



The historic Independent Life Building gets new life in adaptive reuse designs.



Home Tour Weekend Ahead, Closing in on 50 Years

Get a rare glimpse into the past as you tour the Max Knauer residence. The main entrance and two-story pavilion — with its ogee arch and star-wheel motifs in the balcony — were styled after the Palazzo Contarini-Fasan on Venice's Grand Canal, designed by Jefferson Powell, it's a true gem of architectural heritage.

Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) rolls out the historic red carpet for those that have a passion for history, whether it's the home's architecture, eclectic furnishing and antiques or the modern touches that have updated unique spaces, there's something for all to enjoy.

Walk, jog, bike, drive or take your golf cart through the neighborhood to celebrate historic preservation and fundraising for the neighborhood nonprofit that delivers quality of life activities for friends and neighbors during the 49th annual Home Tour on April 15 and 16.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 32



Billy Parsons with Patrick Parsons, Mark Brundick, Jason Harrell, Phillip Parsons, Dennis Golden, John Valentino, Hugh Blanton and Riley Smith

Celebrating the Thrill of the Hunt

The smell of seafood was in the air, as the Northeast Florida Hunting Club held its annual social and low-country boil on the banks of the Ortega River, March 25. The group typically tells tales over gunpowder, shells and later into the evening, a campfire; where stories have been told since 1955, but this gathering was held over plates of boiled shrimp, crawfish, smoked sausage and other tasty steamed cuisine.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 27



Honoree John Carey with his wife Anne and son Whit Carey

Honoring Civic Leadership at Giving Tree Gala

The Jessie Ball duPont Center downtown welcomed guests on Saturday, March 25, for a special celebration to honor the legacy of one of Jacksonville's finest philanthropists and contractors — Mr. W.W. "Bill" Gay.

Guests, donors and fellow patrons paid tribute to G. John Carey, who was joined by his wife Ann and son Whit, at the annual celebration of giving and leadership on behalf of the Winston Family YMCA.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 24



SERVICE WITH A SMILE FOR THE SALVATION ARMY

The Women's Auxiliary of the Salvation Army continues the tradition of serving up tasty, celebrity inspired dishes during its annual Celebrity Chefs Tasting Luncheon and Silent Auction. This year's lineup included dishes served by many leaders and corporate sponsors, to include CSX's booth where Joseph Hinrichs and Corkie Gooden served up meatballs to Carolyn Houston.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 27



YOU GOTTA KNOW WHEN TO HOLD EM'

Traci Jenks, member of the Rotary Club of Jacksonville, readies her chips during the club's benefit poker tournament at bestbet during a recent club outing in early March. The funds raised will benefit the Rotary Club of Jacksonville Florida Foundation.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 28



Mayoral, property appraiser, at-large group and six city council races move on to runoff elections in May.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 2

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letter TO THE EDITOR

Dear Supporters, Volunteers, Sponsors, Anglers and Friends –

In March 2007, the one phone call our parents feared, and we fear, became a reality for the Roberts family. I know where I was when Gary called me that Sunday morning, he needed the fewest words possible. There is a seriousness when your best friend says his son is in the Trauma Center at Shands (now UF Health) fighting for his life. After a tragic and sudden fall, Clay Roberts was gone to soon, never to recover.

Within weeks, the Roberts had assembled a group of close friends at their home and laid out an ambitious agenda for a nonprofit to be named In River Or Ocean (IROO) in memory of their son. It happened to be Clay's email address. A cornerstone of the organization was a scholarship awarded to a graduating Senior athlete at Bishop Kenny High School who exhibits Clay's best attributes, male or female.

The Clay Roberts Memorial Scholarship and Inshore Slam Fishing Tournament has always been an opportunity for volunteers to give back to the Roberts and to provide local fishermen with nothing but fun on the water with minimal rules, high payouts and a celebration of Clay's joy of the water.

To all our anglers and sponsors — we are grateful, and we are blessed — thanks to your participation and contributions. Through all 13 (Covid caught us too) annual tournaments, our fundraising projects have grown the scholarship's fund.

We are happy to announce that we reached our goal this year and the Clay Roberts Memorial Scholarship has been funded in perpetuity at Bishop Kenny High School. I know of two smiling faces looking down, and a bunch of board members smiling up.

In 2020, we lost Gary, Clay's father, my best friend. Gary lost his fight with an illness, but we all knew he was prepared to go peacefully. He knew that Clay was waiting to greet him, rod in hand, bait ready, boat and gear aboard a boat bound for the river — or the ocean — we were all sure there was a joyous reunion for both father and son.

In addition to the scholarship, IROO has created two additional endowments at Bishop Kenny — a music endowment in Gary's memory (he loved to play the Trombone) and a soon-to-be-named marquee on campus.

The bad news is very simple: The Board of Directors of In River Or Ocean has decided to no longer put on the Father's Day weekend Clay Roberts Memorial Scholarship Slam Tournament. Trust me, words couldn't express our disappointment, but the time has come.

To the contrary, the board has decided to explore other ways to reach out to the angling community, especially the Junior Anglers that the Roberts loved to see at the weigh-in. Gary's wife and mother to Clay, Terry Roberts and her daughter Casey, wanted to be sure special thanks were reiterated to all who have shared in the enjoyment of the tournament for so many years — from fellow board members to sponsors and anglers of all stripes.

I hope everyone who has ever been touched by the Roberts family still holds that Saturday before Father's Day as a special day in your hearts and remember all those good times Gary had with all of us, while Clay watched over us as well.

Please follow us and share our news and updates on Facebook at InRiverOrOcean.

Sincerely,
Bill Parker, Pres/Tres
In River Or Ocean

Runoff elections ahead for Jacksonville mayor, city council seats

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Several candidates will move on to runoff elections in their respective races later this spring following the Duval First Unitary Election on March 21.

Daniel Davis (REP) and Donna Deegan (DEM) emerged as the two candidates with the most votes, securing 24.72% (41,505 votes) and 39.43% (66,192) respectively. Because no single candidate secured the majority vote, the two candidates with the most vote (Davis and Deegan) will face each other once again in a mayoral runoff election on May 16. Joining them in their own runoff elections — specific to The Resident's readership — will be:

- Property Appraiser: Jason Fischer (REP, 30.65% — 50,864 votes) and Joyce Morgan (DEM, 47.64% — 79,071 votes)
- City Council At-Large Group 5: Charles Garrison (DEM, 25.83% — 42,163 votes) and Chris Miller (REP, 36.79% — 60,052 votes)
- City Council District 7: Joseph Hogan (REP, 31.52% — 4,486 votes) and Jimmy Peluso (DEM, 34.72% — 4,942 votes)
- City Council District 9: Mike Muldoon (REP, 47.03% — 3,387 votes) and Tyrone Clark-Murray (DEM, 14.75% — 1,062 votes)

Candidates in Districts 2, 8, 11 and 14 will move on to May runoff elections as well.

The following candidates all secured seats on the city council in the March election:

- At-Large Group 1: Terrance Freeman (REP), with 65.13% (100,297 votes)
- At-Large Group 2: Ron Salem (REP), with 53.22% (88,080 votes)
- At-Large Group 3: Nick Howland (REP)*
- At-Large Group 4: Matt Carlucci (REP)*
- District 1: Ken Amaro (REP), with 66.36% (6,607 votes)
- District 3: Will Lahnen (REP), with 53.42% (5,881 votes)
- District 4: Kevin Carrico (REP)*
- District 5: Joe Carlucci (REP), with 63.72% (8,307 votes)
- District 6: Michael T. Boylan (REP), with 64.87% (9,437 votes)
- District 10: Ju' Coby Pittman (DEM), with 64.56% (6,331 votes)
- District 12: Randy White (REP), with 64.79% (7,723 votes)
- District 13: Rory Diamond (REP), with 86.97% (11,310 votes)

*These candidates ran unopposed in their districts.

Election results and statistics for all the races from the March 21 election are available to review on the Duval County Supervisor of Elections' website (duvalelections.gov). The deadline to register for the May 16 general election is April 17. Following that election, the newly elected city officials and representatives will take office on July 1.

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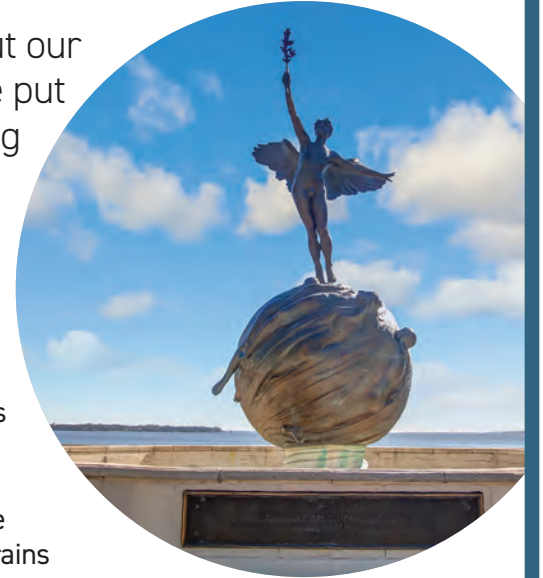
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We all know Jacksonville is a great place to live—and we especially enjoy a remarkable quality of life here in our historic neighborhoods. Along with the rest of our state, Jacksonville continues to welcome new residents in greater numbers than before 2020.

So, what do newcomers need to know about our city and its historic neighborhoods? We've put together a Top 10 of things anyone landing at the intersection of Park, Lomax, and Margaret Streets needs to know!



10 Y'all, it's or-TEE-gah. And also, her-SHELL (Herschel St). Sometimes Southerners decide to pronounce things their own way. These are good examples. See also: Ribault (REE-bawlt) High School, named for the French explorer, Ribault (ree-BOW).

9 FUN FACT: Our oaks shed their leaves in late winter, and fresh ones appear within a week or so, a phenomenon known as marcescence.

8 The Riverside Arts Market is a great way to spend a Saturday morning. Then head over to the original Dreamette in Murray Hill for a cool treat after you've picked up some local veggies.

7 We love to celebrate all the things. And, we never miss a chance to adorn the Acosta Bridge with a dazzling display of lights.

6 Jacksonville boasts the largest urban park system in the country, and much of it is in the historic parts of town. Get out and enjoy them!

5 The Riverside-Avondale Home Tour is a can't-miss event in April. In addition to being RAP's largest fundraiser, it also marks the end of oak leaf-shedding season and the return of Florida's famous humidity.

4 The sounds of freedom and commerce are the soundtrack to our lives. Military planes and trains can be heard (and seen) throughout most of the area, and we celebrate with fireworks year-round.

3 As you move southwest along the river, away from downtown, the houses generally get 'younger.' Riverside has homes that were built in the late 1800s, while most of Ortega Forest was built in the 1960s and 70s.

2 As you explore the area, you will soon find that having a golf cart and/or bike in your fleet is an absolute must for quick and easy transportation.

1 The feeling of community here can't be reproduced anywhere else. Our quality of life is unmatched! Choosing just ten fun tidbits doesn't quite do justice to our vibrant and richly storied neighborhoods. If you're new to town, find yourself a local friend and learn more of the weird and wonderful things that makes these neighborhoods the best places to live in Jacksonville.

If you've been here a minute, seek out a new neighbor and share some Riverside, Avondale, or Ortega lore to help them settle in and get to know their new hometown.



Lastly, if you know someone considering a move to the area, send them our way. We'll show them how to navigate the 5 Points intersection and share our wealth of knowledge about the distinct but intertwined neighborhoods we all love.

Come see us on the RAP Home Tour April 15 & 16! We'll be hosting a beautiful historic Tudor-style home at 2739 Post Street on Sunday and can't wait to share memories with longtime neighbors and introduce newcomers to everything historic Jacksonville has to offer. See you then!



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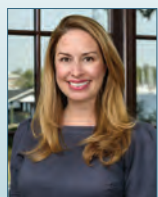
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Planning for a resilient Jacksonville

Comprehensive resiliency strategy for city in the works

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

The City of Jacksonville’s Chief Resilience Officer (CRO) Anne Coglianese hosted a series of public meetings in February to allow residents and stakeholders to learn more about Jacksonville’s Comprehensive Resilience Strategy.

City resiliency, the presentation explained, “is the ability of city systems to adapt and thrive in the face of acute shocks (sudden, extreme events that threaten a community) and chronic stresses (long-term pressures that weaken the fabric of a community over time).”

According to the presentation, examples of acute shocks include events involving intense weather phenomena (hurricanes, tropical cyclones and other storms), extreme rainfall, winds or temperatures, energy insecurity, infectious diseases, cyber attacks and hazardous materials incidents whereas chronic stress would include more recurring or extended, long-term factors like rising sea levels, coastal erosion, drought, aging infrastructure, and poverty — to name a few.

While Jacksonville has faced “its share of challenges in its 200-year history,” the presentation stated, it will continue to “face new and increasing challenges in its future; particularly those brought on by climate

change...Jacksonville is a city that is constantly evolving and poised to adapt again to meet future challenges.”

To meet these future challenges, the city is preparing a resilience strategy that will take “a comprehensive approach to preparing for and adapting to the shocks and stresses [Jacksonville] may face...”

This resilience strategy plans for a 30-50 year vision “for a resilient Jacksonville.” The presentation broke down the strategy into the following components:

- Objectives: “Capturing the social, environmental and economic aspects of resilience;”
- Risks and vulnerabilities: “Science and data on threats facing the city;”
- Actions: “Prioritized built projects, programs and changes to policies and operations;” and
- Implementation: “lead and partners, timeframe, funding.”

During its assessment of risks and vulnerabilities, the City will “analyze data on where and how much shocks and stresses threaten this vision [for Jacksonville], and who and what is most vulnerable.”

“Key stakeholders inside and outside city government will support the development of resilience opportunities, which will be evaluated and prioritized based on how they measurably address risks and achieve our objectives,” stated the presentation. “The final resilience strategy will include a set of implementable actions for achieving

Jacksonville’s vision for resilience despite the risks we face.”

As a city comprised 35% by water and wetlands, flooding remains a major factor for Jacksonville and its neighborhoods and, as the presentation stated, that risk of flooding will only increase in the coming years.

“Jacksonville will experience more inland flooding due to more intense rainfall events (precipitation) and the associated stormwater runoff [and]...more coastal flooding due to sea level rise and from stronger coastal storms.”

A graphic on its website — resilientjacksonville.com — depicted where and how different types of flooding (rain-induced, riverine, compound and coastal) can impact different areas of Jacksonville.

Coglianese declined the request for an interview, however a public affairs representative for the city confirmed via e-mail that Jacksonville’s comprehensive resilience strategy is expected to be completed by the summer.

Coglianese is the first person to hold this position for Jacksonville and was confirmed by Mayor Lenny Curry in September 2021.

Chief resilience officers first appeared on the world stage through the Rockefeller Foundation’s “100 Resilient Cities” initiative in 2013. The initiative was meant to “help more cities build resilience to the physical, social, and economic challenges that are a growing part of the 21st century.”

OneJax, UNF part ways

The OneJax Institute Board has voted unanimously to dissolve its affiliation with the University of North Florida (UNF), seeking instead to re-activate its independent 501(c)3 nonprofit status.

“OneJax is proud to have been a part of the UNF community and appreciates the mutually beneficial relationship we have enjoyed with the university these past 11 years,” said Kyle Reese, OneJax executive director. “The current political climate in our state is impacting every state university, and we do not want the core mission and vision of our 53-year-old organization to be restrained or restricted,” Reese said.

UNF President Moez Limayem said it’s been his experience that affiliations and collaborations like the one between UNF and OneJax change and shift over time. Both parties will be working together to develop a transition plan.

“[The board’s decision] is not an unusual occurrence,” Limayem said. “We part as friends, and I wish OneJax well as it continues to pursue its work in the greater Jacksonville community.”

Ortega, Fairfax, Lakeshore / Murray Hill vote Hogan *By a big margin*

Jacksonville native and Ortega Forest resident, Joseph Hogan, came out ahead of other candidates in precincts located in Ortega, Fairfax, and a Lakeshore/Murray Hill. Hogan believes these numbers are a result of the campaign’s commitment to be a good steward of taxpayer money, improve infrastructure, and maintain public safety in District 7.

The newly drawn District 7 includes Venetia, Ortega, Fairfax, Riverside / Avondale, Murray Hill, Five Points, Springfield, LaVilla, and a large part of downtown. Residents of these areas will have the opportunity to VOTE FOR HOGAN, again, in the runoff election on Tuesday, May 16th.

“I would be honored to have your confidence and your vote on May 16th,” Hogan stated as he reiterated his promise to be a voice for all communities in District 7.

Hogan is a local home builder and currently serves in the Florida Air National Guard. Hogan and his wife, Lauren, have 3 children. Their children attend John Stockton and Lavilla School of the Arts.

Hogan is endorsed by current city council representative, Randy DeFoor.



Joseph Hogan and his wife, Lauren, with longtime friend Bogan Huntley



Joseph and Lauren Hogan outside Grace Church in Avondale



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Joseph Hogan with son 'Brother' & Fireman / Supporter Joe Schweckendieck

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After months of eating sensibly and exercising five times a week, Al is 100 pounds thinner. “My phone even didn’t recognize my face,” he said.

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New life breathed into landmark tower

Adaptive reuse ahead for downtown's historic Independent Life Building

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News



A rendering of the renovated Independent Life building as a mixed-use multifamily development.

After years of standing abandoned, the historic Independent Life Building in downtown Jacksonville can expect a transformation into a 21st-century mixed-use development.

Last month, a permit was filed with the city for the adaptive reuse of the 19-story building at 233 West Duval Street, converting it into “a multifamily residential [building] with ground floor commercial.”

The estimated cost for the project is \$23.3 million. DFI General Contractors LLC is the contractor.

According to city records, “interior demolition of non-[load] bearing walls” was permitted in 2021, along with the removal of lead and asbestos and two elevators, at the cost of \$1 million.

The Independent Life building was designed by KJB Architects and construction was completed in 1955. It was the home of Independent Life and Accident Insurance Agency for 20 years before the company relocated.

After changing hands several times in the interim period and standing abandoned for several of those years, the building was sold to PEP10 LLC in 2019 for \$3.7 million, according to county records. The following year, the city council approved the building’s designation as a local landmark.

This has been a project several years in the making for developer Augustine Development Group. According to the December 2020 Downtown Development Review Board final approval packet, the mixed-use development will feature 135 residential units on the second through 16th floors. Along with commercial tenants, the basement and first level will feature a grocery store and restaurant. An amenity deck will

occupy the 17th level; the 18th will have a commercial kitchen while the top level will be home to a “Sky Lounge.” The designs in the final approval packet were done by Dasher Hurst Architects.

Site plans also detail the recreation of the historic “Independent” sign on the tower’s south face.

“We look forward to seeing this project move ahead,” wrote Downtown Investment Authority CEO Lori Boyer in an e-mail. “Having the Independent Life Building restored and repurposed will be beneficial not just for that building, which has been vacant for some time, but for the group of historic properties around it. And once the work is completed, the building will promote the growth of Downtown and the entire community by providing a new housing option for prospective residents and adding to Downtown’s mix of dining, nightlife and commercial options.”

The Jacksonville Historical Society (JHS) remains a champion of adaptive reuse for the city’s historic buildings. Last year, JHS CEO Dr. Alan Bliss argued, unsuccessfully, for the adaptive reuse of Jacksonville’s Old Ford Motor Company plant. In an e-mail, Bliss said JHS “applauds the developers of the old Independent Life building” for their plans to adapt and reuse the historic building.

“Preserving historically significant buildings works best when they serve an economically sustainable purpose,” he wrote. “After all, buildings get designed and built in the first place in order to serve an economic purpose.



The Independent Life building was completed in 1955 and stands at 233 West Duval Street.

Historic preservation results from the same calculation. Even though real estate markets and construction techniques change, old buildings, when adapted to the 21st century, continue to generate value for their owners, their occupants and their neighborhoods. That’s why the Jacksonville Historical Society applauds the developers of the old Independent Life building. The building is a physical storytelling device about Jacksonville’s many decades as the ‘Hartford of the South’ — the regional epicenter of the insurance industry in the United States.”

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PENDING

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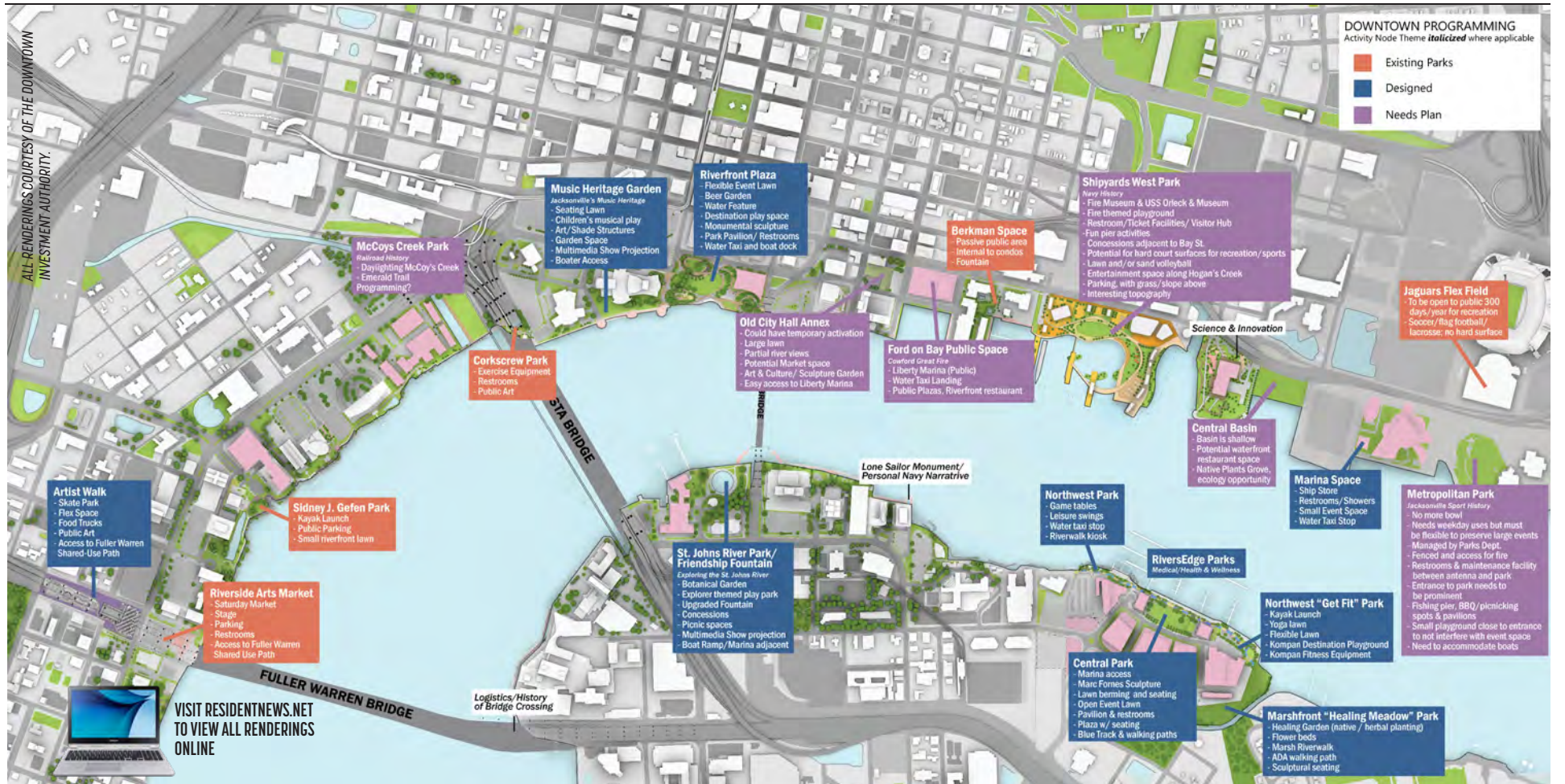


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A map detailing the anticipated parks along Jacksonville's riverfront and their various stages of progress.

Riverfront activation gets helping hand from Conservancy, nonprofit groups

An update on pocket parks and projects ahead

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Last August, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund released the Activation Plan for Jacksonville's

Downtown Riverfront — a plan “informed by hundreds of hours of conversation...with stakeholders from across Jacksonville’s neighborhoods” to activate and revitalize the invaluable North- and Southbank real estate — through both public and private developments — to create what it believes

will be the City’s “social, cultural and economic spine, bringing the community together to play, learn, innovate and celebrate.”

Since then, the riverfront activation has continued to build momentum as plans for various developments moved through the city’s approval and permitting process or broke ground on actual construction. These developments include RiversEdge: Life on the St. Johns, One Riverside Ave and the Hardwick at Ford on Bay, to name a few.

Additionally, the highly-anticipated Emerald Trail — the 30-mile urban trail connecting 15 Jacksonville neighborhoods and linking to 21 parks, 16 schools and two colleges — continues to progress. In February, The Resident reported on the trail’s early phases of construction taking place in LaVilla while its “Hogan Street segment between Riverwalk and FSCJ is in design now with construction expected to begin in late summer 2023...”

Another vital part of the riverfront activation, though, is the creation and development of public green spaces along the river. Achieving that activation is not something that the city can accomplish alone, however, and a new nonprofit has joined the numerous organizations already established to help Jacksonville’s downtown flourish, with a

mission specifically focused on the downtown riverfront parks.

The Riverfront Parks Conservancy was first announced in February at Riverfront 2025: A Look Ahead, a public event hosted by the City of Jacksonville’s Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services and the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) in partnership with in collaboration with the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, Riverfront Parks Now and Build Up Downtown detailing the plans in place for riverfront parks and the organizations that support them.

The Riverfront Parks Conservancy will serve as stewards of these parks once they come online, providing support and resources as needed to maintain them. Part of that stewardship involves acting as a conduit between the public and the city, passing along community feedback, but that is a smaller role for the organization, explained Riverfront Parks Conservancy Board Chair Barbara Goodman.

As time goes on, there will be various things that the parks will need that the city might not be able to accomplish,” said Goodman. “So we would be fundraisers to get funds to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10 ...

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Still in the infancy stages of design, the Shipyards West Park will provide different areas of focus, from history to community to recreation.



The RiversEdge: Life on the St. Johns development will feature a network of four parks with various trails throughout for the community to enjoy.

help provide something in the parks or to activate the parks or to help in some other way — providing volunteers, being there on the ground. That kind of support to help the city just in the sustaining of the parks.

Its first area of focus will be the Southbank's St. Johns River Park — home to Friendship Fountain — which is expected to be the first of the new riverfront parks to come online.

"We are looking at how can we activate there and what are all the various different opportunities, so that is one place that will receive our focus," Goodman explained. "We also have received a grant to do family and youth programming around health and wellness — no specific location has been selected for that. We put out an RFQ [Request for Qualifications] that just closed and we will be meeting as a board to go through the applications to hire somebody to assist us with that effort."

Several other parks and amenities are either in design or already under construction along Jacksonville's north- and southbanks.

"The destination parks on the riverfront will be great new places to play and relax, and they're also an important part of the master plan for Downtown revitalization," wrote DIA CEO Lori Boyer in an e-mail. "The public investment in these high-quality facilities is a key driver of further private investment in Downtown. These destination parks will also enhance the quality of life for Downtown residents and workers, and for the entire community while providing visitors with new things to see and do in Jacksonville. We're very pleased to see them moving forward, and we also thank the many partners involved in the development of the parks — this was a true community effort involving both the private and public sectors. The involvement of the advocates like Riverfront Parks Now and the recently formed Riverfront

Parks Conservancy to assist with funding, programming and maintenance are key to the success of this multi-faceted project."

Other projects discussed at Riverfront 2025 include Artist Walk, the Music Heritage Garden, Riverfront Plaza, Shipyards West Park and the Parks at RiversEdge. Below is a brief summary of each:

ARTIST WALK

Location: Beneath the Fuller Warren Bridge at the park space between Riverside Avenue and Park Street; connects to the Emerald Trail

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11 ...

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A rendering of the skate park that will be a part of the Artist Walk, located beneath the Fuller Warren Bridge between Riverside Avenue and Park Street.



The Music Heritage Garden will celebrate Jacksonville's rich music history.

Features: Plaza space for programming/special events; synthetic turf lawn and areas for food trucks; seating areas; skate park designed by California Skate Parks; stage area
Commencement Date*: 2023
Completion Date: 2024

According to City of Jacksonville Chief of Natural and Marine Resources Jill Enz: "These under-the-bridge projects go a long way in reconnecting neighborhoods. A lot of the larger freeway projects during the City Beautiful movement really disconnected neighborhoods and so this is the potential to reconnect different parts of the neighborhood and really create interesting spaces that are shaded and that don't get rained on."

MUSIC HERITAGE GARDEN

Location: Adjacent to the Jacksonville Center for Performing Arts

Features: Celebrates Jacksonville's "rich musical heritage," "richly planted," rebuilt, custom-designed shade structures on bump-outs.
Commencement Date: 2023
Completion Date: 2024

Enz added, "This garden space and this park space is going to be dedicated to [artists hailing from Jacksonville] and interpreting what type of music and different genres of music that they represent."

RIVERFRONT PLAZA

Location: Former site of The Landing, adjacent to the Music Heritage Garden and Main Street Bridge

Features: A large flex lawn in the center, coming from Laura Street; playground space with one entry/exit point; cafe area beneath playground space; small splash pad; beer garden; fountain that can also be a reflecting pool

or play space; rain gardens with boardwalks; open flex lawn area.

Commencement Date: June 2023

Completion Date: December 2024 (Phase 1)

"This park went through a design competition about a year ago and this was the design that was selected," Enz said. "It was completed and done by Perkins & Will. There are some design refinements as we went through the process and those have increased the amount of play space. The playground has increased in play space and the lawn has changed slightly different in form, but holistically the same."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12 ...

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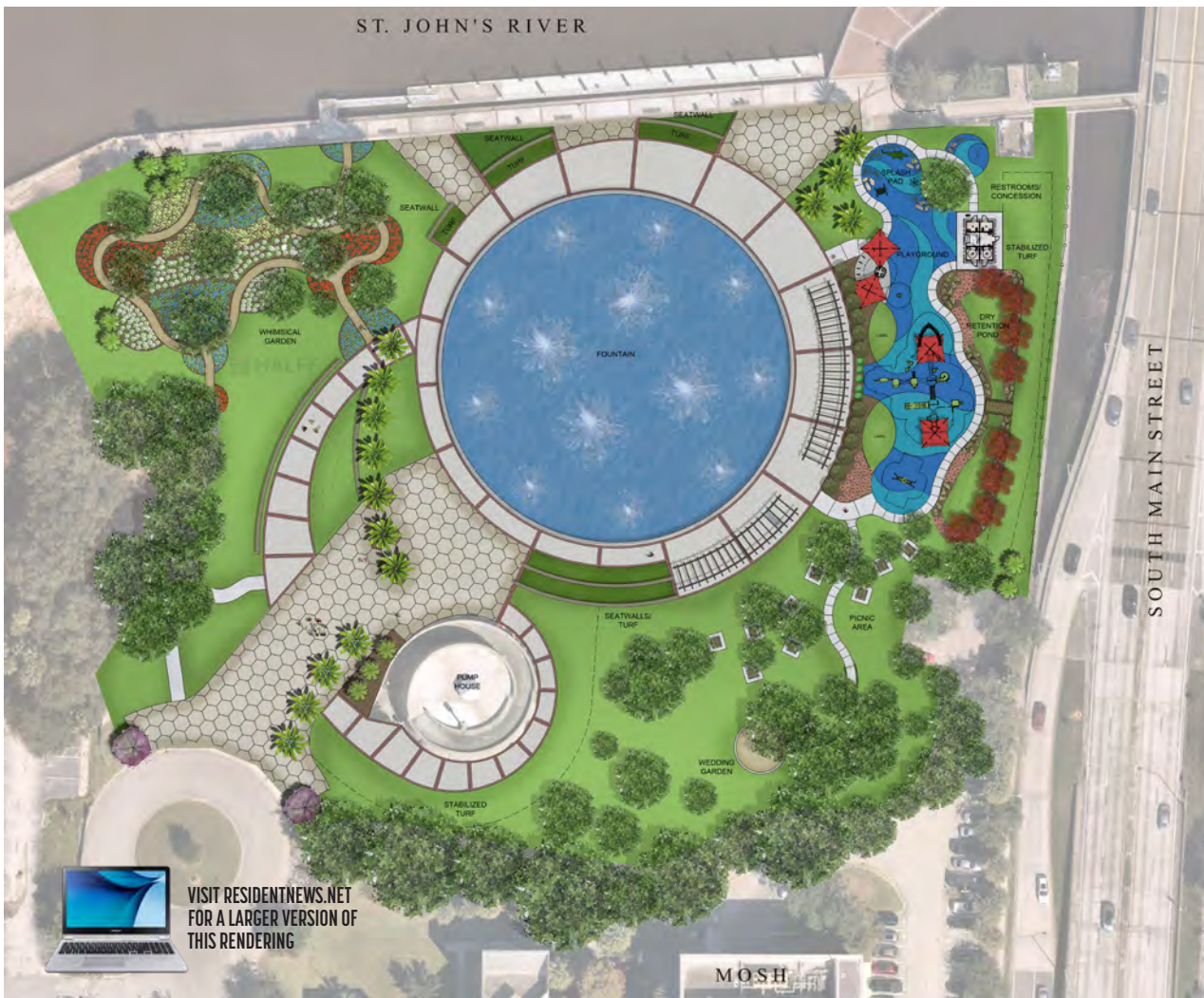
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The Riverfront Parks Conservancy will first focus on St. Johns Park and Friendship Fountain once it comes online.

According to Abigail Fiala, landscape architect with Agency Landscape + Planning, the west side of the park — with the aforementioned museums — will have a historical emphasis and the eastern side will focus more on community gathering with the remainder of the park “offering moments for flexible recreation as well as more structured and unique recreation opportunities.”

“We are still in infancy and looking for feedback,” she added.

RIVERSEGE TRAIL & PARK SYSTEM

Location: RiversEdge development

Commencement Date: 2023

Completion Date: June 2024

RiversEdge: Life on the St. Johns, developed by Preston Hollow Community Capital, LLC will feature four different public parks, each with different features and amenities that will create unique experiences for the community to enjoy. These parks have yet to be named and are currently designated based on their locations within the development.

NORTH WEST RIVERFRONT PARK

Features: digital kiosks; synthetic lawn; leisure swings; water taxi stop; interactive art piece; gathering and seating area

“We wanted to ensure this was a relaxing environment with great views of the river and this is really the pedestrian entrance in the parks system,” Anna Walling with Kimley-Horn, the civil engineer for the RiversEdge development.

CENTRAL RIVERFRONT PARK

Features: plaza areas; walking track; event lawn; pavilion; central art piece custom-designed for the park

“This is going to be, as I said, a very unique space,” Walling said. “It is going to be the centerpiece of the entertainment district of this development. So it’s going to be a place where you can connect with people, it’s going to be a meeting place and it’s also going to have a world-renowned art piece.”

SHIPYARDS WEST PARK

Location: Between Catherine Street and Hogans Creek, accessed by East Bay Street

Features: Home to USS Orleck Naval and Jacksonville Fire museums; food hall; pavilion area; restaurant and dining

terrace; pickle ball and volleyball areas; flex lawn and lawn games; beach area; chess and bocce ball; grilling and birding areas.

Commencement Date: Late 2023

Completion Date: 2025

CONTINUED ON PAGE 13 ...

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“ The destination parks on the riverfront will be **GREAT** new places to play and **RELAX**, and they’re also an important part of the master plan for Downtown revitalization.”

- Lori Boyer,
DIA CEO



The Riverfront Plaza will sit where The Landing once was and offer different spaces for the community to enjoy.

NORTHEAST PARK

Features: four entrances; enclosed play space with two different age-based play equipment plus fitness equipment for adults; synthetic lawn spaces; interactive play equipment; leisure swings; yoga/event lawn; misters; flexible open lawn; kayak stand.

Walling stated, “This is a park that we’ve worked very closely with the City of Jacksonville Parks Department and the Downtown Investment Authority to ensure we were providing a place for play and activity and creating an environment where you can practice health and wellness as much as possible.”

MARSH BOARDWALK

Features: 1,400 feet of boardwalk stretching from the Northeast Park to the Marsh Front Park with shorter routes leading to a lookout or looping back to the Marsh Front Park.

MARSH FRONT PARK

Features: medicinal gardens with signage explaining the medicinal uses for plants in the gardens; synthetic, flexible lawn spaces; outdoor seating; pollinator plants

*All commencement/completion dates listed above provided by the DIA; dates are subject to change.

At the Riverfront 2025 event, Boyer added, “All the way from the Fuller Warren Bridge to Metropolitan Park, the riverwalk is funded and either constructed or in various stages of design with construction plans forthcoming. On the Southbank, that entire loop is either under construction or funded for construction and has already been designed.”

According to Riverfront 2025, additional riverfront parks include Gefen Park, McCoy's Creek Park, Music Commons and Metropolitan Park.

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Bisnow hosts “Jacksonville State of the Market”

Expert panelists discuss factors in Jacksonville’s commercial real estate

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

A panel of commercial real estate experts spoke on several industry topics at the Jacksonville State of the Market event on Wednesday, March 15.

The event was hosted by Bisnow, a worldwide business-to-business platform for the commercial real estate industry, and held at The River Club in downtown Jacksonville.

Downtown Investment Authority CEO Lori Boyer made the opening remarks, during which she discussed the momentum and growth building in the downtown area, both in residential and commercial opportunities.

“Florida remains ones of the fastest growing states in the country — for a variety of reasons — and Jacksonville is one of the fastest growing cities in the state of Florida,” she said. “That factor alone has major impact on the investment opportunities, development opportunities, business growth, etc. within the city.”

With 7,500 residents currently living in the downtown area, Boyer said downtown is on track to clear 10,000 residents within three years, at which point, downtown will begin to generate “self-sustaining momentum” in terms of retail.

Despite the fact that businesses are reducing the amount of space they use

following the pandemic with more people working remotely, Boyer said, the level of activity on the streets has returned to 2019, pre-pandemic levels.

“That’s a positive data point for us in terms of downtown overall,” she said.

“Florida remains ones of the **FASTEST GROWING** states in the country – for a variety of reasons – and Jacksonville is one of the fastest growing cities in the state of Florida.”

- Lori Boyer, DIA CEO

The expert panel was comprised of Chase Properties President and CEO Mike Balanky, Founder and Principal of Banko Design Melissa Spaeth Banko, JAXUSA Senior Vice



Moderator Joseph Loretta led panelists Mike Balanky, Katherine Mosley, Matt Marshall, Adam Moorhead, Melissa Spaeth Banko and Aaron Bowman in a discussion about the growing landscape of Jacksonville commercial real estate at the Jacksonville State of the Market event at The River Club on Wednesday, March 15.

President Aaron Bowman, Tribridge Residential Principal Katherine Mosley, RISE: A Real Estate Company Senior Vice President of Development Matt Marshall, EXP Commercial Broker Associate Adam Moorhead with Half Associates Operations Manager Joseph Loretta moderating.

The panel fielded questions from Loretta, ranging from how the region is changing because of development and projects currently underway in Jacksonville to what has changed Jacksonville in terms of demand and job growth.

“Financially, [the City is] extremely healthy and extremely strong right now,” said Bowman, who also currently represents District 3 on the city council. “Our growth, our property values, our investment in the city is making everything...all the plans are aligning very well on us financially being able to do what we wanna do.”

The “big thing” Bowman said, echoing Boyer, is the migration of new residents coming

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15 ...

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to Jacksonville. He stated Jacksonville’s population is growing by 75 people a day — mainly young people “that want to start a family, that want to have a quality of life.”

“What does that bring — that brings the need for housing, for product, for supplies, for schools and that is not gonna change,” he added.

Mosley expanded on that, adding that the COVID-19 pandemic “left a permanent change in Jacksonville.”

With full-time remote working or hybrid schedules becoming a more regular arrangement for many businesses, people are expanding their radius when it comes to finding a home and branching out beyond the areas near their places of business.

“Pre-COVID, people were really tied to living where their office was around the country,” she said. “Obviously COVID opened that up...People moving to Florida, moving to Jacksonville, so we’ve seen that at our properties...I’m amazed at where people are moving from, it’s all over the country.”

Mosley also cited what she saw as a shift in density from Jacksonville’s southside market — “10 years ago, that’s where you wanted to be” — to the downtown area as activation continues in that area as well as the riverfront, with all the amenities either currently under construction or planned to come online in the next few years.

“I think seeing some of the changes — the riverwalk, the activation, the smart infrastructure — has really kind of set the framework to have the lifestyle that people are looking for in downtown,” she said. “...We really see people making a choice now where they wanna live not based on proximity to their office but the lifestyle, the personality of the neighborhood.”

Balanky spoke of the evolving downtown landscape and the momentum generated by both the increasing migration of new residents and the major developments planned or already under construction, adding that once all these new developments come online “...we will finally achieve the critical mass that we’ve been missing for decades downtown.”

Among other topics, the panelists also touched on how increasing costs in development and construction costs are being handled.

“We’re grinding through it is probably how I would describe it,” said Mosley.

Marshall said he didn’t see prices coming down, rather he expects them to continue to increase a bit, mainly because of rising labor costs.

“Labor is a big issue because of inflationary factors — groceries, etc. that we’re all faced with — well, everybody that works on these construction sites are faced with the same thing so labor is actually increasing,” he said.

Bisnow will return to Jacksonville later this year in August for another event discussing construction and development.

North Florida real estate up in February

Home sales in Northeast Florida increased in February, which is traditionally rare at this time of the year. The combined number of single-family homes, condos and townhouses that closed in the region rose almost 26% from January to February, demonstrating that the housing market within the six-county area is alive and well, despite low inventory and higher prices.

“Love was in the air for real estate this February,” said Diana Galavis, 2023 president of the Northeast Florida Association of REALTORS®. “Closed sales were up...this is a reflection that buyers are comfortable with the fluctuating market and were ready to make a move.”

With an active inventory of 4,811 in February, the number of single-family homes in the region showed a 174% increase from a year ago. The median sales price for single-family homes throughout the region remained at \$360,000, the same as the month before, while the median price per square foot of homes slightly decreased to \$196. This is a sign that a different product mix may be selling in the market as larger homes sell for more money, but often at a lower dollar amount per square foot.

As the median sales price of single-family homes stabilized, so did the Home Affordability Index for single-family residences in the six-county region. In February, the index again registered at 76. A higher number means greater affordability. An index value of 100 means that the average family has exactly enough income to qualify for a mortgage.

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Clay	\$349,995	66	Down 0.3%
St. Johns	\$510,000	48	Up 1.9%
Putnam	\$200,000	62	No change
Nassau	\$366,000	44	Down 3.7%
Baker	\$285,495	99	Down 10.4%

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MOVERS & SHAKERS

George Saoud joins DIA Board of Directors

Lawyer, real estate entrepreneur and small business owner George Saoud is the newest appointment to Jacksonville's Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) Board of Directors.

Appointed by Mayor Lenny Curry, Saoud is set to replace Todd Froats. Saoud's first full term will expire June 30, 2026. He has served as the in-house legal counsel for Fidelity National Financial for 13 years, where he is currently state underwriting counsel and vice president. He owns and manages The George Management Company and is the creator of The Lark, "an upscale urban loft that displays and promotes fine art by local and regional artists."



George Saoud

"As a Jacksonville native, Downtown has always held a special place in my heart. From childhood memories exploring with my father to now as a new father, I'm excited to play a role in shaping its future. The momentum building in Downtown over the past few years is truly inspiring, and I'm honored to contribute to that progress through my appointment to the Downtown Investment Authority," Saoud said in a March press release announcing his appointment. "I look forward to working with fellow community members to create a vibrant and thriving Downtown for generations to come."

The DIA's nine-person board of directors consists of members who "serve as leaders in their respective fields, including real estate, finance and Downtown business ownership" and "guide the DIA's projects and initiatives on an unpaid, volunteer basis." Of those nine, five are mayoral appointments; the city council president appoints the remaining four. All are then confirmed by the city council.

"On behalf of the DIA Board, staff, collaborators and the constituents we serve, I am honored to welcome George as the newest member of our Board of Directors," said DIA Board Chair Carol Worsham in the release. "George brings a unique combination of real estate, legal, financial and Downtown business ownership expertise to the board. We welcome his talent, perspective, time, and most importantly, eagerness to serve Jacksonville."

That's How the Cookie Crumbles



Crumbl Cookies marked the opening of a new location at 2039 Hendricks Avenue, Suite 214, with a ceremonial ribbon-cutting on Thursday, March 16. The location officially opened to the public March 17. Locally-owned and — operated by Steve Seegmiller, Chase Zollinger and Branson Hadfield, the store will provide more than 50 career opportunities to Jacksonville locals.

The store features more than 275 weekly rotating flavors, including favorites like Milk Chocolate Chip, Cornbread, Cookies & Cream, S'mores, Key Lime Pie, Peppermint Bark, Caramel Popcorn, Buttermilk Pancake and Galaxy Brownie. Local residents can enjoy the cookies in-person, or through delivery, curbside pickup or catering. They can also be shipped nationwide.

"I started to recognize that I wanted to be a part of a company that places value in creating memories with family, which led to us opening our first store," said Seegmiller. "Deciding to open in San Marco was an easy decision! We love the engaging and friendly people, and couldn't be happier to be a part of this amazing community. As local business owners, we are looking forward to sharing delicious cookies with our neighbors."

The store will be open weekdays 8 a.m.-10 p.m., 8 a.m.-midnight Fridays and Saturdays, and closed on Sundays.

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‘Fellowship, healing and hope’

Angels for Allison hosts memorial service for ‘Angel Families’

The Allison Brundick Haramis Foundation — also known as Angels for Allison — hosted its annual memorial service for Angel Families on Saturday, Feb. 25 for a morning of “fellowship, healing and hope for the families of have lost a child.”

The event was held in partnership with the Jacksonville Public Library and at the main library branch in downtown Jacksonville, at the branch’s outdoor Betsy Lovett Courtyard.

More than 100 guests attended, including volunteers, board members and friends and families who have lost a child — known by the nonprofit organization as Angel Families. The name of each child was read aloud during the service and Angels for Allison Board President Drew Haramis — Allison’s mother — and Kimmy Clark, mother to Chanzc, “poignantly addressed the families about their personal experiences.”

Live music was provided by the Darren Ronan School of Music and student artists unveiled an art installation “of 12 angels to honor the angel children,” which remained on display at the library for the month of March.



Angel moms Kimmy, Andrea and Megan



The Berini angel family

Dordel Named Top Cookie at Girl Scouts



Wendy Dordel

Wendy Dordel has been named new CEO for Girl Scouts of Gateway Council (GSGC). She will provide leadership to girls and staff across 35 counties in North Florida.

“The committee was impressed with her dedication to connecting people to the right work, through coaching and education, as well as her commitment to being a transparent and authentic leader,” said April Harrell-Devine, GSGC board chair. “She has a proven record of engaging volunteers and driving membership success.”

With more than 20 years of Girl Scout executive experience under her belt, Dordel has previously served as vice president of Council Consulting at Girl Scouts of the USA (GSUSA), oversaw the Girl Scouts Overseas division, and was key in launching the membership and operations team at GSUSA. “Girl Scouts has provided me with life-long friends, mentors and opportunities. I am delighted to join the amazing staff and volunteers of Girl Scouts of Gateway Council in delivering the same lasting impact experience to the girls of North Florida,” said Dordel.

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Supporting the Sanctuary

Four new members join board of Sanctuary on 8th Street



Stephanie Day Lara Leinenweber Dwarakesh Ravichandran Rhianna Scyster

The Sanctuary on 8th Street has recently added four new members to its board of directors: Stephanie Day, Lara Leinenweber, Dwarakesh Ravichandran and Rhianna Scyster.

Day has been in Jacksonville for more than 20 years and works at Episcopal School of Jacksonville's Institutional Advancement office. She believes deeply in the mission of the organization and is eager to join the board and continue its work. Leinenweber, a graduate of University of North Florida, grew up in Atlantic Beach. Her community involvement prior to joining the board includes being a mentor for Take Stock in Children as well as a tutor with Habitat for Humanity's after school program.

Ravichandran is a project delivery manager with Ernst & Young, and values increasing the availability of digital resources and knowledge to underserved children. He hopes to be able to leverage and share his company's resources to bridge the digital divide with Sanctuary students. Scyster is a fervent advocate for equitable practices and policies in K-12 education. She is dedicated to improving her community through justice work, policy development and servant leadership.

Raising the bar

Cyclebar opens in Riverside



Franchise owner Hayes Havener celebrated Cyclebar's grand opening with her family and team at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Feb. 16.

Cyclebar celebrated its grand opening on Feb. 16, with franchise owner Hayes Havener holding a ribbon-cutting ceremony with her family in front of her new Riverside location.

Sharing the space with Cyclebar is Pure Barre, another franchise owned by Havener that she relocated to Riverside after finding this space for Cyclebar. Last summer, Havener took over the Pure Barre location in San Marco as well.

"Fitness has always been a huge part of my life from playing many sports growing up to teaching Pure Barre and CycleBar," Havener wrote in an e-mail. "It is more than just a workout, it is a community and a place to go and forget any stress or worries you might have. I love being able to provide a place for that escape for our members."

Cyclebar General Manager Katelin Gallegos said Cyclebar is a community that uplifts and supports its members to achieve their goals, no matter what they are and she is excited to bring that environment to "such an active community" like Riverside.

Cyclebar offers monthly memberships, class packages and drop-in rates for seasoned cyclists and first-timers alike.

Cyclebar and Pure Barre are located at 1035 Riverside Avenue.

Bolles Website Wins MUSE Award



Screenshot of Bolles' award-winning site.

The Bolles School's website, Bolles.org, was honored as a Silver Winner in the Website — Schools/Universities category of the 2023 MUSE Creative Awards, an international competition for creative professionals who inspire others to greater heights. The redesigned Bolles.org launched in early November 2022 with a fresh, new look with streamlined navigation, visual upgrades and powerful video testimonials to reflect the school's commitment to excellence and vision for the future.

The MUSE Award notes that "The Bolles School website offers prospective families an immersive glimpse into the school's unique educational offerings and vibrant, welcoming community. This has been achieved through a progressive modern design that delivers impactful messaging using distinctive layouts, bold typography, impactful photography and expressive movement to bring the school's unique story to life online. The website also functions as an entry point for current families, staff and alumni to access their internal communication portals."

Bolles was among The Loomis Chaffee School, Benedictine University and The New School as award winners in the Website — School/Universities category.

Library Scores With Sports Exhibit



Nancy DeLander Beecher

The Bill Brinton Murray Hill Library at 918 Edgewood Avenue South has unveiled a new sports photography exhibit by Nancy DeLander Beecher. The exhibit features local professional, college and amateur sports including hockey, football and baseball.

Beecher is a resident of Riverside, studied photography at the University of North Florida and is a member of the Friends of the Bill Brinton Murray Hill Library Board. Her extensive

work in sports, nature, events, journalism and advertising photography has appeared in print publications, exhibits and online over the past 25 years.

Frontz Joins Berkshire Hathaway



Ross Frontz

Ross Frontz has joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty at its Metropolitan office, with locations in Avondale and San Marco. Frontz attended Jacksonville University and has lived in Northeast Florida for the past 34 years, which gives him vast knowledge of the area's various neighborhoods.

"We are so glad to have Ross join our family, and we know that he will flourish at Berkshire

Hathaway HomeServices," said Josh Cohen, broker/manager of the Metropolitan office.



Celebrate Easter at the Cathedral

Easter Services

Sunday, April 9

6 a.m., 9 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.

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Cathedral Brass at 9 and 11:15 a.m.

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The Murray Hill Farmers Market

Promoting local businesses and sustainable products



Nadia Korthis with her reusable biodegradable food covers.

Murray Hill residents and neighbors can discover new local vendors or return to visit their favorites at the Murray Hill Farmers Market (MHFM).

MHFM is held every second and fourth Wednesday from 4 to 8 p.m. at the Fishweir Brewing Company. It first launched in September of last year, just before Hurricane Ian.

An informational flyer for the market states, “MHFM provides an unmatched energy for shoppers and vendors alike to gather around locally grown/produced food and sustainable products.”

MHFM has several regular vendors — including Briecakemood, Max’s Market, Prema Bakes, Seitanic Jax and Harmony Mushroom Co. — with many new vendors regularly joining the line-up. The MHFM social media pages provide regular updates about new and returning vendors for each market, as well as any live musical performances by local musicians.

MHFM was founded “...as part of an effort to facilitate Murray Hill becoming a more food secure neighborhood” and is open to “businesses which grow food locally, create food-related or wellness/health products with a deep commitment to sustainable and regenerative practices.” Businesses interested in applying to the market should e-mail murrayhillfarmersmarket@gmail.com.

Fishweir Brewing Company is located at 1183 Edgewood Avenue S.

Harbinger Signs Turns 60



Steve Williams



Harbinger Sign celebrated its 60th anniversary on April 1 with an on-site event that included a new exhibition opening at the Florida Mining Gallery — Harbinger Sign’s on-site art gallery — as well as live music, food and drinks. This exhibition will be the last for the gallery, as the owners’ focus is on the company’s future expansion.

Avondale resident Steve Williams, who has helmed the company since 2019, envisions the next chapter of expansion as one that drives new markets while leveraging technology advancements to better serve their clients.

“In many ways, we have the entrepreneurial spirit of a startup,” said Williams, the company’s CEO. “Adaptability and versatility have always been hallmarks of our resilience and success over our six decades of operation, and today we are in a growth mode, expanding into new markets and offering new solutions to support client brand activations.”

In recent years, Harbinger Sign has expanded throughout the Southeast, and now has offices in Atlanta, Dallas, Birmingham, Nashville and the Tampa Bay area, as well as their headquarters here in Jacksonville. It operates as a full-service sign company that offers painting and facade refurbishment, and will soon phase in architectural lighting.

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Jacksonville women compete for 2023 Woman of Impact, raise funds for heart disease research



San Marco resident Leah Roesler is competing for this year's Woman of Impact to raise funds and awareness for the work of the American Heart Association.

Blair, the Go Red for Women director for AHA on the First Coast.

Locally, San Marco resident Leah Roesler is competing against Cadie Fletcher, Calli Miller, Courtney Lindblom, Diana Tourtelot and Laura Cowie. Roesler has brought together 10 "impact team" members to set a goal, explore fundraising resources and make an impact on their community.

"I've had people close to me have a stroke, friends who survived heart attacks and some who required open heart surgery. I am grateful to have a healthy heart, and in awe of the strong individuals around me who have fought and are fighting for their cardiac health," Roesler said.

"Everyone has at least one important woman in their life, so it's crucial that all women have the knowledge and the tools to live the healthiest lives possible. The more people we can reach, and the more funds that can be raised for the American Heart Association, the more we can minimize the risk of heart disease and stroke," she said.

Last year, the First Coast Woman of Impact nominees raised more than \$133,000. Nationally, the 2022 Woman of Impact campaign raised more than \$4 million with 355 nominees around the nation.

"With the leadership of volunteers like the Woman of Impact nominees, we can make an impact on women's heart health, because losing one woman to heart disease is one too many," Blair said.

At the end of the campaign, the nominees will be celebrated for their overall impact. The nominee who makes the greatest impact and raises the most funds locally will be named a local 2023 Woman of Impact winner. The nominee who makes the greatest impact nationwide will be named the American Heart Association 2023 National Woman of Impact winner.

To vote for the First Coast 2023 Woman of Impact, visit <http://bit.ly/3ZoxKcr>.

The American Heart Association (AHA) has nominated nine First Coast women to be a part of the 2023 Woman of Impact competition in recognition of their passion and drive to support women's heart health. They join women across the country who are competing in their communities in a nine-week blind competition that launched on National Wear Red Day — Feb. 3 — and ends on April 6. The goal of the competition is to educate more women about the risk factors and warning signs of heart disease and stroke, build a culture of health in their communities and raise funds to support AHA's mission.

"One in three women on the First Coast dies from cardiovascular disease every year, which is higher than all cancers and diseases combined," said Shadia

Cathedral Arts Project selected for \$50,000 NEA grant

The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) has selected Jacksonville's Cathedral Arts Project (CAP) as the recipient of a \$50,000 Grants for Arts Projects award "to continue its work on the Landscape of Education in the Arts in Duval and introduce a new Arts in Schools Certification system for allowing for more transparency in supporting equitable access to arts education."

According to a CAP February press release, the NEA distributed nearly \$28.8 million in its first round of grants for the 2023 fiscal year. CAP is one of 44 Florida arts programs organizations selected to receive a Grants of the Projects award; it is only one of three Florida organizations awarded \$50,000 or more.

With the aid of partners from the University of North Florida's Florida Data Science for Social Good (FL-DSSG) and the Duval County Public Schools (DCPS), CAP's Arts in Schools certification system will build a roadmap "for expanding quality and access in the arts," which "will be a shared system for measuring and understanding equity in access and a tool to support principals' decisions to grow arts instruction in their schools."

This certification system will generate "a deep understanding of the arts education landscape" in the region and provide schools with various ways to further enrich their arts programs "with families and community partners."

"We are honored to continue our partnership with DCPS and FL-DSSG to create the Arts in Schools Certification system," said CAP Vice President of Advocacy and Community Engagement Dr. Lucy Chen in the release. "This data-driven system will measure the depth and breadth of arts education opportunities in DCPS, providing a valuable tool for our community to drive change for access and equity in arts education."

"The National Endowment for the Arts is proud to support arts projects in communities nationwide," added NEA Chair Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson in the release. "Projects such as this one with CAP strengthens arts and cultural ecosystems, provides equitable opportunities for arts participation and practice and contribute to the health of our communities and our economy."



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MEET THE AGENT



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As a Jacksonville native, growing up in beautiful Mandarin, Ryan has developed a strong sense of Jacksonville and its hidden and charming pockets. Over the last twenty years, he's lived, worked, and played in countless different neighborhoods, supplying him with tons of knowledge about our community and what makes Jacksonville unique. With a desire to specialize in assisting first-time home buyers, he aims to equip you with all the knowledge needed, so that making one of the biggest purchases of your life can actually be fun and enjoyable.

Outside of Real Estate, he can be found playing bass in the local band, Loretto, hiking with his wife, and hanging with his cats, Mickey and Zora, and dog, Harper.

Favorite hiking spot in Jacksonville: I love the Spanish Pond Trail in Ft. Caroline. It's the highest elevation in Jax for hiking, and a great place to take dogs and enjoy the scenery.

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The Florida Real Estate School by Pier 21 Realty, LLC Hosts Grand Opening



Aiden and Phil Simonetta

Broker-Owner Philip Simonetta and his Realtor son, Aiden Simonetta, have opened the doors of their new company, The Florida Real Estate School by Pier 21 Realty, LLC. On March 11, they welcomed more than two dozen guests to tour the office and classroom spaces at the Cassat Avenue headquarters. One attendee of note was Escrow, the black cat who serves as Pier 21's resident mascot.

The grand opening event included a full Italian spread of baked ziti, which Phil cooked himself; an array of salads; and sweet desserts to balance out the taste buds. To close the celebration, Phil gave a Real Estate Career Day presentation to visitors interested in joining the profession.

The Simonettas' unique firm operates as both a real estate brokerage and a licensed real estate school, authorized by the Florida Real Estate Commission (FREC) to provide a comprehensive suite of licensing courses. In addition, Phil will be organizing weekend workshops as part of a mentorship program. "Through my travels of all the years being involved with real estate in one form or another, I decided that with all my experience, it's time to give back," Phil said.

This Jacksonville office is the first of four that the father-son duo have planned. Though in operation only a short while, the company has already gotten more than 300 likes and followers on Facebook.

Plush N' Prana offers unique experience in Riverside



Plush N' Prana owner Claudia Prana stands before the boutique she envisioned so clearly when she first saw the Park Street property for lease.

When Plush N' Prana owner Claudia Prana received a phone call saying she had received the Restoration and Rehabilitation Award from Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP), she said she had to listen to the voicemail "several times" before she could comprehend its meaning.

Plush N' Prana — her "exotic, elegant and worldly clothing store" — had only opened at the beginning of December 2022 and she was still acquainting herself to the Riverside community. After researching online, however, she came to understand what the award was.

"It was sort of a validation, a recognition, sort of almost like my heart is home and home is here," she said. "...I felt the warmth of this community. I had this feeling that it is a very heart-based community: a heart-based,

artistic, human-based community. I felt that when I renovated the building and this welcome really validated that for me."

Prana offers kimonos, bathrobes and bath/body and home goods in her richly-colored boutique, which seems to draw customers in the moment they open the door.

"That is a message," she said. "Products are great, colors are wonderful — they're a reflection of Mother Earth and nature — but there is an element of the heart. [My] intention is that people feel — even if it is only for a minute or two — the calmness that is necessary for us to find ourselves."

Plush N' Prana is located at 2761 Park Street in historic Riverside. It is open Wednesday through Saturday, 10:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. and Sunday, 12:30 to 5:30 p.m.

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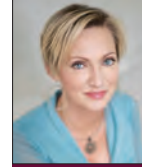
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YMCA GATHERS LEADERS, PATRONS AND HONORS DIFFERENCE-MAKERS

The YMCA of Florida's First Coast welcomed guests to the 'The Jessie' downtown, to rally around civic leaders at its annual Giving Tree Gala. The nonprofit, with more than 14 branch locations in North Florida, counts on its board, staff and invested partners to bring value and quality of life services for youth, families and businesses in the community.

The highlight of this year's annual event was the Community Impact Award, awarded to philanthropist and developer G. John Carey, who exemplifies the character traits of the award's namesake, Mr. W.W. "Bill" Gay. Mr. Gay believed in the power of giving back, leading by example and providing for those less fortunate.

"Mr. Gay was committed to serving the Jacksonville community and I share his passion for providing essential services," shared Carey. "I am honored and humbled to be selected as the 2023 W.W. "Bill" Gay Community Impact Award recipient."



Hud and Rolly Berrey with David Clark



Aryn and Joseph Lentz



Carla Harris with Linda Wright



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Whit Carey with Steve and Teresa Lovett and Eric Mann

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CATHOLIC CHARITIES' SOIREE SUCCESS

It was an evening to remember for many guests that joined Catholic Charities and their Divine Society to celebrate the work of the nonprofit, its goals and annual achievements. The Black and White soiree was held at the Lower East Gallagher Club at TIAA Bank Field, Saturday, March 11. Guests wandered the outdoor terraces overlooking the pitch where the Jaguars take to the field for home games while sipping wine and cocktails, dining on freshly curated meals, while dancing the night away to live entertainment by the Bay Kings Band.

The gala raises funds, by way of donor, sponsor and ticket purchasers, to ensure faith is able to be put into action to serve the most vulnerable in our community. By advocating for justice, human dignity and quality of life, Catholic Charities Jacksonville is able to reflect the compassion and 'God in Christ'— centered mission, serving countless residents throughout North Florida.



Antoinette Vitale with Chris Bolen

Leslie Quaritius with Lisa Benton



Mike and Shannon McVeary with Burt and Caroline Costa, J.D. and Treena Dinsmore, Kim and Don Alexander with Laurie and Doug Kirchoff



Allison Reed with Sam Abbott, Dominick Aurelio, Samantha Smith, Catherine Fudal and Samantha Jarrett



Sarah Yeats and Betsy Sloan with Julie and Joe Helow



Patsy and Terry Moore with Margie and Jorge Morales, Catherine Childers and Bill Hackelton



Laurie Kirchoff with Jan and Lou Walsh, Penny and Bob Ellison, Connie Turner, Jamie and Mickey Ross



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Charity Tastes Good for The Salvation Army



Major Candice Biggers, area commander Jacksonville with Major Timothy Roberts, St. Johns County, Major Keath Biggers, area commander Jacksonville, Lieutenant Colonel Melody Davis, divisional women's ministry leader for the State of Florida and Lieutenant Colonel Kent Davis, divisional commander for State of Florida.

The Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary hosted its 37th Annual Celebrity Chefs Tasting Luncheon and Silent Auction on March 23 at the Prime Osborn Convention Center. Local celebrities, media personalities, government officials and business leaders dished up bites of their favorite recipes, while participants bid in an eclectic, silent auction filled with artwork, collectibles, services and getaways. All attendees got to take home a commemorative cookbook containing the recipes from the tasting, and all proceeds went to benefit the programs of the Salvation Army of Northeast Florida.

Chefs featured at the 2023 event were Virginia Anthony, Ron Autrey, Noble Beckwith, Terrance Freeman, Paige Hakimian, Joseph Hinrichs, Kawanza Humphrey, Melissa Ross, Rob Storm, Nicole Thomas and Andrea Williams.

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

Since its inception in 1985, the more than 70 ladies of The Salvation Army of Northeast Florida Women's Auxiliary have provided hundreds of thousands of volunteer hours and raised more than \$2 million for The Salvation Army.

Hunting Club gathers for low-country boil, camaraderie

Since 1955, a group of gentlemen have been walking the woods, stalking and flushing their favorite birds in search of enjoyment in the great outdoors. Many founding members have passed, but the legacy lives on with each generation sharing in the traditions of hunting with their next of kin and lifelong friends. Whether it's the hunt, the campfires, or the stories that have been shared, these are irreplaceable and fulfilling experiences shared and celebrated amongst the best of friends.

For one group out of Ortega, the tradition remains and the bonds continue to build — the latest low-country boil exemplified the spirit of the woods — alive and well in a local waterfront backyard complete with bonfires and cigar smoke. The gathering was celebrated over shrimp, crawfish, corn on the cob, sausage and whatever anyone felt like sipping on, as fine cigars wafted well into the night.



Phillip Parsons with Mark Brundick



Billy, Walden, Sarah and Phillip Parsons



Susan and Alex Vohr



Mark Brundick with Patrick Parsons, John Valentino, Phillip Parsons and Hugh Blanton



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I SPY A SYMPHONY

The Jacksonville Symphony hosted its annual fundraiser, The Symphony Gala, on March 4. Themed “An Evening of Intrigue,” the evening featured outstanding music that highlighted the exhilarating scores of classic spy films. Guests got to enjoy a cocktail reception, dinner, live and silent auctions, special performances and a night full of festivities and dancing.

Darnell Smith, market president for Florida Blue, served as the honorary gala chair, and Magen McRoberts of Boundless Impact Agency stood as auctioneer and emcee.

All donations raised during the event support the Jacksonville Symphony’s music education programs and community engagement activities, allowing the arts to continue to unify our communities by infusing life, joy, creativity and imagination into the lives of listeners.



Kelly Milliron and Nicholas May



Dr. Sandy and Frank Robinson



Joe Barton, Bruce and Gabriele Dempsey with David Rinzier



Rob and Angie Wilmlink, Rahil Gour, Kelsey and Thomas Sloan

Rotarians raised bets, while raising funds



Rotary Club Members and guests enjoyed poker with friends, pictured are Jeanie Taras with Teri Wanamaker, Traci Jenks and Renee Parenteau

The Rotary Club of Jacksonville gathered members for a fun, Gatsby-themed night out at bestbet, the region’s poker attraction for a No Limit Hold Em’ event. The glitzy evening, chaired by members Pete Hicks and Pete Denholm, will help raise funding that goes back into the community in many forms, by way of the Rotary Club of Jacksonville Florida Foundation, Inc.

The evening event was held March 2, at bestbet, at 201 Monument Road in the Arlington area. Patrons, both experienced and inexperienced, learned ‘when to hold em’...and when to fold em’, all in one night.

Winners of the evening were Tim Burrows, Sadat Jaffrey and David Rey, who placed first, second and third in winnings, respectively. The support of the Foundation will help in the disbursement of grants and other programs aimed at enriching the quality of life of citizens in Jacksonville and other portions of the world, where giving is helping fight polio and providing aid in devastated areas, where Rotary funds help mitigate disaster impacts as well.



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A Real Estate Brokerage and Real Estate School Both Under One Roof, A Unique Combination, Right Here in Jacksonville

Real estate education, though essential, is not typically provided by brokerage firms. Real estate professionals, traditionally, practice under one company and fulfill their licensing requirements through a separate institution. But welcome to a new era. Enter Pier 21 Realty, LLC. Family-owned-and-operated by Broker Philip Simonetta and his Realtor son, Aiden, Pier 21 is a unique combination of brokerage and school, an independent non-franchised company headquartered on Cassat Avenue.

Phil Simonetta has over two decades of expertise in Florida's real estate, having been involved in consulting, financing, and structuring businesses in the entertainment and restaurant fields. He draws on knowledge from this broad background that average agents just don't have. He has seen real estate professionals through a variety of trials and tribulations.

"The national statistic is 80% of people who are in this business now will not be in it in two years," Simonetta said. He believes the reason for that is no one truly trains and mentors them through the practical application of the theories and principles they are mandated to learn. "A book can teach you how to get a real estate license but not how to deal with a client on a personal level during a transaction," he said.

Simonetta's goal is not only to help clients find their dream homes and acquire their investment properties but also to empower real estate professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to thrive, thereby improving the industry success rate. That's why he and his son operate Pier 21 Realty, LLC as both a real estate brokerage and a real estate school.

BROKERAGE

Pier 21 is a full-service brokerage that represents buyers as well as sellers. The firm handles both residential and commercial transactions, including but not limited to strip malls and development communities. Simonetta has access to available programs and grants, and he taps into creative solutions that address auctions, short sales, and foreclosures.

"Most real estate agents enter a property into the MLS and pray that buyers will come and see it," Simonetta said. He's different. He takes a more personal and proactive approach, and his reach extends much farther. Pier 21 advertises properties in 140 countries and in 18 different languages, catering to foreign investors as well as people searching the nationwide MLS listings.

Pier 21 clients also benefit from a bit of complimentary consultation, which comes naturally to a man like Simonetta, who himself has owned a variety of businesses. He's happy to offer hints and tips to his clients on how they might make their establishments more profitable. "I've literally turned empty fields into homes. I've started cigar lounges from nothing and sold them to major

corporations," he said. One of Simonetta's restaurant successes is that a sandwich shop he owned earned the 2009 Best of Philly Cheesesteak Award from Fox 29 News Philadelphia. He is no stranger to successfully turning properties.

"Real estate is a simple business. From the back end, there are 23 steps to closing a deal, 12 pages to a contract, 4 pages in a listing agreement, and there are addendums. But it's a hard job," Simonetta said. The paperwork is the same no matter the size of the deal. It's the connection that's established, the communication between the parties, and the expertise brought by the professional that make all the difference. That's the difficult part. And that's where Simonetta stands out.

"Every client I have ends up being a friend," he said. He sees the industry from a different perspective than most. For Simonetta, it's not only about making money and closing deals. It's more about empathy for him. He values relationships and puts his clients above himself, but it's never his intention to solicit property owners already listed with other brokerage firms. It's a philosophy of integrity that he's passing on to his son and to their Pier 21 agents.

SCHOOL

In addition to offering a broad spectrum of brokerage services, Pier 21 Realty, LLC is authorized by the Florida Real Estate Commission (FREC) to provide a comprehensive suite of professional education options meant to meet state requirements.

As a qualified real estate school, Pier 21 is an optimal choice for pre-licensing classes, ones intended for those aspiring to become certified agents. Once the state test is passed, Pier 21 educates agents to advance toward broker status. The school then provides the required continuing education classes for both agents and brokers to maintain their credentials. Pier 21 also offers the post-licensing enrichment that is mandatory for license renewals.

Classes are available in multiple formats to suit participants' learning styles and scheduling needs. The Florida Real Estate School by Pier 21 Realty, LLC brings one of the highest quality distance education programs available with on-demand virtual modules if traditional classroom courses and live Zoom sessions are not preferred.

There's also the convenience of a virtual store on Pier 21's school website. It carries study materials that are specifically designed to help advance a real estate career. Available are textbooks written by industry experts and published by preeminent names such as Dearborn. Also find there a list of links to a wealth of other real estate resources, whether you're an enrolled student or not.

Because Simonetta is such a proponent of quality relationships, he offers paired pricing at The Florida Real Estate School.



That means couples desiring to pursue their real estate education together at Pier 21 are granted tuition discounts. At Pier 21, a couple might mean a military member and spouse, a brother and sister, two friends, or business partners. Students decide whom to pair and enroll with.

FUTURE

A visionary, Simonetta already has his sights set on what the future holds for himself, his son, and others who are passionate about the real estate industry. Though he chose Jacksonville to launch this unique realty concept of brokering and educating within the same firm, he plans to establish Pier 21 satellite offices by the end of next year in Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, and Naples.

Beyond the FREC-approved curriculum, Simonetta also intends to organize weekend workshops as part of a mentorship and apprenticeship program with topics like 'Walking through Contracts' and 'Acquiring and Relating to Clients.' Though Simonetta is currently licensed in Florida and North Carolina, these general classes applicable to all states will be held nationwide online and locally in person. They will be open to all real estate professionals, no matter whose company they work for.

Simonetta is eager to engage with other real estate brokerages and support the industry at large because he has a heart to help people. As good as Simonetta thinks the real estate business is today, "I want it to be better tomorrow," he said.



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Local NFL star gives to youth in crisis



Kim Sirdevan with Bailey Branham, Nina Madanlow, Landon Strickland, Cathy Hurst, Hayden Hurst, Pete Hicks, Jerry Hurst and Logan Farrelly

Growing up isn't always easy, everyone has their setbacks — for one local NFL player — life has been a journey to the peak level of athletics. Hayden Hurst struggled with his own setbacks along the way.

Despite having his own trials in his youth, his family has followed their hearts to help other kids and teens in need of support, many going through some of the hardest years of their young lives. For the tight end who plays for the NFL's Cincinnati Bengals, giving back means a great deal.

Hurst was in town, March 21, where he signed a check and gathered with leaders and staff from the Youth Crisis Center on Parental Home Road, his parents by his side. He shared some thoughts about the importance of the Hayden Hurst Family Foundation and its ability to impact local youth.

"It's just incredible. When we first started this Foundation, we didn't know necessarily what it would turn into. To have the ability to hand over \$73,000 to the Youth Crisis Center.

That's why we started it [the Hayden Hurst Family Foundation]," said Hurst.

How does he hope to inspire others in the community? Hurst made it known that it's all about passion. "Find something that hits home with you and your family, for me, it's suicide and mental health, it's just a cause that my family feels very passionate about. There's a lot of people out there that need help."

"We're extremely grateful for the opportunity to partner with the Hayden Hurst Family Foundation that raises awareness about suicide prevention and mental health, we're like a big family. This is what we do, come together to benefit the community," shared Youth Crisis Center CEO, Kim Sirdevan.

For more information about how you can impact young people in our community or partner and/or support the Youth Crisis Center, visit youthcrisiscenter.org, or visit Hayden Hurst Family Foundation at haydenhurstfoundation.org.

Ortega River Run Success for St. Mark's

The St. Mark's Campus of the Episcopal School of Jacksonville (ESJ) once again hosted the 45th Annual Ortega River Run on Saturday, Feb. 25. More than 1,500 runners crossed the finish line, encouraged and cheered on by ESJ's pep band and cheerleaders, followed by a day of entertainment at the campus.

The after-race street fair included face painting, balloon art, tennis, sweet treats, giveaways and a game truck. All proceeds, totaling \$22,000, went to benefit the financial aid efforts at ESJ's St. Mark's Campus.

"We are grateful to our sponsors, especially the 2023 title sponsor, Ascension St. Vincent's, for their support and for helping to make this run a huge success," said Susan Kwartler, director of development, St. Mark's Campus. "The event also would not have been possible without the 2023 Ortega River Run Committee: Rebekah Hagan (chair), Jennifer Bechan (co-chair), Kayla Earrey, Jessica Ryals, Amanda Trimble and Melissa Vogt."



Tre Gardner, Brooks Gallagher, Melissa Vogt and Lucy Jones



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The Rev. Mark Anderson with son, Phillip



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RAP Home Tour continues comeback, approaches 50 years

Tour includes a retail shop, churches and unique homes

BY WINDY TAYLOR
Resident Community News



2761 Park St. had no roof or floor prior to being transformed into Plush N' Prana.



2761 Park Street sports a cheerful awning after its complete renovation.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CLAUDIA PRANA

ALL OTHER PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARK PENNINGTON FOR RAP

The 49th Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) Home Tour, held this year on April 15 and 16, promises to once again showcase the creativity and reverence for history that reflects the character of the Riverside and Avondale neighborhoods. This year, the usual lineup of private homes is joined by a boutique that turned a dilapidated eyesore into a jewel box.

Plush N' Prana, owned by Claudia Prana, is an eclectic retail space that showcases colors and textures from around the world. But before it was filled with bright silks, the building at 2761 Park Street was a ruin.

"I talked to people who have lived in the neighborhood for decades," said Shannon Blankinship, RAP executive director, "and no one remembers it not being an abandoned building." Prior to the renovation, the boarded-up structure had no roof or flooring. Now it features a colorful exterior and bright lighting. The restoration garnered Claudia Prana the 2023 Best Retail Renovation award from RAP.

"People are going to love that space so much," Blankinship said. "It's so bright and vibrant."

Blankinship joined RAP during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the Home Tour was on a two-year hiatus. "Last year was very much a comeback year," she said. "With COVID there was a lot of fear and trepidation about letting people into your home (so) it was a little more challenging last year. We're excited to see how many people have been working on restoring their homes for years and are willing to share their story, the outcome of the hard work to bring a home back."

Two of the buildings included in the home tour are turning 100 this year. The Mediterranean-style home at 1605 Avondale Avenue, as well as St. Paul's Catholic Church, are joining many neighborhood buildings who reach this milestone through diligent upkeep. "We see people being proud of how old their home is," Blankinship said. "There's a special level of work involved in keeping these homes in good shape."

Blankinship has been intentional about including non-homes in the Home Tour lineup, for several reasons. "Number



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one," she said, "we're seeing a lot of the older homes in our neighborhood converted to commercial spaces. When I see that done successfully, I feel it's something we should highlight. We're focused on retail spaces through the lens of preservation and craftsmanship."

"As for the churches, we have some beautiful examples in this neighborhood that are vastly different (from each other)," Blankinship said. "Being able to step into and see the differences between a Baptist church and a Catholic church and a Methodist church, you can see the way that people worship within the architecture. Our churches are communal spaces, and inviting people into these communal spaces allows people to learn more about the neighborhood and ways to engage with the community."

The church and boutique take their places in a home tour lineup that reflects the architectural diversity of Riverside

CONTINUED ON PAGE 33 ...

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and Avondale, where small bungalows rub elbows with grand houses, buildings stay true to one architectural style or pull from several traditions, new construction stands next to century-old structures.

“Me, I love the tiny homes,” Blankinship said. She is especially excited for people to see the 1922 craftsman bungalow at 1454 Belvedere, which features four doors along the front and four along the back that can be opened up to create one large indoor-outdoor space. “The bungalow that opens up is just so fun and exciting and I hope the weather is good enough for people to actually experience that.”

Just up the street at 1359 Belvedere, another bungalow features pre-air-conditioning touches. There, five French doors open onto the front porch to admit breezes. Over at 1028 Osceola Street, a deep veranda wraps around three sides of the 1911 home, which is a fine surviving example of the use of rusticated stone — hollow concrete that is shaped to look like stone. This fireproof material became popular in Jacksonville during the era of reconstruction after the Great Fire of 1901.

This year’s featured home is located at 3404 St. Johns Avenue. This striking Mediterranean Revival home demonstrates that utility and beauty can live in harmony. The property is actually divided into three separate living areas to accommodate the needs of the family who lives there. The basement of the home was converted into a three-room residence, while a pool house was repurposed as a mother-in-law apartment.

This home is also the site of the Twilight Party, which takes place Thursday evening before the tour begins.

“Twilight started early on in the home tour legacy,” Blankinship explained. “The idea behind it is that some of these homes are more special at night. The party is typically held in the back yard, and it’s a more intimate gathering with twinkling lights or candlelight.” This year, guests will enjoy food from Biscotti’s, spirits from Manifest Distilling, and music from the Stefan Klein Trio under the glow of the 150 landscape lights that dramatically enhance the architecture of the home.

Pre-sale tickets for the tour begin at \$25 (The price increases to \$30 on April 15). Guided tours are available through Go Tuk’n, ZenCog, and Art Bikes Jax. For more information, including tickets, hours, and a complete list of homes, please visit riversideavondale.org.



3404 St. Johns Ave. is this year’s featured home, and the location for the Twilight Party.




The sunroom of 3404 St. Johns Ave. features an indoor fountain.





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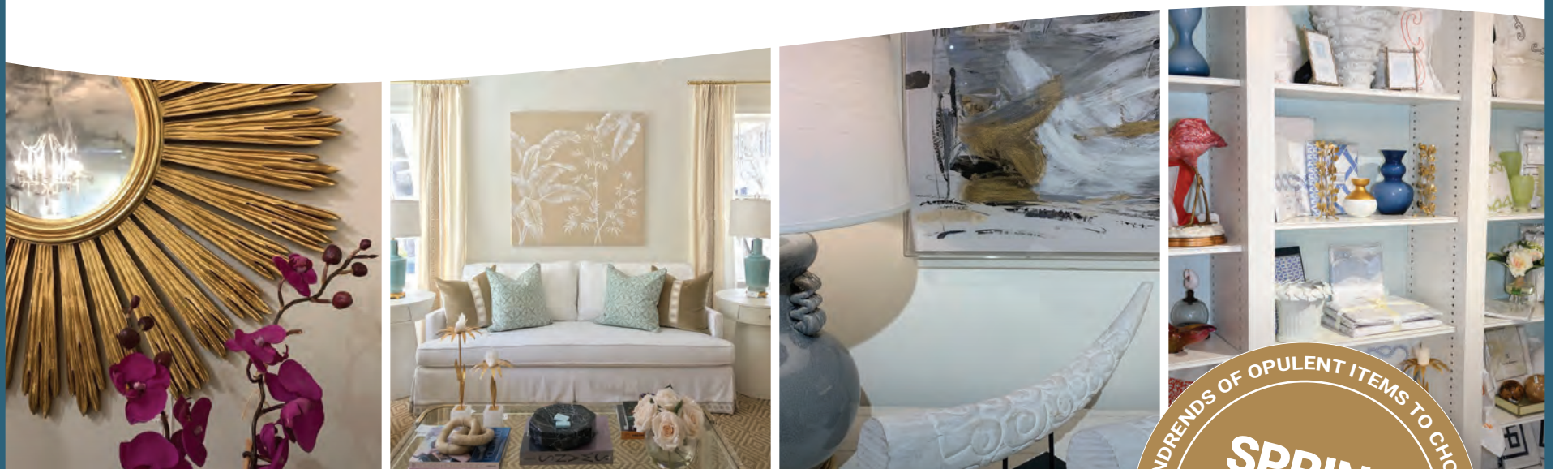


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JUNIOR RESIDENTS

Scott Named Player of the Year



PHOTO CREDIT RICHARD NICHOLS

Taliah Scott

Taliah Scott, senior at St. Johns Country Day School with a high school career 2,733 points, has been named the 2022-2023 Gatorade Florida Girls Basketball Player of the Year. She is only the third player from the First Coast to achieve this honor.

The award, which recognizes not only outstanding athletic excellence, but also high standards of academic achievement and exemplary character demonstrated on and off the court, distinguishes Scott as Florida's best high school girls basketball player. The selection process is administered by the Gatorade Player of the Year Selection Committee, which leverages experts including coaches, scouts, media and others as

sources to help evaluate and determine the state winners.

"Taliah is a great basketball player," said St. Johns Girls Varsity Basketball Coach Yolanda Bronston. "But she's more than a great basketball player. She's a National Honor Society member, and the hardest working, most committed player I've ever coached."

Scott has volunteered more than 100 hours of her time teaching basketball to young girls at summer camps, weekend training sessions, and the local YMCA. She has also donated her time at the Ronald McDonald House of Central Florida and as a peer mentor. As Player of the Year, Scott receives a grant to give to one of Gatorade's social impact partners.

The "In" Club

Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida Honor Youth of the Year



Paul Martinez, Cornell Penn, Rona Welch, Youth of the Year Jordyn W. (elementary school), Ambrosia C. (high school), Tyler H. (middle school), and Lendward Griffin

Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida announced the winners of their local 2023 Youth of the Year competition, the organization's highest honor for young leaders, at the Youth of the Year Awards Ceremony and Alumni Club Reception on Feb. 23 at the Florida Blue Conference Center. The winners are Ambrosia C. for the high school category, Tyler H. for middle school and Jordyn W. for elementary. All three local Youth of the Year winners attend THE PLAYERS Championship Boys & Girls Club in St. Augustine.

As the local high school Youth of the Year, Ambrosia will represent Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida in upcoming state, regional and national competitions through Boys & Girls Clubs of America. She will also be the local teen spokesperson, advocate and voice of her peers throughout the year.

"If not for the club, I know there are many kids and teens who would get into trouble out on the streets. Instead, these young people have a safe, fun place to be after school where they get their academic and emotional needs met. I'm thankful for the club staff who lend a helping hand and show all young people that they have a chance to be their best selves and dream big, no matter how out of reach their dreams may seem. They encourage young people that they can do anything they put their minds to doing," Ambrosia said.

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Students Unite Again in Mentorship

Students at Ruth Upson Elementary School are once again gaining a strong foundation thanks to the return of a mentorship program with Riverside High School. The program had seen many successes as the elementary students were paired with a high school mentor to help them see the confidence that a personal investment in school would later bring.

“Our hope was that by pairing our students with a high school mentor they would hopefully form a deeper connection and ultimately help improve their behaviors and motivation,” said Dr. Faith Roberts-Graham, principal of Ruth Upson.

The program, originated in 2018 by a group of staff members at the elementary school, was placed on hiatus during the pandemic years of 2020-2022. Its return in the 2022-2023 school year was welcomed back by both sides. Students meet monthly for activities, games and group discussions.

“I feel like I’m looking up to the right person, and that person can guide me and help me,” says fifth-grade mentee Daniel Strada. “He’s already experienced, and he already understands because he’s been in elementary before.”

“It connects with them better to see someone that was in their shoes,” says Strada’s mentor, Riverside senior Jamarcus Jordan.

St. Patty’s Raises \$8K for St. Paul’s



Fourth-graders, shown at the start of their St. Patty’s Jig Jog Fun Run, raised the most funds of any grade.

St. Paul’s Catholic School-Riverside students raised more than \$16,165 for playground improvements through the St. Patty’s Jig Jog Fun Run, held on the historic campus March 17.

School principal Kim Repper said the original goal amount of \$8,000 was raised within five days of announcing the event to the school community. Funds will go toward resurfacing the school playground and installing shaded seating.

“Half of our playground is sand. The kids get it in their hair and their shoes. Our goal is to replace the ‘sandlot’ with new playground surfacing. The children also have limited shaded spots to hang out, and we would like to add shaded seating,” said Repper.

“The most exciting part of this type of event is the community engagement. It is always joyful to have our parents and teachers rallying on the kids for a common purpose,” she said.

RPDS Introduces Run Riverside

On Saturday, April 29th, Riverside Presbyterian Day School will host the first ever Run Riverside. Run Riverside is a community driven event, from the event logo, made by RPDS 1st Grade teacher Amanda Barkley which highlights Riverside landmarks, to the support from our title sponsor, Daily’s, connected to the event by RPDS alumnus Max Globber (class of 2002). Run Riverside is a celebration of not only the RPDS community, but the larger Riverside community as a whole. Run Riverside will consist of a 5k event which will take participants through significant parts of Riverside such as 5 Points, Cheek Castle, Memorial Park, and the Cummer Museum. In addition to the 5k, open to both adults and children, there will be a 1 mile fun run filled with exciting surprises along the route for younger participants.

To learn more and register for Run Riverside, visit rpds.com/run.



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Torkzad Team Takes to Space



Celine Torkzad and Elaine Giles

Celine Torkzad, Class of '27 at St. Johns Country Day School, proved her ideas are out of this world when she participated in a 4-H program, 4-H In Space: Mission Command Team. Torkzad is a member of the winning team of Go For Launch! 4-H In Space, and the team's experiment will be flown to the International Space Station on SpaceX-27, which launched Wednesday, March 15, 2023.

"Through participating in the 4-H In Space: Mission Command Team program, three Clay County youth were able to explore the future of space exploration and space industry jobs, meet an astronaut, and work with other 4-H youth to create a science experiment to test out an idea on how to make living on the moon and Mars a reality for humankind" said Elaine Giles, 4-H STEM Extension Agent with UF/IFAS Extension Clay County.

Through the program, students explore STEM and space topics while working on a viable experiment design that could be successfully researched in space. Torkzad's winning team, team Space Goats, consisted of Torkzad along with Krish Nangia, Cove Searle and Nolan Williams. Their experiment will look at the effects of microgravity on the growth of spirulina in space. It is being developed in partnership with Higher Orbits payload integration partners Space Tango.

Team Space Goats' experiment will be flying with three other Go For Launch! student experiments aboard SpaceX-27, bringing the grand total of experiments sent to space from this program to 17. Torkzad's is the first from St. Johns Country Day School.

"It was certainly my pleasure to work with these future architects of our space industry. They will shape our country's future in space," said featured Astronaut of Go For Launch! 4-H In Space, Jim "JR" Reilly.

Cultural Diversity Curates at Bolles



Bolles students in St. Augustine for Afro-Latino trip.

Bolles upper school students embraced cultural diversity through the recent celebration of Japanese Week, enjoyed alongside exchange students, as well as the exploration of the historical contributions of Afro-Latinos by Bolles' Spanish students.

During this year's Japanese Week, Feb. 27-March 3, students enjoyed dynamic, educational videos about Japan and listened to Japanese music during the change of classes on the San Jose Campus. The week was highlighted by the participation of three exchange students from the Keio School in Japan. During their visit, the Keio students enjoyed taking classes alongside their host students, visiting local landmarks and attending school functions, including athletic games and the Upper School Winter Dance. They also added their valued perspectives in activities that ranged from practicing calligraphy to making Japanese rice balls called onigiri.

Students in Spanish 4 and 5 traveled with members of the Bolles Black Student Union on Feb. 23 to St. Augustine to explore Fort Mose State Park, the first free Black settlement in North America, and the Best-Richardson Museum of the African Diaspora. At the park, students were given the site's history by a guest speaker from the Fort Mose Historical Society, and they collaborated in groups to complete a digital scavenger hunt. The group then visited the Best-Richardson Museum of the African Diaspora, where they were treated to a presentation from founder Gigi Best, who described her own journey with African-American history, culture and literature, as well as her exploration of her ancestry.

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Bolles Students “Break a Leg”

Upon well-wishes of “break a leg,” Bolles middle school students enchanted audiences with their production of “Once Upon a Mattress: Youth Edition,” an adaptation of the beloved musical famously anchored by actress Carol Burnett. The musical, a spin on the classic fairy tale “The Princess and the Pea,” was filled with raucous comedy, melodic songs and powerful performances from Bolles middle schoolers. The performances were held Feb. 24-25 on the Parker Auditorium stage at the Betsy Lovett Arts Center on the Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus.



The cast performing in Once Upon a Mattress: Youth Edition

The Performers Academy hosts book signing after publishing an Anthology of Poems written by teen authors



City Council President, Terrance Freeman, with the TPA and AMI Duval Executive Directors

The Performers Academy (TPA) hosted a book release attended by many of Jacksonville’s biggest supporters of education, the arts and youth services. Together they celebrated the publication of an anthology of poetry written by 15 teen boys enrolled in AMIKids Middle School, an alternative education environment for children with troubled pasts.

The event represents the culmination of work through Project P.O.M.E (Product of My Environment), a unique curriculum designed by The Performers Academy to teach poetry writing as a path to mental health and emotional healing.

Lessons in contrasting trending pop culture with classical literature and poetry allow teens to learn to express themselves in a healthy way. In addition, the students practice their

writing and public speaking skills by creating original poems and then sharing with the group. The workshops are conducted for high-risk youth using poetry and other creative writing to guide the young voice towards its own empowerment and to furnish participants with the internal tools that it takes to positively show up for self in often discouraging environments. The learning objectives are accessible and adaptable for all students and can be monitored by the teaching artist and classroom teacher. The outcome for students participating in this workshop series is self-empowerment, especially the courage to tell one’s own story and challenge society’s narrative.

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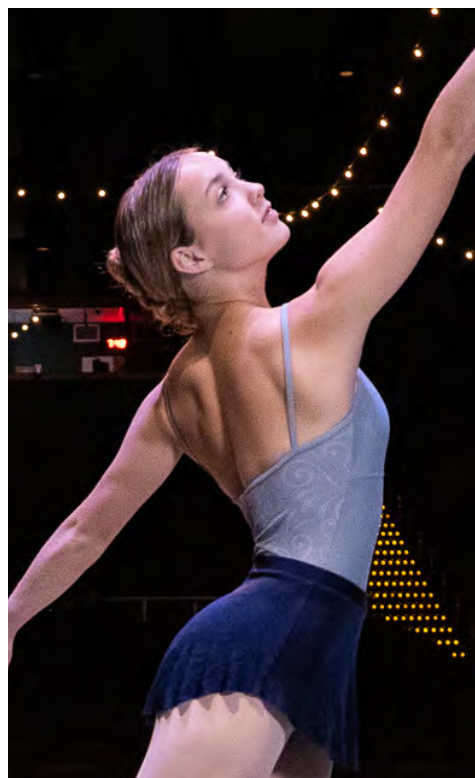
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BY KERRY SPECKMAN
Resident Community News

April is National Volunteer Month, and if you're one of the 60.7 million Americans who formally volunteer, thank you. Our community is a better place because of you.

Giving back to the community also comes with significant benefits not just for the organization or individuals receiving assistance but also to the volunteers themselves.

Volunteering can improve your health — both physical and mental. People who volunteer find a sense of meaning and appreciation in the work they do, which can lead to reduced stress and decreased physical and mental health issues like heart disease, high blood pressure, anxiety and depression. It provides a sense of purpose and allows you to gain valuable experience. And by volunteering you are creating new relationships and strengthening existing ones. By participating in a positive activity together, volunteers grow closer to each other and the community members they are serving.

As beneficial — and necessary — as volunteering is to our community, not all of us have the time or the resources to devote to an on-going volunteer position. Not to worry, my good-hearted neighbors. There are plenty of other ways to give back without the commitment of becoming a full-fledged volunteer.

- The most obvious way to support local charities is to give money. It can be a one-time gift, a recurring pledge or, if you're feeling really generous, add a charitable bequest to your will.
- Another no-brainer is donating clothes and shoes to a local thrift shop or church.

Give Back and You'll Get Back.

"Locals Care" explores what it means to "live local" and how we can help each other make our community even stronger by supporting each other. Send your ideas, questions, topics — and even your complaints — about living local and showing our neighbors we care to editor@residentnews.net.

(Pro tip: Make sure they are accepting donations before you pack them up.)

- Purchase items from an organization's wish list, like Wolfson Children's Hospital and Friends of Jacksonville Animals, and have them shipped directly. You don't even have to leave your house.
- Leave books at a little freelibrary or non-perishable items at a mini food pantry. (Check out littlefreelibrary.org and littlefoodpantry.org for locations and keep an eye out for them while you're exploring the neighborhood.)
- Contribute art supplies or other classroom necessities to your child's classroom. (Better hold on to any book donations for the time being. Wink-wink.)
- Patronize businesses that give back to the community like V Pizza, that donates free meals and other resources to individuals undergoing cancer treatment and their families; Bitty & Beau's Coffee, that employs individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities; and Hamburger Mary's, that hosts Charity Bingo every Monday with funds raised going to local non-profits.
- Become a member of a cultural organization like MOSH or the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens or give a membership as a gift. (Bonus: Members get free general admission for a year and other perks.)
- Give blood. In just 30 minutes, you can save two lives.
- Attend a special event like Fin Fest, benefitting the Jacksonville Speech and Hearing Center, coming up May 13 at Timuquana Country Club. (Pick up a copy of our free Social Date Book and Charity Register, and you'll find plenty other charity events to choose from. And don't forget to bid on those silent auction items!)
- Buy gift cards from local nonprofits like Theatre Jacksonville or Goodwill.
- Join Target Circle (it's free) and earn votes for local charities to split \$15,000 quarterly. Recent recipients include Volunteers in Medicine, Girls Who Code and NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness).
- Talk to a friend or share a post on social media about a nonprofits that is important to you.
- Finally, eat at one of 14 Jacksonville restaurants, including bb's, Biscottis, Black Sheep, Carmines Pie House, European Street-San Marco, The Garage, Hamburger Mary's, Lola's Burrito Joint and Restaurant Orsay, on April 27 for Dining Out for Life. As part of the event, participating restaurants are donating a minimum of 25% of sales to NFAN (Northeast Florida AIDS Network).

And for those of you who are interested in an ongoing volunteer experience, there are more than 50 nonprofits located in The Resident's service area ranging from animal rescues to art galleries including:

AIDS Memorial Project of Northeast Florida: jaxaidsmemorialproject.com, Aging True: agingtrue.org, American Red Cross: redcross.org, Angels for Allison: angelsforallison.org, Animal Care and Protective Services: bit.ly/COJACPS, Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside Hospital: healthcare.ascension.org, Baptist Medical Center: baptistjax.com, Boy Scouts of America: nfcscouting.org, Champion Women: championwomen.org, Changing Homelessness: bit.ly/changinghomelessness, CIL (Center for Independent Living): ciljacksonville.org, Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens: cummuseum.org, DLC Nurse & Learn: dlcnl.org, Family Support Center: fssjax.org, FemArt Gallery: femartgallery.org, Friday Musicales: fridaymusicale.com, Friends of Jacksonville Animals: friendsofjaxanimals.com, Friends of the Library: jaxpubliclibrary.org, Gateway: gatewaycommunity.com, Girl Scouts of Gateway Council: girlscouts-gateway.org, Girls on the Run: gotrnefl.org, Greenscape: greenscapeofjax.org, Garden Club of Jacksonville: gardenclubjax.org, The Honey Pot Bike Collective: facebook.com/honeypotbikes, Hope at Hand: hopeathand.org, Hope Haven: hope-haven.org, Hunger Fight: hungerfight.org, JASMYN: jasmyn.org, JCA: jcjax.org, Junior Achievement of Florida's First Coast: northflorida.ja.org, Junior League: jljacksonville.org, Kamp Kitter: kampkitter.com, LifeSouth Community Blood Centers: lifesouth.org, The Lotus Flower Project/Kamala's Kloset: thelotusflowerproject.org, Love Cleans: instagram.com/thewelljax, Memorial Park Association: memparkjax.org, Murray Hill Preservation Association: murrayhilljax.com, Museum of Science and History: themosh.org, Northeast Florida Healthy Start Coalition: nefhealthystart.org, One Blood: oneblood.org, Pine Castle: pinecastle.org, PFLAG: pflag.org, Riverside Arts Market: riversideartsmarket.org, Riverside Avondale Preservation: riversideavondale.org, Renaissance Jax: renaissancejax.org, Ronald McDonald House Charities: rmhcjacksonville.org, San Marco Preservation Society: smpsjax.com, St. Johns Riverkeeper: stjohnsriverkeeper.org, Stronger than Stigma: strongerthanstigma.org, Theatre Jacksonville: theatrejax.com, Wolfson Children's Hospital: wolfsonchildrens.com, Yellow House: yellowhouseart.org, Yoga 4 Change: y4c.org.

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LOCAL FOLKS

Emily Bellock

BY MARY WANSEER
Resident Community News

Emily Bellock is a native of Connecticut who moved down to the Jacksonville area for a job with the PGA Tour. She lived at The Beaches, at first, before moving to Riverside about a decade ago. Over the years, she has held a variety of titles within the PGA organization. Today, Emily is the director of community



Emily Bellock

outreach for THE PLAYERS Championship, the annual golf tournament held at TPC Sawgrass in Ponte Vedra.

Just like her dad, Emily is an avid golfer. She began at 14 driving the cart for him even before she had a driver's license. "Eventually, I started having the willingness to put a club in my hand and try to take a whack at the golf ball," she said. That was up in New England where golf season occupies a much shorter window than in Florida. One of the things Emily likes about this state is the year-round warm climate.

Emily learned to cook from her mom, whose favorite chef is Ina Garten. Growing up, Emily's family enjoyed many meals that her mother had made from Ina's recipes. Now, living on her own, Emily follows Ina on social media and on the Food Network where Ina is known as the Barefoot Contessa. During the pandemic, Emily and her sister were sent recipes by their mom. The young women would try to duplicate the meals and share photos of the results. "I love to do a lot of pasta dishes," Emily said. Her favorite is Ina's Weeknight Bolognese, which she says is very easy.

Emily enjoys cooking for her friends. "But now that I'm working so much, I don't cook as much," she said. When she's eating alone, Emily prefers takeout, and she shared the following list: "I love the salmon salad a Biscottis. I love tacos from Taqueria Cinco. I love Hovan's, the Mediterranean place."

In addition to golf and food, Emily has a passion for travel. "I love to show my friends New England," she said. Her parents still live

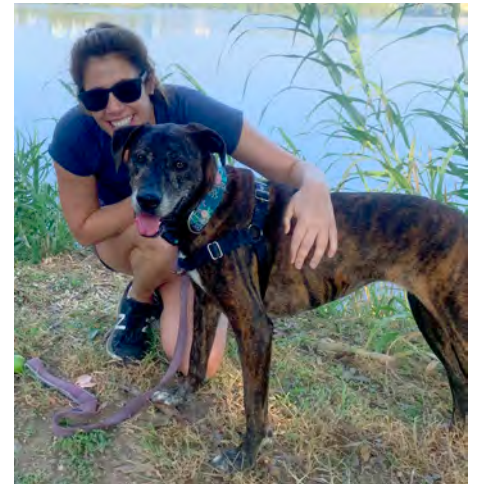
up there in Connecticut. She has a sister and a brother in Texas and another brother in South Carolina. She likes flying to visit with all of them, but international travel has captivated her.

Emily studied for a single semester in Seville, Spain while she was a student at Boston College. "I used to know Spanish conversationally, but I just haven't used it much," she said of the language. Since then, Emily has seen Australia, Japan, South Korea, England, France, Italy and Ireland. Her trips have been a combination of pleasure and business in her former roles. "The PGA Tour has brought me to some very interesting destinations," she said, for golf tournaments that were hosted abroad. Then, COVID came, which dampened travel for a while. Portugal last December was Emily's first trip since the pandemic.

Emily has a dog named Darla, a brindle-colored mixed breed that she rescued from the Charleston Humane Society. Darla has accompanied Emily on drives to Connecticut and Texas to visit family, but she stays home whenever Emily flies anywhere.

"My favorite part about living in Riverside is the walkability," Emily said. "Darla and I walk all over." On Saturdays they walk the Riverside Arts Market together. On Sundays, they walk to Bold Bean to pick up coffee and breakfast. Multiple times per week, they visit BARK on Park to pick out a treat. Darla is somewhat of a celebrity there. Everyone seems to know her.

"I love the proximity of the river and the ability to walk along [it]," Emily said. Her favorite



Emily and Darla Bellock

spots are near the Winston Family YMCA and around Memorial Park. Darla likes walking to those places, too, but she prefers a drive to Congaree and Penn. That's the farm that has open space for dogs to run free as well as organized activities for them. Emily and Darla go up there with The Dog Gang. That's a group of their friends — five humans and seven dogs. After play, the gang of a dozen eats at the farm's restaurant, which Emily claims has "the best food in Jacksonville." Darla especially likes that part of the trip because she's allowed to dine there with the humans.

For Emily Bellock (a Connecticut native) and Darla (a South Carolina rescue), life in Jacksonville, Florida seems to agree with them. They're living their lives in Riverside as local folks.

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BY SUSANNA P. BARTON
Resident Community News

Last month, we wagged our tails with gratitude for all the house pet friends in our neighborhoods. This month let's give some love to the creatures who make their homes in hidden dens, nests and holes and share the dark, wild spaces beyond our fences and hedges. As author Maurice Sendak said in his famous children's book, "Let the wild rumpus start!"

First, I acknowledge this could be one of the more controversial "Thank You Notes" columns. I will say straight away I LOVE seeing foxes in our neighborhood and consider them a harbinger of good fortune. I am grateful they exist. They remind me that nature was here before my pollen-covered yard, weeds and old landscaping. You may not feel this way. You might have small crusty white dogs or chickens that have been taken out by foxes, hawks and other wildlife. I am so sorry that was your experience. But it does not diminish the gratitude I feel for these furry, feathered neighbors and I plan to prattle on about them for at least a few more paragraphs. So, if this offends you or compels you to call your local wildlife removal service in an angry panic, save us all an apoplectic moment and just. Stop. Reading.

So back to the foxes. They are beautiful, mythical animals. From time to time, a skunk will take up residence on an empty lot in the neighborhood. Life is good when this happens. They scream bloody murder at each other at night, which is invigorating and makes us feel like we are pioneers living on the edge of wilderness, like the Duttons from "Yellowstone." If you're willing to wake up before sunrise — especially on trash days (which is now WEDNESDAYS, by the way) — you will encounter them loping across the streets from

one box bush and lamp shadow to the next, often pausing to lock their gaze with yours — if you are lucky and still and awed.

I feel lucky when I see foxes on early morning loops through Granada. I always stop and admire their saunter. There's something so purposeful and regal about their neighborhood walkabout. Like the rest of us, they're just trying to provide for their families — and like most of us, they can get down on some fresh chicken, too, which unlike humans, gives foxes a real bad rap.

Sadly, this fox-magic is usually a short-lived experience. Empty lots make way for new homes, concerned residents make calls for extermination or the foxes simply make their way to another neighborhood — and then it's boring and quiet in our neighborhood again for a long spell. I'm always happy, though, when they return. I love watching nature win.

My friend, Laura Carriere, sent me photos recently of a coyote sneaking around a neighbor's yard near Vale Orchard and San Jose Boulevard. My reaction was "omg, cool!" Her response was, "Is it though?" While I like it when nature reclaims its territory and messes with our sense of comfort boundaries, I can't deny it imperils our beloved small dogs, cats and chickens. Something to consider, I suppose.

Raccoons are another story. They are smart, and super cute with freakishly adorable tiny hands — but they are very messy. They love trash days more than foxes do and are not shy about pilfering through your cans for the good stuff. We have family in Ortega who spent months trying to keep raccoons out of their trash and I'm not sure how that was resolved, but it was a process. I do think if you make your trash cans inaccessible, racoons eventually will move on and rankle someone else's litter program.

Possums are not my favorite either, but they can provide some evening entertainment

when you let the dogs out in the backyard, and they are discovered. Like foxes, they scary scream. A ruckus always ensues if dogs are involved. I'll never forget our springer spaniel, Bud, prancing out into the floodlights with a possum in his mouth. We hollered and stomped for Bud to drop the darn thing — you should have seen that creature's death-defying performance. Creepy. But very Mutual of Omaha's Wild Kingdom, nonetheless. It was definitely more exciting than those run of the mill squirrels and rats, which tend to build nests in our crawl spaces before they die and leave gaggy bad smells — and take up residence in Karen, my pristine little Lexus. (Yes, this happened and yes, it was TERRIFYING.) I am generally NOT grateful for squirrels and rats. Or skunks. Or snakes. I did see some nutria at that gamey pond behind the Walgreens on St. Augustine Road a few years ago and I was grateful their habitat was a good three miles away from my house.

Bring on the birds, though. There's nothing more bucolic than watching cardinals and bluebirds and other small birds zip around through the trees and bushes. I even appreciate those confused song birds that start chirping at too-early-thirty right by my bedroom window, calling sunrise in the dark of night when I want to sleep in. And don't get me started on the bigger birds — the owls, the hawks, the eagles. Their presence way up in the tallest trees and streetlights is regal beyond measure. Plus, they airlift those nasty rats out of our yards and into their gullets. I also love seeing egrets and herons and lost seagulls swooping over busy roadways and medians, just doing their Florida thing.

And I'd be totally remiss if I didn't mention the TURKEYS — yes TURKEYS — we had in San Marco a few months back. These neighborhood sightings made my turkey-hunting-husband go mad. He stalks these big dumb beautiful birds all year long in the deep Florida and Georgia woods, sleuthing out their habits and their mating patterns and their turkey ways so when turkey season opens in the spring he is READY. All that, and those gobblers were strutting around just down the street in Alexandria Oaks Park. That's some nerve.


Ducks are also pretty cool. Apparently, a couple of ducks have made their way back to the Duck Pond south of San Marco Square. That's good news, because what's a duck pond without ducks? Their return also means the

water is regaining its health, which also is good news. I wonder if the same is true for Riverside Park? I haven't been there in a while, but I think it had some work to do in the water cleanliness and duck friendliness department.

I'll end on alligators. Nothing represents #FloridaLife more than these large reptiles of the Crocodylian order. They remind us that Florida nature — especially in the swamps and waterways around our beautiful neighborhoods — is powerful and wild, uncompromising and robust. Alligators are the species nominated by their animal peers to keep us human folk in check. That's why every now and then they gobble up a big dog or take down an adult human or small child loitering too close to the water's edge, even at Disney World. So, we go on about our lives, mindful of their presence, respectful of their strength — and cognizant of our pets' proximity to them.

Wildlife is a blessing — a "wild rumpus" of the highest order — and we are fortunate to share our community with so much of it.

Susanna Barton secretly hopes she'll see a sasquatch, yeti or chupacabra on an early morning walk one day because that would really take living in this neighborhood up a notch. She has lived in a house on Granada Park with her husband David, their children Ben and Marley 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. Each month, she will share reflections on neighborhood qualities for which she is grateful.



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River City Dancing With The Stars spotlights local dancers, benefits Jacksonville Children’s Chorus

Seven local leaders and their professional dance partners will face off on April 15 in a friendly dance competition for the mirror ball trophy and the title of River City’s favorite dancer. The Jacksonville Children’s Chorus (JCC) began producing River City Dancing With The Stars (RCDWTS) to raise money for singer scholarships and ongoing programming for the chorus.

This year’s competitors include Tamara Baker, Mark K. Bennett, Ashley Folladori, Melissa Fulmore-Hardwick, Adrian Rust and Sarah Small, who are working with professional dancers William Brand, Brian Brocato, Roseanna George, Heather Kornick, Zeljko “Jake” Lukic, Gilberto Maldonado and Daniel Nicolaescu from All About Ballroom dance studio.

One of the contestants, St. Nicholas resident Tamara Baker has been an entrepreneur since the age of 12 when she started a dance camp for young girls. Her engineering and construction career began in 1992, and since then she has held many different positions including rodman on a survey crew, draftsman, drill-rig manager, truss designer, geotechnical engineer, structural engineer and business owner. She can run business meetings or crawl under dusty buildings.

After working at a national design-build firm, Tamara decided to start her own business, Baker Design Build, in 2004, at the age of 32. Her company is a successful design-build consulting firm with average annual revenues of \$12,000,000. Baker Design Build recently

topped the Florida Fast 100, an annual list highlighting Florida’s growing business.

Tamara has been an adjunct professor at the University of North Florida, teaching mechanical and electrical systems, structures, surveying, drafting and estimating. She is a member of the Southside United Methodist Church, Assumption Catholic Church, St. Nicholas Preservation Society, the Associated Builders and Contractors, the Florida Structural Engineering Association, The Rotary Club of South Jacksonville and the Cathedral District of Downtown Jacksonville. She has three children, Brandyn Baker, Olivia Belle Baker and Nathaniel Banks Baker.

“I am hoping to represent the architectural, engineering and construction industry well this year and hope to inspire other downtown businesses to support the Jacksonville Children’s Chorus,” Baker said.

“We have a shortage of engineers and scientists today, and I truly believe that when children are exposed early to music and the arts, they are more open to scientific careers in the future,” she said.

Baker is taking dance lessons one to two times each week and has started running again three times a week.

“I feel great,” she said.

Another contestant, Sarah Small, who lives in Jacksonville Beach, is vice president of membership, sales and marketing for Gate Hospitality Group. She has personally set a goal of raising \$25,000 for Jacksonville Children’s Chorus.

She is a trustee member of the Chamber of Commerce, supporter of the FSCJ Artist Series and The Florida Theatre, and an alumna of the Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce’s Hightower Emerging Leaders Fellowship. She also serves on the executive board for the Northeast Florida Chapter of the Professional Club Marketing Association, Mason’s Voice and is an avid supporter of the American Heart Association and Make a Wish Foundation.

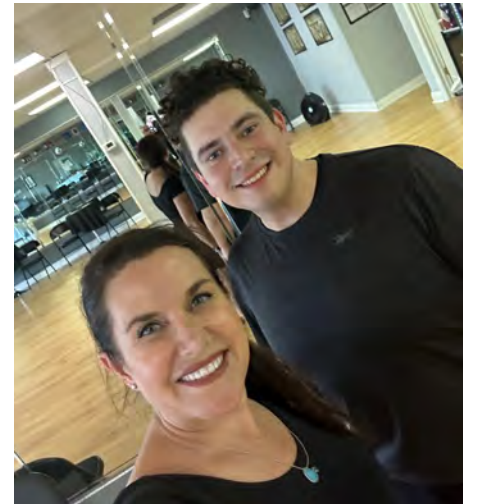
“JCC enriches lives, encourages creativity, culture and teaches a sense of confidence that its alumni can take with them for a lifetime,” Small said.

Small practices at least two hours a week with her dance partner to help learn the dance and genre style that she has selected.

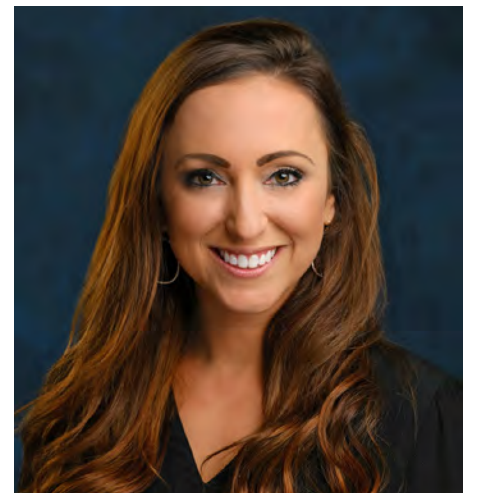
“It has been a journey that I will remember forever,” she said.

To vote with a donation for your favorite dance team, visit <https://www.rivercitydwts.com/contestants>. All proceeds benefit the Jacksonville Children’s Chorus. JCC’s scholarship program ensures that every child who desires to participate may do so regardless of a family’s inability to afford tuition. More than 44% of children who participate receive financial aid.

The 2023 River City DWTS will be held in UNF’s Lazzara Performance Hall on April 15, 6:30 – 9 p.m. Doors open at 6 p.m. General admission tickets are \$50 each; reserved tickets are \$80 each; and VIP tickets are \$150 each.



Tamara Baker rehearses with professional dancer William Brand to prepare for the River City Dancing With The Stars competition.



Sarah Small

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Heartworm Disease Updates

BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA
Resident Community News

During a conversation with Dr. Howard Acree of Cedar Hills Animal Hospital, the question came up regarding the necessity to continue monthly heartworm treatment for my senior dog Sylvia, 17. Sylvia is in excellent health for her age but only enjoys brief walks outdoors due to anxiety caused by her near-total blindness. Staying indoors limits her exposure to the mosquitoes that carry heartworm disease, which prompted the discussion.

Dr. Acree assured me that monthly heartworm prevention medication is still necessary year-round for all dogs, even indoor dogs and especially in Florida. He said heartworm-infected mosquitoes could survive Florida's mild winters and fly inside homes through open windows, doors, or into cars or garages to infect unprotected pets. It only takes one mosquito bite to transmit microscopic heartworm larvae, causing heartworm disease. Dr. Acree began his veterinarian practice in 1987 and is a former Veterinarian

of the Year, honored by the Florida Veterinary Medical Association.

Because heartworm disease is found in every state, with consistently high numbers of cases throughout the U.S., heartworm prevention, early detection and treatment is an ongoing scientific focus of veterinarian research. Heartworm experts strive to reduce the number of confirmed cases while improving diagnosis accuracy, prevention choices, treatment options and safety. The American Heartworm Society (AHS) provides regular disease prevention updates that explain how mosquitoes transmit heartworms, how to prevent and treat the disease, and what pet owners must know to protect pets.

At the 17th Triennial Heartworm Symposium presented by AHS in New Orleans last September, 40 speakers from three continents convened to present their heartworm research and related clinical topics. This international symposium comprised the latest scientific data on all aspects of heartworm disease.

"Heartworm disease continues to be one of the most common and costly diseases confronting the veterinary profession," said veterinarian cardiologist and triennial symposium co-chair Dr. Marisa Ames. "The fact that

heartworm incidence remains far too high — year after year — makes it clear that veterinarians need forward-thinking innovations and practical approaches to this disease." Ames is an associate professor of medicine and epidemiology at the UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine.

New approaches presented at the symposium included tactics learned from managing malaria, where the mosquitoes — instead of pets — could be treated in the future. Treatment of the favored host pest would prevent them from carrying or transmitting live heartworms.

Speakers stressed the importance of better information for pet owners about heartworm disease in cats, which can be fatal. Cat owners need to know how often indoor or outdoor, homeless, and feral cats are diagnosed with heartworm disease and that it can be fatal. There was also an emphasis on developing more accurate diagnostic protocols for feline heartworm disease.

Speakers also noted that climate change has contributed to the heartworm disease crisis. Historically, traditional winter freezing temperatures throughout the mid and northern U.S. reliably killed mosquito populations. Now dramatically fluctuating winter temperatures allow mosquitoes to survive.

Urban sprawl has also contributed to the robust heartworm population by creating "heat islands." Urbanized areas experience higher temperatures than undeveloped land. Paved surfaces, rooftops, buildings and infrastructure absorb and re-emit the sun's heat far more than natural landscapes such as forests, grasslands and water. The "heat islands" create perfect year-round survival zones for mosquitoes to breed and spread heartworms even during colder weather.

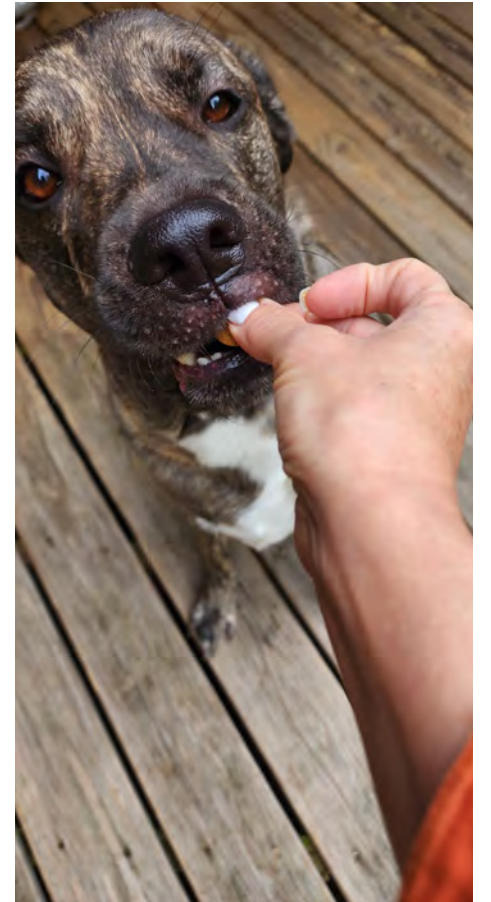
Untreated heartworm disease can be fatal to dogs, cats and ferrets. When an uninfected mosquito bites a heartworm-infected animal, it becomes infected, ensuring the continuous cycle and spread of heartworms. Heartworm-infected mosquitoes bite pets and transmit microscopic heartworm larvae into the pet's bloodstream. The heartworm larvae travel to the heart, lungs, and blood vessels, where they live and mature. They can grow up to 12" long and continuously breed.

Prevention treatments, oral, injectable, or topical prescription products, are necessary for indoor and outdoor pets and may include other ingredients to protect against fleas, ticks, and parasites. Monthly heartworm prevention medications can be safely given to puppies and kittens at eight weeks old. Pets must have the proper amount of heartworm prevention medication circulating in their bloodstream to kill heartworms. Heartworm prevention medication will not kill adult heartworms.

If an animal tests positive for heartworms, the goal is to first stabilize the pet's overall health and any symptoms before treatment. Then the veterinarian will administer the FDA-approved medication determined to be safest for that pet based on its physical condition, stage of heartworm disease, age and other contributing factors. Heartworm disease medication kills all parasitic adults and immature heartworms carried by infected mosquitoes.

Once a dog is infected with adult heartworms, the veterinarian may administer one of the FDA-approved arsenic-containing drugs, like injectable Melarsomine. Arsenic-containing drugs quickly kill adult heartworms but are dangerous treatments that pose risks to pets and can have side effects.

Some veterinarians consider doxycycline safer because it is less toxic with fewer side effects than arsenic-based heartworm



treatments. Doxycycline is a slower process that gradually eliminates all heartworms. However, the additional time required by doxycycline to eliminate heartworms, permits internal damage to continue. This delay causes some veterinarians to reject this treatment option except in specific cases.

Pets are monitored during heartworm treatment for possible side effects. After heartworm treatment, the pet should be re-tested for heartworms before resuming monthly heartworm preventive medication to ensure successful treatment.

Some pets never show signs of heartworm disease until its advanced stages, while in others, there are noticeable symptoms: persistent cough, tiredness after mild activity, labored breathing and decreased appetite. If untreated, heartworm disease damages the pet's heart, lungs, liver, and kidneys, eventually causing death.

Overheating must be avoided during heartworm treatment and recovery, and exercise restriction is necessary to minimize cardiopulmonary complications. Research has documented a direct correlation between the pet's activity level and the severity of heartworm disease, according to the AHS.

If a pet tests positive for heartworms, discuss treatment options with your veterinarian. If you foster or consider adopting a heartworm-positive dog or cat, discuss care and treatment with the agency representatives. Pets in foster care receive all veterinarian treatment free from their shelter clinic until they are adopted.

Pets with heartworm disease that receive proper veterinarian treatment and care can recover and live normal lives with low chances of any long-term effects, according to the U.S. Food & Drug Administration Center for Veterinary Medicine (FDA) and the AHS. Heartworm disease is not contagious between pets.

Current guidelines from the AHS also recommend that using an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered mosquito repellent can increase protection from heartworms by repelling mosquitoes. Additionally, pet owners should remove any standing water to eliminate mosquito breeding

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43 ...

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sites and restrict outdoor walks to daylight hours, avoiding prime mosquito feeding periods.

There is no FDA-approved treatment for killing adult heartworms in cats or pet ferrets, but heartworm prevention medication treatment is available. Pet owners should consult their veterinarian regarding the best options for these pets.

Although cats are susceptible to heartworm disease, they naturally resist infection, unlike dogs. However, because of complications with diagnosing and treating heartworm infection in cats and ferrets, misdiagnosis or failure to diagnose is common.

Due to their smaller size and other factors, cats can become acutely ill even from a single-worm infection. They may never show any clinical signs of heartworm disease, and even a small number of heartworms can cause severe disease and are potentially life-threatening.

The FDA warns pet owners that heartworm prevention medications require a veterinarian's prescription. Internet sites or stores that sell these medications without a prescription are not legitimate sources for heartworm prevention medication. They could be selling dangerous products with toxic ingredients of unknown origin that could harm pets.

At a pet's annual veterinarian check-up and vaccination visit, there should always be a yearly heartworm blood test done on all dogs seven months and older. Annual testing ensures that any infection is detected and treatment can begin to minimize harm to the pet. If the pet is negative for heartworms, the vet will provide the prescription for monthly prevention medication.

Experts remind pet owners that no drug is 100% effective and even one missed monthly dosage could result in an infection, especially for pets living in heartworm-hotspot, Florida. The sunshine state is ground zero for heartworm disease that has reached epidemic-confirmed case rates throughout the warm, temperate Southeastern U.S. Unfortunately, some isolated pockets of drug-resistant heartworms have also emerged here.

The AHS invests hundreds of thousands of dollars annually in heartworm research and provides updated recommendations. The society publishes free current guidelines for Canine and Feline Prevention, Diagnosis & Treatment of Heartworm Disease on its website.

A passion for pups, groomer welcomes furry friends

New stylist growing her own client base

Janill Compres styles all types of hair for the K-9 kind and loves it: straight, curly, long, short. She is a passionate pet stylist.

With 15 years' experience as a dog groomer, she comes from a long line of groomers, with three of her sisters running successful businesses of their own. With the support and guidance of her former boss-turned-mentor Jeannette Brunick — Compres is now also a small business owner and has launched her own grooming company: Jay's Spaw Grooming.

Jay's Spaw launched in February and will continue to share the space and work alongside Brunick at Brunick's long-established Riverside grooming salon, allowing Brunick to reduce her work week to three days a week — Wednesday through Friday — while Compres will work Tuesday through Saturday.

Compres works primarily with all breeds, both large and small and said Brunick's support has been invaluable during this new chapter of her professional life.

"It means a lot," she said. "Without her knowledge and experience, I couldn't do it. She's shown me a lot, she teaches me the tricks of the trade. She still educates me so that's great for my professional development. I think it's [the opportunity] the best thing that could've ever happened."

Working with dogs is her passion, she feels a connection with the animals she works with every day and takes the time needed to get to know each dog and make them feel comfortable in her care.

"I try to figure out what the dog likes, what it doesn't like, what is easier for them," she shared. "There are things we learn to manage the dog's temperament, it's always better that way."

Jeanette's Grooming has been part of the community for 17 years, located at 4228 St. Johns Avenue, just after the roundabout heading up to Roosevelt Blvd (US 17), from Herschel Street at the split. While Brunick is reducing the number of days a week she's at the salon, she will still maintain a regular clientele roster during the days she is at the salon.



Jeanette Brunick and Janill Compres will share the space at Brunick's Riverside grooming salon, working three and four days a week respectively.



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More than 800 wine enthusiasts, gourmets, philanthropists, friends and local celebrities joined two-time Super Bowl-winning Head Coach Tom Coughlin at Venue 841 on the Downtown Jacksonville Riverfront for the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund Wine Tasting Gala on March 2. Attendees had the opportunity to sample food from some of the area's top restaurants, enjoy a selection of hundreds of wines, and bid in an exclusive silent auction that included rare wine, sport memorabilia and travel packages. Proceeds benefited the Tom Coughlin Jay Fund, which provides financial, emotional and practical support for families tackling childhood cancer. To date, the foundation has provided more than \$17 million in financial assistance to more than 5,000 families.

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Mr. Humphrey Turns 102!



Vaughn A. Humphrey, called Sam by most, turned 102 on March 18. He is believed to be the oldest living veteran of WWII's Battle of the Bulge.

Inducted into the Army in 1942, Sam rose in rank and served overseas 1944-1946 under General Patton's command before being honorably discharged, having survived active combat. He helped his division release prisoners from two concentration camps, earning him a multitude of bars, stripes, and ribbons, even a Bronze Star Medal.

The Jacksonville Chapter of DAR threw a birthday party for Sam. They invited his local family members and the Jacksonville Chapter of SAR. A short program recapped Sam's military service, and he received two certificates and another medal. All attendees signed a birthday card while music of Sam's era played, including several patriotic numbers. Sam's favorite desserts were served—chocolate cake, chocolate ice cream, and chocolate eclairs. An invocation and benediction opened and closed the celebration.

At 102, Sam is still fully mobile, requiring only a cane for balance; takes only a few medications; remembers most everything; and reads his bible daily. "I attribute my longevity to my mother's genes," he said.

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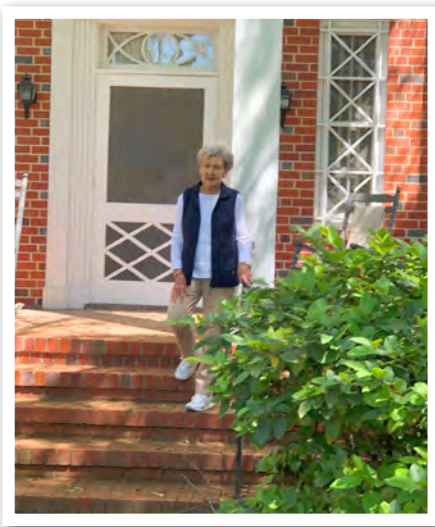
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THE WAY WE WERE

Mary Virginia Skinner Jones

BY MARY WANSER
Resident Community News

Mary Virginia Skinner Jones came into the world at St. Vincent's Hospital in May 1928 as the youngest child and only girl of Chester and Virginia Skinner, natives of Georgetown, South Carolina. Four years later, her father founded Meadowbrook Farms Dairy in San Jose Forest.



Mary Virginia Skinner Jones in 2022 at her childhood home on Meadowbrook Farms

The family home sat adjacent to the dairy, and so it was on that land that Mary Virginia, a tomboy, shared the adventures of farm life with her two older brothers, Chester and Brightman, the middle names they were referred by. She loved growing up in the country, where she always felt safe. Playing in the haybarn, riding the horses used for herding cows, roller-skating on the milking floor, and floating in wooden washtubs down Christopher Creek were among the simple pleasures the three enjoyed while their mom welcomed folks through the back kitchen door to share her home cooking, as these were the days of the Great Depression.

At 13, while sitting with her family in their study and listening to a sporting event on the radio after Sunday service at Riverside Park Methodist Church, Mary Virginia heard the interrupting news announcement that Pearl Harbor had been bombed. Soon after, Chester and Brightman entered the military, and high school girls started dating the Navy men training in Jacksonville.

Mary Virginia's early schooldays were spent at South Jacksonville Grammar School, now The Lofts San Marco. Her parents had intended for her to attend Bartram School for Girls afterwards, but Mary Virginia persuaded them that co-ed Landon High would suit her better. She joined the Lionette drill team and the cheer squad, finding it great fun. Often, her cheer friends would drive over the red bricks of Old St. Augustine Road to practice in the Skinners' front yard. They usually performed locally at what was then called Fairfield Stadium, but once, they cheered at the Miami Orange Bowl.

By 14, Mary Virginia was working in the family business, driving a tractor to bring cornstalks from the field to the silo so they could be used as fodder. At the end of the week, she enjoyed standing in line with the other workers to collect her paycheck. Sometimes, Mary Virginia would hunt on that land with her dad. One day, she killed two turkeys with a single shot.

At 16, with both brothers off to college, Mary Virginia gained use of Little Henry, the family's black Model A Ford. It had four doors and plenty of room for transporting her friends to San Marco Theatre for a movie, to the drug store next door for sodas and snacks, or the lanes nearby for bowling. Though Mary Virginia considered herself somewhat shy, by senior year in 1945, she was so popular that she won the Best All Around trophy and had been elected president of Senior Girls.

With psychology as a major and sociology as a minor, Mary Virginia completed college at Agnes Scott in Atlanta, Georgia. Upon returning home, she taught third grade for a short while at what was then duPont Elementary School. In January 1952, at the same Methodist church she would attend with her family, she married Mac Jones, whom she had met on a blind date.

The newlyweds moved to Elizabeth City, North Carolina, where Mac was stationed as a midshipman. While there, their first child, Malcolm, was born. The family of three moved back to Jacksonville, and Mac joined his father at Graham-Jones Paper Co. near Myrtle Avenue and Logan Street. They soon became a family of four when their second son, Ned, was born, and then five with the birth of Ginny.

Mary Virginia raised her three children in the same San Jose area where she and her two brothers had grown up. As a family, they were active members of Southside Methodist Church. Once her youngest had entered school, Mary Virginia picked up a tennis racket and has been a member of San Jose Country Club's team ever since. She'd be on the court whenever she wasn't serving in one school leadership role or another.

Just as she used to cheer for Landon's team in years prior, Mary Virginia would cheer for Malcolm on the football field, Ned in the pool, and Ginny on the volleyball court. All three had inherited her love of sports. She'd even feed honey to Ned's swim team at meets, whatever it took to support her children and their activities, whether locally through



Mary Virginia Skinner Jones on hunting day, circa 1940



The Skinner Family, 1940s: Charles Brightman, Virginia Brightman, Arthur Chester, Arthur Chester Jr., Mary Virginia

elementary and high school, or out of state for championship events at their respective universities, where she later established endowment funds in their names.

Now, at 94, Mary Virginia retains her love of sports and fun. She's still a Gator fan and has plenty of paraphernalia to prove it. She still joins her tennis team for Thursday lunches when she's not able to play, and she would never think to boast that none but she had one time dined with Virginia Wade on Wade's English estate. She's part of a two-table bridge club with a group of lifelong friends, including Nancy Mahon and Nancy Edwards.

Mary Virginia still travels, too, and can be packed in five minutes, just as Mac had always joked. She says that the destination doesn't matter. Sometimes, it's to their home in Cashiers, North Carolina. Sometimes, it's shopping in Atlanta, Georgia. Sometimes, it's to Ginny's in Tampa. Soon, she'll be traveling to the graduation of one of her five grandchildren in Birmingham, Alabama. In earlier days, she had sailed on the QE2 to Europe and flown to Japan.

For many years, Mary Virginia had volunteered as a Pink Lady at St. Luke's Hospital and served on the board of the Y.W.C.A. She supports Seamark Ranch, The Bolles School and the Jacksonville Symphony, too, believing that every city should have one. She holds membership in the Watsonia and Hibiscus Garden Circles of the Garden Club of Jacksonville.

Though in her modesty Mary Virginia usually prefers her generosity be concealed, her lineage is woven into the fabric of the city. Portions of the thousands of acres of land that her father had owned hold today's St. Johns Town Center, Seven Pines, and the University of North Florida (UNF) — making the Skinners instrumental in Jacksonville's history and particularly that of the school, as Mary Virginia and her brothers donated the land for UNF's original campus and subsequent expansion. She

has enjoyed seeing Jacksonville grow into the city it is today.

Since Mac died in 2019, Mary Virginia has sold their San Jose Forest home and purchased an Epping Forest townhouse, which she had renovated. She described her new neighbors as kind and sweet. She introduced herself to

them by hosting a cocktail party for everyone on the street. She walks through the neighborhood daily, visits the mansion for a glass of wine occasionally, eats well always, works out with a trainer regularly and drives herself wherever she needs to go.

Mary Virginia has always loved fulfilling the role of hostess and cooking for her close friends, whom she chooses wisely, as well as her large family, which now includes eight great-grandchildren. With the approach of her 95th birthday in May, she is planning a luncheon for 50 girlfriends and a gathering for family at her home in Atlantic Beach.



The Skinners: Mary Virginia, Chester, and Brightman



Landon High School, 1945.
Mary Virginia Skinner Jones is 3rd from right, 7th from left

IN MEMORIAM

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Samir Boulos Salem

FEBRUARY 7, 1951 – MARCH 9, 2023

BY PEGGY HARRELL JENNINGS
Resident Community News



COMMUNITY! The dictionary has a lengthy definition of community which includes fellowship and commonality, but the best definition is summed up as: SAM SALEM and WHITEWAY DELI. Since 1975 after taking over his dad's business in Riverside, Sam and Hanan Salem with his sister Anne and his mother, have welcomed generations of people from all over Jacksonville to enjoy the sandwiches and camaraderie of the family-owned gathering place. Known far and wide for the "best tabouli on earth," and the friendliest faces, Whiteway was a home away from home for several generations. On his retirement in 2016 Sam stated in his Letter to Whiteway friends: "Three things make Whiteway special: the familiarity, the comradery and the food. People call Whiteway an institution. I don't see it that way. Our customers are the real institution."

PHOTOGRAPHS! Over 70,000 photos of customers and family were displayed on the walls, posters and in albums. Stuart Boline said, "These photos reflect Sam's love of people and his great spirit. Sam touched so many lives and always beamed a smile to all he knew and those he just met." Dr. George Trotter remarked, "Sam was so dapper and pleasant. He and his family are wonderful people. We joked about the photos. I always said, "NO. I'm on the witness protection program."

Sam Salem was born in Ramallah, Palestine and immigrated to the U.S. in 1957, grew up in Riverside and graduated from Robert E. Lee High School in 1969. Besides helping his father

after school at the deli, he played basketball and baseball at Willowbranch Park with his brother Charles and friend Billy Finch. Billy recalls going into the Salem's store 60 years ago to buy comic books and an RC Cola. He said, "I walked from our house on Forbes Street to their house on Green Street and Mr. Salem would drive Charlie, Sammy and me to John Gorrie and then take Anne to Lee. Sammy was always 'the little brother.' We played ball all over the neighborhood. My dad would stand at the deli counter and talk to Mr. Salem for hours." Cousin Louis Ballantyne wrote in a remembrance that he enjoyed courtside chats at Boone Park while watching Ryan, Paul or Hanan play tennis. "Sam's favorite topics were The BOSS, Daytona 500, cycling and of course, family." Pat Hazouri, a high school friend, remembers that Sam loved fast cars and scooted around in his Rambler. (Later on, he advanced to a Porsche.)

On a trip to Buffalo, New York to visit relatives Sam met his beautiful bride-to-be Hanan. She told of how they dated long-distance for about a year. "I graduated from high school in June and got married July 26, 1975, then moved to Jacksonville. Eventually my parents followed me here. We have an extended family, and our customers were our family."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47 ...

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MEMORIES: There is an outpouring of stories and love for Sam and his family on social media and the Legacy website all noting his generosity and kindness. The Salems have three children — Amanda Salem Mackoul, Ryan, and Paul (Jamie.) True to form Sammy and Hanan (called Cedo and Tata — Arabic for grandfather and grandmother) posted photos of their grandchildren — Jackson and Alden Salem and Olivia and Frank Mackoul on social media at every opportunity — jumping on trampolines, getting awards, acting and singing in productions, swimming, playing basketball, at the beach, the zoo, pretend sword fighting at Riverside Park and Sam riding bicycles with the kids. Each photo is a testimony to love and family devotion. When Frank was born Sam remarked in a post “another joy in my life.”

Bicycling as well as tennis was a lifelong passion for this exuberant man. Riding buddy and friend Tony Nasrallah explained that they started out at St. Mark’s Episcopal Church at 6:30 am twice a week and traveled 10 or 12 miles through Ortega Forest and back. The men have a long history as Nasrallah’s grandfather and uncles developed the Nasrallah building which is Whiteway Corner. Tony reminisced about skipping school at lunch time and hiding out in the back room at Whiteway to eat.

THE BACK ROOM: The gathering place for reunions, planning sessions, including meetings for the Jacksonville Artists Guild, board meetings (as well as a hideout for errant schoolboys.) Jim Love held his monthly business sessions at Whiteway. Daisy Miller Davidson recalls family meetings in the back room. Called River Club West, Whiteway was the gathering place for the “high rollers, the Big Shots and the everyday Joes.” Davidson said, “The regulars

— prominent men in the community — sat at the center table and talked. You could get all the local news just by listening. All the critical moments of my life have been accompanied by a sandwich from Whiteway. Every day while a student at Riverside Baptist Day School I ate a sandwich from Whiteway (Sam was so handsome — all of the girls had a crush on him); we got food for picnics, for football games, every occasion. Sam always knew what you wanted, remembered everything. The first place I went after my engagement was to Whiteway. Of course, Sammy took a photo. While recovering from a car wreck and hobbling around on crutches I’d go in the back door and eat in the kitchen to avoid the crowd. His mother would be in the back chopping parsley for the tabouli. I’ve walked in, no wallet, he’d say pay me later. You were fed in so many ways. Not just physically but spiritually. Sam and Hanan and Sam’s sister Anne were the heart of everything.”

THE SANDWICHES: Hanan said the first named sandwich was “The Amanda Special” named after their daughter. Then there was “The Anne Beard Special.” Shaara Swallow said she would drive all the way from the beach to get the “Dr. Long.” The Drs. McClow, Clark and Berk ordered 20 sandwiches a week for their meetings according to Becky Rood who worked for the group at St. Vincent’s. She said, “I always got the same thing Turkey, tabouli, and slaw on pita bread with the famous potato salad. The “Dr. Berk” sandwich. After Saturday rehearsals, dancers from Baggs Studio of Ballet chasséd down King Street to Whiteway for lunch. But it wasn’t just a sandwich. Sam’s compassion and kindness provided nourishment for the bodies and spirits of his Whiteway friends.



The Salem Family

THE LEGACY: Besides his personal contribution to people’s lives, Sam was a trustee for MOSH, active in St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Riverside Avondale Preservation Society, the Park and King Merchants Association, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, the Ramallah American Club and was supportive of the former Riverside Arts Festival. Cookie Davis remarked, “He believed in his community and supported it.”

Sam’s service, with several hundred attendees, was held at St. George Antiochian Orthodox

Church with the Very Reverend Father Kamil Al — Rahil officiating and daughter Amanda delivering the moving eulogy. He is survived by his siblings Lily, Anne, Charles (Sharon) and his wife, children and grandchildren.

Sam fed Jacksonville with wonderful food, his smiling face, his humor and stories that made you smile. A friend commented that he hoped to touch as many people’s lives in a positive way as Sam did.” Gordon Terry stated, “He left this world a little better with a life well lived.”



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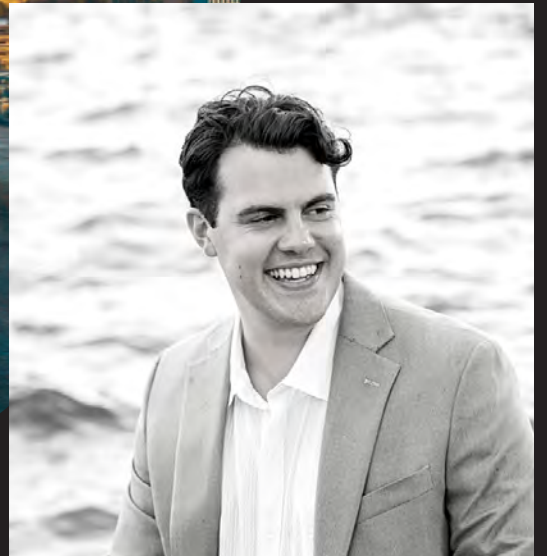
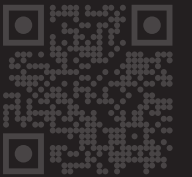
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