



Jimmy Orth, Lisa Rinaman, Marty Jones

Resident



COMMUNITY NEWS

RIVERSIDE | AVONDALE | ORTEGA | MURRAY HILL



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RESIDENTNEWS.NET

MARCH 2023, VOL. 16, ISSUE 03

NOTES FOR NATURE

The St. Johns Riverkeeper and Jacksonville University's Marine Science Research Institute hosted a free concert last month as part of the Great Florida Riverway Reunion on Saturday, Feb. 4.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 29



Susan Towler, Kristi Aiello and Huson Gilberstadt

'EXCEPTIONAL BY ANY MEASURE'

Volunteers in Medicine honored seven women at its annual Women with Heart Luncheon, which took place on Feb. 1 at the Florida Blue Convention Center.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 24



CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF STUDENTS

In honor of its 100 years, Ortega Elementary is hosting "100 Years of Exhibiting our Knowledge" on March 30, from 6 to 8 p.m. Open to the public, and coinciding with its annual Museum Night Exhibits, the evening will also feature student performances and offer refreshments, all in celebration of this milestone anniversary.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 36

VOTER INFORMATION

With Election Day coming up on March 21, The Resident has provided a rundown of what voters need to know, from who's running in which races to when and where voters can cast their ballots.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 6

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FUN & FLAIR IS ALWAYS IN FASHION

Father and North Florida School of Special Education (NFSSE) Board President Bert Brown hit the catwalk in with son Ben in fashion from Dillard's at NFSSE's 11th annual Heart of the Runway fashion show. The fashion show and luncheon took place on Tuesday, Feb. 14 at the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 12



Sean and Heather Joyce with Kellee Wip and Clint Miller

Huge success for Big Red Ball

More than 400 guests attended Bishop Kenny High School's (BKHS) inaugural Big Red Ball, making it a smashing success for the school. The evening included dinner, dancing, a live auction and more.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 35



John Mills Architect, RAP Executive Director, Shannon Blankenship, Angela Schifanella and Nathan Miller, Miller Contracting Inc.

A RAP-UP OF AWARDS

Riverside Avondale annual community awards

Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) distributed awards in categories at its annual meeting and awards ceremony the evening of Thursday, Feb. 16. The event was held at Riverside Church at the corner of Park and King streets.

SEE MORE ON PAGE 18



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Making the Case for Cumber for Mayor

In my nearly two decades of living in Jacksonville and working with elected officials as a past Chairman of the Jacksonville Aviation Authority, in the legal community as a member of the Jacksonville Bar Association Board of Governors, and in the business community as a small business owner, I have never been as excited as I am right now to vote for such an accomplished and well-rounded candidate for Mayor of Jacksonville.

Councilmember LeAnna Gutierrez Cumber checks every box imaginable (and more) for the ideal candidate to be our next Mayor. First, she has outstanding academic credentials – including earning her law degree from one of the world's top law schools. She served as a public school teacher, labored on some of the most complex civil cases at one of the leading international law firms, and gained substantial transportation policy experience working at the United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) under President George W. Bush, and she serves us admirably on the Jacksonville City Council. What excites me most about the prospect of Councilmember Cumber as our next Mayor is her business experience and the corresponding vision she has for Jacksonville. As a fellow small business owner, I know she has personal knowledge of the daily challenges all business owners face. Further, she has unbelievably deep relationships with

some of the nation's most influential business leaders who are ready to invest in Jacksonville. She is aware of the barriers to investing in our city (especially unduly burdensome taxes) and will begin eliminating them on her first day in office. I am excited about the transformation our city will make under her leadership.

In addition to knowing and working with Councilmember Cumber for over a decade, I have similar experience working with the other candidates vying to be our next Mayor – especially Daniel Davis. A vote for Mr. Davis would be a grave error. In almost a quarter century of running for office I am unaware of any meaningful accomplishment or any articulable vision he has for our city. In 2016, I traveled with the Jacksonville Aviation Authority, the Jacksonville Chamber, and Haskell Corporation to the Farnborough, England International Air Show. This is a multi-day International Aerospace Conference and Exhibition. Our Jacksonville Delegation, including Daniel Davis, sat through countless business development meetings with executives from Embraer, Lockheed Martin, and many, many other aerospace firms we were looking to recruit and attract to Cecil Airport. I was disappointed by what I perceived as his lack of interest and contribution to these meetings. It is no wonder why so many CEOs of companies headquartered in Jacksonville are personally

supporting Councilmember Cumber.

The time is now for Jacksonville to vote for competence – and not for someone who has been a long-time friend. We have made this mistake often and have yet to fulfill our potential as a result. We now have the chance to vote for Councilmember Cumber who has sterling credentials and experience. After her first term on the City Council, she is known for her legislative achievements, constituent service, and passion for women & children's issues. She demonstrated the courage to pass one of the nation's most comprehensive sex trafficking bills, and sounded the alarm on our abhorrent 47% reading scores in our Duval County Public Schools while the other leading candidates in this race sat in silence.

Please join me in supporting Councilmember LeAnna Gutierrez Cumber for our next Mayor of Jacksonville. She's the unmistakable conservative choice who will finally help our great city maximize our natural resources and competitive advantages.

Patrick Kilbane, Jacksonville

*Past Chairman,
Jacksonville Aviation Board of Directors*

*Commissioner,
Fourth Judicial Circuit Nominating Commission*

Why Jacksonville Needs Mayor LeAnna Cumber

As a longtime resident, mother, conservative activist and fundraiser in Florida, its imperative voters unite their support behind Councilwoman LeAnna Cumber for mayor.

LeAnna is smart, a mother, former schoolteacher, business owner and attorney who can navigate a successful vision for Jacksonville from businesses down to the countless improvements our city needs.

As Einstein once stated: "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result." We have watched political insanity at City Hall for 8 years with virtually no benefit to the community.

This mayoral primary boils down to this: It's us against them, The Sandlot Team (the taxpayers) VS. The Establishment (\$ cronyism).

Crime is up, loud mufflers and drag racing abound, blight and trash are everywhere, panhandlers are at every corner, median or intersection, the homeless have taken over downtown and San Marco, and so called "massage" parlors and gangs have proliferated in our neighborhoods. It seems that nobody cares. Why the indifference? It is BECAUSE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT, they cannot be bothered. By establishment I mean, the current mayoral administration and those in the council who work in tandem with their self-serving agenda. The puppeteer with strings to many office holders and councilmen is the mayor's political consultant, (in case you were wondering) and he is Daniel Davis's campaign manager for mayor -Tim Baker. Baker was also named as a "central figure" in the failed plot to sell the JEA.

Mayor Curry is supporting Daniel Davis. If you like being on the receiving end of cronyism and all your new taxes, that's what you'll get more of.

If you liked doubling the gas tax for "infrastructure-" (you can't make this up), they are throwing \$260 million of taxpayer's money at the Riderless

Express to nowhere. Think of how our money could be spent ... more police officers, repair the roads, create new parks, replenish the trees throughout our city, maybe a homeless center with job training.

This is not Bedford Falls anymore, it has become Pottersville but we can turn it around. There is work to be done to restore the beauty and unique character of Jacksonville and the St John's River.

A resolute leader is needed to steer the school board to focus on educating students, i.e.- reading, writing and arithmetic. We must compensate teacher's salaries equally at public and classical charter schools; pay higher salaries to those who have 4 yr. college degrees and are tenured. These children are our future leaders- virtue, excellence and experience matters.

A mayor's job is to focus on the needs of the entire city, not a monopoly of a few businessmen, lobbyists and corrupt consultants who benefit fiscally at taxpayer's expense, more often to the detriment of our community.

This network of elites must be stopped, as there is no attack they won't launch, no matter how dishonest, if someone becomes an obstacle to their agenda.

Other cities are thriving with sensible development and beautiful park systems. We can do this! The city of Jacksonville is a gem, but City Hall cannot run on autopilot with compromised leadership. Something is systematically wrong with Jacksonville and it has to stop.

Voters must take back the fort and send a strong message - enough is enough. LeAnna Cumber is the mayor Jacksonville needs now. Let's do it.

Nancy Peek McGowan

*DeSantis for Governor
State Finance Team 2018 and 2022*

*"Women for DeSantis"
State Chairman 2018*

*Ron DeSantis For Congress
State Finance Co-Chair 2011-2012*

Follow the leader with ethics, judgement and character

It is past time to become informed and push back against the status quo smoldering at Jacksonville City Hall. In fact, it's time to imagine a dynamic future for all - not just a select group of connected individuals.

With citizens still reeling from the unresolved JEA scandal, four recent tax hikes, escalating crime and families burdened by a public school system that has been struggling for decades, we must have a change.

Can Jacksonville finally compete regionally and nationally, provide safety for all families and create true partnerships with our vibrant business, military and educational communities for the benefit of all?

Yes.

With a dynamic mayor, we can finally combine our unparalleled natural and business resources, geographic location and the untapped potential of every citizen to excel and live safely.

That's why I am proud to support LeAnna Cumber for Jacksonville mayor.

LeAnna is an ethical City leader. She is a successful business owner, attorney, and former teacher who will be the mayor to provide the leadership and vision to finally achieve what candidates and elected officials have opined about for decades while serving up mediocrity.

Get to know LeAnna Cumber. It's time to become informed. Her vision is compelling and achievable. Her passion for Jacksonville is infectious.

I am convinced that she has the tenacity, experience, work ethic and proven conservative track record on the Council to achieve success and safety for families and businesses. I'm proud to support her.

Cindy Graves

*Gubernatorial Appointee
2018 to 2022*

*Past Chairman of the
Duval County Republican Party*

*Past President of the Florida,
Federation of Republican Women*

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REAL ESTATE



- Mar. 2-4 | Jax Science Festival | FSCJ & Seawalk Pavilion
- Mar. 3-5 | Concours d'Elegance | Ritz Amelia Island
- Mar. 3-5 | Spring Home & Patio Show | Prime Osborn
- Mar. 4 | GATE River Run | Sports Complex
- Mar. 7-12 | The Players | TPC Sawgrass
- Mar. 11-12 | Arts & Crafts Festival | St. Augustine Beach
- Mar. 19 | Jax Spring Fest | Riverside Arts Market
- Mar. 25-26 | Lions Seafood Festival | St. Augustine
- Mar. 25-26 | Tough Mudder Mud Run | Otis Rd
- Mar. 31-Apr. 1 | Springing the Blues | Seawalk Pavilion
- Apr. 4 | Jumbo Shrimp Home Opener v. Durham Bulls | 121 Financial Park
- Apr. 6 | Jax River Jams Kickoff | Downtown
- Apr. 8-9 | Mandarin Art Festival | Mandarin Community Club
- Apr. 14-15 | Think Bold Festival | Hyatt Regency Downtown
- Apr. 14-15 | Disco Inferno | Jacksonville Symphony
- Apr. 15-16 | RAP Home Tour | Riverside-Avondale
- Apr. 22 | Taco & Margarita Festival | TIAA Bank Field
- Apr. 27-28 | Murray Bros Caddyshack Charity Golf | WGV
- Apr. 30 | The Taste of St Augustine | St. Augustine Amphitheatre

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30						



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FDOT hosts final public meeting for proposed I-95 improvements from I-10 to Beaver Street

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) hosted its final public hearing for the I-95 Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Study from I-10 to Beaver Street on Feb. 2.

A kick-off meeting was first held last August to introduce the study and its proposed improvements along this corridor of the I-95 to the public and open channels for public feedback. In September, The Resident reported the “study presented ‘options to improve safety, capacity, and traffic operations on I-95’ including adding two 12-foot lanes in each direction of the interstate and deck replacement and rehabilitation of the Myrtle Avenue Bridge. Additional options include ‘intersection and roadway improvements at Church Street, Beaver Street, and West Union Street [and] potential changes in access to and from I-95 ramp terminal.’”

Following this kick-off meeting — which was a hybrid in-person and virtual meeting — FDOT revisited the proposed improvements along with the feedback provided by the community.

FDOT presented an updated version of the PD&E Study at the February meeting to reflect changes made since receiving public input.

“Notably, proposed improvements that were not included during the kick-off meeting include improvements on Park Street and Forest Street,” wrote FDOT Community Outreach Manager Hampton Ray in an e-mail. “Additionally, the reconfiguration of the Forest Street and Margaret Street intersection to a roundabout is being considered as part of this project.”

According to the February meeting, the Park Street improvements include “adding a raised median along Park Street between Edison Avenue and Forest Street, to improve traffic operations and safety” and reducing it “to one lane in the southbound direction between Roselle Street and Forest Street, to accommodate the addition of left turn lanes in the north direction.”

In addition to the proposed roundabout, the new improvements for Forest Street also include “a

channelized right turn from Myrtle Avenue onto Forest Street.”

In his email, Ray added that “the funding is not yet in place” for these additions to the PD&E Study.

The Rail Yard District is one quadrant of Jacksonville impacted by the study’s proposed changes to access to and from I-95 and I-10, two major interstates both for Jacksonville and the nation at large. The Rail Yard District Business Council Immediate Past President Jeff Edwards said the council has maintained a working relationship with FDOT, providing input on how any proposed changes could impact the Rail Yard District.

“Overall we appreciate that FDOT has responded well, positively, from members of the Rail Yard Business District Council, [but] there’s still some concerns,” he said.

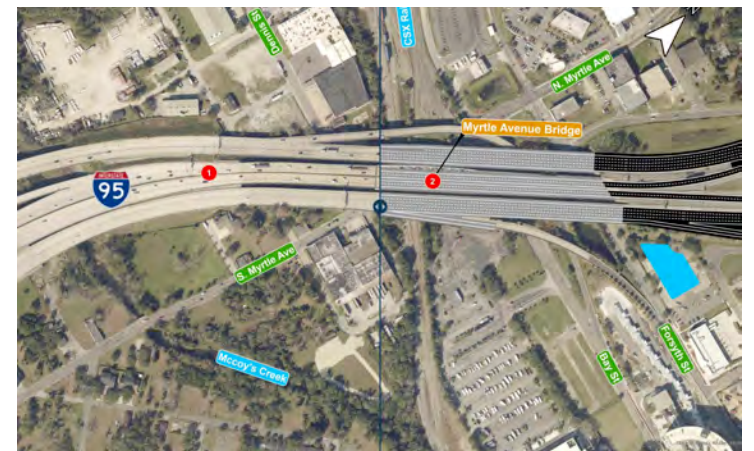
“The Rail Yard District has a total, by our count, of I believe six exits from I-95 and I-10 — four from I-95 and two from I-10 — and we think the strength in part of the geographic area that makes up the Rail Yard District is the access from those two interstates coming together,” he said. “...We want to be able to tap into that vein of traffic; that’s a major economic asset for the Rail Yard District as well as for downtown and other areas in the urban core, but we’re advocating from our viewpoint for the Rail Yard District. So it’s very important that we preserve good access to the interstate on and off for the future economic development of the Rail Yard District.”

Public comments on this project could be submitted until Feb. 16.

Once all public comments are collected and considered, “a decision will be made and the final PD&E document will be sent to the Florida Department of Transportation Office of Environmental Management, which...has approval authority on this project granting location and design concept acceptance.”

Before construction can begin, FDOT must complete right-of-way acquisition — the process of procuring any necessary real estate — which is estimated to cost \$2.6 million and is expected to begin next year. The project itself is currently expected to cost \$194 million and wouldn’t begin until 2026, although all current estimates and timelines are subject to change.

This PD&E study is expected to wrap up early this year before the project moves on to its next stages.



The proposed improvements to the Myrtle Avenue Bridge include adding two lanes in each direction on the Myrtle Avenue Bridge, replacing the deck and rehabilitating the bridge itself.



GRAPHICS COURTESY OF FDOT

The proposed improvements to Forest Street and access changes to Park Street are new additions to the PD&E Study following public input. These proposed changes are not currently funded.

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Al before weight loss surgery.

Get down to your fighting weight.

After two decades of trying to lose weight, Al is finally winning the fight.

“I tried every diet and exercise program out there,” said Al. “I felt defeated.”

His life changed after seeing a friend who had weight loss surgery. “He had been just as heavy as I was, and he looked like a different person,” he said.


Al decided it was time to go to Baptist Center for Bariatric Surgery, where he had a sleeve gastrectomy, which removes part of the stomach to limit food intake.

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.

Now Al’s no longer a heavy weight, but he’s definitely a champion.

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VOTER INFORMATION

What to know

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
RESIDENT COMMUNITY NEWS

Election Day for the Duval Unitary First Election is coming up on March 21.

By now, voters impacted by the new court-ordered Jacksonville City Council District map — approximately 200,000 voters, according to the Duval County Supervisor of Election's (SOE) office — should have received their new voter information card displaying their updated district and designated polling precinct.

Early voting for the March 21 election begins March 6 and runs until the 19th. Registered voters can visit any one of the 18 early voting sites to cast their ballots during that timeframe. These locations are open Monday - Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. A full list of the early voting sites can be found at www.duval elections.com under "Early Voting."

On the 21st, voters must visit their designated polling precinct to cast their votes.

Should a single candidate fail to obtain a majority vote in any race, the top two candidates with the most votes in that race will go on to a runoff election on May 16.

In preparation for the election, the SOE held a Logic and Accuracy Test, as mandated by Florida statute, on Friday, Feb. 24. During this test, election staff members displayed 19 voting tabulators in operation, chosen at random from each Jacksonville City Council District and one early voting site, to ensure "the machines are working properly and counting votes accurately." Four "high speed central count tabulators" were tested as well. Conducted before the Election Canvassing Board, the test was also open to the public and members of the media.

To view a full list of candidates for all city council districts and countywide seats, or for more information about voting sites and procedures, please visit www.duval elections.com. The following list was taken from the Duval County SOE "Qualified Candidate List," also available on the website.

Mayor:

- Omega Allen (NPA)
- LeAnna Gutierrez Cumber (REP)
- Daniel Davis (REP)
- Donna Deegan (DEM)
- Al Ferraro (REP)
- Audrey Gibson (DEM)
- Brian Griffin (WRI)
- Frank Keasler (REP)

Property Appraiser

- Danny Becton (REP)
- Jason Fischer (REP)
- Joyce Morgan (DEM)

Sheriff

- T.K. Waters (REP)*

Supervisor of Elections

- Jerry Holland (REP)*

Tax Collector

- Jim Overton (REP)*

City Council At-Large Group 1

- Terrance Freeman (REP)
- Eric Parker (LPF)

City Council At-Large Group 2

- Joshua Hicks (DEM)
- Ron Salem (REP)

City Council At-Large Group 3

- Nick Howland (REP)*

City Council At-Large Group 4

- Matt Carlucci (REP)*

City Council At-Large Group 5

- Reginald K. Blount (REP)
- Charles Garrison (DEM)
- Jack Meeks (NPA)
- Chris Miller (REP)
- Nahshon Nicks (DEM)
- Jerry "Tub" Rorabaugh (LPF)

Specific to The Resident readership are the elections for city council representatives in Districts 5, 7 and, in small part, 9. These are the candidates for these districts:

District 5

- Joe Carlucci (REP)
- Morgan Roberts (REP)

District 7

- Joseph Hogan (REP)
- Parrish King (NPA)
- Jimmy Peluso (DEM)
- John Philips (DEM)
- Kim Pryor (DEM)

District 9

- Shanna Carter (DEM)
- Tyrone Clark-Murray (DEM)
- Celestine Mills (DEM)
- Mike Muldoon (REP)
- TaNita S. Noisette-Woods (DEM)
- Kamren Stowers (DEM)

* These candidates are running unopposed in their respective races.

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ORTEGA RIVER
4570 ORTEGA ISLAND DR
6 BR · 5 FBA · 2 HB · 7,341 SQFT - \$2,700,000



PENDING
SAN JOSE
6740 EPPING FOREST WAY N #110 - \$1,175,000
3 BR · 3 BA · 2,189 sqft



MAGNOLIA PRESERVE
1056 W DORCHESTER DR - \$959,000
5 BR · 5 BA · 3,993 sqft



PARK LANE
1846 MARGARET ST, 13A - \$839,000
2 BR · 2 BA · 1,643 sqft



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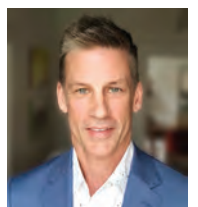
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TOGETHER WE CAN DO THIS!**

- *HONEST
- *TRANSPARENT
- *RESPONSIVE



Kim's PRYORities

You: The people make District 7 and Jacksonville extraordinary. Your priorities are my PRYORities. Tell me what you need and I will listen. I will be available and will fight for you...for US. Let's work together in a partnership.

Quality of Life: Improve Jacksonville's infrastructure including roadways, sidewalks, parks and pedestrian/bicycle safety.

Transparency: Government that works for you through Town Halls, an Open Door Policy, being Responsive to calls/emails and no backroom deals. I will fight the Good 'Ol Boy network.

Neighborhood Preservation: Each District 7 neighborhood is unique. Let's build up the good things in our neighborhoods instead of tearing them down (literally & figuratively).

Bring LIFE to Downtown: When downtown is flourishing, the city is alive! Spur business/residential growth by improving walkability & utilizing public spaces to their full potential.

Paid by Kim Pryor, Democrat, for City Council District 7.



COLDWELL BANKER

VANGUARD REALTY

Avondale Office: 3610 St. Johns Avenue 904-394-2316



THIS IS HOME



Ed Akers
904-651-6676



Alan Aptheker
904-982-3950



Megan Baker
904-651-2006



Mariel Benn
703-473-8082



Nancy Pedrick Cusimano
904-728-0981



Erica Davis
904-219-0954



Diamond Deazle
954-654-2135



Sonia De Los Santos
954-439-5208



Wade Griffin
904-534-0969



Glenn Guiler
904-707-7712



Ethel Henry
904-477-6313



Tiffany Hebert
904-855-5495



Christina Jenkins
904-214-6865



Seth Kimball
904-270-0210



Tina Mattucci
904-710-3641



Allison Mead
904-678-7355



Tripp Newsom
904-234-6117



Rosemarie Reynolds
904-553-0015



Keith Sowin
904-314-4324



Robert Van Cleve
904-535-4420



4570 ORTEGA ISLAND DR - \$2,700,000
6 BR | 5 FULL BA | 2 HB | 7,341 SQFT
Listed By Wade Griffin | 904-534-0969



6740 EPPING FOREST WAY N #110 - \$1,175,000
3 BR | 3 BA | 2,189 SQFT
Listed By Wade Griffin | 904-534-0969



95575 BURNLEY RD - \$965,900
3 BR | 3 FULL BA | 1 HB | 2,833 SQFT
Listed By Edmund Akers | 904-651-6676



1056 W DORCHESTER DR - \$959,000
5 BR | 5 BA | 3,993 SQFT
Listed By Wade Griffin | 904-534-0969



1846 MARGARET ST 13A - \$839,000
2 BR | 2 BA | 1,643 SQFT
Listed By Wade Griffin | 904-534-0969



1661 RIVERSIDE AVE 301 - \$699,000
3 BR | 2 BA | 1,523 SQFT
Listed By Wade Griffin | 904-534-0969



2200 OCEAN DR S 6-F - \$590,000
2 BR | 2 BA | 1,168 SQFT
Listed By Seth Kimball | 904-270-0210



9743 INVENTION LN - \$549,998
4 BR | 2 FULL BA | 1 HB | 2,201 SQFT
Listed By Christina Jenkins | 904-214-6865



3072 VILLA VERA CT - \$549,000
3 BR | 2 BA | 1,886 SQFT
Listed By Darlene Mariel Benn | 703-473-8082



3066 VILLA VERA CT - \$549,000
3 BR | 2 BA | 1,886 SQFT
Listed By Darlene Mariel Benn | 703-473-8082



13165 NOTRE DAME LN - \$499,900
5 BR | 4 BA | 2,935 SQFT
Listed By Erica Davis | 904-219-0954



1011 CATHCART ST - \$339,500
4 BR | 3 BA | 2,147 SQFT
Listed By Erica Davis | 904-219-0954



10202 OLD KINGS RD - \$325,000
3 BR | 2 BA | 1,872 SQFT
Listed By Robert B Van Cleve | 904-535-4420



1285 WOODRUFF AVE - \$279,500
3 BR | 2 BA | 1,358 SQFT
Listed By Seth Kimball | 904-270-0210



2976 DELLWOOD AVE - \$275,000
3 BR | 2 BA | 1,315 SQFT
Listed By Alan Aptheker | 904-982-3950



3524 CORBY ST - \$269,000
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Community meeting held to determine future of two popular parks

Members of the local community got a taste of what's to come for two parks in the historic districts of Riverside and Avondale during a recent meeting held Feb. 21 at Riverside Presbyterian Church's Bittering Hall. City Council Representative Randy DeFoor welcomed attendees and introduced city consultants and staff affiliated with park improvements, design upgrades and engineering. The Duck Pond in Riverside Memorial Park and Willow Branch Creek Improvements in Willow Branch Park were on the docket; both were discussed at great length.

Each project will have a significant impact on the future of these area parks. The Duck Pond is in a different stage of the process from Willow Branch, as a design and engineering firm has already been selected for site work being considered. The Willow Branch project is weeks, potentially months, away from hiring an engineering firm to handle the construction, research and configurations to help its creek meander more naturally through the neighborhood. This will include taking stock of current trees, root beds, bulkhead needs and water controls necessary to avoid washouts and flooding.



A rendering of Concept 2 for the Riverside Memorial Duck Pond, as presented at the Feb. 21 meeting. Rendering and photos courtesy of City of Jacksonville.

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Historic image of families visiting the Riverside Memorial Duck Pond, dated circa 1898-1900.



Riverside Memorial Duck Pond, circa 1898-1900.



A historic example of what the Riverside Memorial Duck Pond looked like in the late 19th, early 20th centuries.

INPUT AND CRITIQUE ON DUCK POND

The first order of business was a presentation of the current situation at the Duck Pond, which has undergone many attempts at improving the cleanliness because of stagnation and fecal matter from birds that frequent the pond. The suggested changes and renderings caught the attention of locals, who hope that the history of the park is preserved as best it can be while plans are in motion.

"There were five water features back when [I was growing up here], I would love to see some sense of flow from one to the other," shared Wayne Wood, local historian and founder of Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP), while sharing critique of the renderings as shown in their current state.

Many in the room echoed Wood's desire to have flowing water between ponds, but according to Ruth Perry of GAI Consultants, the group that's been contracted to design the new features, it may not be as simple as it sounds. "We were afraid of losing space," she said, when asked about making several ponds mingle into one another, "...we want to be sure we don't infringe upon other shaded areas, tree canopies and existing amenities." The planners were cautious not to infringe upon other green spaces, but provided their reasons for using two ponds, where water can travel from one to the other. There will also be a lighted, island path crossing the pond for visitors to stroll. Ideas were also floated for irrigation and fountains, filtration to help ease the impact of fecal matter from local feathered residents that causes algal blooms as nitrogen levels rise in the Florida sunshine.

Perry mentioned limitations for space and when talking about historic precedent, she alluded to the fact that JEA built a structure in the park, hampering the ability to utilize some space that may have been part of a larger pond system at one point in time. Other items were discussed that were encouraging to those in the room, namely the removal of fencing around the pond and demolishing the concrete and sealed pond infrastructure in favor of a naturally sloping pond edge that

meanders down to the waterline. The banks would then take on a more natural slope down to the water table. Some insisted that an 'island' needs to be made available to migrating birds that roost seasonally in the park.

Both projects have Capital Improvement Project (CIP) funding and DeFoor is intent on seeing the improvements through, despite leaving office in the coming months when her tenure expires on council.

FIRM PRESENTS EARLY FINDINGS FOR WILLOW BRANCH PARK

The latter order of business were the proposed solutions and mitigation of flooding, abating erosion, careful and considerate removal of trees and other issues surrounding Willow Branch Creek. The current bulkheads made of concrete block and mortar are failing and lack natural appeal, which has left residents concerned about the best approach for this neighborhood tributary moving forward.

The main concern for residents in attendance was the consideration for the existing trees, leaving the AIDS Memorial mural intact on the bridge at Park Street and discussing whether the bridge at Oak Street that crosses the creek will remain — a favorite crossing for many seeking a thrill on the creek between Riverside Avenue and Park Street.

Chief Robin Smith of engineering firm, Half Associates, alongside Guillermo Simon, were on hand with their team to be sure they elaborated upon solutions, but answers were hard to come by due to the preliminary nature of the work. The conclusion was that it's too early to know who will execute the next phase; it is simply speculation until a firm is officially hired to do the work.

Plans for Riverside Memorial Park have not been finalized and remain in a design phase; Willow Branch Park awaits its next steps. Resident News will continue to share what it learns on both projects in the weeks and months ahead.

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‘Geography of opportunity:’

Jessie Ball duPont Fund and The Reinvestment Fund present
2022 Market Value Analysis

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Last month the Jessie Ball duPont Fund hosted a community event to discuss Jacksonville’s “housing ecosystem.” To do that, it welcomed Philadelphia-based The Reinvestment Fund to share its 2022 Market Value Analysis (MVA) for Jacksonville/Duval County.

An MVA, the presentation explained, is “a tool to help residents and policymakers identify and understand the elements of their local real estate markets...[With it,] public officials and private actors can more precisely target intervention strategies in weak markets and support sustainable growth in stronger markets.”

This is the third MVA The Reinvestment Fund has conducted for Jacksonville.

“We think this is incredibly valuable to understand the real dynamics of housing values here in the city,” said Jessie Ball duPont Fund President Mari Kuraishi.

The 2022 MVA analyzed and discussed a variety of datapoints for the Jacksonville housing market, from median sales prices and how those prices have changed since the previous two MVA’s to how homeownership, rentals, foreclosures and home vacancies have fluctuated in the years between past analyses.

It also identified and discussed “critical themes illuminated by” this year’s MVA.

One of these “critical themes,” noted The Reinvestment Fund President of Policy Solutions Ira Goldstein, is what he calls “the geography of opportunity.”

With the median annual household income in Jacksonville averaging around \$56,000, the MVA underscored the “narrow” areas in the city and county that are affordable for a typical household just meeting the threshold for that average income.

The MVA broke it down further by households earning 80% and 50% of the median household income, showing how the radius of the areas with affordable housing continued to constrict for households with lower incomes.

“We think that these different markets are not only about the housing markets but what they offer to people

in terms of access to schools and parks and rec centers and libraries and all the other things that go with space,” Goldstein explained. “If you make half of median income, your geography of opportunity is very, very constrained here.”

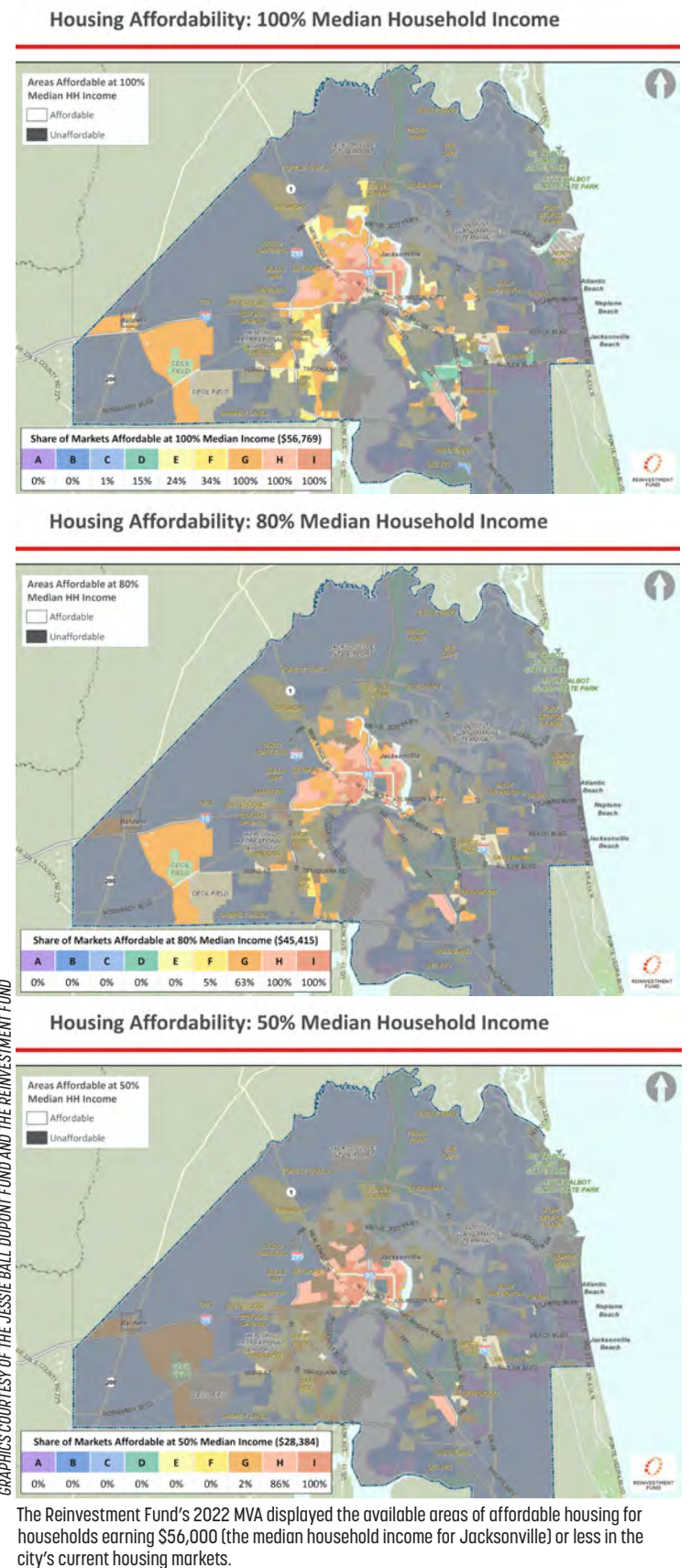
The MVA also pointed out that the “geography of opportunity” fluctuates based on race as well, with white residents earning 100% of the median income able to afford “most middle market areas” while Black and Hispanic residents with “typical incomes” have a “similarly constrained geography of opportunity.”

Following the MVA presentation, Jessie Ball duPont Fund Director of Impact Investing Chris Crothers discussed various ways “equitable access to housing” is being addressed in Jacksonville. He highlighted four programs and strategies that are currently underway or expected to begin this year, including the Jacksonville Community Land Trust, the proposed JAX Affordable Housing Fund, CHDO/CDC Capacity, led by The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida in partnership with LISC Jacksonville and heir’s property work, led by LISC Jacksonville in partnership with Three Rivers and supported by United Way of Northeast Florida.

Later, in an e-mail, Crothers expanded on the importance of the data provided by the MVA, adding that it “can direct policy interventions, as well as investment from the public, private and nonprofit sectors.”

“...This new MVA shows us that with the appreciating real estate market, there are fewer areas of town that are affordable to residents who have jobs as teachers, police officers, or construction workers,” he continued. “These are jobs that are close to Jacksonville’s median household income—and there are fewer places today where people making a median income can afford to buy or rent compared to three or seven years ago. If we do not act now, it means that many of our neighbors will have no choice but to either move farther out or spend more of their paycheck on housing, making them housing cost-burdened.”

February’s event was recorded and is available in its entirety for viewing on the Jessie Ball duPont Fund’s YouTube channel.





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A front row seat to the riverfront's future

City, DIA partners with local organizations for "Riverfront 2025: A Look Ahead"

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Jacksonville's Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) partnered with the city's Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services to host "Riverfront 2025: A Look Ahead" on Wednesday, Feb. 8.

According to a DIA press release, the free community event was held in collaboration with the Jessie Ball duPont Fund, Riverfront Parks Now and Build Up Downtown to inform residents about the progress of "destination parks and projects slated for development on the Northbank and Southbank of Downtown..."

These projects include Shipyards West, Artist Walk, RiversEdge and Riverfront Plaza.

Last month, The Resident reported on both Shipyards West Park and RiversEdge: According to The Resident, the DIA is expecting conceptual designs for Shipyards West Park, a 10-acre park that will sit along the Northbank between Catherine Street and Hogans Creek, sometime in the first quarter of this year. In another February article, The Resident reported that RiversEdge: Life on the St. Johns — across the St. Johns River along Jacksonville's Southbank — is roughly halfway through its infrastructural work.

"Downtown Jacksonville is on the brink of creating a connected network of public spaces that will add to our region's quality of life. Destination parks, public-private developments, and private developments all play a role in this effort," said Director of City of Jacksonville Department of Parks, Recreation and Community Services Daryl Joseph in the release. "Together with our collaborators at the Downtown Investment Authority, Build Up Downtown, the Jessie Ball duPont Fund and Riverfront Parks Now, we look forward to sharing updates with our most important stakeholders: Jacksonville's residents."

Plans dashed for Southbank apartment complex

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Jacksonville will have to wait longer than expected to see new construction start at 835 Museum Circle after the redevelopment agreement between Jacksonville's Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) and Miami-based developer Related Group was terminated earlier this year for the anticipated RD River City Brewery apartment development.

The City Council approved the plans for the development in July 2021. It was expected to feature an eight-story residential complex with 327 multi-family units, an attached parking garage and an on-site restaurant and bar with indoor and outdoor seating.

Demolition of the former River City Brewing Company took place last summer in preparation of the coming development, however this past January, the deal for the incoming apartment complex was cancelled.

In an e-mail summarizing the situation, DIA CEO Lori Boyer wrote, "...the developer, Related Development, LLC (Related), did not meet performance schedule deadlines in the contract and all extensions allowed under the contract had been provided. This terminates the City's obligations to pay incentives but does not alter the Developer's previous approvals of construction plans and they could proceed at any time."

"We're disappointed that this project didn't get under construction before interest rates increased

and inflation impacted construction costs, but ultimately it could be a win," Boyer added. "We may end up with a project that better complements the adjacent St. Johns River Park and our vision for a vibrant, walkable, and mixed-use Downtown."

The Related Group will work on a new design/proposal for the site, Boyer said, and the DIA anticipates receiving that this spring.

Boyer added that this delay will not impact the work currently underway at nearby Friendship Fountain or the St. Johns River Park. Work at the fountain is expected to wrap late spring, early summer this year.

The Related Group declined a request for an interview and/or comment.

“We’re disappointed that this project didn’t get under construction before interest rates increased and inflation impacted construction costs, but ultimately it could be a WIN We may end up with a project that BETTER complements the adjacent St. Johns River Park and our VISION for a VIBRANT, walkable, and mixed-use Downtown.”

- Lori Boyer, DIA CEO

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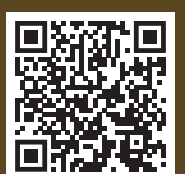
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Couture for a cause

NFSSE's Heart of the Runway

Fashion and fun were on full display at North Florida School of Special Education's (NFSSE) Heart of the Runway Luncheon and Fashion Show.

The 11th annual event was held at the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center on Tuesday, Feb. 14. It was emceed by News4Jax anchor Mary Baer and featured model Heather Crawford from First Coast News.

Models wore the couture fashion of Linda Cunningham by Dillard's.

According to a press release, the fashion show "is one of the ways that North Florida School of Special Education supports its mission of fostering each student's unique abilities revealing their highest potential within an engaged community."

NFSSE culinary team prepared the luncheon's meal, featuring fresh ingredients from Berry Good Farms, NFSSE's urban garden. Entertainment was also provided by NFSSE's theatre program, People Like Us.



Sheila Collier modeling a Linda Cunningham couture gown.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF NFSSE



Leslie Jones, Kathy Newton, Erin Skinner, Patty Campbell, Kim Skinner and Mary Virginia Jones



Paige Ray, Laine Silverfield, Ginny Dastie, Jeanie Lynch, Michelle Klimt and Carolyn Mikals



Susan Wingert, Cecelia Carmichael, Meghan Woods, Linda Cunningham, Gina Black and Jennifer Priek



Head of School, Sally Hazelip and Heart of the Runway Honorary Chair, Jennifer Mayo

Tabitha and Jim Furyk make surprise \$10,000 scholarship commitment to JAGA Trust



Jim and Tabitha Furyk, Richard Blackston and Dr. Justine Redding of Moore-Myers Children's Fund with Duke Butler III of JAGA/Northern PGA Chapter

With a sellout audience of 200-plus in attendance at Sawgrass Country Club, longtime Jacksonville-area residents Tabitha and Jim Furyk and other leaders of and contributors to the game were honored last night by the Northeast Florida golf community at the seventh Celebration of Golf Banquet.

The Furyks received the evening's most prestigious honor, the Deane Beman Award, in recognition of their varied and outstanding contributions to the welfare and wellbeing of less fortunate and in-need members of the Jacksonville community.

In a surprise development, the Furyks announced that the Jim and Tabitha Furyk Foundation would commit \$10,000 to the JAGA Charitable Trust, with the Trust selecting the Moore-Myers Children's Fund graduates who receive scholarship support from it over the next few years. Moore-Myers is a JAGA member organization that strives to transform young lives by reinforcing key core values and to develop exceptional character using the game of golf as the vehicle.

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MEET THE AGENT

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What do you love about Jacksonville?

I love that our city thrives on a sense of community. There are always events going on here, on every side of town. Whether it's a local market or pop-up, a festival in one of the many parks, a random Thursday night food truck in your neighborhood, an art show, a music show, etc.. I wouldn't be able to name all of the creative ventures that take place here in our lovely city, and I think it helps to make us all whole and happy!

What's your favorite part about being a Realtor?

Meeting new people is probably my favorite part of this career, but again, this list could go on as well. I am a people person and a lover of community and in this business, I get to meet more people and learn more about community issues and community building than I ever have in any other career. Every day I see myself getting more involved and paying more attention to how I can help.

Favorite Local Spots:

Restaurant Orsay and Southern Grounds in Avondale are always a good vibe and both have great menus. I also love walking my dog to Fishweir Park because we both always run into our besties. You just can't beat this neighborhood!

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The ninth annual Riverside Craft Beer Festival



Bret Sigoda and Madison Sisco



Patrick and Megan Broderick

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Beer lovers gathered beneath the Fuller Warren Bridge for the ninth annual Riverside Craft Beer Festival on Sunday, Feb. 26. More than 60 breweries across the state and the country participated in the festival and food trucks were onsite for bites. The Rotary Club of Riverside hosted this yearly fundraising event and proceeds will benefit Community Hospice and Palliative Care's Community PedsCare Program and the Riverside Rotary Foundation's charitable causes.



Alaina Porcellini, Filip Ivanov, Kayla Mackey with Liz and Paulo Koberle



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John's Agenda:



Equal Justice for ALL

As an award-winning civil rights attorney, **John believes that everyone deserves to be treated equally—regardless of race, zip code, or economic status.** Throughout his career, he has stood beside victims of violence and crime to deliver justice for Jacksonville families—including Jordan Davis and his parents, Congresswoman Lucy McBath and Ron Davis; Rashaud Fields and his family; and far too many other families that face tragedy due to violence. On the City Council, John will continue to stand up for those who are overlooked and underrepresented.



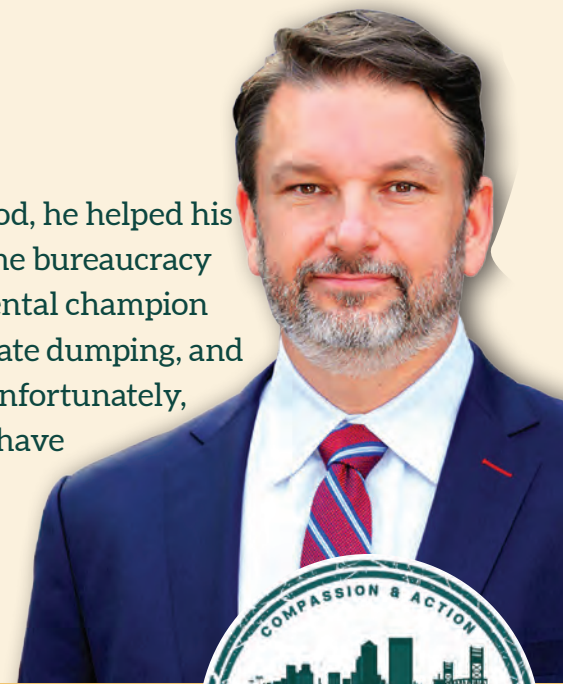
Making Our Communities Safer

We must work together to address the rising crime in Jacksonville. **No matter where you live, John knows you should feel safe going to the store, sending your kids to school, and going to church.** On the City Council, John will partner with the community to make the much-needed investments in our local public schools, provide good-paying jobs, make homes more affordable, and improve public safety by focusing on the root causes of crime.



Repairing Our Broken Infrastructure

John and his family lost their home to flooding during Hurricane Irma. Following the flood, he helped his neighbors with the FEMA process so they could get the help they needed and navigate the bureaucracy of the federal government during such a difficult time. John has worked with environmental champion Erin Brockovich and her partners on cleaning Florida's waterways, stopping toxic corporate dumping, and studying the aftereffects of pollution including cancer clusters and other health issues. Unfortunately, while the cost of your utility bill has gone up in the years since Irma, few improvements have been made that would prevent this from happening again. **On the City Council, John will push to improve our roads and aging infrastructure to reduce traffic congestion, strengthen our port, and prevent floods.** We cannot accept inaction on such a critical issue.



VOTE
John Phillips
for City Council District 7

ELECTION DAY IS TUESDAY, MARCH 21ST
EARLY VOTING BEGINS MARCH 6TH

Paid for by John Phillips, Democrat, for Jacksonville City Council District 7

Al Ferraro will put Families and Taxpayers First

When it comes to the Jacksonville mayoral candidates, Al Ferraro is set apart from the others.

- He is in his second term serving as the District 2 representative on City Council, but Ferraro is far from a career politician. He is a family man and small business owner whose mission to become mayor stems from a desire to make the community better and safer for everyone and to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used wisely.
- Ferraro seeks to burst the political bubbles that foster foolish spending – the kind of spending that continually ends up being a burden to and coming out of the pockets of taxpayers. If elected mayor, he will focus instead on investing taxpayer dollars in areas that help families thrive.
- “In Jacksonville, the taxpayer is never the number one priority. When things in our city fail or go wrong, the taxpayer has to take care of it. The taxpayer has to fix it,” he said. “The taxpayer getting the benefit is not a common result of most things that happen in our city, and that needs to change. As mayor, I would make that change.”
- Ferraro has consistently voted against (taxpayer funded) pay raises for City Council members, and he is the only two-term City Council member who never took a pay raise. Additionally, he voted against the gas tax and then voted to repeal it. He was the only mayoral candidate who voted against the Lot J Development, which would have cost the taxpayers \$230 million.
- He has been a strong voice for his constituents in District 2, establishing hundreds of acres of conservation land, creating a new overlay in his district to fight over-development, and being present and available for all.
- Some of the biggest areas of concern for Ferraro are public safety, core functions, preventing the sale of Jacksonville Electric Authority (JEA), preserving historical markers and statutes, and keeping men and boys out of women’s restrooms in schools and public buildings.
- Ferraro fought for JSO funding at the height of the Defund the Police Movement; he led the way in eliminating the crime-attracting internet cafes; and he proposed legislation to fight street solicitation when the citizens of Jacksonville said it made them feel unsafe.
- For the past year, Ferraro has routinely participated in ride-a-longs with the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office in some of the city’s most crime-ridden areas. A ride-along allows the participant to see the streets of Jacksonville from a police officer’s perspective to gain a greater understanding of what their job entails.
- “You also get to see the community’s perspective. I see how the community is afraid to talk because they fear retaliation from the criminals out there,” said Ferraro. “And it’s tough for the police officers to keep arresting these people when the jail is a revolving door and the criminals are continually being set free. I see that first hand and I see what damage it’s doing. As mayor, I would bring attention to that and make sure that the judges and state attorneys are doing their jobs, and that there is plenty of room in the jail.”
- Ferraro said he would add a minimum of 250 police officers to the Jacksonville Sheriff’s Office to keep up with the growing numbers of citizens in the city. He also wants to build public trust in the police and in elected officials.
- “You don’t build that trust by sitting behind a desk downtown. As mayor, I would be out there on the streets. I want the community to know they can reach out to me and trust me because I will be there,” Ferraro said. “They won’t have to fight to try to get a hold of me. They’ll see me out in the streets and they can come out and talk with me, tell me their issues, and build up this trust to where we can break this code of silence and people won’t be afraid to come forward and report the criminals.
- “It has worked in District 2. District 2 is the safest area in the city of Jacksonville because we have a program where we have community, along with police, that have eyes and ears on the street. I would continue this on a citywide level.”
- As the city continues to grow, the infrastructure is not keeping pace. New developments and businesses are being established at breakneck speed, while roads and drainage systems continue to remain clogged and fall deeper into disrepair.
- “Everybody has seen that roads and infrastructure have been on the back burner. We’ve got developments going in without real improvements to our streets. Some of our streets are to the point where they need not just to be resurfaced, they need to be widened and improved,” said Ferraro. “We also need to put new roads in because we have a lot of new neighborhoods coming in, putting our existing roads over capacity. Some of the measurements that we use in school capacity, road capacity and traffic capacity are outdated.”
- Another issue Ferraro pointed out is the discrepancy in drainage methods throughout the city. Some areas have drainage pipes that are under the road, allowing for easier drainage with minimal flooding. Other areas have swales and ditches that require a lot of maintenance.
- “As big as our city is, it’s very difficult to keep them clean on a regular basis, so as roads and neighborhoods go in, we need to seriously think about piping and infrastructure so we don’t have the flooding that we do in some areas when we have weather-related issues and large developments coming in,” said Ferraro.
- Although two attempts to sell the JEA have failed, Ferraro is concerned that the publicly owned utility may end up being sold in a stealthy way that goes largely undetected until it’s too late.
- In late 2021, a private company sought to start investor-owned water utilities in a Westside area where an 11,5000 home development was going in. JEA opposed that plan, saying that doing so would set a precedent allowing other developers to do the same.
- “I was the only member of the Land Use and Zoning committee that voted against the proposal,” said Ferraro. “Thankfully, though, that plan didn’t end up happening. JEA and the developer were able to work something out.
- “On the surface, it sounded great, because here is an area of town where the development is brand new and the developer services it’s own utility, but what it does is start poking holes in our franchise agreements. If it’s done at 1% or less at a time, with the number of developments that continue to go up in Jacksonville, those percentages add up, and when more than 50% is sold, JEA would go into a death spiral. As mayor, I would make sure that doesn’t happen – the JEA would not be sold off piece by piece.”
- When it comes to historical monuments and markers, Ferraro opposes the removal of any of them.
- “I just don’t believe in taking down historical pieces of our city. My aim is to build things up in our city as I did with Freedom Park, the El Faro monument, and helping to put 243 acres into our state parks.”
- Ferraro put forward a bill that would allow voters to decide if historical monuments should stay or go, but the City Council voted against putting the question on the November 2022 ballot.
- “When people are talking about monuments and statues, they are not talking about gas taxes, they are not talking about the high cost of food, they are not talking about the high cost of electricity, they are not talking about crime in our city, they are not talking about garbage, they are not talking about the conditions of our roads or the way the houses are flooding, because the way they are putting it out there is they are pitting one person against another, and that is a total distraction that has been put out there deliberately to divide our city and our people.
- “I put that bill out there so people could vote. If they vote to take it down, take it down. If they vote to leave it up, leave it up. But don’t leave this issue open out here to where nothing is happening. We need to put it to bed one way or another. Now they are talking about having a study where people from Virginia come here and explain what we need to do as a city because we have council members who couldn’t make that decision. As mayor, I would not take down any historical monuments – period.”
- Repealing the Human Rights Ordinance (HRO) is something Ferraro said he would look into as mayor, but not because he doesn’t believe in equal rights for everyone.
- “If people are gay, they can do whatever they want. I have my own beliefs and religion, but as mayor, I would protect and serve everyone. I don’t think the government should tell people what to do – that’s not what the government is for. However, when you start telling people they have to recognize a man as a woman, and you are going to put men and boys in women’s restrooms and locker rooms and on teams competing against girls and women – I am 100% against that.
- “I’m not talking about people being able to have safe housing or equal protection under the law. I think if you are an American citizen and you pay taxes and you live in this country, everybody needs to be treated equally – I have no problem with that. But I do not believe that I have to pretend a man is a woman or a woman is a man and I don’t think that they should be in our restrooms or our locker rooms or competing against our women.”
- The heartbeat and slogan of Ferraro’s campaign are putting families first. He says the way to do that is by making the community safer, cleaner, and better for everybody in every neighborhood. Additionally, he wants to see decisions made that are best for the taxpayer – not for the developers, new businesses, and other entities that cause taxpaying citizens and their concerns to fall by the wayside.
- “I give great thought to everything I do, and I don’t do things off the cuff. I don’t do what everybody’s telling me to do – I give it a lot of thought and I think how is the taxpayer better or worse with this? What is good morally for our city, topless bars, or something you can bring your kids to for generations to come? Those are important things to me.”

For more information about Al Ferraro and to learn where he stands on all the important issues, visit www.keepitrealjax.com.

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Jacksonville awarded federal grant for safe streets program

The City of Jacksonville's Transportation Planning Division has been named a grant recipient by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to fund a safety plan "targeting zero bicycle and pedestrian traffic fatalities by 2030."

The city was one of 473 Action Plan Grant recipients selected by USDOT in this first round of funding for its Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) competitive grant program.

A February press release announced the city's Transportation Planning Division "would be awarded \$280,000 in federal discretionary grant funding."

Jacksonville's action plan is "Vision Zero Action Plan: Targeting Zero Bicycle and Pedestrian Fatalities by 2030 in a Designated Safety Focus City." According to the release, "development of the plan is the first step in reaching a target of zero traffic fatalities and serious injuries among all roadway users by the year 2030."

Thirty-four Florida applicants, including North Miami Beach, Key West and Atlantic Beach, received funding, equalling a total allotment of more than \$19 million for action plans in the state of Florida.

TaxSlayer Gator Bowl sponsorship extends through 2027

After an announcement extending its Gator Bowl sponsorship through 2027, TaxSlayer has become the "longest tenured entitlement sponsor in Gator Bowl Sports history."

Gator Bowl Sports Board of Trustees and TaxSlayer made the joint announcement at the end of January. TaxSlayer has been the title sponsor of the Gator Bowl since 2012, which also marked the company's first foray into the college sports sponsorship space. This latest extension "places TaxSlayer as the eighth longest running title sponsor across college football bowl games."

"We express our gratitude to the TaxSlayer family for extending their sponsorship of our historical post-season bowl game," said Gator Bowl Sports President and CEO Greg McGarity in the January press release. "As we enter our second decade of this sponsorship, we are blessed to work alongside such an incredible partner as TaxSlayer."

"The TaxSlayer Gator Bowl is an exciting opportunity for us to engage with college football fans across the country," added Jamie Saxe, TaxSlayer CEO, in the same release. "We're honored to connect our name with this prestigious event and to reach such a significant milestone in Gator Bowl Sports history."

According to the release, the 78th TaxSlayer Gator Bowl saw Notre Dame square off against South Carolina on Dec. 30, 2022. That game was the bowl game season's fifth-highest attended game, behind the CFP National Championship, Rose Bowl, Peach Bowl and Fiesta Bowl.

The date and time for the 79th TaxSlayer Gator Bowl will be announced in May.

Retired Bolles teacher returns to share family's Holocaust experience



Helen Meatte

Retired Bolles teacher, Helen Meatte, returned to the Upper School San Jose Campus to discuss with U.S. History students her family's harrowing stories of loss, suffering and survival in the Holocaust. A second-generation survivor, Meatte described the Holocaust as a slow and deliberate process marked by a pyramid of hate, which begins with prejudiced attitudes that develop into acts of prejudice before intensifying into discrimination, violence and, ultimately, genocide.

Meatte's blonde, blue-eyed mother hid in plain sight in Poland using forged papers and went undetected for five years working at a slave labor camp. Her father's candy shop in Germany was confiscated by the Nazis, but he was able to escape and move to the United States. The rest of their family wasn't as fortunate, with many perishing in Auschwitz.

Meatte is part of the LJD Jewish Family & Community Services Holocaust Survivors Speakers Bureau. She said she feels called to share her family's stories to ensure history doesn't repeat itself.

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Residents, merchants honored with 2023 RAP awards



Perry Reynolds, Randy DeFoor, Wayne Wood and Shannon Blankinship

Ann and John Kopelousos



RAM Maker of the Year, Kathleen Hill, Kismet Art Studios
Historic Avondale Merchants: Erica Davis, Liz Bobek, Shannon Blankinship, Tasha Brooks, Caroline Hurst, Bronwyn Benoit and Missy Kampmeyer



Brandi Matthews, Memorial Park Association and Alice Jones, JaxParks

Claudia Prana, Owner and John Reep, Architect

Margaret Tocknell and Wayne Wood

Photos courtesy of RAP

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) hosted its 2023 annual meeting and awards ceremony at Riverside Church at the corner of Park and King streets on Thursday, Feb. 16.

The meeting included a presentation by RAP Executive Director Shannon Blankinship recapping 2022 and outlining plans for the coming year and Jacksonville historian and RAP Founder Dr. Wayne Wood led the 100-plus guests in a bicentennial quiz show about the city's 200-year history.

Seven different awards were distributed in various categories.

The "Restoration and Rehabilitation 2023" award winners were: John and Natalie Mills (Singe Family); Denise Renbarger (Multi-Family); Plush N' Prana (Retail); Josephine's (Commercial); and Thou Art Exalted, TAE on Talbot (Commercial).

"New Construction" awards were given to Keith Combs and Dylan Rigdon with Matt Austin from Cardinal Contracting; and Glenn Chandler, Bold City Properties.

The Memorial Park Association and JaxParks were recognized with a Special

Project award for the Memorial Park balustrade and grounds restoration.

The "Individual Service" award was given to Margaret Tocknell on the RAP Transportation and Infrastructure Planning Committee; "Community Impact" awards were given with special recognition to the RAP Park Stewards program for meeting "its goal in 2022 to have a steward for each of our 26 historic parks" with an honorary mention for Ann and John Kopelousos for Yacht Basin Park.

Another "Community Impact" award for small businesses was awarded to the Southern Roots Filling Station.

The Historic Avondale Merchants was recognized with the "Featured Arts" award for its efforts to showcase local musicians in its monthly "Music on the Avenue" program.

Council Member Randy DeFoor was honored with the Wayne Wood Award, an award given in recognition of "outstanding service in the Riverside Avondale Historic District."

"This year, RAP recognizes Councilwoman Randy DeFoor for her leadership, courage, and unwavering commitment to representing this district," read the program. "As a public servant, Randy listened to community concerns, worked with City departments to seek solutions, and remained steadfast in keeping promises and completing projects..."

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Facelift for Desoto Park



Members of the Patrol Squadron SIXTY TWO's (VP-62) Second Class Petty Officer Association (SCPOA) recently gave Ortega's Desoto Park, off Baltic Street, a much-needed clean-up and facelift. VP-62 is a combat aviation squadron of the U.S. Navy Reserve, with its home station out of NAS JAX. The squadron is named as the designated keeper of the park, according to the posted Keep Jacksonville Beautiful sign; and when neighborly curiosity brought the park's condition to the squadron's attention, it jumped into action.

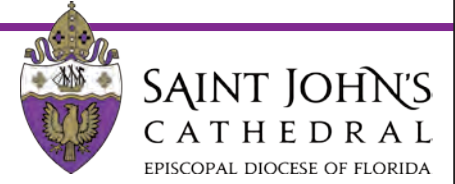
The SCPOA notified the neighbors of the clean-up and encouraged them to join, picking up fallen limbs and trash, raking and planting a new flower bed around the sign. Neighbor Shelly Fordham reported that SCPOA Secretary Nathan Tress told her they have plans for a new bench and are trying to get new signs for the park, about which they are currently awaiting a response from the city.



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MOVERS & SHAKERS

Clifton Thomas named senior director of development for Catholic Charities Jacksonville

Clifton Thomas has been named the new senior director of development for Catholic Charities Jacksonville.

The announcement was shared in a February press release, adding that this new role will allow Thomas to “support major fundraising initiatives for programs, including food assistance, emergency financial assistance, [and] refugee resettlement” among other programming.

To this new position, Thomas brings more than 30 years of experience in leadership and administrative support. Prior to joining Catholic Charities Jacksonville, he managed development and community relations for Life Renewed Counseling, also in Jacksonville, for six years, in his role as executive director. Thomas is active in the Jacksonville community, serving as a Florida State College of Jacksonville adjunct professor and a member of the National Association of Nonprofit Professionals, the Planned Giving Council of Northeast Florida and the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

“We’re excited to have Clifton in this important role at our agency, as his experience and dedication to our community will help propel us forward,” said Catholic Charities Jacksonville Regional Director Lori Weber in the release. “We know he will bring positivity, strategy and true leadership to the table as we serve those in need in northeast Florida.”



Clifton Thomas

A swinging success

Daily’s Foundation Annual Charity Golf Tournament raises \$775,000

Golfers gathered at Sea Island last month for two days of golf, a private concert and, most importantly, a good cause: to raise money for the Daily’s Foundation Annual Charity Golf Tournament.

In total, the event raised \$775,000, all of which went directly to various charities: \$600,000 was donated to Nemours Children’s Health; \$150,000 went to the Tim Tebow Foundation; and \$25,000 was donated to HopeKids Nashville, the charity supported by Eric and Jessie James Decker.

“At Daily’s, we believe that building a nicer community begins with a focus on the health and wellbeing of our children and their families,” said Daily’s President and CEO Aubrey Edge in a press release. “Our partnership with Nemours Children’s has allowed us to make a larger impact through their cutting-edge research and targeted care. We are proud



Daily’s President & CEO Aubrey Edge; Nemours Children’s Health Alliance President Jim Digan; Daily’s Director of Marketing Max Glover.

to join them in their mission and look forward to partnering with Nemours for years to come.”

Nemours Children’s Health Alliance President Jim Digan attended the tournament’s event reception to accept the donation, which went towards Daily’s commitment of \$5 million to Nemours Children’s.

Also in attendance at the reception was Charlotte and Micah Lancaster with their son John, who, at two years old, was diagnosed with stage-four cancer.

“World-class care and award-winning physicians make all of the difference when your child is fighting to live,” Charlotte said.

Daily’s partnership with Nemours Children’s dates back to 2019.

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Trio is tops for Root Ball



Co-Chairs Sally Ragsdale, Debbie Early and Tiffany Davis

Tiffany Davis, Debbie Early and Sally Ragsdale have been named co-chairs for the 2023 Root Ball, hosted by Greenscape of Jacksonville and the Late Bloomers Garden Club. Davis, a San Marco resident, is a Greenscape board member. Early and Ragsdale, Ortega residents, are members of Late Bloomers Garden Club.

The Root Ball, now in its 16th year, will be held Saturday, May 6 at 6 p.m. at The Garden Club of Jacksonville. Themed "Ante Up for Derby Day," the Kentucky Derby watch party will feature casino games, Derby-signature mint juleps, a bourbon bar and silent auction. All proceeds support the Jacksonville community. Tickets are available at greenscapeofjax.org/events.

North Florida Land Trust interim presidency becomes permanent for Allison DeFoor



Allison DeFoor

Allison DeFoor was named president of the North Florida Land Trust (NFLT) in January after serving as interim president since August of last year.

DeFoor first joined NFLT's board of directors in 2018. When then-President Jim McCarthy stepped down, DeFoor's fellow board members asked him to fill the position.

"We are delighted to see Allison take over as NFLT president," said Matt Ramp, NFLT board chair, in a January press release. "In his brief but extremely active tenure as interim President, he has more than earned the Board's full trust and proven to be the perfect person for this role at this critical inflection point for NFLT which is poised for unprecedented growth."

An Episcopal priest, DeFoor has served as the Canon to the Ordinary in the Episcopal Diocese of Florida for the last seven years. With degrees in theology, law and criminology, he's also served as a county and circuit judge and has been active in conservation throughout the state for much of his career.

NFLT was founded in 1999 with a mission to "preserv[e] and enhanc[e] the quality of life by protecting North Florida's irreplaceable natural environment."

New Board for Avondale Merchants Association



The 2023 Avondale Merchants Association Board: Erica Davis, Missy Kampmeyer, Caroline Hurst, Liz Bobeck, Cathie Clark and Bronwyn Benoit. Not pictured: Lindsey Bush.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BRONWYN BENOIT

The Avondale Merchants Association has hit the ground running as it settles into the new year: Bronwyn Benoit has succeeded Tasha Brooks as new president and she leads the 2023 board, which includes Vice President Erica Davis, Secretary Liz Bobeck, Treasurer Missy Kampmeyer and Board Members Lindsey Bush, Cathie Clark and Caroline Hurst. Benoit also listed Hooshang Harvesf as the honorary mayor of Avondale.

Under Brooks' leadership, the association saw a rebranding and a significant growth in membership and Benoit says, as president, she wants to see the association continue the momentum Brooks generated during her tenure.

"You gotta keep that elevation going and that's what this board is looking for this year is to keep the elevation going, keep the momentum going and to make Avondale even better as we go," she said. "...as president, I'm very, very fortunate to have such a strong team on our board."

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A prime cut above:

Southern Steer Butcher opens in Ortega



JAX Chamber members joined franchise owners Chris and Simone Craft in a ribbon cutting ceremony for their Southern Steer Butcher franchise location that opened last month.

Southern Steer Butcher has opened a new franchise in the Ortega community of Jacksonville.

Franchise owners Chris and Simone Craft held a ribbon cutting ceremony with JAX Chamber members on Friday, Feb. 3 to celebrate the shop's grand opening, which happened two days prior.

"First off, a huge, huge congratulations on getting opened and we appreciate your economic impact that you'll be making," said JAX Chamber Senior Account Manager Stephanie Deimling during the ceremony.

"It's great to be now a small-business franchise owner and it's pretty incredible to watch the impact we're already having in the

neighborhood because we've been open for two days and we've just — it's been constant, people coming in," Chris said. "Thank you for being part of this."

Chris and Simone first began the process to open their Southern Steer franchise nearly two years ago and now that the business is officially up and running, Simone said she's excited to join and support the small business community.

"We're just excited to finally get to be part of the community in this capacity," she said. "We've lived here — the two of us have lived here together for 23 years. Chris grew up in this community so it's just really neat to see it come full circle and now we have a chance to give back."

The Crofts' Ortega location will be participating in Southern Steer's "Project 52," a program designed to support local families and organizations in need. Each week, Simone explained, the store will select a family or organization to donate to through neighborhood nominations.

"We will have it set up where if you know a family in need, you can come in and leave your information with us," she said. "We'll call people back and we'll try to reach out and take care of those families."

Southern Steer Butcher is open Monday thru Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. It is located at 5421 Roosevelt Boulevard.

Paul Shorstein returns to Pajcic & Pajcic



Paul Shorstein

Attorney Paul Shorstein has returned to the Law Firm of Pajcic & Pajcic.

In 2008, Shorstein left the firm to practice law with his father, former State Attorney Harry Shorstein. With his father now retired, Shorstein is once again part of the Pajcic & Pajcic team "to focus on personal injury and products liability cases."

"We can trust Paul to handle the most complex cases," said Steve Pajcic, who also added that everyone at the firm is "thrilled" to have Shorstein back.

Shorstein's career began first in commercial loan transactions before moving into the field of criminal law. He served as Assistant District Attorney in DeKalb County, Georgia. He prosecuted "white collar crime, including complex racketeering and corruption cases, as well as other felony cases."

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Souper Bowl win for First Coast children



Attendees each chose a handmade soup bowl, made by students served by Blessings in a Backpack.



Lindsey Gast, Linda Gast and Danielle Guba



Susan Evans, executive director for Blessings in a Backpack, joins student chef Diago Pino, left, and instructor Chef Rey Ocasio-Cosme from the Frank H. Peterson Academies of Technologies.

Souper Bowl 6, presented by Sysco Jax, was held on Feb. 8 at the Garden Club of Jacksonville. The event raised more than \$40,000 for First Coast Blessings in a Backpack, which will provide more than 10,000 weekend meals for First Coast children who might otherwise go hungry over the weekend.

The event featured signature soups from more than a dozen local restaurants, as well as three from high school students at the culinary arts academy at Frank H. Peterson Academies of Technologies. More than 210 people attended, each casting a vote for their favorite soup. Culhane's Irish Pub took home the fan-fave vote with its Potato Leek Soup.

Wedding Announcement: Lacey and John Allen



PHOTO COURTESY OF LACEY AND JOHN ALLEN.

Newlyweds Lacey and John Allen celebrated their wedding at Club Continental on Friday, Feb. 10.

On Friday, Feb. 10, Lacey and John Allen celebrated their wedding at Orange Park's Club Continental. Mark Watkins officiated, and standing beside the bride and groom during the ceremony were Best Man Joseph Schofield and Matron of Honor Lindsey Williams. Lacey holds master's and undergraduate degrees in communications; she's currently a human resources leader at Oma Robotics and Fertility. John has two decades of experience in the electrical trade and currently serves as the chief operating officer of Cornerstone Electrical. The newlywed couple will reside in Ortega Forest.

Robin Pfalzgraf named first executive director for Jacksonville Community Land Trust



Robin Pfalzgraf

The Jacksonville Community Land Trust (JCLT) has hired Robin Pfalzgraf as its first executive director.

The Resident reported on the launch of this nonprofit organization last summer, explaining its mission is to "create homeownership opportunities for low to moderate-income households in order to build 'generational wealth.'"

As its executive director, Pfalzgraf will now begin the process of "making homes available to the individuals or families who desire homeownership within the city of Jacksonville." She comes to the organization with past experience of working with low- and very-low-income families and affordable housing.

"I have been honored to help people meet their housing needs throughout my career," said Pfalzgraf in a February press release. "I see the JCLT as a great avenue to continue to help individuals and families when they do not see a way that they can obtain homeownership."

According to the release, JCLT will soon begin accepting applications.



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Riverside Presbyterian hosts 35th annual Capers Gala

Riverside Presbyterian Day School (RPDS) hosted its 35th annual Capers Gala on Friday, Feb. 10.

The gala first began in 1987 in an Omni Hotel ballroom chaired by Jan Andrews and Kitty Crenshaw, both RPDS parents at the time. This year's event was attended by more than 200 guests ready for an entertaining evening with a good cause: supporting the arts program at RPDS.

Joy McDonald and Caroline Skinner chaired this year's gala "with support from a dedicated committee of parent volunteers." The event was held at the Glass Factory and featured live music from the Bay Kings Band, an auction of more than 160 items and dinner from Chef's Garden.



Annie Roberts, Ginger Greaker, Deena Wallace and Kate Weidlich



RPDS parents and supporters Kelly and Andrew Breiner, Joy and Frank McDonald, Taylor and Stephen Horne



Maggie and Weston Vierregger

Volunteers in Medicine honors Women with Heart

Volunteers in Medicine (VIM) held its annual Women with Heart Luncheon on Wednesday, Feb. 1 at the Florida Blue Conference Center.

Each year, this luncheon celebrates honorees selected for "their commitment to leadership, advocacy, and the health of our community," explained a VIM press release.

At this 7th annual event, the Women with Heart honorees were Kathy Barbour of Brooks Rehabilitation; Camille Harrison of Florida Blue; Shavondra Huggins, DNP, APRN of University of Florida; Amber L. Isley, MD of Ascension St. Vincent's; Akilah J. Pope, MD of the Florida Department of Health; Christine Smith of Baptist Health; and Cindy Stover of TD Bank.

"Each year we celebrate and honor a remarkable group of women who have made noteworthy contributions to the well-being of our community," said VIM Board Chair Dr. Barbara Darby in the press release. "Our 2023 honorees are truly exceptional by any measure!"

The luncheon raised more than \$110,000, which will go to "free healthcare for the working uninsured."



Terry Ezell, Bradley May, Dave Medvidofski and Brian Kerr



Eleanor Lynch, Amanda Osborne and Ann Leinenwever



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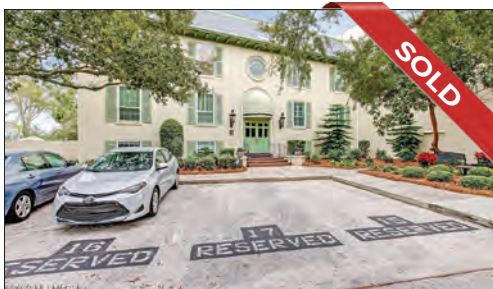
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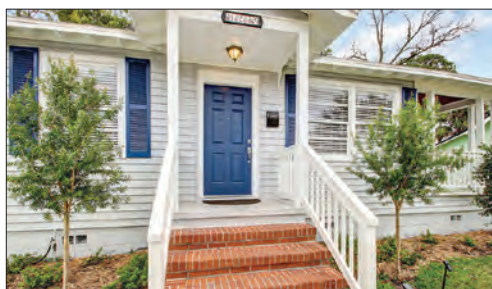
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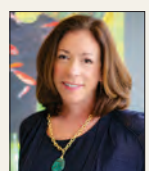
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A CELEBRATION OF FREEDOM

Rethreaded hosts 12th annual Mukti Freedom Gala



The evening of Rethreaded's Mukti Freedom Gala began with a black carpet champagne toast at The Glass Factory on Saturday, Feb. 25.

Meaning "freedom" in Bengali, the 12th annual Mukti Gala is the local nonprofit's largest fundraising event of the year "both in fundraising and attendance." It was presented by the Jaguars Foundation.

This year's theme was "Through Our Eyes" and the evening included a powerful message keeping in that theme. Guests were able to participate in silent auctions, shopping, raffles and other "opportunities to donate and support Rethreaded's survivor program."

"We are grateful for everyone who participated in the Mukti Freedom Gala this year," said Rethreaded Founder and CEO Kristin Keen in a February press release. "Because of the generosity of the Jacksonville community, volunteers, sponsors and donors, we will be able to provide more than we could have ever imagined for women in our Survivor Development Program."

"We are thrilled to partner with Rethreaded and support their mission to empower survivors of human trafficking," said Jaguars Senior Vice President and Chief Community Impact Officer Whitney Meyer in the release. "The Jaguars Foundation shares the same values of creating positive change in our community, and we are dedicated to breaking the cycle of poverty and empowering those in need in the Outeast neighborhood, where Rethreaded is located..."

GONE COUNTRY FOR DOWNTOWN

Downtown Vision Inc. hosts 8th annual Downtown Vision Gala

Guests dusted off their hats and kicked up their cowboy boots at Downtown Vision Inc.'s 8th annual Downtown Vision Gala. Proceeds from the evening, which took place on Friday, Feb. 24, went to funding placemaking in downtown Jacksonville. In accordance with this year's theme — "Rhinestone Cowford" — guests attempted to capture their "eight seconds of fame" on the #DJax mechanical bull before hitting one of two dance floors and got down to the tunes of Dean Winter and the Heat under the stars or to DJ Mouth of the South on the indoor dance floor. The evening offered appetizers from downtown restaurants as well as local brews spirits. Guests could capture memories of the evening with photos from a Chic Booth photo booth and participate in the silent auction.



Heather Schatz and Jason Roth



Danielle Moga, Caitlin Doherty, Amber Sesnick and E...



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THE EARLY SHOPPERS GET THE TREASURE

Garden Club of Jacksonville host 2023 Flea Market Preview Party

The Garden Club of Jacksonville hosted its 2023 Flea Market Preview Party on Friday, Feb. 24.

Held at its Riverside Club Room, the preview party was open to members and non-members alike and offered a sneak peek and early shopping for Saturday's main event. Roughly 250 shoppers were able to peruse inventory and grab a bite and beverage while enjoying some tunes. This "gigantic yard sale" offered "enticing items from homes across Jacksonville," including furniture, artwork, books and housewares as well as clothing for men, women and children.



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The tunes that bind

Free concert held to support the Great Florida Riverway Reunion

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Jacksonville residents kicked back on Saturday, Feb. 4 to enjoy live music at last month's free outdoor concert at the Jacksonville University's (JU) Riverfront Amphitheater.

Hosted by St. Johns Riverkeeper and JU's Marine Science Research Institute, the concert featured local band Snake Bloody Remedy, a "traditional country music and Old Time band."

The live tunes were enhanced by bites from local food truck Twisting Roots.

The concert was one of a series of events taking place on Feb. 4 as part of the Great Florida Riverway Reunion, "from the headwaters of the Ocklawaha River at Lake Apopka to the confluence of the Ocklawaha and Silver Rivers near Silver Springs, to Palatka, near where the Ocklawaha and St. Johns Rivers unite, all the way to Jacksonville where the Great Florida Riverway meets the Atlantic."

"We are excited to provide this opportunity to gather on the banks of the St. Johns River and enjoy a family-friendly concert for an important cause," said St. Johns Riverkeeper Executive Director Jimmy Orth in a press release. "This is also an opportunity for citizens to show up and express their support for restoring the Ocklawaha River, the largest tributary of the St. Johns, which will have a positive impact all the way upstream to our estuary here in Jacksonville."



Rosemary, Jasmine, Jason Davis and William Coe



Mary Pat Wallmeyer, Rebecca Vevera and Sara Schmalfeld



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for Mayor

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Sulzbacher cuts the ribbon

on final piece of its urban rest stop program



On February 14th, 2023, Mayor Lenny Curry and Sulzbacher CEO Cindy Funkhouser cut the ribbon on Sulzbacher's new Urban Rest Stop Social Services Bus, a joint venture of the City of Jacksonville and Sulzbacher. The final piece of the Urban Rest Stop Program, the mobile unit is designed to bring 'Housing and Hope on Wheels' to persons experiencing homelessness in downtown Jacksonville by providing social services including case management and housing placements to people experiencing homelessness who are still living on the streets. This bus compliments Sulzbacher's Healthmobile, launched in 2020, which provides health outreach services to this same population.



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



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DISTRICT 7



A CANDIDATE WE CAN TRUST

Joseph is a multi generational native of Jacksonville. Joseph and his wife, Lauren, are raising their three children, Sadie (12), Betty (9), and Edward "Brother" (7) in the same community where they met and grew up together.

Joseph currently serves in Florida's Air National Guard at the 125th Fighter Wing. In addition to his military service, Joseph and his brother operate a construction company building houses in Jacksonville and St. Augustine. When he's not working, you can usually find Joseph coaching baseball at Navy Ortega Lakeshore (NOL) Little League or flag football at Westside Baptist Church's youth sports league. Joseph also regularly attends recitals and other dance performances for his two girls.

Joseph's interest in serving the community began at a young age. His dad, Mike Hogan, has modeled public service throughout his life. Joseph's dad showed him the importance of listening to everyone and working hard to meet the needs of those around you.

Joseph is committed to be a listening ear and voice for all **constituents** in **District 7**. Joseph will be a good steward of taxpayer dollars by evaluating plans for smart growth and development of our **infrastructure**, providing **first responders** with the resources they need to reduce crime and maintain public safety, as well as provide **clean and safe parks** with youth activities in all communities.

Joseph is endorsed by several public officials and community residents including: *Mike Hogan, Doyle Carter, Jerry Holland, Charlotte Joyce, Randy DeFoor, Mark Zeigler, Gordon Terry, Ron Pellum, Lockwood Holmes and John Lewis.*

Jacksonville's City Council Districts have changed. For information on the new maps, visit JosephHoganFL.com

The Remedy Lounge

An exclusive, modern amenity for the historic Florida Theatre



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SEVERINE PHOTOGRAPHY

Remedy Lounge is the third phase of Florida Theatre's multi-year capital improvement plan as the historic theatre approaches its centennial anniversary in 2027.

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Downtown's Florida Theatre has unveiled its newest amenity: the Remedy Lounge. The 3,000-square-foot lounge was unveiled at a ribbon cutting ceremony on Monday, Feb. 13. Mayor Lenny Curry and other Jacksonville dignitaries attended to celebrate this new addition to the historic theatre, which is also its first addition to its public spaces in its 95 years.

A February press release explained this new lounge will be available for the more than 1,300 members and corporate partners supporting the nonprofit theatre and its programming. It will accommodate more than 300 guests (standing) and can be reconfigured to accommodate table seating for 150 people. Its brand-new 25-foot-long full bar will offer an exclusive menu of premium wines and liquors and a craft beer and spirits selection "with an emphasis on locally brewed beverages, such as Manifest distillery and breweries like Intuition, Aardwolf, Ruby Beach and Veterans United."

This new lounge will be located on theatre's second floor. This will allow the former third-floor Donor Lounge to convert to a balcony-level bar for the general public to enjoy.

"We all know the Florida Theatre as a great place to see great performances, but we also know it's aging," said Florida Theatre President Numa Saisselin in the release. "We want our artists and audiences to walk out saying, 'Wow, everything about that experience was first class.' The Remedy Lounge goes a long way to achieving that goal in the front-of-house area."

The Remedy Lounge marks the completion of the third phase in a "multi-year capital improvement plan expected to cost \$20 million." The plan began in 2020 with the addition of "new historically-appropriate seating," more accessible seating and a new assistive listening system and concert sound system. The following year saw a new stage

lighting system installed in the theatre. The next phase of the improvement plan — which will include cosmetic updates and repairs — will begin this summer.

"...The Theatre will close for four months to repair the decorative plaster and paint the lobbies and auditorium; replace the heating, ventilation and air conditioning system; refurbish all of the existing public bathrooms; and move the electrical vault for the building to a higher floor," the press release explained. "Further improvements include connecting the street level lobby spaces, restoring the marquee, and improving the backstage dressing rooms and green room."

This extensive work on the theatre comes as it approaches its centennial anniversary in 2027. In the release, Board Chairperson Leslie Gordon stated, "...Our capital improvement plan is about making the Florida Theatre experience better and making the Theatre's finances sustainable for another 100 years. In addition to improving the customer experience, the financial impact of introducing a new lounge and returning the third-floor bar to the public strengthens the Florida Theatre's fiscal sustainability."

KBJ Architects designed the Remedy Lounge. It was constructed by Auld & White Constructors, "with oversight on behalf of the Florida Theatre by Clark Advisory Services." Individual membership to the Florida Theatre begins at \$250. Those interested in membership can visit www.floratheatre.com for more information.



The new members-only Remedy Lounge will feature a full bar and offer an exclusive menu of premium wines, liquors, craft beer and spirits.

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The End (of Jacksonville's Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum)

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Jacksonville's Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum Jacksonville has closed its doors after 30 years.

The museum's final day open to the public was Jan. 31.

Museum Director Cheryl McCain said the museum's closure is "bittersweet" for her. As a Navy veteran, she likened the end of the Jacksonville museum to the decommissioning of a ship:

"You see the legacy of the ship and the longevity of it and it's coming to an end," she said. "Some ships last as long as 30 years in the military, so I look at it kind of the same way and it's a bittersweet thing. But I'm thankful for the legacy and what Karpeles has done in the 30 years in this community."

The Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum first opened in 1992. It was part of a network of 15 museums throughout the country that showcase rotating exhibits from the overarching Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum, founded in 1983 by David Karpeles. It is widely known as the "world's largest private holding of original historical manuscripts."

This collection includes rare documents pertaining to pivotal moments in both world and American history, including Benjamin Franklin's "Taxation Without Representation," handwritten excerpts of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "Sherlock Holmes," and Napoleon

Bonaparte's excommunication by Pope Pius VII.

Karpeles passed away a year ago in January and his children, Mark Karpeles and Cheryl Alleman have since assumed leadership roles in the organization as chief executive and chief financial officers, respectively.

Jacksonville is not the only museum in the network closing. McCain noted that four other museum already have or are expected to close, including locations in Shreveport, Louisiana and Buffalo, New York.

Housed in Springfield's former First Church of Christ, Scientist, built in 1921, the museum needed significant repairs and renovations and McCain explained that played a primary role in the decision to close.

"This building has had its fair share of issues over the years and they just found it as too costly to try to renovate it from top to bottom, we're talking foundation to the ceiling and all around, the facade and even the interior, and other upgrades that are needed to the building," she said.

In addition to the manuscripts and documents it showcased, the museum had also become an integral part of the Jacksonville art community, offering rotating exhibits of local artists throughout the years. Springfield resident and artist Drew Hunter has participated in several exhibits at Karpeles throughout the years and said the museum has been a "tremendous influence" for himself and other artists.

"They've always been so welcoming and so ready to showcase local artists of all types, both visual and musical and some performance,"

he said. "It's been a wonderful venue, of course being housed in that magnificent structure has enhanced — just going there, being in that atmosphere is a real treat."

"It's such a shame to see it closing and [I] certainly hope that whoever does wind up buying it turns it into another viable space for the community," he added.

McCain doesn't know what the future holds for the building once the exhibits are all boxed up and cleared out, although she did note, "Someone has put in a bid on the building and I'm not really sure of what their plans are for the building."

"Whatever it is, I hope that they keep the historical integrity of the building," she added. "I hope they don't tear it down. That's what I'm hoping."

Jacksonville Historical Society CEO Dr. Alan Bliss echoed McCain's sentiments in an e-mail.

"Today the old church is a Jacksonville landmark and contributing structure to the Springfield's National Register Historic District," he wrote. "But, as we saw recently in the case of Jacksonville's historic Ford Motor Company plant, slated for demolition, historicity and even landmark status will not be enough to save this century-old church. It will take an economically sustainable new use for the property. For old churches, such uses are hard to find."

Although this branch of the Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum is no more, residents can travel to St. Augustine to view these rare documents at its newly opened mini-museum off George Street. Touted as

the "smallest walk-in museum in the United States," it's currently showcasing around 40 documents in a "temporary exhibit," McCain said, while the organization searches for a larger, more permanent location in St. Augustine. Additionally, another location is planned for Lake Mary, roughly two hours south of Jacksonville, to be both a headquarters and museum.

In an e-mail responding to an interview request, Alleman — Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum's CFO — wrote, "We will not be doing any more interviews till mid-March when we know more."



Springfield's Karpeles Manuscript Library Museum closed on Jan. 31 after 30 years of serving the Jacksonville community.



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Big success for Bishop Kenny's Big Red Ball

Bishop Kenny High School celebrated its Big Red Ball in style at Jacksonville's Deerwood Castle.

More than 400 guests attended the inaugural fundraising event on Saturday, Feb. 4 and enjoyed cocktails, dinner, dancing and a live auction, led by Brian Sexton. The auction alone generated \$17,000. The evening also included private tours of the new event venue's luxury car collection.

"The Big Red Ball exceeded my expectations and it was wonderful to see the community come out and support the students at Bishop Kenny..." wrote Director of Major Gifts and Events Amy Davis in an e-mail.

In total, the evening raised \$120,000. These proceeds will benefit "on-going campus renovation projects and implement additional state-of-the-art technology within the classrooms."



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Ortega Elementary School celebrates 100 years of educating students

BY KAREN RIELEY
Resident Community News



Ortega Elementary School's first graduating class in 1920, three years before moving to its current location on Baltic Street.



Ortega Elementary School was originally located on a corner lot at Longfellow and Arapahoe avenues. The building is now a private residence.

From a one-story, Wood Frame Vernacular-style building, now a private residence, at 4280 Longfellow Street to the beautiful Mediterranean Revival-style school at 4010 Baltic Street, Ortega Elementary School has educated thousands of students living in Ortega and surrounding neighborhoods for a century. On Thursday, March 30, 6-8 p.m., the school will open its doors to all students, families, alumni and neighbors to experience "100 Years of Exhibiting Our Knowledge" including its annual Museum Night Exhibits, student performances and refreshments.

Ortega Elementary is a Museum Studies Institute, a magnet program. Museum Studies schools partner with museums and integrate course subjects, so students learn to create exhibits and art and write and research alongside traditional academic disciplines.

"The students work to create museum exhibits to go along with their units of study, and we transform the school into a museum twice each year," said Shannon Rose-Hamman, who is in her seventh year as the school's principal. "The students are trained to be docents and we invite families and community members to tour our museum every December and March."

Beth Payne, Parent Association president, chose to send her children to Ortega Elementary because it reminds her of the school she attended on the eastern shore of Virginia.

"All of the teachers know my children's names. It is a very close-knit, family environment," she said.

In 1909, the Ortega Company, founded by John N.C. Stockton and Charles C. Bettes, began development of the Ortega subdivision, a streetcar suburb designed by the prominent architect Henry J. Klutho. He designed the community to include five circular parks named after New World explorers.

One of the largest and most architecturally elaborate non-residential buildings in the Old Ortega Historic District, Ortega Elementary School opened adjacent to Desoto Park and received its first students in 1923. For many years, the



Dekle Day's second grade class in 1962

park served as the school's playground. In 1950, the Ortega Company donated the western portion of the park to the Duval County Public Schools Board for use by the school.

Dekle Day, who still lives in Ortega, attended Ortega Elementary School from 1960 to 1966. He fondly remembers time spent on the playground.

"We had a football team. Can you imagine a bunch of elementary school boys in pads and playing tackle football today? The field also had a baseball diamond. It was a big deal for us guys to play the NAS Jax team," Day said. "It was an idyllic setting. Most of us walked to school every day."

Day's two daughters finished at Ortega Elementary about eight years ago and are now in college. Day continues to maintain the Ortega Elementary School Alumni Facebook page.

Mostly neighborhood kids initially attended the school, although even in the '60s, Day remembers 10 to 15 kids per

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37 ...

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grade, mostly from military families, who were bussed in from neighboring communities. When the school became a magnet school, it began to draw more students from surrounding neighborhoods.

Ortega's first school, Public School 16, was constructed in 1914. Two teachers conducted classes for grades one through six in the spare, rectangular, wood frame building on a corner lot at Longfellow and Arapahoe avenues.

“ All of the teachers know my children's names. It is a very close-knit, family environment.”

— Beth Payne, Parent Association president

Just two years later, a neighborhood committee was formed to advocate for a new building. In 1923, a new school building was designed by architects Earl Mark & Leeroy Sheftall and built by P.J. McCullough to accommodate the neighborhood's rapid growth because of the Florida Land Boom. A few years later, two classrooms were added along the Princeton Avenue wing of the main building. In 1935, a new auditorium with an entrance on Harvard Street was constructed. Two additional wings were added in 1950 and 1951 at the front of the building.

In 2004, Old Ortega was designated as an Historic District and added to the National Register of Historic Places. The school is noted as a contributing structure.

The May 2019 Riverside edition of The Resident News reported that the school board planned to demolish Venetia Elementary and then rebuild it with additional classrooms that would allow it to consolidate students from Ortega Elementary. The presentation then showed closing Ortega Elementary and demolishing it.

Jacksonville Daily Record reported on June 15, 2021, that the Jacksonville Historical Society has identified 22 endangered structures, including Ortega Elementary School and five other public school properties.

To learn more about the 100-year celebration, contact 100YearsofOrtega@gmail.com.



Teacher Marie McElvey's first grade class in 1958



The graduating Class of 2015



Teacher Naomi Scatterday's fifth grade class in 1953

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ANIMAL HOUSE

The serenity of the fishbowl: *A deep dive on tropical fish-keeping*

BY JULIE KERNS GARMENDIA
Resident Community News

An aquarium of shimmering tropical fish could be one of the only tabletop item to instantly calm life's chaos and provide escape from a difficult day, stressful thoughts and feelings just from looking at it. Aquariums induce relaxation and sensory enjoyment by gliding through lush, swaying emerald aquatic plants to the sounds of soothing water among decorative rocks or living coral.

Florida is the number one U.S. producer of aquarium fish and aquatic plants, according to the Florida Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services and while aquarium fish rank among the most popular U.S. pets — nearly one in eight households has an aquarium — fish-keeping is not a new hobby.

Encyclopedia Britannica reports archeological evidence of fish-keeping in artificial ponds in Mesopotamia 4,500 years ago and aquariums in 2500 BC. Fish-keeping purposes varied around the globe as well: Where the Egyptians considered fish sacred and worshiped the Nile perch, Chinese fish aquariums held dinner.

Fish-keeping appeals to all ages and offers much more budget flexibility than other pets. Silent tropical fish may also be the only pet possible in rentals due to limited space, pet restrictions, or where pet deposits and monthly fees are prohibitive.

Fish pets compactly bring the outdoors inside to those with limited mobility, the elderly or the disabled. They are perfect pets for those with allergies or compromised immune systems.

Some keepers say their fish can be trained and can provide non-physical interaction. Fish learn to approach owners for feedings and exhibit responses. They move within the aquarium, reacting to owners' movements.

"The public would be surprised at how smart fish are and the behaviors they display," said Dr. Cait Newport, Marie Curie Research Fellow at Oxford University Zoology Department. "Tropical fish can distinguish one human face from another despite lacking a brain section that homo sapiens and other 'smart' animals (primates) with large complex brains have. Fish lack the neocortex, the most recently evolved brain part that governs sensory perception and language."

Dr. Sylvia Earle's research also illustrated fish intelligence: Fish recognized each other, gathered information by eavesdropping, remembered past social interactions with

other fish, and showed affection by rubbing. Fish are good-natured, curious, sensitive, have personalities, and express pain when wounded, Earle reported. Earle is an American marine biologist, leading deep-sea oceanographer, author and National Geographic Explorer-in-Residence.

In research conducted by the University of Bern, Switzerland, behavioral ecologists documented fish functioning in complex social systems: Fish helped each other, cooperated, demonstrated reciprocity, and communicated through low-frequency sounds to court other fish, show submission or signal danger.

Scientific research has also showed positive psychological, physical and emotional benefits of fish-keeping. Such research into the health benefits of human-animal interaction has traditionally focused on dogs; however, there is data regarding tropical fish-keeping in "The Effects of Interacting with Fish in Aquariums on Health and Well-being: A Systematic Review," published by the National Institutes of Health.

The 19 research studies included in the report showed evidence of positive effects on mood, happiness, pain tolerance, nutritional intake and body weight from human interaction with tropical fish in private and public aquariums. This research was conducted in the U.S., U.K., Germany, France, Taiwan, and Australia.

When subjects watched tropical fish swim, researchers documented increased relaxation, lowered blood pressure and heart rate. The viewing diverted attention away from stressors or negative mental activity, including anxiety. It promoted rapid emotional and physiological recovery from stress. All studies reviewed for



Co-owners Neil Magsaki and Rowel Celestino took over Southside Estates' SimpReef — formerly known as FishManiaJax — in 2020. The shop specializes in African Cichlids and other freshwater fish, including community and oddball fish.

this article advised that more research into the benefits of fish-keeping is needed.

Bio Reef owner Eddie Miller said that saltwater aquariums' biological and chemical requirements make them more difficult and expensive to maintain. He also said it is essential to know the size a fish will grow, its food and care needs, and its temperament towards other fish.

"We care about the fish and invertebrates we sell and want to ensure they will thrive and have what they need in their new home. They're so intelligent, and the triggers grunt and chatter when annoyed or hungry," Miller said.

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THE WAY WE WERE

Martha "Molly" Holmes King

BY MARY WANSER
Resident Community News

Martha "Molly" Holmes King arrived in Jacksonville at nine years of age in February 1941 from her birthplace in Birmingham, Alabama. "Now, I'm 91 and three fourths," she said, and she lives in the same house that she had grown up in on Harvard Avenue in Ortega.



Molly King, February 2023, photo by Carol Curtis

Molly was raised an only child; two siblings had died as babies. Her family was used to household help, so their butler, William Rudolf, moved down to Florida with them. Molly's mother was Jessica Holmes King, a former North Carolina, New York, and Pennsylvania school teacher. "Ladies didn't work after they got married back in her day," Molly said. Frank King, Molly's father, was an executive of Cosco Steel.

Cosco made steel reinforcements for the landing strips at the air base, now NAS JAX, then called NAS Yukon prior to consolidation when the city limits of Jacksonville ended at Verona Avenue. The original landing strips had been engineered of concrete and continually cracked under the weight of planes because of shifting sand underground.

Cosco manufactured ammunition as well, particularly bombs used in WWII. Cosco also had the contract for building three storage units visible from Roosevelt Boulevard. The three are recognizable among the others there now by their flat roofs, intentionally built that way so they could be topped with dirt for planting low bushes to camouflage the units were the area to be raided by air during wartime.

"My daddy had an old Chevrolet," Molly said. It was a 1934, greyish blue in color. She's reminded of it when she watches *The Waltons*. Molly's father would drive her and her mom all around Jacksonville in that car. Years later, Molly would learn to drive on the unpaved roads around NAS Yukon.

Molly did not have to travel far to grammar school; Ortega Elementary was and still is just across the street. She remains in touch with one of her classmates from there, Mary Aichel. As young girls, they had lived just a

block-and-a-half from each other, both attended Riverside Methodist Church, and both their daddies had steel companies. Mary now lives in an assisted living facility up in North Carolina, and she and Molly speak by telephone every so often.

At Robert E. Lee High School, now Riverside High, Molly was president of the Latin Club, secretary of the Spanish Club, and a member of the Dramatic Club, Jubilee and National Honor Society. Always a stellar student, Molly had skipped a couple of grades and graduated with the class of 1948 alongside Elizabeth "Betsy" Ross Lovett, a Jacksonville legend.

Molly spent four years away from Jacksonville for higher education at Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Georgia and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She came back home with a bachelor's degree in hand and enjoyed spending time at her family's beach house until her father asked, "Well, are you about ready to go to work?"

Molly said that her dad didn't allow her to be a beach bum for very long and suggested she get a job teaching. But she told him that after so many years of being in "little boxes of classrooms," she'd like to do something different for a time. She landed a position at Atlantic National Bank downtown, which she found quite interesting. That's where she met the bank client who would become her husband.

In 1956, Molly married John Wesley King, a career military man who had worked locally in real estate and insurance. They just happened to have the same last name. Friends would joke that at least she wouldn't have to change the initials on her luggage. It was several years into their marriage when Molly discovered that her husband's cousin had been a college classmate of hers.

Though he grew up in Jacksonville, John was a Georgia native, and that's where the couple initially wed. The following year, Molly's dad insisted that they have a church wedding, so they confirmed their vows before a priest at Good Shepherd.

Molly and John's first home together was in the Willowbranch neighborhood of Riverside. Molly left her banking job to raise their three children: John Jr., Martha "Marcy," and Amanda "Mandy." All three attended Ortega Elementary, just like their mom. One of Molly's grandchildren was also a student there, making for a third generation.

Molly and John moved their young family to Apache Avenue in Ortega. Most afternoons



Molly King, August 20, 1945



Cosco Steel Bomb Factory, Monday, August 20, 1945

when school let out, their children would play kickball with friends. "My front yard was third base, so I continually had a path across my lawn from them playing," Molly said.

"Being in Ortega is a memory in itself. One of the nicest customs that we used to have was every Halloween an open house at the public school," Molly said. It was an annual festival that included a costume contest, a bake sale, and booths of activities to help raise money for the PTA.

Once her youngest daughter was in high school, Molly went to work teaching foreign languages—Spanish, French, and Latin—at Andrew Jackson and Englewood high schools, before retiring in 1993. Ever humble, Molly indicated that speaking four languages "is not very hard."

In 1975 after her mother passed away and her father was alone, Molly and her family moved into her childhood home on Harvard where she still resides today. Her husband passed away two decades ago, and her children are long grown and have grandchildren of their own now. "I had three children and five grandchildren. The next thing I knew, I had 10 great-grandchildren," she said.

Molly has eight cats to keep her company. She calls them the River Rat Patrol of Ortega. She keeps all of them fixed and their nails clipped because "I don't want to get in trouble with the city," she said.

Molly has been a member of the Jacksonville chapter of Daughters of the American Revolution for nearly 50 years and still attends meetings. She is former president of the Southern Genealogist's Exchange Society and continues to work on genealogy as a hobby every spare moment she gets. It has been a constant in her life. "You can never run out. It's like eating potato chips. You never get finished," she said. Currently, she's working on a branch of her mother's family that's in Ireland.

While she was growing up, Molly's family often had reunions, so she was familiar with her second and third cousins. Her husband, however, had not been exposed to his extended family. While she was putting together their son's baby book, which has a family tree in its center pages

to be filled in, "I thought maybe I'd better check this out. Maybe we are kin after all," Molly said. So, she embarked on research to prove to herself and others that she and her husband, both Kings, were not blood relatives. She found out that her husband's King family had settled in South Carolina in the 1700s but



Molly King and dad Frank, Jacksonville Beach, Sunday, May 10, 1942

that her father's King family had settled in Virginia in the 1600s. They are, surely, two different King families.

Longevity is not unusual in Molly's family. Her great-grandfather was 97 when Molly was born, and she found in an 1850 census report a distant female relative on her mother's side who had seen 100. At nearly 92, Molly keeps active. She never committed to a formal exercise routine, but she has enjoyed gardening in addition to her research. "I'm always doing something. I never just lie down and take a nap," she said. "I just go with the flow."

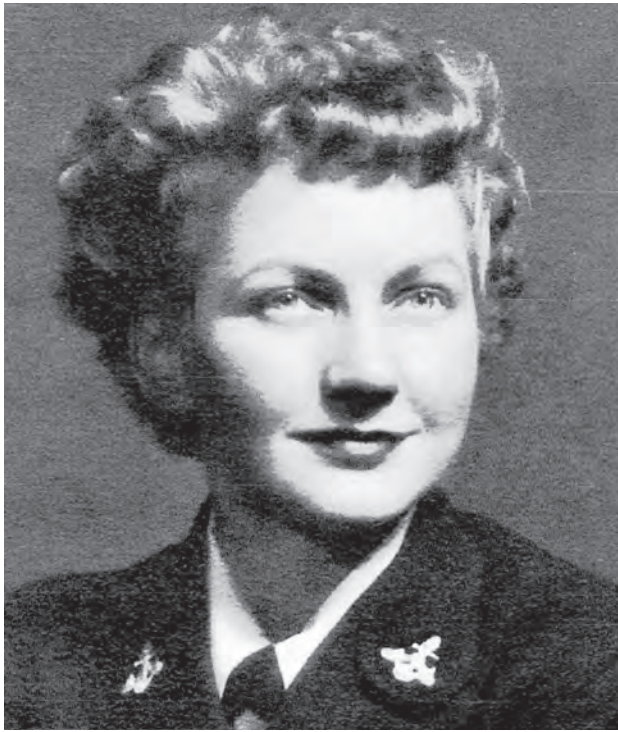


William Rudolf and Molly King, June 30, 1941

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Maxine Meritt Kroll

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104 Years! What an extraordinary life well and fully lived! Documenting the achievements, interests, philosophical bits of wisdom, humor and joie de vivre of everybody's favorite luncheon and dinner date, friend and advisor Maxine Kroll would take another 104 years and another 200-plus Facebook messages. At her recent Witness to the Resurrection Memorial Service at Riverside Presbyterian Church, Bill Schmidt gave a fitting and uplifting tribute to her accomplishments and highlighted her personal history of growing up in Texas, working for the military in the payroll department during World War II, meeting and marrying Dr. Peter Kroll, her husband of 53 years — a naval flight surgeon and cardiovascular surgeon who later headed up the Veteran Hospitals in Florida under the administration of Governor Claude Kirk. Schmidt cited Maxine's numerous commitments to volunteering at St. Vincent's Hospital, the Symphony Guild, the Cummer Museum, The Jacksonville University Library and many more organizations which benefited from her help. Maxine remarked once that her



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makeup (blue eyeshadow accentuating sparkly sapphire eyes) and glowing skin (thanks to Rule #10: "Use Pond's cream every night."), Maxine was a diminutive picture of elegance, determination and energy. While at lunch at Blue Fish with friends for birthday 103, she laughed and talked for hours, then remarked that she needed to go home and freshen up for a dinner party with other friends. Recently, when Maxine remarked that she had to limit herself to one event a day, friends knew she was slowing down. Rule #9: "Surround yourself with younger people. After all, you may outlive your contemporaries." Reverend Dr. Brian Lays got a resounding chuckle from the 200 or so attendees at RPC when he remarked on Maxine's Rule #3: "Don't waste time on boring people." He related that he had called to make an appointment to see Maxine, but she said she was too busy at that time. He was surprised that someone would be too busy to meet with their pastor then joked that maybe he fit into the "#3 boring people category." Of course, as Schmidt remarked, "It took two or three weeks to get on Maxine's dance card." After all, she lived by the rule, "Always be interesting" and she certainly was.

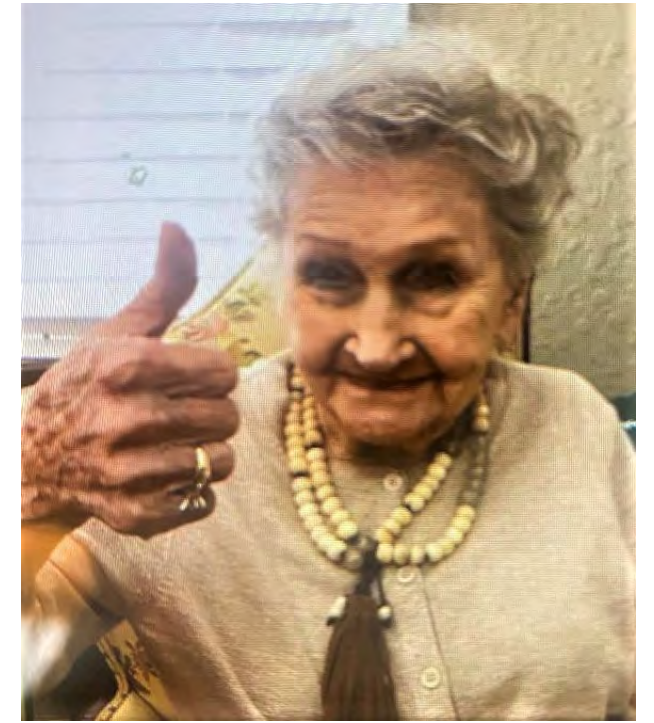
A whiz at texting (always with perfect diction), thanks to friend Clark La Blond, Maxine was the queen of emoticons. Her cousin Nicky Sherwood who traveled from California for the services laughed that Maxine got an iPhone before she did. Maxine became tech savvy in her 80s, splurged on an elliptical machine in her 90s, loved music, painting — she was an accomplished artist - dancing, spy novels, dining out and visiting with friends. Perhaps another rule should be: "Eat Peggy Bryon's pound cake for breakfast every day."

Debrah Gervin, her long-time shopping, driving, social organizing, photo documenting, devoted friend, arranged a lovely reception at Timuquana Country Club where folks gathered to honor this "little dynamo" and it seemed that Maxine would make an entrance at any moment dressed to the nines! Mary Sumner reminisced: "Maxine lit up every room that she came into." Facebook is flooded with comments including "a light has gone out in the world" but Schmidt said, "That light will keep on shining on us and in us."

When Maxine was failing the last couple of weeks before she passed on, cherished friend John Hurtubise told her that

he didn't want her to leave us. "She snapped back that I was selfish and not to worry because God was with her, and everything would work out," he said. Rule # 11: "Have a strong faith." She remarked that she never prayed, but God was her conversational partner, and they chatted all day. Readings from John 14 included comfort for her many best friends: "Do not let your hearts be troubled."

Maxine constantly expressed gratitude for her wonderful life and longevity and for the love and friendships that she cherished. In her last days she charged friends to care for each other and said she would be looking out for everyone from heaven. Peggy Bryan related that she was "always so positive, always looking forward. About an hour before she died, a hospice chaplain sang 'Amazing Grace' at her bedside." The words, "We've no less praise to sing God's praise, than when we'd just begun" reflect her eternal optimism. Thumbs up!



husband had asked her exactly what she had learned in college and she responded with a twinkle in her eyes, "To be a cheerleader!" She could not have been more accurate or prescient. Throughout her amazing life she was everybody's cheerleader. Numerous people commented that when you were with Maxine, she made you feel like you were her best friend - the most important person in the world. Rule #6. "Remember life is not all about you. Always be interested in the people you are with."

John Hurtubise relayed Maxine's life lessons at the service and Rule #7 was: "Always dress up - you will feel better about yourself and be more successful and respected." Always impeccably dressed, with perfectly-coiffed hair, flawless

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JUNIOR RESIDENTS

Episcopal School of Jacksonville celebrates student accomplishments

Episcopal School of Jacksonville (ESJ) is celebrating the many recent accomplishments of its students.

Eight students — Nia Atcherson, Sofia Davila, Tom Commander, William Rosenberg, Claire Huang, Ryan Napoleon, Garrett Davidsen, Sophia Lipari, Parthiv Reddy and Matthew Salek — won first place for their categories at the Northeast Florida Regional Science and Engineering Fair last month. Their victories earned them \$1,600 in cash prizes from universities, local businesses and professional organizations and opportunities to present their projects at the State Science Fair of Florida next month. Additionally, two students were selected for further opportunities: Rosenberg was chosen as the region's representative for the International Science Fair in Dallas, Texas this May; Reddy will be presenting his project at the Genius Olympiad this June in New York.

Another four ESJ seniors— Kate Adams, William Volen, Sean Ramsey and Ella Bisher — were named National Merit Finalists.

The National Merit Scholarship Program selects students based on scores from "...the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test and by meeting program entry and participation requirements."

According to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation, more than 16,000 students were selected as semifinalists and those wishing to advance as finalists must meet many more requirements including maintaining "a record of consistently very high academic performance in all of grades 9 through 12 and in any college courses taken."

Additionally, Cate Bryce Anderson, Avery Blalock, Cohen Chesser, Tom Commander, Natalie Do Amaral, Samira Isack, Natalie Rabil, and Caroline Taylor were named Commended Students and seniors Russell Beard, Halle Taylor, and Gael Malone "were invited to participate in the College Board National Recognition Programs (CBRP) for scoring in the top 2.5% of students who identify as BIPOC."

Feel the rhythm and strike a (yoga) pose

RPDS introduces Music and Movement for early learners



In her Music and Movement class, Mrs. Jennings will walk students through the "fundamentals of music and flexibility."

Students from Riverside Presbyterian Day School's (RPDS) PreK 3 through Kindergarten will spend the year learning about the "fundamentals of music and flexibility" with Mrs. Jennings in her "Music and Movement" class. During this weekly class, students about developing their voices and the basics of musics. In between these lessons, they'll also learn to feel the beat and move to the rhythm with movement dances and exercises. Jennings will also incorporate corresponding yoga moves to go with the week's story during story time.

"I love seeing the students get lost in a yoga story and expanding their imaginations," Jennings said. "It is nice to give students tools to help calm their minds and bodies, and also encourage them to express themselves, move around and just have fun."

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Anila Quayyum Agha (Pakistani American), *A Beautiful Despair*, 2021, lacquered steel and halogen bulb, 60 x 60 x 60 in., Masterpiece Presents photos. Ben Fisher Photography, Courtesy Masterpiece London, 2022.

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Six sign for success

Six seniors at Episcopal School of Jacksonville committed on National Signing Day, Feb. 1, to play a sport in college next year. Episcopal held a special National Signing Day ceremony in the Semmes Gym on the Munneryn Campus. Those from the Class of 2023 who signed were: Sophia Bailey, Colorado Mesa University for lacrosse; Reese Edwards, Florida Atlantic University for beach volleyball; Aubrey Finn, University of South Carolina for swimming; Bradlie Hicks, University of Louisville for rowing; Ella Parker, Coastal Carolina University for lacrosse; and Ralphie Weakland, Drexel University for swimming.



Reese Edwards, Sophia Bailey, Ella Parker, Bradlie Hicks, Aubrey Finn and Ralphie Weakland

18 athletes commit for Bolles



San Jose residents Dowl Bowen, Ella Mickler and James Zebroski, Riverside resident Jeb Allen and Avondale residents Jake Hogan and Spencer Surface were among the 18 Bolles student-athletes representing six different sports honored for committing to a particular college or university to continue their athletic and academic careers.

Family, friends, classmates, coaches and faculty gathered in Davis Gym on the San Jose Campus to celebrate this well-deserved achievement. Athletic Director Matt Morris welcomed everyone, and coaches introduced their respective athletes.

In the spirit of friendship

Ortega Playschool collects children's donations at annual Friendship Chapel

Ortega Playschool hosted its annual friendship chapel early last month. In the spirit of the day, children gathered various donations including diapers, wipes and children's underwear and socks to donate to Community Health Outreach. The event was completed with songs and a talk from Pastor Art of Ortega United Methodist.



Children brought donations for Community Health Outreach at Ortega Playschool's annual Friendship Chapel.



Pre-K 4 classes ended the chapel with a song.

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A high academic standard — coupled with broad arts curriculum — offers students an opportunity to excel in a chosen discipline while preparing them for post-secondary education.

To learn more about the school and its programming, go to **douglasandersonSOTA** on Facebook, or online at **da-arts.org**.

Please visit the **www.da-arts.org** for more information and audition requirements.

Students dazzle at 36th annual Extravaganza

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Douglas Anderson School of the Arts (DA) hosted its 36th annual "Extravaganza" at the Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts on Friday, Feb. 10.

DA students performed 22 acts in the Moran Theatre for the evening's student showcase in a variety of different artistic categories, including theatre, cinematic arts, chamber orchestra, musical theatre, creative writing, piano and an array of instrumental quartets and combos.

Prior to the performances, guests were able to peruse an art exhibition in the lobby area featuring visual and photographic art pieces.

In a statement from mayor's office included in the evening's program, Mayor Lenny Curry stated, "...This evening serves as a testament to your hard work and skills as blossoming young artists. I also want to recognize the teachers and families who have provided the support, encouragement, and guidance needed for these students to flourish."

The theme of this year's Extravaganza was "Landscape," DA Principal Tina Wilson explained in the event program.

"This evening we will share a small glimpse of our day-to-day scenery at DA," she said. "Our landscape depicts days filled with diverse artistic expression by a community that shares an unwavering passion for both arts and education."

The audience was filled with many notable guests, including several City Council and School Board members, mayors from nearby towns, leaders in the arts and higher education and former DA Principal Jane Condon.

This year's Extravaganza's honorary event chair was The Community Foundation of Northeast Florida President Nina Waters.

"Since 2005, as president of The Community Foundation of Northeast Florida, Nina has directed more than \$500

million in grants to community causes, which has included Douglas Anderson," said Wilson. "Her efforts to connect philanthropic individuals and companies in Jacksonville with community organizations has resulted in a better quality of life for everyone."

Also recognized was Gary McCalla, a longtime DA ambassador, member of the Douglas Anderson Foundation and Extravaganza event chair for the 18th consecutive year. Wilson described him as "a man who needs no introduction" and thanked him profusely for his continued support of the school, its programs and its students.

"DA pulls the talent out of the students," said McCalla in an article about his involvement with DA and Extravaganza as event chair in the event program. "It boosts up kids with unrealized potential who wouldn't necessarily shine in a regular school...The valuable arts training provided by the passionate teachers is evident in DA students' work [a]nd success. Wherever they go to pursue their craft...they are prepared."

This year's Extravaganza "Alumni Shining Star" was Chase Finn, who graduated DA in 2009 and has since built a successful career in the entertainment industry. His resume includes leading the post-production team for Queen Latifah's talk show, post-production supervisor with Conde Nast Entertainment, which allowed him to work with several notable publications including "Vogue," "Vanity Fair," "WIRED," "The New Yorker," "GQ" and "Glamour." He is currently the director of video production for "Goop," Gwyneth Paltrow's lifestyle brand.

Finn took to the stage for an interview with current DA students where he shared experiences, advice and insight on what he's learned during his career.

"At DA, I learned how to tell stories that resonate with people and push them to see the world in fresh ways," Finn said in an event program interview. "It's an honor to come back to Jacksonville, and visit my parents (Kevin and Sherry Finn of Ponte Vedra Beach), and reconnect with high school friends, and share my work with the audience at Extravaganza."



Dancers in the evening's final performance, choreographed by Jennifer Turbyfill.



Dancers accompanying the musical performance of "Masquerade" by Aram Khachaturian, trans. A. Kondratiev.



A powerful chorale performance of "The Conversion of Saul" with conductor Jeffrey Clayton.

PHOTOS BY CADY STUDIOS, COURTESY OF DOUGLAS ANDERSON SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

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Science fair flair

Bolles students win 2 of 3 international spots

At February’s Northeast Florida Regional Science and Engineering Fair, Bolles students Sarah Park and Riya Kar secured two of the three available bids for the prestigious International Science and Engineering Fair (ISEF) in Dallas, May 13-19.

Park’s project, titled “Spark Care+: Personalized Music Therapy for Relaxation and Energizing using a Mobile and AI Approach” won first place in the category of Behavioral and Social Science. She is the first student in school history to win a bid to ISEF two years in a row.

Kar’s project, “The Role of VEGF-B and NRP-1 Axis in Regulating Mitochondrial Homeostasis in Ischemic Heart Disease,” was completed with research conducted through the Mayo Clinic SPARK Program. She won first place in the category of Zoology.



Riya Kar and Sarah Park

Six scientists place for St. Paul’s

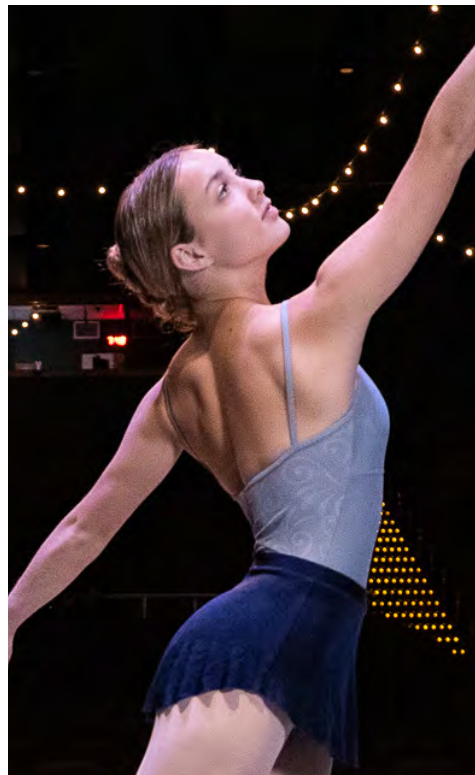


Euan Pascual, Joshua Inocencio, William Petersen, Alex Silba, Viktoriia Galushchak and Marco Chua.

Six St. Paul’s Catholic School-Riverside students earned top awards at the Northeast Florida Regional Science and Engineering Fair, held at the Episcopal School of Jacksonville, Feb. 12 to 15.

- Marco Chua — First place, Junior Earth Science Category — “Wave Force Dissipation: Year 2”
- Viktoriia Galushchak - President’s Award; Lemelson Early Inventor Award; First place, Junior Computer Science category — “How Can People Who Don’t Know Sign Language Communicate with People Who Do?”
- Joshua Inocencio — Second place, Junior Behavioral and Social Science category — “Could a Statement Being Positive or Negative Affect Its Credibility?”
- Euan Pascual — Fourth place, Junior Engineering category — “Energy Rays”
- William Petersen and Alex Silba — UF College of Medicine Junior Division Medicine and Health special award; Second place, Junior Medicine and Health category — “Testing the Efficacy of Antioxidants to Hinder Cell Growth and Its Utility in Cancer Research”

Chua, Galushchak and Inocencio will join the Northeast Florida regional team, advancing to compete at the 68th State Science and Engineering Fair of Florida, slated for April 4 to 6 at the RP Funding Center in Lakeland.



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Assumption Catholic School celebrates 100 years

BY MARY WANSEER
Resident Community News

Assumption Catholic School celebrated its 100th year in January, making it one of the oldest parochial schools in Jacksonville. Alumni members and students' parents along with former and current staff members gathered on the Atlantic Boulevard campus for food, drinks and fellowship to celebrate the milestone.

The more than 200 attendees included 150 alumni. Among them were Carol Attenvaugh and Juliette Howard from the class of '55 and Dr. Richard Sollee from the class of '59. Also present, from the class of '88, was Father Jason Trull, who is in his 18th year serving as Assumption's pastor and was recently elected vicar general of the Diocese of St. Augustine. Father Trull is one of 14 alumni who work at Assumption.

Principal Maryann Jimenez was there, too. She attended Assumption Catholic School during her early years, began teaching 3rd grade there in 2010, became assistant principal in 2013. She moved into her current role two years later.

The festivities included tours of the school. A celebratory Mass was held at Assumption Catholic Church, as the community remains forever united in the Eucharist. Along with praise and worship, prayers of thanksgiving were offered for God's blessings bestowed. And there have been many.

HISTORY

Assumption Catholic School has a long, successful history from its 1923 beginnings at the corner of Gary Street and Naldo Avenue in a building that accommodated only 110 students.

In 1948, the land was purchased on Atlantic Boulevard, and the shipyard administration building that existed on the site was converted into a school that opened in September of the following year.

In 1955, the present Assumption Catholic Church was built on property adjacent to the school, followed by construction of the convent in 1958 as growth of the parish and the school continued.

The year 1965 found Monsignor Harold Jordan leading construction of what has since been named Jordan Hall as well as classroom space now dubbed Barry Hall, allowing for the old auditorium to be converted into a library and media center.

The current Kohls Hall was erected in 1977, freeing Jordan Hall for school use. A preschool was formed and, in 1996, the original school building was completely renovated.

The "Heritage & Horizons" building campaign began in 2002 and allowed the 2008 opening of the Parish Family Center, which includes a gym and classrooms for music and art. Construction of the Early Childhood Learning Center and middle school addition followed soon after and were open by 2016.

The Assumption campus continues to grow. Renovations of four classrooms in 2022 allowed for an expansive STREAM wing. Plans are underway to renovate the playground in the coming summer. Outdoor spaces will be elevated over the long term.

Assumption's faculty and administration have evolved over time as well. In the early years, the principal and teachers were primarily nuns. But since 1977, the principal and most of the faculty and staff have been lay Catholics. Students learn weekly now from the Sisters of the Home of the Mother during liturgical events and in school retreats. Father Trull has led the development and growth of Assumption's Youth Ministry Program.

LOOKING FORWARD

With 100 years behind them, the Assumption community looks forward to the future, knowing that the school has been built on a solid foundation with Catholic principles and values that remain unchanged in an ever-changing society.



Kelly Nance, 2nd Grade Teacher, Ann Fletcher, 1st Grade Teacher, Karen Plemons, 3rd Grade Teacher, Wendy Nelms, 8th Grade Teacher, Alicia Alligood, 3rd Grade Teacher, Jennifer Jardine, 1st Grade Teacher, Jennifer Churchill, Assistant Principal, Susanna Elliott, 3rd Grade Teacher and Kristin Spears, 1st Grade Teacher



Academic Administrator Kelli Waterman and Principal Maryann Jimenez



Sister Kelly, Julian Valbuena (former Assumption staff member for 15 years as PE teacher, athletic director, and assistant principal), Shirley Valbuena (2nd grade teacher who has been with ACS for 37 years), Sister Paulette and Sister Anna

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Runners hit the streets for annual Ortega River Run

BY MICHELE LEIVAS
Resident Community News

Friends and family came out to the Episcopal School of Jacksonville's (ESJ) St. Mark's campus to participate in Ascension St. Vincent's 45th annual Ortega River Run on Saturday, Feb. 25.

The St. Mark's campus has been home to this family-friendly fundraising event for the last 44 years and it is hosted by First Place Sports "as a Grand Prix sanctioned event." Proceeds from the event will go to ESJ's financial aid and scholarship program.

Participants had the option of selecting the 1-Mile Fun Run or the 5-Mile Run/Walk, both offering picturesque routes down tree-lined streets or over bridges.

Gourmet dinners were available for dine-in or pick-up the evening before, prepared by The Florida Yacht Club Chef Stephen Bechan.

Medals were distributed for the first 500 people to complete the one-mile loops; the first 1,200 runners of the 5-mile course received a special collector medal.



Michelle Krueger and Amelia Bjornson



Taylor Hughes, Courtney Hughes and LeAnne Crabtree



Christine Betlock, Dana Chirumbolo and Megan Trumpler



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FROM MY EMPTY NEST PERCH

BY SUSANNA P. BARTON
Resident Community News

It has taken more than two months and a New Year to talk about the December passing of my geri-dog, Emmy Junebug, without wilting into a wailing drivel of snot bubbles and ugly tears. That snarling little beagle stole my heart. This is the job of house pets, I suppose. They come into our lives with extra scoops of unconditional love and joie de vivre and turn our boring old houses into home sweet homes. Emmy J. Schnoogs and her eff-you-all attitude certainly provided this ambiance in our home, for nearly 11 years. Such a doggone legacy — one we are still cleaning out of the carpets today, lol.

I am grateful for the four-legged characters who make our neighborhoods kinder, more interesting places to live — even if they eventually die and leave an emotional mess of us. I'd even go as far to say the pets in our Resident Community are sometimes more interesting than the people who feed them.

Take our remaining geri-dog Dot, for example. She is a very skinny, very anxious French Pointer who wears a cornflower blue fleece 24 hours a day. She is almost completely blind and can't hear a thing, YET she maintains a very active daily schedule that includes such excitement as pillow-thrashing couch parties, kibble-picking, securing the perimeter of the backyard from rats and moles, giving park dogs the what-for and (her favorite), racing up the stairs to play "change the clothes" when Father comes home from work. Dot is definitely more interesting than we are, plus she is making our neighborhood a safer place, one backyard varmint at a time.

Mr. Pickles was the real star of our neighborhood. I mean, it's always fun to see Jim and Susan Towler or their daughter,

Emma, out on a Granada Park stroll, but it was a celebrity-sighting if Mr. Pickles was on the leash. Mr. Pickles was not just famous; he was a legend. Often in costume and sometimes sporting a skin condition or loose tongue, Mr. Pickles was the self-proclaimed Frenchie Mayor of Granada Park. In his Facebook memorial post this summer, his mom of 13 years reflected on Mr. Pickles' robust community service career — greeting neighbors, keeping the park free of lizards and squirrels and traveling to their lake house to get lost in the woods.

Ah, the life of our neighborhood pets.

Piper the rescue dachshund lives across the street from us at the Barakats' house. She's definitely an inside, cat-dog kind of canine but on occasion, she sneaks out an open garage door to share her sausage dog charisma with the neighborhood before she remembers she is OUT. SIDE. (OMG) but can't remember how to get back into the house where Mother is and — oh, the panic. This commotion may, or may not, inspire Dot to give Piper the "What's Yer Name?" from the other side of our front door, because she can't see or hear but, doggonit she can still smell trouble!

I think all the Granada hounds are trying to plot their escape so they can attend the dog party that occurs most mornings on Alhambra Drive West. It's mainly for labs it seems, but word on the street is it's a quality shindig for any dog, two-legged or four. Miller McCormick and his lab pup are usually on the scene along with other morning dog-walkers. I wonder if that sprightly Irish Setter ever attends — the one who prances several yard paces ahead of its owner on daily promenades through the neighborhood. That always amazes me, how some dogs can be off-leash and not be total a-holes — same goes for the German Shorthair Pointer who runs down San Jose Boulevard's sidewalk

with its bike-riding mom. Our dogs would never be that good. They'd see some squirrel and ruin it for everyone.

I can't forget the cats — they, too, are doing their paw-rt to keep our neighborhoods friendly and purr-fect. The Auchter home in Ortega always includes a thriving cat community. Those felines provide everything from emotional support to generous leg buffs and neighborhood pest extermination. An Auchter home wouldn't be complete without at least two-five kitties sauntering about. And what a blessing for their neighbors because — hello, no critters. Now they're into a sweet English Setter named Winnie, who sits in their hedges and watches the cars and the days pass by like a community security officer, not. Sweet Winnie.

My husband David grew up in Ortega and their family's pet legend was a cat named Woemage, that's MEOW spelled backward and that's how he mewed — WOOEWWWMMM. Woemage was the stuff of legends and survived horrible 1980s encounters with car engines and bumpers, ones that rendered him tail-less and head-squished and embarrassingly emasculated. Yet, he persisted. I think that cat lived until he was almost 20 — I know he was on the scene when David and I married. I remember the way he click-click-clicked on the hardwood floors at my brother-in-law Ellis' house on Pine Street. Every neighborhood needs an underdog (cat) superhero to inspire, and Woemage was certainly that.


Though, nothing beats the stories of the Surface family's pet squirrel monkey, Max. I'm not sure how he improved the quality of life in Ortega back in the 1980s, or how all that worked having a little monkey in the house, but allegedly he was "fun to sleep with" and David tucked him in one night during a sleepover. Well, the joke was on David because he woke up with monkey poop all over the pillow — and a tiny little primate attempting to suckle him. I think best to stick to dogs and cats — or better yet, fish. And ALWAYS a smart idea to keep pets out of the bed (though I never did).

One of our favorite neighborhood functions to attend was the annual Blessing of the Animals at All Saints Episcopal Church. The kids LOVED taking our four-legged friends to church. We did, too. All of our animals needed a splash or 10 of holy water to just behave for once. It may have worked a little, too, over the years, but I can't say for certain

because our house is still one big piddle stain and they're to blame. On this topic of church and dogs, another favorite sight was Bishop John Howard processing down the aisle with his German Shepherd, who always looked so faithful sauntering up to the cross and settling in by the lectern. Again, our dogs would never be trusted to partake in such pageantry, but it was a blessing to watch a better-behaved pup rise to the occasion.

Regardless, I can't overstate the importance of our neighborhood pets. They may be messy and obnoxious and embarrassing — they may poop on our pillows or dig up our yards — but they unite us in ways we could never manage on our own. They bring us down a notch — and up into greater, more authentic community connections. I miss my mean little beagle. I miss the way she growled if you tried to pick her up, I miss her sleeping on top of my feet like a 100-pound brick and I miss telling funny stories about her on the line. But I am grateful for the way she made our home — and our neighborhood — a sillier, friendlier, more real-life place to be.

Susanna Barton is not getting another dog — or cat — anytime soon, and definitely is not interested in a monkey. 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 when she's not watching terrible reality television, particularly any of the 90 Day Fiancée franchises. Each month, she will share reflections on neighborhood qualities for which she is grateful.



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LOCAL FOLKS

Rebekah Suwak-Worsham

BY MARY WANSEER
Resident Community News



The Worshams, Costa Rica, summer 2022



Rebekah Suwak-Worsham, Surfer's Beach, Puerto Rico, June 2021

As the vice president of marketing and communications for Goodwill of North Florida for the past two years, Rebekah Suwak-Worsham spends most of her work time behind the scenes. Other than at grand openings for new locations and at the annual Striving to Succeed event, which she described as "a ton of fun," Rebekah is rarely seen in public while in her VP role. However, when she's not on work time, Rebekah is anything but hidden! She is active and engaged within the local community and well beyond.

Rebekah is married to David Worsham, and as much as the duo loves Jacksonville, they often embark on exciting getaways. Their list

is long. In January 2021, David proposed to Rebekah while 1,500 feet in the air on a hot-air balloon ride in New Mexico, overlooking plains with the Rocky Mountains as a backdrop. In June of the same year, they spent their honeymoon at Surfer's Beach in Puerto Rico. "The sunrise there is absolutely breathtaking," she said.

Last summer, for their anniversary, Rebekah and her husband went hiking in Costa Rica. One of their treks included wearing life vests, swimming through rivers and pulling on ropes to make their way to La Leona Waterfall at the base of a volcano. "It was pretty wild," Rebekah said.

In August 2022, the couple went on a music tour. They drove around North Carolina, following their favorite band, Umphrey's McGee. Rebekah has seen them 80 times. "And my husband is in the 75-80 range," she said. They've seen them out west, up north in New York and Boston, and all over Florida. The band comes to St. Augustine every summer. Of course, the Worshams don't miss that! The couple met at a concert and like to keep their shared hobby alive.

To fulfill lifelong dreams they'd both had since childhood, Rebekah and David visited Yellowstone National Park, where they witnessed bison and coyotes in the snow. Though the bears were still in hibernation, Rebekah found thermal steam pools and the fact that a supervolcano hidden beneath Yellowstone could erupt again fascinating. "Honestly, it

was hard to leave, it was so perfect," she said.

"Fishing is also a big part of our lives, and we love to fish for sport," Rebekah said. She finds being out on the water life-giving. Annually, she observes her in-laws' family tradition of spending a week swimming, boating and fishing in Marathon, down in the Keys. Last year, she and David caught a huge skipjack.

No matter how far or near Rebekah and David travel, they always return to Jacksonville. In part, it's for their pets. The Worshams have two adopted cats that Rebekah admits to being obsessed with. She and David take Crash and Nutmeg for walks in Boone Park in cat backpacks, about which Rebekah said, "We think they're cool."

Six years ago, Rebekah and her friend Kate Jolley began a monthly book club of their own because they didn't feel like they belonged in other book clubs, desiring to read mainly memoirs and autobiographies rather than standard novels. Today, their nameless club consists of nine women who have read a total of 55 books together. "It's a very uplifting, inspiring group," Rebekah said, although she admits that many of the subjects they read about are considered difficult topics. For example, one recent pick was about the impact of forced birth control on young, Black females in Alabama. The club members choose books that educate them and encourage strong



Local Book Club: Rebekah Suwak-Worsham, Danielle Russell, Marie Bough, Kate Jolley, and Jessica Garske

discussion that help them better understand the world around them. Other books are much lighter in subject matter, like a recent memoir about a woman who cooked a variety of fruit.

"We're very into music and the arts," Rebekah added. She and David attend live music shows at downtown's 1904 Music Hall, enjoy performances by the Jacksonville Symphony, and look forward to plays at the Moran Theater.

Last Halloween, the couple visited the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens for Spooktacular. "It was such a fun experience!" Rebekah said. Many weekends find them playing on Atlantic Beach with extended family; they regularly fish on the St. Johns River and they try out new restaurants around Jacksonville as often as possible.

Rebekah has been living in the Riverside-Avondale area for six years. David grew up in Venetia near Ortega. They recently purchased the Avondale house they've been living in for five years. "So, we're stayin'!" Rebekah said.



Rebekah Suwak-Worsham and Crash, Boone Park, September 2022



David and Rebekah Worsham with skipjack, July 2022

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Shop local. Eat local. Support local.

We hear these catchphrases all the time, but how many of us are actually doing it? "Locals Care" is a new column by Kerry Speckman that 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 how we can show our neighbors we care to editor@residentnews.net.

Vote like your life depends on it. *Because it does.*

BY KERRY SPECKMAN
Resident Community News

Of all the ways you can show you care about your neighborhood and your city, voting might just be the most important. Oh, sure, it's nice to have neighbors who take out the garbage cans when you're too lazy or forgetful (guilty as charged), or take in your mail when you're out of town. But wouldn't it be even better if all of your neighbors also voted—in every single election—and helped make our city and its people safer, happier and more productive?

Newsflash: Voter participation in this country stinks. In a study by the Pew Research Center, the U.S. ranked 31st out of 50 countries "with highly developed economies and solid democratic traditions" in voter participation. (I guess we can take some solace in the fact that we barely beat out the Greeks, who invented democracy in the first place.) Closer to home, Florida is ranked 25th in voter participation by the U.S. Census Bureau. And here in Duval, our voter turnout for the 2022 general election was three points lower than the state average at 50.4%, according to the Duval County Supervisor of Elections Office. All of that to say, we must get better about voting. With elections coming up this month, there's no better time to talk about why we need to care.

On Tuesday, March 21, Duval County residents will go back to the polls (weren't we just there?) to vote for mayor, city council and property appraiser. Sheriff T.K. Waters, Property Appraiser Jerry Holland and Tax Collector Jim

Overton are running unopposed. If you don't know who you're voting for yet, now is the time to do your research. Visit the candidates' websites and social media accounts. Check out their interviews with local media. Talk to knowledgeable friends and neighbors. Even better, go to an event the candidates are attending and meet them yourself.

If, on the other hand, your voter registration is current and valid but you are not planning to vote, your neighbors have questions. How can you not be interested in how your tax dollars are spent—or not spent? Or reducing crime? Or addressing education issues? Or improving city infrastructure? Or supporting public services? (Remember the Great Recycling Debacle of 2021-22?) Based on a Census Bureau survey of registered non-voters, your reason is likely that you don't like any of the candidates, you're too busy or you forgot. And I'd like to add: You don't think your vote makes a difference.

So, what is a local who cares supposed to do to help the community around election time—besides vote, of course? Allow us to offer some suggestions:

1. Find out if anyone you know doesn't have a way to the polls and offer them a ride. Saving someone a bus trip would be nice, too.
2. Volunteer for a candidate you support. It can be as simple as chatting with friends, or more involved, like making phone calls and leaving promotional door hangers on your neighbors' door knobs.
3. Become a part of the process by volunteering to be a poll watcher or applying to be a poll worker.
4. Employers: Allow staff to come in a little late or leave a little early so they have time to vote.
5. Talk to friends who don't intend to vote. See if you can do anything to persuade them. (Warning: This may involve babysitting...but you'd be babysitting for America!)
6. Encourage others to vote early, especially anyone who uses the old "I forgot" excuse. Early voting begins March 6 and runs through March 19. (If you forget to do something for 14 days straight, especially when you're reminded by your neighbor who cares, you might want to look into ways to improve your memory.)
7. Finally, make sure your neighbors know which district they are in and where they need to vote. With the redistricting, re-redistricting and re-re-redistricting, many folks are confused. At this point, it would have been nice to be able to direct you to the City of Jacksonville's website for the most up-to-date information. Unfortunately, the "current" maps on the city council's webpage are from 2015, with no mention of the considerable changes that have since been made to the districts. (And you wonder why you should vote...)

For more information on all things Duval County Elections, including early voting locations and hours, updated district maps and "Find My Precinct," visit duvalelections.com.

I'm Kerry Speckman and I approve this message.

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Thomas Wilbur Trout Jr.

JULY 23, 1927 – FEBRUARY 9, 2023

Thomas Wilbur Trout JR, lovingly known as Tom and “Papa,” peacefully went home to be with his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ on Thursday, February 9th, 2023. Anyone who was fortunate enough to meet Tom knows that he was a uniquely uplifting person who always made time for friends and strangers alike.

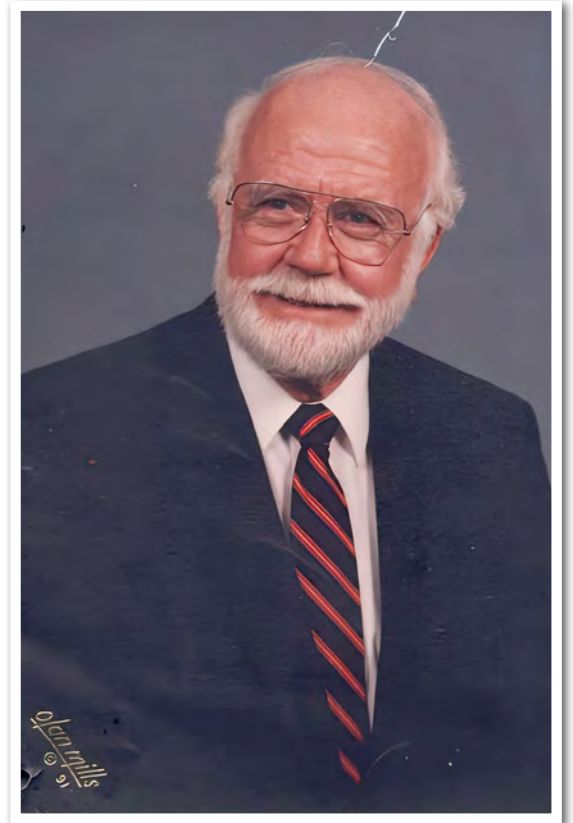
Born in 1927 in Jacksonville, FL, Tom had a rich and storied childhood, growing up in the historic home, Marabanong, and spending his time on the St. John’s River. He graduated from Landon High School in 1945, after which he immediately enlisted in the Navy at the age of 18. He attended both Florida Southern and Stetson Universities where he received a degree in business administration, which launched his career as a successful entrepreneur and as an active member of the Jacksonville business community, including The Rotary Club and The Northeast Florida Builders Assn.

Tom is perhaps most widely known for his prominently displayed billboard sign on I-95 and Bowden Rd in Jacksonville, on which he displayed short messages of wit, wisdom, and humor that have inspired Jacksonville commuters for decades. The Tom Trout construction company and sign have become a true Jacksonville icon, and both will live

on with his son and grandson, Tom Trout III and Tom Trout the IV.

Tom is survived by his wife, Joan Henry Trout, who was truly the love of his life for every moment of every day of their 67-year marriage. Tom and Joan were not only deeply in love every day, but were the best of friends. One story to share is that around 20 years into their marriage when Tom realized his business commitments were cutting into family time, he and Joan spontaneously decided to take up sailing to have dedicated time together; they became avid and accomplished sailors for over 30 years. They also thoroughly enjoyed spending the majority of their time at their lake house in Keystone Heights, FL, where they attended Fresh Start Fellowship Church.

Tom is the proud father of 3 children, Antoinette Silsby (John), Tom Trout III, and Jennifer Porter (Jim). Tom and Joan also have 10 grandchildren and 15 great grandchildren and counting, who now and forever will lovingly know him as “Papa.” He and Joan together have served as an incredible foundation and example of kindness, self-sacrifice, and positivity for their entire family and more, which they would undoubtedly attribute to their relationship with Jesus Christ and the strength and purpose He has created in their lives.



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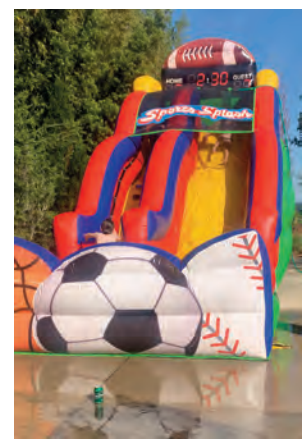
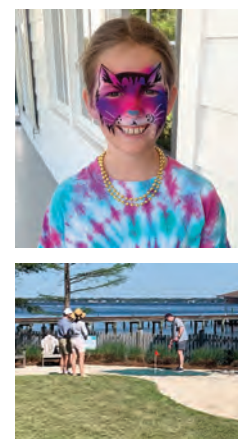
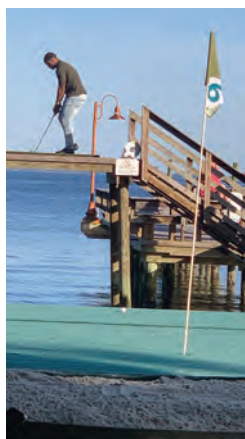
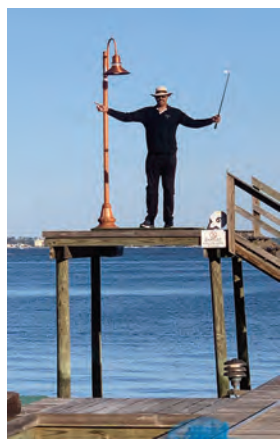
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