTY NEST PERCH

BY SUSANNA P. BARTON
Resident Community News

I am grateful for the shops and restaurants in our neighborhoods and – bust out the confetti and noise makers – my most important New Year's resolution is to be a better buy-local consumer in 2023.

I decided this after my first experience in IKEA just before the holidays. TBH, I'm surprised I lived to talk about it. Having been absolutely lost in the bowels of the store with an empty, wobbly-wheeled cart for more than an hour – spitting and quiet-cussing – I managed to find the exit and score two sleeves of sugar-low-soothing Swedish cookies on the way out. It was there – in the hot expanse of the store parking lot, slouched behind my steering wheel with a dribble of crumbs in my bra and on the pavement below – that I contemplated the blessings of neighborhood retail.

Our local businesses are everything an IKEA is not. Pop the cork!

Before all you IKEA-lovers start getting uncomfy, I will not be throwing shade on big box, buy-it-all-for-less-under-one-roof shopping adventures – nor will I be talking about the perils of buying of cheap furniture you have to assemble from Swedish instructions. That would be petty and unrealistic, because, let's face it – there are perks to these places. And sometimes – many times – there is no way to avoid NOT going. All I'm saying is, neighborhood retail is BETTER, and we are fortunate to live so close to it.

Local shopping and dining centers like San Marco Square, Five Points, the Shoppes of Avondale (and in more recent years, Brooklyn and Lakewood) are “anchor tenants” to the thriving residential communities around them. No doubt Telfair Stockton knew what he was doing when he developed many of these neighborhoods in the mid-1920s. People then – and now – want to live near a “gettin' place.” Places where you can get a haircut or get your food and drink on. Places that make gettin' of any kind quick, easy and familiar.

Let's start with that last word – familiar. Local shopping is personal! At local gettin' places, business owners and customers know each other by name. You might have kids who go to the same school, you might be in the same Pilates class. Heck, you might be

neighbors, or related, even – a common occurrence if you're a Barton in these parts. It feels good to know and be known when you're on the retail prowl. I guarantee you no one would have known my name at IKEA if it weren't for the invisible “MY NAME IS SUSANNA BARTON, HELP ME” sign I taped to my forehead. What I wouldn't have done to be known, found and whisked away to the check-out line that day. Familiarity, I think, is the foundation of good community.

In the first year of our marriage nearly 30 years ago, David and I lived in the top floor of an apartment home on Landon Avenue one block from San Marco Square. Our landlord was the legendary Gene Starling, who owned Starling's Market where Rue Saint Marc is located today. What a hotspot. So pre-Publix, so farm-to-table and early-organic. In addition to purchasing perishables, neighbors would visit Starlings to stock up on good conversation with Gene and his wife Margay before scooting across the street to the corner Pic 'n Save for toothpaste and expired medicine. There have been so many memorable relationships on the buy-local scene over the years. Skin care maven Casey Lee (who now owns the successful Skin Spa Eco Luxe Beauty spa in Jacksonville Beach) shaped my eyebrows at Luxe Lounge while infants napped on my chest. When I still had one foot in the hometown nest, Krista Eberle would send bills to my father in Texas (!!! I have no words for myself). I loved visiting Rosie True in San Marco Square because Angie Sparks was happy to let Ben and Marley lick her showroom mirrors while I puttered around the store escaping it all. And of course, Saturday morning excursions and weekday lunches at Whiteway Deli were a must no matter what – because it was always a treat to see the Salems and old friends and put back a Barton Special or Anne Beard.

Local shopping is also – quick. Patronizing neighborhood stores and restaurants can make for a real get-in, get-out, get-on-your-way kind of experience. Exactly the opposite of IKEA. Whenever a kiddo birthday present or shower gift was on my get-list, I would race into the Shoppes of Avondale's Hobbie Horse or White's (later known as the Green Alligator) because they'd wrap it up real quick like and make my offering look nice. Talk about looking nice – I'd be remiss to not mention local manly man stores. Sometimes there were – and still are – those “why isn't this fixed already” moments that required

David to make haste to the Curry-Thomas Hardware store in St. Nicholas or Ace – rarely the Lowe's or Home Depot. We have been blessed with “quick stop” retail over the years – including the Blockbuster Video and 8 'til Late convenient store. Today, I enjoy the whiz, bang, pop of zipping through the Miramar WD in for big, oaky chardonnays and Busch Lite – refreshing rewards for wrapping up those punishing home improvement projects.

Sometimes, local restaurants fall into the quick category. I love ordering home delivery from Taverna. It takes no time at all and the folks who deliver are always “regulars” – including some of our kids' classmates from Bolles. Of course, getting ice cream or grabbing a coffee are quick culinary experiences, but sometimes eating out is as well. Back in the Dark Ages of attempting restaurants with small children, our favorite dash-dine experience was at the original La Nopalera. We observed one nonnegotiable rule every time: order and slug the Nop's extra-large-size giant margarita. IMMEDIATELY. This was a must because there was no telling when the kids would emerge from their under-the-table soiree in screechy tears about some misdeed – forcing a hasty exit and thereby ending the big night out. That way, at least we scored a buzz. There is something super reassuring about always being a five-minute car ride away from home when you're out – especially with unpredictable kids in tow.

That's a perfect segue to the last major perk of sticking closer to home for your retail: local shopping is easy, it's convenient, it's close. When Ben and Marley attended Riverside Presbyterian Day School and I began working for The Resident at its Park and King area “headquarters,” I really expanded my retail repertoire. A pre-carpool line swing through Grassroots market helped me check the “only the freshest, healthiest and most organic for my kids” box. And because I was RIGHT THERE ANYWAY, I could pop into 5 Points' iconic Edge City to elicit some direction from Gunnel Humphrey and Tom McCleery on how to maintain a hip mom image despite, well, despite the fact there was nothing hip about checking boxes while your kids wait for you in the carpool line. Perhaps a little more apropos for the occasion and the time, no pun intended, were the infrequent dashes to Lanny's Jewelry Works in the Shoppes of Avondale for a new watch battery or necklace clasp. Lanny could fix the little stuff on the fly and what a bonus to observe the fishpond (koi pond maybe?) inside his store. I miss that guy!

The more I write, the more nostalgic I get for all the neighborhood retailers we've enjoyed patronizing over the years. There are so many fantastic and unique places to go! Don't even get me started on all the thrift, resale and consignment stores we have in our hoods. Or the movie theaters. Or the

specialty cuisine shops. There are too many to list! But I have to close with a shout out to Solomon Ventures on Art Museum Drive. It is hands down one of very best examples of local retail greatness. David and I are late to this party. In fact, Solomon's has been on the neighborhood scene for half a century or more – some might say the Solomons were among its founding members. Today, you can go into the local overstock/retail salvage store (Where shopping is an adventure!) and meet three generations of Solomons – Raymond, Kristin and on occasion one of her precious 20-something-year-olds – working behind the counter and managing this successful business. Can you imagine saying howdy-do to three generations of IKEA owners while you're, say, in the lighting section? That's about as likely as finding your way out of the store in under an hour. Buying local is personal – and has history!

We can be so fortunate this is the case. All I know is that these wonderful stores, restaurants and small businesses make our neighborhoods valuable, desirable places to live. I'd be lying if I said I don't enjoy the convenience of an Amazon purchase, but it is my sincerest New Year's resolution to be a more dedicated local shopper and take stock in the fond memories these places have made for our family. That's something to hum Auld Lang Syne over. Happy New Year's and Cheers to neighborhood businesses – may your sales be prosperous in 2023!

Susanna Barton loves a good bargain, and a big oaky Chard. 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 geri-dog Dot 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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THE WAY WE WERE

Cookie Davis

BY MARY WANSEER
Resident Community News

Carranna Shirley Faling was quite a long name for such a cute little girl. It was a mouthful for a mother to say, too. The year was 1941, when Dagwood and Blondie Bumstead were popular comic strip characters. They had a daughter named Cookie. So, Cookie Faling it is, her mother had decided.



Cookie Davis

Since there was no hospital where the Faling family lived in Neptune Beach, Cookie was born at St. Luke's on 8th Street in Jacksonville. Her dad was Robert "Bob" P. Faling, an accountant who worked for the shipyards and then in private practice. Her mother, Edith Vivian Faling nee Copeland, was a woman ahead of her time who owned her own laundry and dry-cleaning business at the corner of Walnut and East 3rd Streets.

Cookie grew up with one younger sister, Sandra, in Oceanway where their parents owned a large fishing camp and restaurant at the end of Starratt Road. It was called Shady Rest, and it included a dock, bait house, and boat rental business. "I lived at the end of a dirt road on a fish camp, while the KKK burned a cross on property just up the road," Cookie said. She lived there when neighbors, who were farmers and cattlemen, along with zoo staff captured a tiger that had escaped during a storm and was roaming the woods. There, Cookie had been chased by a turkey, a bull, and a wild pig. "I loved living out there," she said.

At age four, Cookie began dance lessons at Hinson's. Within a couple of years, she had been chosen to dress like Minnie Mouse and burst out of a cake during a recital at the Florida Theatre. Movies at Brentwood back then cost a dime, and they included cartoons and newsreels. "You got your dime's worth,"

Cookie said. In the late '50s, she swam and lifeguarded at the Springfield Pool when it was segregated.

Cookie had begun elementary school in Oceanway until she and her sister went off to boarding schools, their mother believing that to be the most advantageous option for them. Cookie returned to Jacksonville during her sophomore year and graduated in 1959 from Andrew Jackson High School. She proceeded to Florida Junior College and then to the University of North Florida (UNF) where she shot on the national Olympic-level archery team. "I had taken every art and art history course that I could as electives while attending college and was continuing to paint in my free time," Cookie said.

Cookie had always been particularly interested in art and sports. But her dad was determined that she get a college education that would lead to doing something to make a "real" living. So, she earned at UNF a degree in education. While in school and afterwards, Cookie worked in the radio business. By the 1960s, she was serving as vice president for WOBS, a Jacksonville-based chain of Black stations throughout the Southeast, which allowed her to use her artistic talents designing logos and required her to travel to places where there were some real racial struggles, particularly in Alabama. "It was a very interesting and enlightening time in my life," she said.

When Cookie was a young woman in the 1960s, Jacksonville was so small that residents knew the names of every lawyer and every doctor in town. Most thoroughfares were only two-lane roads; there was no expressway. The deep horn that people called Big Ben could be heard all over town every morning and evening. These were the days when Cohen Brothers, which is now City Hall, was the place to shop. And diners at Morrison's Cafeteria were greeted by Charlie McRoy—the doorman in white gloves—assuring, "No waiting. There's a short line in the Carriage Room."

In addition to her success in the radio business, Cookie held a position with Swisher International, the maker of King Edward cigars. She worked in marketing and publications for the company, which allowed her to remain connected to art. For a dozen years, Cookie ran her own graphic design and printing business, Take It To Press, in Riverside's 5 Points area. Cookie realizes that women of her generation were not often given the



Cookie Davis and John Glessner at an Avondale Dance Studios competition, circa 2000



UNF Archery Team, circa 1972, training for Olympic trials in California: Cookie, Claude, Gene, William, and Donna

opportunities that she has enjoyed, and she attributes a great deal to the influence of her mother.

In the 1970s, Cookie took a clay class from Christy Rogers at a museum on Art Museum Drive. "I had always wanted to make a clay pot," Cookie said. After throwing some cups, saucers, and vases, she decided she would go to Woolworth's and buy those items. Instead, she began hand-building and manipulating the clay, working with Ruby Floyd and Vina Schemer.

During this period, Cookie was also doing research for a jazz studies project at Jacksonville University with Bill Davis, whom she married, of the Bill Davis Trio. The further they delved into the roots and history of the blues, jazz, and other music forms, the more interested Cookie became in African music and culture. "The Story People were born," she said. That's what Cookie calls the sculptured pieces and paintings that she exhibits and is known for throughout Jacksonville's art community. Her works are stories without words. She has filled sketch books with ideas and themes for sculptures. In early 2016, she began translating some of them into paintings, "Story People on Canvas." Her work can be found in permanent collections nationally and internationally.

In addition to being an exhibiting artist, Cookie is a volunteer chairperson and board member of several cultural organizations and events. She administers many programs and solicits outreach opportunities in the community. In 2014, the Cultural Council of Jacksonville presented her with the first Robert Arleigh White Award for Advocacy to honor her efforts at educating the general public, business leaders, and elected officials about the intrinsic and economic value of the arts and culture. Every Wednesday for the past several years, she's been teaching classes at The Art League of Jacksonville. Cookie's dad had not envisioned this is how she would use her education degree.

Though her dad didn't want Cookie to be an artist, she found a way to satisfy both of their desires. She had several "real" jobs, as he had insisted. And she infused every one of them with art. "He couldn't imagine a girl

could make a living as an artist," Cookie said. But she did. And she remains immersed in the art community, now as a volunteer. "My goal has been to encourage women to find their place, whether it is in business or in the arts," Cookie said. She has surely done that. And more.



Cookie Davis teaching at The Art League of Jacksonville, 2019

Cookie has completed the local River Run 13 times, but these days, she's a walker—two miles at least five times a week throughout her Murray Hill neighborhood. "One year I walked 1,037 miles," she said. Cookie also likes to cook and owns a lot of cookbooks. She often tries new recipes as requested by her friends. Twice annually, she hosts a fish fry, harking back to her roots in Oceanway.

Amid it all, Cookie is the mother of two, Eva Christina Porter and Kimberly Edith Brown; grandmother of two; and great-grandmother of six.



Linda Wilder & Cookie Davis running the inaugural Disney World Marathon, 1994

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