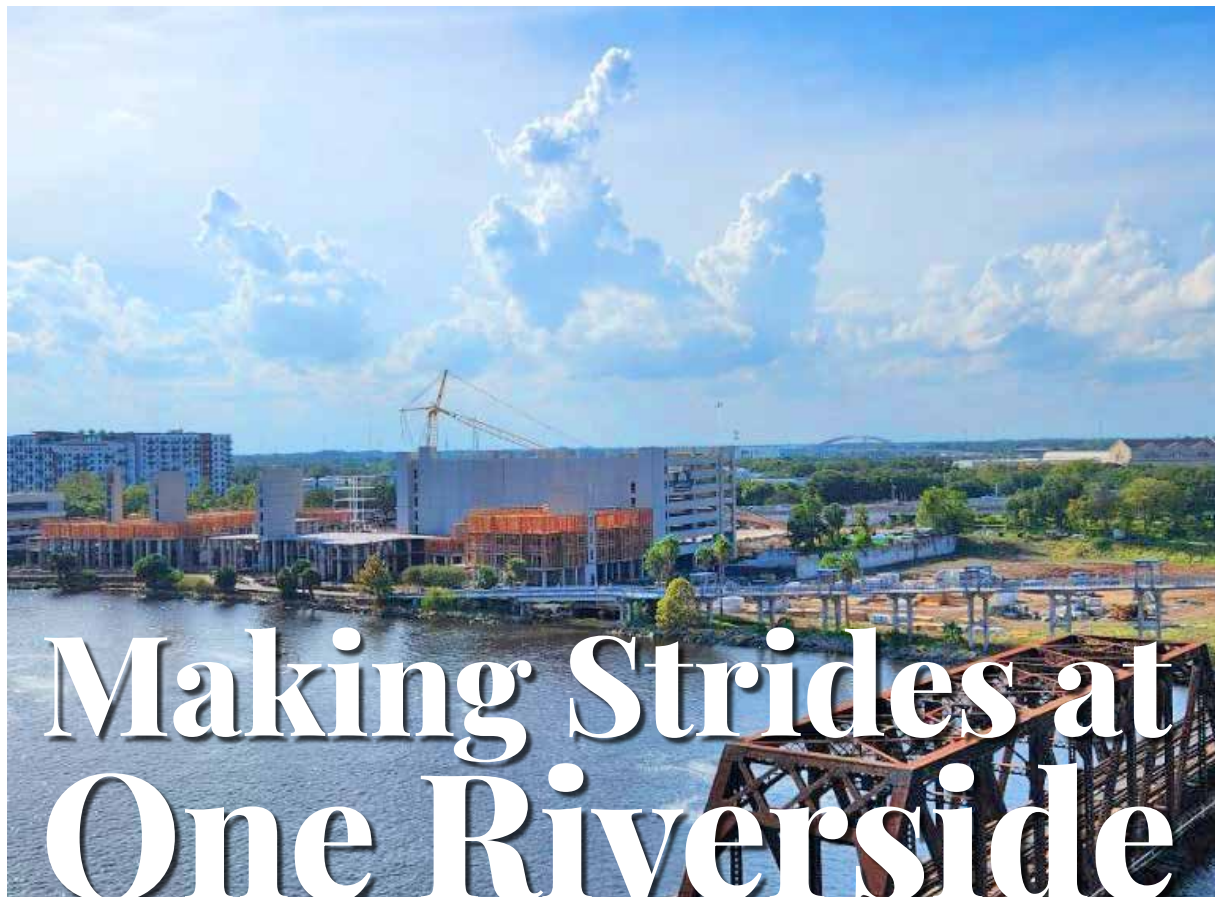


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## Making Strides at One Riverside

Construction is making notable progress at One Riverside, as seen in this photo taken from the Acosta Bridge last month. The mixed-use development replacing the former Florida Times-Union campus will feature luxury apartments, a city park and retail and dining options, as well as its anchor grocery store, Whole Foods Market. City permits were issued in July and August to begin work on this third Whole Foods location in Jacksonville. Ground broke on this first phase of construction in September 2022. According to published reports, Phase 1 is expected to wrap up by the end of this year.



## Compassionate Cuisine

Kristina and Abdi Abbassi, along with Sofia and Val Muenyi, stepped out in support of the Ascension St. Vincent's Community Outreach Program for the 21st Annual Delicious Destinations presented by Miller Electric on Sept. 9.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 24](#)



## Record in Real Estate?

Coined by Jacksonville historian Wayne Wood, the Lane-Towers House has been regarded as "the most spectacular example of Tudor-Revival style architecture in Jacksonville." The home will hit the market as the most expensive in Jacksonville and is being readied for an open house schedule of appointments that begin Sept. 30.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 2](#)



The Innovation Price Tag

Jacksonville continues to progress toward autonomous, driverless vehicles as Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) finalizes plans to break ground on phase 1 of its Ultimate Urban Circulator program while also adjusting its budgetary needs.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 10](#)



Monique and David Miller with Eres McKee

## Raising Funds to Defend the Future

The Downtown Ecumenical Services Council (DESC) raised more than \$330,000 at its DESC Defenders: Into the Future fundraising event last month, celebrating 40 years of providing critical care to people struggling with poverty.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 27](#)




## 69 Years Strong

Robert E. Lee High School's Class of 1954 celebrated their 69th class reunion on Saturday, Sept. 23 at the Timuquana Country Club. Alumni president Wilson Smith welcomed 51 classmates to the luncheon, including Frances Nash Gallogly, Jane Aspinwall, Bobbie Woodman MacDonald, Millie Parks Ogletree and Sue Culpepper (seated).

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# Historic Mansion on the Market

## Auction ask at \$25 million



A historic, Tudor-Revival riverfront mansion located at 3730 Richmond St. is going on the market. The iconic home on the Westside of the St. Johns River is poised to potentially set a record price for real estate with a listing price of \$25 million. It goes up for auction in October, with starting bids between \$2 and \$7 million. The result of this sale will be highly anticipated by realtors, brokers and homeowners in this close-knit neighborhood as well as the citywide housing market.

This isn't just any historic home, its rich history and famed occupants helped to place it on the U.S. National Register of Historic places in 1982. The landmark has housed top titans of Jacksonville's business community throughout its lifespan.

"This home is special, the owner is a unique man, and this home is ready for its next rightful owner," said listing realtor Sperry Lee of RE/MAX Specialists PV [Ponte Vedra], in cooperation with Concierge Auctions.

The home sits on a massive parcel along the St. Johns River with 220 feet of waterfront and room for a yacht along its bulkhead facade. The gated, gilded iron entry welcomes guests under the sprawling oaks of the 2.2-acre estate. For 11-plus years, the home has undergone meticulous renovation, having been gutted and restored beyond its original glory. The estate, from its guest home and six-bay garage to the main home and carriage house, has been brought to modern standards. The current owner and seller, John Hove, likened it to "a modern home in an old suit."

The property has been curated with wood carvings that speak to old-world craftsmanship, leaded glass windows, slate

roof tiles and a driveway pour with blue limestone pavers. From the artistry of the grand, two-story foyer and third-floor ballroom to the Arabesque and Gothic archways, the meticulously engineered details are evident.

"Nobody will be able to say that John Hove took any shortcuts," he said. "They will look back and know that I put my heart and soul into the place."

The property is one of, if not the largest estate in the historic districts, and it's set to bring much attention to the riverfront ranks of the top homes in Avondale, Riverside and Ortega, not to mention the other high-end real estate along the riverbanks of San Marco, San Jose and St. Nicholas. If the auction gets close to the property's list price, it will affect real estate comps for many years to come.

Having played host to only four families within its walls since 1928, the estate has been home to the Lane family, the Towers family and Raymond Mason, Jr., until it was sold to Hove and his late wife, Yvonne, in 2012 for \$2.6 million. It is also a living part of film history, having been a backdrop for six movies. Over the last decade, Hove has invested millions of dollars in renovations to bring the historic home back to life.

"The place was probably heading to a wrecking ball, had we not rescued it. The plan was to restore it to a point where it won't need anything but upkeep for another 100 years," said Hove.

For more on the property, visit [residentnews.net](http://residentnews.net), where more photos will be posted alongside the story.

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# Urban Odor Study Report Revisited

Air Quality Division Manager Mike Williams presented an overview of the findings from the year-long Urban Odor Study, conducted by Envirosuite from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2023, at the Jacksonville Environmental Protection Board meeting in August.

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

For more than a year, *The Resident News* has been following issues surrounding complaints of “noxious odors” detected primarily in Riverside, Avondale and Murray Hill communities, including the launch and conclusion of the City’s 12-month Urban Odor Study conducted by Envirosuite. In its September issue, *The Resident News* reported on a presentation made to the Jacksonville Environmental Protection Board (JEPB) discussing an overview of the findings in the resulting Urban Odor Study Report. As promised in that September article, and in response to reader requests, *The Resident News* made further inquiries with the City regarding the Urban Odor Study and its accompanying report.

## The Timeline

Jacksonville’s Air Quality Division Manager Mike Williams made the presentation at the August JEPB meeting, which reflected a total of 4,544 odor complaints made between September 2020 and July 2023. According to Part VII of JEPB Rule 1, the Environmental Quality Division (EQD) investigates each odor complaint and verifies “with reasonable certitude” its source. Management must then, in turn, validate each investigation.

Citations are issued after five validated complaints from different households within a 90-day timeframe.

According to the presentation,

between September 2020 and July 2023, there were 155 validated complaints for International Flavors and Fragrances (IFF); six for Symrise, Inc.; one for Reichhold, Inc.; two for JEA; and one for Preferred Materials, Inc.

Two citations were issued to IFF in December 2020 and October 2021, respectively. In December 2021, Williams said IFF made changes to its wastewater tank, “involving a temporary pure oxygen diffusion system and partially covering the surface with floating hexagon-shaped pieces.” Odor complaints dropped off shortly thereafter.

“We can’t be sure if that was because of the changes that were made to the wastewater tank or for some other reason,” he said.

IFF installed “full coverage hex pieces, maintaining the temporary pure oxygen system” in January 2022.

The Urban Odor Study began on April 1, 2022, and ended on March 31, 2023.

Symrise received its first citation in spring 2022 and IFF signed a compliance plan in December of that year.

EQD Chief Melissa M. Long said one thing residents can take away from the Urban Odor Study report’s findings is that there were “no unknown sources of odor.”

“The software we used for this study was extremely useful in helping us determine what was going on during off-hours as well as how winds were moving throughout the area when we were receiving complaints,” she said.

## The Study and Equipment

Williams explained that Envirosuite made a presentation to the JEPB in February 2021, after which the JEPB “expressed an interest in a funding proposal.” Later that year, in August, the City Council approved a bill appropriating the necessary funding for the study, which cost \$125,392.

When asked if other companies were considered to conduct the study and what criteria led to Envirosuite’s selection, Long stated that Envirosuite approached JEPB with its proposal, which the board then approved.

“This was not something the Environmental Quality Division went in search of,” she added. “Therefore, no other companies were approached about this type of study.”

As *The Resident News* reported previously, Envirosuite installed 11 eNoses throughout the community for the Odor Study. These eNoses came equipped with three sensors to detect ammonia, hydrogen sulfide and volatile organic compounds, or VOCs. During his presentation, Williams noted the VOC sensors “were not very reliable.”

“Really, the VOC data was good at the beginning of the study; about halfway through, it was almost unusable,” he had previously said.

Additionally, Williams noted Envirosuite did not provide or complete the recommended monthly calibrations for the eNoses.

*The Resident News* inquired whether EQD was concerned that not performing the recommended monthly calibrations would compromise the data collected during the study and if Envirosuite was consulted about the impact skipping those calibrations could have.

In her e-mail, Long responded, “We had a concern about the VOC data once the study got underway and we were observing issues with individual monitors. We discovered that the VOC sensor manufacturer recommended monthly calibration late in the study. Envirosuite was notified any time we noticed issues with the data. They were slow in responding to issues with the sensors, although they did replace some of them.”

A slide included in Williams’ presentation detailing hardware maintenance records reflected the VOC

sensor for eNose 2 was replaced in February and again in April 2022.

In March 2022, eNose 6 had its internal and external battery replaced. The slide reflects maintenance for eNose 5 for “re-seated NH<sub>3</sub> sensor to correct null values” in May 2022.

Four eNoses – eNose 6, 8, 9 and 10 – were all replaced on Nov. 30, 2022.

Long added that there are no plans to request any sort of refund for the sensors, which she said “were not necessarily faulty, they didn’t last as long as anticipated.”

Following Williams’ presentation, a question was asked if Envirosuite provided any explanation regarding the sensor issues.

“They had no explanation,” Williams said.

Long said the City will not be acting on any of the recommendations provided in the Urban Odor Study report, many of which involved additional Envirosuite equipment and software and gathering additional information “such as characterizing emissions and expanding on the pollutant types.”

“EQD will not be moving forward at this time with the purchase of the software platform or equipment, but we may implement other solutions down the road,” she said.

Moving forward, Long explained that the City “will continue to follow the Environmental Protection Board Rule 1 criteria that we have been following for investigation and potential enforcement. We are looking to see if there might be other software programs that we could use.”

## Process Improvements Made

At the conclusion of his presentation, Williams noted that “along with our field efforts and this study and the general attention to odors the last couple years,” procedural improvements have been made at several facilities, including IFF, American Cool Air, Symrise and Reichhold.

According to the city officials, no odor citations have been issued since the odor study’s conclusion. IFF’s odor compliance plan with the city “protects them from citation and enforcement for odor violations while in effect, providing time for them to implement the mitigation measures agreed to in the plan.”

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# Oak Street PUD Clears LUZ Hurdle, Advances to City Council

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The amended Planned Unit Development (PUD) for The Local's proposed third location on Oak Street moved through the Land, Use and Zoning (LUZ) committee at its Sept. 19 meeting.

The PUD – ordinance 2023-0365 – includes the following conditions:

- Limitations to seats: A maximum of 150 seats total, both interior and exterior, with a maximum of 24 patio seats.
- Adjustments to operating hours: Sunday through Wednesday, 6:30 a.m. to 11 p.m.; Thursday through Saturday, 6:30 a.m. to midnight.
- Live entertainment will end at 10:30 p.m. Sunday through Wednesday and 11:30 p.m. Thursday through Saturday.
- Commercial deliveries and dumpster pick-ups will occur between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m.

Landscaping requirements are detailed in an additional condition with the final one laying out requirements related to parking, calling for the owners to “ensure drivers exiting the driveway can see vehicles on Oak Street in both directions. The on-street parking and landscaping may be a sight obstruction, particularly the proposed spaces.”

Plans for the incoming restaurant have been in the works since the original PUD was approved in 2016, though at the time The Roost was the proposed restaurant concept for the space. The PUD includes the two currently condemned buildings that once housed the Deluxe Laundry and Dry Cleaners and Deluxe Launderette and a third building, formerly known as KT's Alteration and Embroidery, which is separated by the existing dirt parking lot.

The PUD will now advance to the City Council for a final vote.



Mayor Donna Deegan heard from District 7 constituents at the Riverside Church at Park and King on Sept. 6.

## Mayor Deegan Converses with District 7

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Mayor Donna Deegan continued her circuit of Community Conversations in District 7 on Wednesday, Sept. 6 at Riverside Church at Park and King, joined by District 7 City Council Member Jimmy Peluso.

“Hearing from you and what's important to you is just incredibly important to this administration,” Deegan said during her opening remarks.

Constituents filled the pews and gathered in the back to listen to the discussion between the mayor and speakers that lined up before the microphone to share their questions, comments and concerns facing Jacksonville as a whole and District 7 specifically. Topics ranged from gun violence and guns laws, homelessness, infrastructure and trash and blight in the community.

In response to comments about blight in the community, Deegan cited the 95% increase in the budget for mowing, edging and trash pickup.

“It's really been focused a lot on the communities that seem to get skipped a lot in terms of that mowing regiment,” she said. “So that will happen more often and that trash pickup – not garbage pickup, but trash pickup – around the community, that budget has vastly increased and that will start Oct. 1.”

Additionally, parking remains a big issue for the older neighborhoods.

“Over at Springfield, I think it's fair to say that we have a challenge when it comes to parking,” said one Springfield resident, who went on to inquire about the possibility and feasibility of parking decals for neighborhood residents.

“It's something I have discussed a little bit with some folks, especially in the historic districts where parking is very limited,” said Peluso. “But it's something that I'd be willing to have conversations about to see what the temperature of the community is.”

Following the event, residents gathered outside on the steps of the Riverside Church at Park and King. As a Riverside Avondale resident of 30-plus years, Susan Fraser said she feels homelessness is one of the bigger issues the neighborhood faces.

“We have a lot of unhoused people; that number is getting bigger every year,” she said.

Despite the issues facing both the city and the district, Fraser said, “I hear hopeful. I hear conversations where it's not a one-way conversation. It's, ‘Here's my issue, and I have a plan.’”

“I'm very encouraged, I think everybody here is really encouraged that there's ideas moving forward and there's plans to make changes,” she said.

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# Unpacking Impact Fees

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Jacksonville has been experiencing exponential growth these last few years in population and development, both residential and commercial.

While this expansion is good for the city in many ways, new developments put strain on existing infrastructure and may require infrastructural upgrades or enhancements. That's where impact fees come into play. The city collects impact fees for new development to account for the added strain - or impact - that new development will have on its surrounding infrastructure.

In Jacksonville, those are called mobility fees, and they are assessed and collected within the Citywide Mobility Fee Program.

Assessment for mobility fees is determined by the "increased intensity in use and demands on public infrastructure," said Transportation Planning Division Chief Laurie Santana. Contributing factors are the property's Mobility Zone (of which there are 10) and the "new daily traffic" the proposed development would generate. A greater increase in daily generated traffic would have a larger impact on mobility fees. Santana added the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) can provide "mobility credits" to developers interested in bringing a project to the downtown area "to reduce or eliminate the fee, provided they are furthering our mobility goals."

Michael Herzberg is the vice president of development with Sleiman Enterprises, a Jacksonville-based commercial real estate and development firm. Before joining Sleiman, he worked for the City of Jacksonville as the chief of comprehensive planning division, the precursor encompassing what is now the planning division. He explained that the city's Planning and Development Department is tasked with maintaining the funds collected through these mobility fees and ensuring they "go to the prescribed projects or improvement projects that the mobility zone identified."

The precursor to the mobility program, Herzberg said, was transportation concurrency.

"[The mobility program] is a much better alternative to concurrency because concurrency encouraged people to go where capacity was available, which was normally in the hinterlands further away from the infrastructure, so we promoted sprawl by doing concurrency," he said. "The mobility program instead recognizes where the center is and where our greatest density and says, 'We're going to charge you more as you get out to those rural areas because we have to drag the infrastructure out to you.'"

In June 2021, Governor Ron DeSantis signed House Bill 337, which, among other

things, placed limitations on how often and by how much a local government can change or increase impact fees.

Michael Balanky, president and CEO of Chase Properties, said the passage of that bill allows developers "to better project what the final costs will be" for a proposed development.

"By them limiting how they can change and when they can change to some extent, it allows developers to better forecast their model to make sure it's going to still work when they finally break ground," he said.

Every five years, Santana explained, the City conducts a "transportation analysis and long-range travel demand forecast modeling of future land use and potential development impact," in conjunction with the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Long Range Transportation Plan model - or LRTP model, for short.

The requirements of this implementation process are detailed in Chapter 655 Part 5 of the City's ordinance code.

Mobility fees apply to both residential and commercial construction, although Herzberg explained that for homes, mobility fees are only collected when the home is built, not with each subsequent sale and purchase of the same property.

The City details some exemptions to mobility fees, which, according to Development Services Division Chief Ellyn Cavin, include developments related to "all public educational and ancillary plants," private schools and related facilities (other than daycare), and public transit stations, terminals and related parking structures, among others.

The Resident News reached out to the DIA for an interview regarding impact fees; the DIA declined and referred us to the City.

In addition to impact fees collected by the City, capacity fees are collected by JEA. The Resident News will explore this fee in a follow-up article.

## DETERMINING IMPACT FEES: Transportation Planning Division Chief Laurie Santana details the five-step methodology used to develop mobility (impact) fees.

- 1. Goals and Objectives:** Delivering the comprehensive plan with goals and objects to guide future growth;
- 2. Growth:** Forecasting the land growth and associated growth in travel demand;
- 3. Impacts:** Evaluating the current operations and how future operations will be affected by growth;
- 4. Mitigation:** Identification and prioritization of cost-feasible, multi-modal transportation capacity projects and construction costs;
- 5. And Fee:** Calculation of base mobility fees as a cost per unit of demand (vehicle mile traveled, or VMT) by zone.



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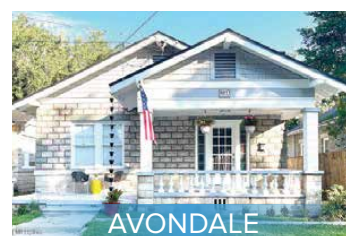
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(VERDICT, 5/4/2022)

PERSONAL INJURY: TRUCKING CRASH

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KATHLEEN THOMAS\* V.  
GEICO INSURANCE COMPANY

**\$14.4 MILLION**

(VERDICT, 8/5/2022)

PERSONAL INJURY: CAR ACCIDENT

*\*Names changed to protect client privacy*

---

JOHN AND DEBRA SMITH\* V.  
LOCAL GLASS COMPANY,  
OUT-OF-STATE GLASS COMPANY\*

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PERSONAL INJURY: WORKPLACE NEGLIGENCE

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An updated rendering of the Autonomous Innovation Center, JTA's planned operations and maintenance facility on Bay Street. This will be the command and control center for the Bay Street Innovation Corridor.

# Budget Bumps to \$65.6M for Autonomous Vehicles

## An update on the Ultimate Urban Circulator Program

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

At its September meeting, the Jacksonville Transportation Authority (JTA) board approved an additional \$15.5 million in the budget for the Bay Street Innovation Corridor (BSIC) – the first of three phases in its Ultimate Urban Circulator (U2C) program.

This brings the BSIC budget to \$65.6 million.

JTA CEO Nathaniel Ford called the U2C a “lighthouse project” that has garnered national attention. Already

several years in the making, the U2C plans to bring driverless, autonomous vehicles (AVs) first to the Bay Street corridor before advancing into its next two phases, which involve a downtown service expansion – by modernizing and converting the existing Skyway (Phase 2) – and expanding into other neighborhoods (Phase 3).

“When we’re all said and done, we will deliver on our promise to keep, modernize and expand the Skyway with

over 10 miles of autonomous vehicle service, revitalizing the downtown urban core of Jacksonville and providing seamless mobility solutions for all,” explained JTA Senior Vice President and Chief Infrastructure and Development Officer Greer Johnson Gillis during her presentation to the JTA board prior to its meeting.

According to Gillis, the \$65.6 million budget accounts for the higher cost of labor and materials the construction industry has been experiencing these last few years. The additional \$15.5 million provides funding for the following items:

- \$9.4 million for the Autonomous Innovation Center, the operations and maintenance facility JTA plans to bring to Bay Street for the 12 to 15 autonomous vehicles (AVs) initially planned to operate within the Bay Street Corridor. This corridor will cover a three-mile loop traveling between Pearl Street, the downtown core and the sports and entertainment complex.
- \$2.4 million for a dedicated, independent cybersecurity system
- \$2.7 million for design enhancements, including those required by the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) and the Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB), custom station designs and locations and lighting designs.

The \$15.5 million also includes a \$1 million in-kind contribution from the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization.

The BSIC itself is broken down into three phases. Its first phase – design – is 60% complete. Phase 2 is construction with the third and final phase being operations and maintenance.

Current timelines anticipate groundbreaking on the BSIC this December, with “shovels in the ground” the following January, explained Gillis. An anticipated two-year construction window will lead to a three-month “burn-in” period to test the AVs. JTA expects travel for public service to begin June 2025.

“Most importantly, we will have a five-year operations and maintenance plan as part of this contract, so our partners will operate and maintain the system for us for five years,” Gillis said.

Phase 2 of U2C will see funding provided by the local option gas tax in the amount of \$246.7 million; an FTA RAISE grant of \$1.72 million will allow JTA to begin Phase 3 planning.

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<b>23-MONTH TERM</b>	<div style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold;">4.65%</div> <div style="font-size: 0.8em;">APY*</div> <div style="font-weight: bold;">\$50,000 Minimum to Open</div>
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– Greer Johnson Gillis  
JTA Senior Vice President and Chief Infrastructure and Development Officer

“We do have a strong opportunity to get federal funding to support both Phase 2 and Phase 3,” Ford stated.

Ford went on to add U2C offers capabilities to be “scalable” and “flexible” that simply are not available in existing mobility options like buses, railcars or streetcars.

“You’re talking about a system here [where] frequency can scale up and down based on time of day, day of week, events of downtown, routes can be changed,” he said.

This fall, in partnership with FSCJ, JTA will also launch an autonomous vehicle service on the FSCJ Downtown campus, that will operate a one-mile loop between the President’s office, the Advanced Technology Center and the cafeteria.

“We’re excited about this effort because it shows that seamless mobility options are available now,” she said.

JTA will have to return to the DDRB to present the changes made to the designs for BSIC’s Autonomous Innovation Center following the August DDRB meeting and conversations with community stakeholders, including the LaVilla Heritage Committee.

It hopes to reconvene with DDRB in October.

While autonomous vehicles may soon offer alternative modes of transportation for residents, Go Tuk’n already offers Tuk’n Ride, an eco-friendly, pay-to-ride shuttle service covering Downtown, LaVilla, Brooklyn, 5 Points Riverside, Avondale and parts of Murray Hill.

Residents will recognize the familiar Tuk Tuks cruising through their neighborhoods, sometimes on private tours showcasing the art, architecture and history of Jacksonville – or its food or brewery scenes – other times shuttling passengers in privately-arranged transportation. Since 2019, Go Tuk’n has also offered its shuttle service on Thursday from 5-9 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 5-11 p.m.

In April, the locally owned company offered extended hours on Thursdays to accommodate for Downtown Vision’s free concert series, Jax River Jams.

“It’s a great way to avoid all of the parking issues that exist in all of those areas for sure,” said Stephanie Dale, who launched Go Tuk’n with her husband, Stephen Dix, in 2018.

Tuk’n Ride is made possible through a sponsorship from the Jacksonville Transit Authority, Dale explained, and prices range between \$3 and \$11. While pricing may soon be changing, Dale said Go Tuk’n works to keep the shuttle pricing “reasonable.”

“It just really warms my heart to know that we’ve kind of brought a little piece of a mode of transportation that’s been around the world for a very long time,” she said.

Like other rideshare services, passengers can book rides on Tuk’n Ride through an app – available for Apple and Android. To learn more about Go Tuk’n, Tuk’n Ride or to download the app, visit [gotukn.com](http://gotukn.com).

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A rendering of "Concept 2," the selected design for the enhanced and updated Duck Pond at Riverside Memorial Park.

# A "21st Century Pond" Still Months Away for Riverside Memorial Park

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Residents will have to wait at least until next summer for visible work to begin on Riverside Memorial Park's reimagined Duck Pond.

The *Resident News* reported on a community meeting this past February to discuss plans for enhancements and improvements for both the Duck Pond and the Willow Branch Creek in Willow Branch Park, two parks in the historic Riverside and Avondale communities. Both of these projects, as reported, have funding through the Capital Improvement Plan.

Two design concepts for the Duck Pond were presented during the meeting with Concept 2 as the selected proposal for the "21st century pond." City of Jacksonville Director of Parks, Recreation and Community Service Daryl Joseph wrote said that this design features "an expanded footprint, combined lily and formal pond areas with a natural edge."

While the pond will remain oval in shape, the upgraded design will feature a "reinterpretation of a pedestrian bridge," he said.

GAI Consultants was the firm contracted by the city to complete the designs for the new duck pond. Currently, engineering work at the pond is underway, with groundwater monitoring expected to begin this winter. Groundwater monitoring is the process by which the City can identify water flow and levels, which, in turn, will aid in designing "a more sustainable pond." Aerators have been installed in the pond as well to address water management concerns while maintenance staff routinely cleans the sidewalks and clears away any debris from the pond and surrounding areas.

Once all the engineering plans are completed, Joseph said, work on the pond will begin. This is anticipated to start in summer or fall of 2024 and will take approximately six to nine months.

# Housing Market in Flux; Inventory Increases 11%

While outside temperatures may continue to soar as fall approaches, the opposite is true of Northeast Florida's housing market. A cooling period has begun with the inventory of single-family homes increasing in August, while pending sales and prices are down.

"Home affordability took a slight upward tick, but overall housing is significantly more expensive than this time last year," said Diana Galavis, 2023 president of the Northeast Florida Association of REALTORS®. "Pending sales were down, which is heavily due to interest rates. Buyers now have an opportunity to preview more active

inventory, and there are more new listings entering the market."

While affordability is still lower than it was last year, the index in August was higher than it was in July, which is a good sign for buyers. The higher number means greater affordability. The region's months' worth of supply rose 10% to 2.7 months. The median sales price for single-family homes fell 3% to \$383,000 and was down 1.8% from August the year before.

"The median sales price was reduced slightly due to buying power," said Galavis.



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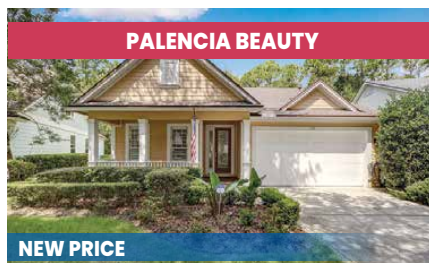


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# Council Says “Hard Pass” to Hospitality Tax

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The conversation surrounding the establishment of a homelessness trust fund through a specialized food and beverage tax came to a halt after the City of Jacksonville’s Rules Committee voted 6-to-1 to withdraw Local Bill J-1 (2023-0582) at its meeting Monday, Sept. 18.

It will now advance to city council with the committee’s recommendation to withdraw.

The resolution was co-introduced by Council Members Michael Boylan (District 6) and Jimmy Peluso (District 7).

It called for an amendment to section 212.0306 of the Florida Statutes to grant the City of Jacksonville the authority to levy certain food and beverage taxes with the goal of providing “funding for programs aimed at reducing homelessness and domestic violence,” as explained in the bill summary.

“I think the opposition that we saw, the same opposition would probably come out and be just as loud as they were this go around. And I just don’t see my fellow council members as having either the backbone or the motivation to move through this sort of legislation.” – Jimmy Peluso  
Council Member

Had the resolution passed at the city council level – unlikely, now that it is advancing with a recommendation to withdraw – the resolution would have gone before the Duval County Legislative Delegation. If it received the delegation’s support, it would have advanced to Tallahassee for the 2024 state legislative session, beginning in January. If the resolution passed at the state level, the conversation would have returned to Jacksonville to begin research, conversation, debate and, eventually, voting on the taxes themselves.

The taxes in question were a 1% tax on food and beverages, alcoholic or otherwise, “in establishments that are licensed by the state to sell alcoholic beverages for the consumption on the premises, except for hotels and motels” and a 2% tax on food and alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages in hotels and motels only, with certain exemptions where applicable.

This tax is modeled after one implemented by Miami-Dade County, which established its own Homeless Trust to administer the proceeds of its 1% food and beverage tax. According to the Miami-Dade Homeless Trust website, Miami-Dade is

the first county in the country to establish this dedicated funding stream by way of this 1% tax.

The conversation surrounding a “dedicated, recurring revenue source” to address the city’s homelessness issue emerged in the Special Committee on Critical Quality of Life Issues’ December 2022 report, which cited the Miami-Dade model as an example.

The issue up for debate at the committee meeting, however, was not the tax itself but rather the City’s petition to possess the authority to levy the tax.

Representatives from the restaurant and hospitality industry came out in force to oppose the J-1 bill, arguing that, while they support efforts to resolve the city’s homelessness crisis, the solutions should not be funded solely by taxes levied on their industry, particularly after all the hardships their businesses have endured in the years during and following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Seeking to assuage these concerns at the committee meeting, Boylan said, “I totally understand and appreciate it shouldn’t be burdened to a single industry. There are other options we are taking a look at and will take a look at as we pursue this.”

“I understand the concerns from our friends in the restaurant industry,” said visiting Council Member Peluso. “But they’re talking about an issue that’s not before us. We’re not talking about a tax today, nor are we in the next several weeks...No one should believe that there’s going to be some kind of tax that’s going to hit them anytime in the next probably several years.”

Ultimately, diners would be responsible for paying the 1% tax as it would be added to their total bill, along with any existing applicable taxes.

Council Member Raul Arias stood in staunch opposition to the bill and argued that “the conversation has been had already” about seeking all available funding sources beyond a tax for the restaurant and hospitality industry.

“When you’re saying, ‘Having the conversation to explore other options,’ there are no other options – not right now,” he said. “Not with the purpose of this J-1 bill.”

After a lengthy committee debate surrounding the J-1 bill and extensive public comment, which included significant opposition, Boylan eventually made a motion to withdraw the bill.

Before doing so, though, he stated, “I will only vote for a withdrawal – and if my members of this committee support that vote for a withdrawal, I’m also going to count on it as a vote for support of continuing to develop a dedicated funding source for this pervasive issue in our community.”

In response, Council Member Terrance Freeman referenced a bill he is currently working on regarding a potential “dedicated funding source,” though he declined to speak on it in any detail during the meeting. Earlier in the meeting Council Member Joe Carlucci and City Council President Ron Salem mentioned items they’re working on regarding this issue as well.

Following the committee meeting, Peluso expressed his dismay over the recommendation for withdrawal and said he was “not at all” hopeful that a similar resolution would be reintroduced in the future.

“I think the opposition that we saw, the same opposition would probably come out and be just as loud as they were this go around,” he said. “And I just don’t see my fellow council members as having either the backbone or the motivation to move through this sort of legislation.”

The J-1 bill will move on to city council for a final vote.

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# Fackler Appointed Acting General Counsel

BY MICHELE LEIVAS



Michael Fackler

Attorney Michael Fackler was appointed acting general counsel for the City of Jacksonville on Friday, Sept. 29.

The interim general counsel was Bob Rhodes.

"Michael is well respected in the legal profession and community. He brings to the table nearly two decades of legal experience, unimpeachable character, and bipartisan support," said Mayor Donna Deegan. "As our city continues to grow and our legal needs become more complex, I look forward to bringing him on board as our next General Counsel."

Fackler's 20 years of legal experience includes being a partner at Milam Howard Nicandri & Gillam P.A., a local law firm, and previously clerking for the Honorable Harvey E. Schlesinger, U.S. District Court Judge for the Middle District of Florida. He previously served as president for the Jacksonville Federal Bar Association and an adjunct professor at the Florida Coastal School of Law.

His community ties include various leadership positions on the board of the Jacksonville Historical Society. He currently sits on the board for the Jacksonville Area Legal Aid and Riverside Presbyterian Church Basketball League.

Fackler's appointment comes following the withdrawal of Deegan's initial appointment for General Counsel, former District 7 City Council Member Randy DeFoor. After meeting significant opposition for her appointment as the City's lead attorney, DeFoor issued a statement on Sept. 13 officially withdrawing her name for consideration.

Her statement read, in part, "Thank you to Mayor Deegan for nominating me to serve as General Counsel for her and the Consolidated Government of Jacksonville, the City I love. In the best interest of both, I withdraw my request for consent to the nomination. My support for this Mayor, and my belief that we must as a city unite in support of her is undiminished; we must rise above politics to create a better environment for all of us."

That same day, Deegan issued a statement regarding DeFoor's withdrawal.

"I'm grateful that Randy was willing to continue serving the city we both love. I stand by her impeccable character and qualifications. Randy has the support of all the city's independent authorities and a large, bipartisan coalition of community and business leaders. Jacksonville needs a General Counsel who has her vast experience, commitment to service, and belief that unity is our only path forward. We will continue moving ahead with those qualities in mind," it said.

The Qualifications Review Committee (QRC) will begin reviewing Fackler's qualifications, per the city charter, in October. Once the QRC approves Fackler's qualifications, his appointment will advance to city council for final approval.

# City Council Approves Florida Blue Office Space for JSO

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office's (JSO) Homeland Security Division will soon be getting new office space in Brooklyn's Florida Blue office tower.

Currently, 135 of the division's 205 employees are housed at a JSO facility at the intersection of Liberty and Beaver streets while the remaining officers are at additional off-site locations.

At a Sept. 5 Neighborhoods, Community Services, Public Health and Safety Committee meeting, JSO Homeland Security Division Chief Steve Gallaher said, "This will enable us to grow not only for what we have but for the 10-year projection [of 250 employees]."

In a 16-to-0 vote at its Sept. 12 meeting, the Jacksonville City Council approved Ordinance 2023-0494, authorizing the lease for the new office space.

A lease will be executed between the City of Jacksonville and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida, Inc. for 58,959 square feet of office space across the first, ninth and 10th floors at the Florida Blue building located at 532 Riverside Ave. Included in the lease is 3,567 square feet of garage space in addition to the "five parking spaces per 1,000 rentable square feet."

The legislative summary stated the JSO is the lease's designated oversight agency. The lease includes an initial rate of \$20 per square foot for the office space, and \$6 per square foot for the additional garage space, with an annual 3% escalation rate.

A tenant improvement allowance of \$3.45 million will be provided by Florida Blue while JSO will be required to contribute \$1 million for tenant improvements, which will come from JSO's fiscal year 2022-23 budget. Additionally, "the landlord will oversee and manage the build-out of all leased areas at a 'not-to-exceed' cost of \$5,447,950."

The initial lease term is 149 months, with two, five-year renewal options. Per the bill's legislative summary, the new lease goes into effect in the fiscal year 2023-24. The costs for the lease will be included in the new budget, which went before city council for approval on Sept. 26.



New office space for JSO Homeland Security Division will soon be available at the Florida Blue Building on Riverside Avenue.

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# MOVERS & SHAKERS



Wesley and Anke Deason

## Deason Duo Team Up at DeVore Capital

Husband-and-wife team Wesley and Anke Deason have joined construction, real estate, and development firm DeVore Capital: Wesley Deason as COO and Anke Deason as vice president of operations.

Wesley Deason brings more than 10 years of experience in the construction industry. Previously the owner of Str8Line Consulting, he has been working as a consultant with DeVore Capital since 2020. Anke Deason has more than 25 years of sales and management expertise, which includes more than 10 years of experience in the roofing industry.

“Wesley’s visionary leadership and strong business acumen will help us guide our organization towards sustained growth and success, and he has a passion in providing excellent customer service and helping homeowners with their roofing needs,” said DeVore Capital CEO Scott DeVore. “Meanwhile, Anke is an accomplished leader with a solid history of achievement in office operations, customer service, sales and marketing, account management and relationship building. With their combined scope of knowledge in business operations, they both make a great addition to our management team.”

## Hightower Appointed Board Chair for Five Star Veterans Center

Michael R. Hightower has been appointed board chair for Five Star Veterans Center, bringing nearly 40 years of government and legislative relations expertise to the organization. His appointment will bolster the organization’s ongoing efforts to provide comprehensive support to veterans as they transition to civilian life.

A visionary leader with an exceptional track record, Hightower’s career spans both public and private sectors. Prior to his appointment, he served as the Chief Public and Stakeholder Affairs Officer for JEA, from which he retired in spring 2019. That role showcased his ability to foster relationships and navigate complex regulatory landscapes. His JEA legacy also includes a 16-year tenure on its board of directors, culminating in two terms as chair.

Prior to JEA, Hightower played a pivotal role over a three-decade career with Florida Blue. As the Vice President of Government and Legislative Relations, he engaged with political leaders at all levels, solidifying his reputation as a consummate diplomat and advocate for change. He chaired numerous organizations and civic and trade associations, including the U.S. Naval Academy, Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce and the Florida Insurance Council.

Beyond his professional achievements, Hightower exemplifies unwavering dedication to community service, passionately committing his time, talent and leadership to various boards and commissions. His work in these capacities has left an indelible mark on the organizations he’s been a part of, reflecting his commitment to making a positive impact.



Michael R. Hightower



Whitney Meyer

## Meyer Joins Sulzbacher Board

Whitney Meyer has been appointed to the board of directors for Sulzbacher. Meyer is the Senior Vice President and Chief Community Impact Officer for the Jacksonville Jaguars. She is responsible for the development and implementation of the Jaguars community impact initiatives, including operations of the Jaguars Foundation, Inspire Change and Social Justice Initiatives, and community activities in connection with local development projects.

Currently, she serves on the Florida Sports Foundation Board, PS27 Foundation Board, JAX Chamber Hightower Fellowship Board and the World Affairs Council Board. She is also a frequent volunteer for the Friends of Boone Park South.



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# Cross Country for a Cure Cyclists Complete 5,000-mile Journey

After a 45-day journey, which started in Anchorage, Alaska, Wolfson Children's Hospital welcomed back cyclists Moi Monroe and Jason Rogers from their cross-country cycling ride on Sunday, Sept. 3. Traversing Canada and the United States, the pair traveled nearly 5,000 miles by bicycle with the goal to raise awareness for families battling childhood cancer as well as raise money for childhood cancer programs at Wolfson Children's Hospital and the Georgia-based Mattie's Mission. Each day of the ride was dedicated to a child who has had or currently has cancer. The current fundraising total for the initiative has surpassed \$140,000.

"As hard as the ride was, we continually reminded ourselves that this cycling challenge was nothing compared to what childhood cancer patients and their families go through fighting this disease," said Monroe. "It gave us a daily dose of strength even on the worst of days."

Monroe and Rogers's arrival at Wolfson Children's Hospital coincided with the start of Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.

Monroe and Rogers had a police escort for their Sept. 3 arrival at Wolfson Children's Hospital.



Still donning their blue and yellow cycling gear, cyclists Moi Monroe, second from left, and Jason Rogers, fifth from right, presented more than \$144,000 in donations.

Fans gathered to show support for Monroe and Rogers's cross-country ride.

# Flipping for Flops

Many people have a bucket list. Troy Winn's just came with a shovel, sand and flip-flops.

The 75-year-old mother of two, grandmother of three, and great-grandmother of two is beginning the fourth quarter of her life with a new endeavor, and she's bringing her son, Chris, along for the ride.

The duo just opened Flip Flop Shops Jacksonville in Five Points, a dream the former Ms. Senior Jacksonville Winn had for them for a long time. Son and partner Chris Winn moved back from New York City by way of Nashville to join his mother in this venture. His background in retail and the fitness industry led him to the decision to open a retail store in the historic Five Points district of Jacksonville.

"Having grown up in Jacksonville and returning some many years back now, I am so proud of our city," said Troy Winn. "We are having so much fun watching it grow and providing an opportunity to give back through various added-value events for charity. We are hoping to be a fixture in the historic Riverside/Five Points community for many, many years to come."

The store officially opened on Saturday, Aug. 12, and celebrated with a grand opening on Sept. 2, with a wide selection of name-brand casual footwear, notably, with lots of flip-flops, and an assortment of outerwear and accessories.

"We are feeling so very blessed. We had a wonderful turnout for our Grand Opening. People were so gracious and complimentary as to our store and the large variety," she said.

**Flip Flop Shops Jacksonville is located at 1620 Margaret St., #104. Store hours are Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.; Sunday, 12-6 p.m.**



Mother-and-son team Troy and Chris Winn

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# Big Names Step In for Freed to Run

This year's Freed to Run Challenge, Nov. 17-18, will have some major names behind it, thanks to local philanthropist Delores Barr Weaver and legendary Boston Marathon winner Jack Fultz.

The Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund has offered a multi-year challenge grant, matching \$25,000 in donations to the 2023 Freed to Run Challenge, provided the event raises at least \$75,000 from other donors. In addition, over the following two years, the fund will match a gift of up to \$25,000 from a single donor each year, dollar-for-dollar, provided that at least \$50,000 can be raised from additional donors. The challenge grant is designed to help the Freed to Run Challenge meet its \$100,000 fundraising goal each year.

Weaver has a history of raising funds through running that goes back more than three decades, when she offered a matching challenge grant to a group of runners who would compete in the Boston Marathon. The funds had gone to the Claudia Adams Barr Program in Innovative Basic Cancer Research, which Weaver had established in 1987 at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in memory of her mother, Claudie Adams Barr, who died of breast cancer.

Dana-Farber recruited Jack Fultz, a legendary Boston Marathon winner in 1976, to build and coach a team of 19 charity runners training for that race, and together that team raised \$51,000 to trigger Weaver's challenge. Since 1990, the Dana-Farber Marathon Challenge has raised more than \$122 million for the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute.

In November, Fultz will join local marathon-running lawyer and fellow Georgetown University alumnus Mike Freed for the Freed to Run Challenge, a 24-hour relay event where participants will complete laps around the Duval County Courthouse to support Jacksonville Area Legal Aid's Shelter for Elders endowment to fund legal aid for area seniors facing housing instability.

"We are honored and proud that Jack Fultz is taking the time to return to Jacksonville, and we hope the community will turn out to meet him," Freed said.

To donate to or register for the Freed to Run Challenge, visit [jaxlegalaid.org/freedtorun](http://jaxlegalaid.org/freedtorun).



Suzanne Winkler's husband of 21 years, Bradley, and their children Ava, 16; Bradley J., 14; Grace, 11; and John, 8, joined her in accepting her Hall of Fame induction.

# Winkler Named to Hall of Fame

Suzanne Winkler, head volleyball coach of Bishop Kenny High School, was inducted into her high school alma mater, Holy Name (Berks Catholic) Hall of Fame. Winkler was a standout player receiving many academic and athletic awards during her four-year high school career playing varsity volleyball, basketball and soccer. She attended a Catholic University "Marymount" in Virginia on an academic scholarship and played volleyball to the level of earning a place in the university's Hall of Fame.

Winkler is in her 21st year coaching indoor and beach volleyball. She was awarded the Florida Coaches Coalition Beach Volleyball Coach of the Year in 2023. Winkler, who started the beach volleyball program at Bishop Kenny in 2019, has had three consecutive regional final appearances and three consecutive state playoff appearances with an overall record of 62-7. She also has a 71% win record in indoor volleyball. She is the only coach in the City of Jacksonville to run three sports team's freshman, junior varsity, and varsity in the same season for 21 consecutive years, winning 20 Consecutive District Championships, 6 Regional Runner-up, 14 Regional Championships, 14 State Final Four appearances, 3 State Runner-up, and 2 State Championships in 2014 and 2020.

"The best gift I have been given is the ability to pay it forward in life. I was blessed with incredible coaches, mentors, friends and family and every day I get to do a job that I love that allows me to work with amazing students, players, friends and families," said Winkler.



Dylan Thue-Jones

# Thue-Jones Joins NAI Hallmark

Dylan Thue-Jones has been appointed vice president at NAI Hallmark, the largest locally owned full-service commercial real estate brokerage and property management firm in Jacksonville.

"Dylan's extensive background, demonstrated skill set and strong work ethic are a valuable addition to our company. Dylan is a great resource for developers, investors and users looking to acquire development sites throughout the Southeast," said NAI Hallmark Managing Partner Keith Goldfaden.

Thue-Jones has been active in real estate since 2007, with experience managing both high-growth expansions and existing portfolios. He has spent years traveling the Southeast, working on site selection, entitlement and permitting.

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Philip Simonetta  
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Erin Wolfson



Mia Jones

# New Names Atop Wolfson's Board

Wolfson Children's Hospital announced its new chair and vice chair of its board of directors, Erin Wolfson and Mia Jones, respectively. Each will serve a three-year term.

Wolfson is an Assistant State Attorney with the State Attorney's Office, 4th Judicial Circuit, and has spent the majority of her career in the Special Victims Unit - where she is currently a division chief - focusing on the prosecution of domestic violence, sexual assault offenses and crimes against children. She has an extensive history of community involvement and was named one of the 2018 Women's Center of Jacksonville's Unsung Heroes for the work she has done to improve the lives of women. She currently serves as a member of The

Women's Board and is a member of the Hightower Emerging Leaders Fellowship, Class VII.

“Erin and Mia have both demonstrated a strong commitment to our focus of providing world-class care for the children in our community.”

- Allegra C. Jaros  
Wolfson Children's Hospital President

Jones serves as CEO for Agape Family Health, the oldest Federally Qualified Health Center in Jacksonville, providing quality health care to both uninsured and insured patients across Jacksonville. She

was appointed as the inaugural Health Commissioner for the City of Jacksonville and has served eight years in the Florida House of Representatives. She was also a member of the Jacksonville City Council from 2003-2008, and she has served the public sector since 1992.

“Erin and Mia have both demonstrated a strong commitment to our focus of providing world-class care for the children in our community and I'm excited to welcome them to our board of directors,” said Wolfson Children's Hospital President Allegra C. Jaros. “The passion they bring will be instrumental in advancing our mission and their unique insights will enhance our efforts to make a positive impact on the lives of our patients and their families.”

# Bone and Nodurft Join Berkshire Hathaway

Michael Bone and Pat Nodurft have joined Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty. Bone, as a broker associate for the Metropolitan office with locations in Avondale and San Marco, and Nodurft as a realtor.

A native of Northeast Florida, Bone's deep-rooted connection to the area begets extensive knowledge

of its neighborhoods, communities and real estate trends. He has a bachelor's degree in public relations from the University of North Florida and is the father to a new baby boy.

“We are thrilled to welcome Michael to our team at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty,” said Broker/Manager Josh Cohen. “His passion for the local community, coupled with his expertise in real estate and his genuine commitment to hospitality, make him an incredible asset to our brokerage. We look forward to witnessing his continued success within our network.”

Nodurft, a 42-year Navy wife, has been a real estate professional in the Jacksonville market for 40 years. She is a member of an all-women's barbershop chorus and received her bachelor's degree in arts from the University of Florida.

“Her combination of experience, talent and dedication sets her apart as a real estate agent who truly cares about the people she serves,” said Cohen.



Pat Nodurft



Michael Bone

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Darryl and Karen Jordan with Drs. Alison and Charles Bruce



Leslie and George McCaughan with Cathy, Will and Rob Stursberg



Kelly Risdon with Bebe Alexander



Connie Jett with Michael and Ana Tari

# A New Exhibition for MOCA and Art with a Heart in Healthcare

MOCA Jacksonville celebrated the launch of its new exhibition, "Daydreamers," in partnership with Art with a Heart in Healthcare. The exhibition is on view through January 14, 2024. "Daydreamers" features the work of 20 young artists ranging in age from eight to 19 who are patients at Wolfson Children's Hospital in Jacksonville.

For more than a decade, MOCA Jacksonville has partnered with Art with a Heart in Healthcare, a nonprofit organization that provides personalized art experiences to enhance the healing process for patients and families in local healthcare settings. Patients and their families also learn technical art-making and creative skills while gaining self-confidence and self-awareness in the process.

Each year, the groups work together to develop a unique patient art exhibition based on a prompt that inspires imagination, artistry and individual expression among young patients, who work under the guidance of an artist-in-residence. This year's prompt was, "Where does your mind wander when you daydream?" with artists-in-residence Dylan Bauer, Kianna Godoy, Jaycee Guttormson, Amy Irizarry, Brooke McKinney, Lisa Miyares, Matt Richards, Abigail Santos and Micaela Yates.



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Maia Cruz Palileo (Filipinx American, b. 1979), *It Was Said They Could See Each Other's Memories I*, 2023, flashe and oil on canvas, 84 x 84 in., Courtesy of the artist and Monique Meloche Gallery.

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# JaxLab Welcomes First Cohort into New UF Architectural Master's Program

BY MICHELE LEIVAS



The third floor of Cathedral House of St. John's Cathedral will be home to UF's JaxLab, once fundraising efforts and renovations are complete.

The first cohort of students of Jacksonville's newly-minted JaxLab officially started this fall. JaxLab is a special purpose educational site offering graduate degree programs in architecture and sustainability through the University of Florida's (UF) College of Design, Construction and Planning (DCP).

JaxLab Program Director Nancy Clark. "So, basically, we're bringing the degree program to them and that's the concept in Orlando and now in Jacksonville."

Ultimately, JaxLab will be housed on the third floor of Cathedral House, the educational administrative building for St. John's Episcopal Cathedral on Church

the institution has had to get involved at the collegiate or graduate level.

"We're an old, historic jewel in the heart of the city, so it's a great place for people to study about historic preservation as well as in looking at the river and how to build in relation to that beautiful body of water," said Dean Kate Moorehead Carroll.

The students are currently using temporary accommodations on Market Street while UF completes its final stretch of fundraising for the approximately \$350,000 renovation project for the 2,557 square feet of designated space in Cathedral House. Clark said UF hopes to have students move into the official JaxLab in the Cathedral District by fall 2024.

"Our focus areas are sustainability, regenerative design, historic preservation and we are moving towards an AI degree - but AI in design, AI in architecture," Clark said. "We're trying to collaborate with the other institutions in the area, so we think it's really mutually beneficial for the other institutions as well as UF."

Clark said Jacksonville provides a "unique context" to be a "living, learning laboratory" and that DCP hopes to interact and integrate itself with the community at large through the various design projects coming from the students at JaxLab.

"We're also very excited to be in Jacksonville because it's a water-based city," she said. "For us, it's addressing these contemporary challenges at the intersection of natural and constructed environments."

Clark explained that UF was approached by Jacksonville's professional community about creating a CityLab here following the success of its flagship lab in Orlando in an effort to keep young professionals here in

the community since students often don't return home once they go off to graduate school.

"We want to keep the talent in Jacksonville. So that's one of the reasons we were approached by the community as well," she said.

Placing JaxLab at Cathedral House also allows the Cathedral District to begin building its own academic presence.

"Our brand is 'Love at the core,' which means love in the core of our hearts but also love in the urban core. We're committed to manifesting God's love in the urban core, and we see this as the next step, providing this school of architecture in the urban core because we believe these architects are going to influence the physical surroundings, and they're going to help us become a greater city," Moorehead Carroll said.

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“We're also very excited to be in Jacksonville because it's a water-based city. For us, it's addressing these contemporary challenges at the intersection of natural and constructed environments.”

— Nancy Clark  
DCP Associate Dean and JaxLab Program Director

JaxLab is the second CityLab UF has opened for its architectural graduate program, with the first being CityLab - Orlando, which was launched in 2012.

"The CityLab program, the model is a lot of the potential students can't, for whatever reason, pick up and move to Gainesville," said DCP Associate Dean and

Street, allowing students to train in an environment uniquely suited to their field of study. The cathedral has maintained a mission to be civically engaged and has been "education-focused," through both its preschool and the Episcopal School of Jacksonville, which was birthed through the cathedral. This is the first opportunity

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RJ Caster with Mike Preissler, Jim Aughterton, Jeff Kidd and Evan Sopher

# Team Rubicon: X Marked the Spot

BY LINDSEY GAST PESSIA

An overgrown cemetery at St. Nicholas Bethel Baptist Church became the source of community togetherness when it brought to light a virtually unknown organization in Northeast Florida through an unusual avenue.

RJ Caster was scrolling through Twitter, now renamed X, when he saw a story about a local, historic, African American church with World War II veterans buried there. The cemetery had become so overgrown it was inaccessible. Caster, a Greyshirt volunteer with Team Rubicon, an organization dedicated to disaster response, thought it would be a great project for the newly founded Northeast Florida Chapter.

“People don’t know there’s a chapter [here],” he said. There was no information in the post on how to help the church, so Caster commented and asked who to contact. Jill Sadowski, who ended up helping the team every weekend, responded.

“She has no ties to the church, she has no ties to Team Rubicon, she just really cares about her community,” said Caster. “She responded on Twitter and said, ‘I know Veronica at the church and can get them in touch if you really want to help out.’”

Caster then reached out to the Team Rubicon state lead, who brought together volunteers from Jacksonville, Orlando and Palm Coast for the cemetery project, which

spanned five weekends in early summer 2023.

“People had been dumping stuff there. There were trees that were in there. It was like the Amazon rainforest,” he said.

“[The St. Nicholas Bethel Baptist Church project] was just really cool because it is something that started with just a comment on Twitter. It all just kind of snowballed. Where people comment usually nasty things under articles for the most part, it was kind of just a demonstration of, ‘Hey, you can actually comment and start something good, too,’” said Caster.

The project is not typical for Team Rubicon, which does a lion’s share of its relief work after natural disasters, especially hurricanes.

Ahead of Hurricane Idalia, which made landfall in Florida on Aug. 30, 2023, Team Rubicon met with local leaders – city council, mayor’s office – to be sure that everyone was informed about being able to request assistance from Team Rubicon for any number of disasters, but especially hurricanes.

“We have several people here who have been through a number of different trainings, including the FEMA trainings online who are ready to get pulled together in case somebody does need their assistance,” said Caster. “If there were any sort of disasters, or just things the community needed help with, Team Rubicon is here, and there are people who are associated with the organization that can help out in these instances.”

When mobilizing, Team Rubicon pools the skills of its largely veteran volunteers, along with first responders and medical professionals to provide disaster relief free of cost to the community. They also have a working relationship with Home Depot to obtain supplies like goggles and gloves for volunteers or to rent large equipment like chain saws.

Caster, a product of a military family and self-proclaimed Murray Hill-billy, said there are myriad ways through Team Rubicon to help out not only in the community locally, but the national community as a whole.

“This day and age, there is nothing more important than people embracing, loving and caring for their communities. I think a lot of times people want to do more for their communities, become more involved, especially considering the political climate these days. There are a lot of different other ways that people can become associated with one another and be neighbors again. I think the most important



Team Rubicon Greyshirts carry a fallen tree out of the historic cemetery at St. Nicholas Bethel Baptist Church.

thing is just letting them know how they can do that, knowing that organizations like Team Rubicon are out there, not only if you need help, but also if you want to find a way to be helpful,” he said.

Those interested in becoming an official Team Rubicon Greyshirt volunteer can sign up at [teamrubiconusa.org/volunteer](http://teamrubiconusa.org/volunteer) to complete their background check and online FEMA training modules.

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The Florida Theatre got soulful at its annual Blues, Brews, Bourbon & BBQ fundraising event at Bowing Oaks Event Center in Jacksonville, Sept. 7, 2023. The food-and-spirits offerings included more than 20 local vendors sampling their signature BBQ wings, pulled pork and smoked brisket alongside craft cocktails and brews. The Snacks Blues Band and blues singer Henry Jones entertained guests throughout the night as they dined, bid on silent auction items, and voted for the best participating restaurant.

"Adding a fourth 'B' to the equation, Bourbon, gave the event another dimension of Southern food and beverage culture to explore, and having the event at Bowing Oaks also added another dimension," said Numa Saisselin, president of the Florida Theatre.

This event has traditionally been held at the Florida Theatre, but was relocated this year to Bowing Oaks, one of the theatre's corporate partners, while the theatre is undergoing renovations. This year's Blues, Brews, Bourbon & BBQ raised over \$55,000. Since its inception in 2013, the event has raised over \$351,000 for the historic, nonprofit Florida Theatre, which will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2027.

Blues singer Henry Jones performs at Blues, Brews, Bourbon & BBQ, Sept. 7, 2023.



# True Blues



Keith Maas, Carolyn Klucha and Kevin Stone



Kiah and Dan Amato with 16-month-old daughter, Georgia Mae



Chad Munsey, center, with Rich and Judy Prokapek



Bill Parker and Janice Lamattina



Beth Carper and Shannan Greene



Matt Martz with Irene Lazzara, Numa Saisselin and Jason Roth



Ginny and Doug Schlosser



Margaux Jurasic, Katherine Byra and Jessica Tozy

Jenny and Michael Brumbach

# Bite-sized B

Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation held its signature food and wine fundraiser, Destinations presented by Miller Electric, on Sept. 8-9 at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club. Destinations hosted its Celebrity Chef By the Sea Luncheon, followed by the evening. The event included its namesake food and wine offerings and a silent auction.

Proceeds from the event benefit Ascension St. Vincent's Community Outreach, serving individuals and families across Northeast Florida and Southeast Florida. Outreach includes free healthcare, wellness programs, nutritional education, and like clothing and food.

Last year, the organization's Mobile Health Outreach Ministry served 1,000 individuals, including 4,000 children, while The Good Samaritan Fund assisted with medication, transportation and medical equipment. The outreach program also includes Brighter Beginnings, which educates mothers and partners on prenatal care.



Chelsea Sandifer with Kelly Louis and Kelly Pollard



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# Junior League Celebrates 100 Year Kickoff

The Junior League of Jacksonville kicked off a century of service with a 100th anniversary celebration at The Riverside House on Aug. 29. With approximately 100 members in attendance, the event also marked the first official event for the newest members of Junior League. The day honored the 17 women who founded the organization in 1923 as well as those carrying the torch today. The yearlong milestone will culminate in a gala on April 13, 2024.

"We're excited to continue our impact with our community partners and deepen our relationship with the community and see where the next 100 years takes us," said Courtney Taylor, 2023-24 president of The Junior League.

The Junior League is committed to promoting volunteerism, developing the potential of women and improving communities through effective action and leadership.



Miranda Anderson with Stephanie Thomas



Cayci Weaver with Alex Young



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# Defending the Future

The Downtown Ecumenical Services Council (DESC) celebrated 40 years of providing critical care to those struggling with poverty at DESC Defenders: Into the Future on Thursday, Sept. 21, at the WJCT studios in Jacksonville.

"I am ecstatic that DESC Defenders was another great fundraiser," said Alex Benavides, event chair and DESC board member.

The poverty-fighting fundraiser, emceed by Action News Jax's Tenikka Hughes, raised more than \$330,000 for

DESC. Presenting sponsors were the Delores Barr Weaver Legacy Fund and the Hall-Halliburton Foundation; Randy and Allison DeFoor served as honorary chairs for the event. The event featured two "time machines": A smaller unit at the reception which showed guests the challenges of families struggling to make ends meet, and a larger one which converted the WJCT Studio into a time machine showcase of how DESC services help people today and into the future.

"Our volunteers stepped up to make this event a great success by recruiting new and repeat sponsors committed to helping those struggling with poverty," said David Clark, DESC's executive director. "The contributions ensure this ministry can continue to spread hope and encouragement to thousands of families and individuals every year."

Proceeds from the event will help the community's impoverished and homeless fight poverty. DESC was founded in 1983 by several downtown churches to help working poor families and homeless people. The center is in the basement of the First Presbyterian Church. In 2022, it provided more than 15,000 services of emergency financial assistance, groceries, clothing and case management.



Joyce Morgan and Alex Benavides



Barbara Drake and Joyce DeVillez



Anita Goyer, Andrew Svarre, Dennis Whittle and Steve Goyer with Lisa Schieffelin



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Kristen Humphrey with Kathy Church and Shirley Budden

# Ladies Golf Celebrated in Fine Tradition, Legacy Tournament

Association's rich history on display at San Jose



From tee to green, and in between, the Ladies Golf Association at San Jose Country Club (SJCC) was alive with hospitality of the finest order Sept. 20-21. The annual Ladies Invitational theme, Diamonds in the Rough, celebrated 60 years of tournament play, which started in the fall of 1962 with 130 ladies throughout Florida and Georgia entering the invitational.

A few things have changed over the years, such as the dinner celebration themes - from Roaring 20s, Red, White and Blue, and Fabulous 50s with Elvis, to husbands in tutus and tights - and the shift to a two-day versus three-day format. Yet one thing remains the same: a passion for the tournament, thanks to the SJCC Ladies Golf Association, whose membership works tirelessly alongside the pro shop and clubhouse staff to ensure a flawless execution during the annual affair.

From the opening-day breakfast to the champagne toast at the 60th luncheon, a hole in one contest and donated silent auction items from local vendors, the journey continues. This year's celebration held a special moment of recognition for Polly Wise and Emily Brown, who have both played in 57 of the 60 tournaments.

Organizers welcomed lady golfers and tallied 108 entries for the two-day tournament, which included past champions Kim Balaskiewicz of Jacksonville Golf and Country Club (JGCC), Shirley Budden of Sawgrass Country Club (Sawgrass), Chris Hunt of Sawgrass, Susie Fonde of JGCC, Tama Caldabaugh of The Plantation at Ponte Vedra Beach, and Therese Quinn of Sawgrass.

"A special thanks goes out to the ladies, you put your heart and soul into [the tournament] and that's why it's such a success," said Todd Bork, Director of Golf at JSCC,

as he welcomed the field, reviewed rules and extreme weather measures prior to the shotgun start.

Fran Clinkscales, who hails from Long Point Golf Club on Amelia Island, echoed the sentiments as she participated in her third tournament at the Donald Ross-designed course. "I love this golf course. There's a great group of women who really know how to run a tournament; they've really got it down," she said during her warm-up on the putting green.

Following two days of tournament play, Therese Quinn came out on top as the overall champion, with a 76 and 75 round for a 151 total. Round 1 medalist was Tama Caldabaugh, who won a tiebreaker, shooting 75. For complete tournament results, visit [residentnews.net](http://residentnews.net).



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Carrie Davis and Jaxson Deville with Suzanne Vandekamp, Cici Anderson, Denyse Mahoney and Jennifer Walker

# Tasting, Toasting, Saving Lives

The Jacksonville Humane Society's (JHS) 25th Annual Toast to the Animals charitable tasting event returned on Sept. 26, 2023. This year's event, held at the newly renamed EverBank Field, honored Nina Waters, former president of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, for her contributions to the community and the organization.

Patrons enjoyed local bites, live music, raffles, shopping, and one-of-a-kind silent and live auctions, along with crowd favorites like the wine pull and candle pull. Proceeds from Toast to the Animals benefited the JHS Medical Fund, which provides lifesaving medical care to animals suffering from illness or injury. JHS has nearly 9,000 animals in its care.

"This was our 25th Toast to the Animals. We are so thankful for the community's unwavering support and dedication to our mission. The generosity shared will empower pets and the people who love them," said Denise Deisler, CEO of JHS.



Kathleen Miller with Nik Conte



Lisa Pearson and Abigail Jewett with Rebecca Carrigan and Erin Gordon



Lauren and Andrew Steif with Georgette Dumont and George Candler



Holly Smith with Dana McEwan and Jon Pali



Nina Waters with Jacob Hatstra, Keleigh Morrison and Lex Waters



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Theresa Scardo and Denise Deisler with Lawrence Nicolas



Emcee Rich Jones with Lily



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Sara Hunt



Childhood cancer fighter Lily

# Boots and Bling

The Child Cancer Fund held its annual gala on Saturday, Sept. 9 at the Jacksonville Golf and Country Club. Themed "Boots and Bling," the gala, presented by Duval Asphalt, featured Western-style attire complete with giveaways for both Tecovas boots and 2-carat diamond earring bling. Supporters enjoyed small bites, cocktails, live and silent auctions, and

**“The outpouring of support we've seen from our donors, sponsors and friends is overwhelming.”**

- Carla Montgomery  
Executive Director for Child Cancer Fund

live music from the Clay Brooker Band. The event raised over \$100,000, with all proceeds benefiting the Child Cancer Fund's programs serving local Northeast Florida and Southeast Georgia families dealing with a childhood cancer diagnosis.

"The outpouring of support we've seen from our donors, sponsors and friends is overwhelming," said Carla Montgomery, executive director for Child Cancer Fund. "They are critical to our mission and our families, especially as we look ahead to our 30th anniversary in 2024."



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Darren Dailey with Megan Dailey

# Honoring Cultural Impact

The Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville will host its 2023 Arts Awards, in partnership with Downtown Vision, Inc., honoring eight individuals, businesses and artists for their contributions to the cultural community. The event was held on Thursday, Sept. 21 at Venue 841 on the Southbank of the St. Johns River.

The 2023 honorees include: businesses Indigo Art Studio, Miller Electric Company and ReThreaded; as well as individuals Laura Hammock, teacher, Duval County Public Schools; Mari Kuraishi, president, Jessie Ball duPont Fund; Adam Madrid, director, LOL Jax Film Festival and editor with PRI Productions; Toni Smailagic, owner, Cre8 Jax; and Richard and Kimberly Sisisky.

WJXT News4Jax Morning Show host Vic Miccolucci co-hosted the event, which featured a speech from Mayor Donna Deegan on the importance of arts to the community. The annual celebration of the arts community and those making a difference within it was held in tandem with the Cultural Council's 50th anniversary.



Michael and Jennifer Mayo with Kimberly and Richard Sisisky

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The Constellation FURYK & FRIENDS presented by Circle K returns to the Timuquana Country Club for its third year Oct. 2-8. The family-friendly event will host a 78-player field with a collection of the game's legends and fan favorites like John Daly, Ernie Els, Jerry Kelly, Rocco Mediate, Colin Montgomerie, Davis Love III and Mike Weir vying for the \$2.1 million purse.

In addition to the golf tournament, spectators can partake in the Kids Zone, Family Lounge, Circle K Partee Porch, and collect autographs at the Fisher Tousy Autograph Alley. There is complimentary spectator parking, and youth 17 and under receive free admission with a ticketed adult.

All three rounds of the tournament will be broadcast on the Golf Channel. Tickets and additional information are available at [constellationfurykandfriends.com](http://constellationfurykandfriends.com).

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Author Karen Rieley with Carter

# Breast Cancer was Just the Beginning

BY KAREN RIELEY

*Editor's Note: About 1 in 8 women are going to develop invasive breast cancer in the course of their life, making it the most common cancer in the world. During this October's Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we thought it was important for our readers to hear a first-hand account from one of our own staff members who, sadly, has found herself in her own battle against the pervasive enemy, of which breast cancer was just the tip of the iceberg. The Resident News encourages the entire community to share their stories, increase awareness, and help in the fight against breast cancer.*

## The Risk is Real

Through genetic testing I had five years ago, it was confirmed that I have the BRCA1 gene mutation. About 3% of breast cancers (about 7,500 women per year) and 10% of ovarian cancers (about 2,000 women per year) result from inherited mutations in the harmful BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes. But while The National Cancer Institute reports that about 13% of women in the general population will develop breast cancer sometime during their lives, my truth is that 55%-72% of women with the BRCA1 variant and 45%-69% of women with the BRCA2 variant will develop breast cancer by 70-80 years of age.

The chance of a woman with one of these gene mutations getting breast cancer is even higher when there is a strong, generational family history of breast cancer. In my case, both my mother and grandmother died from breast cancer when they were 50 years old.

To add insult to injury, triple negative breast cancer (TNBC), a highly aggressive form of breast cancer, tends to be more common in women who have a BRCA1 mutation. TNBC does not have any of the receptors that are commonly found in typical breast cancer, leaving doctors with few treatment options other than chemotherapy.

## The Fight Begins

In February 2023, my diagnostic mammogram identified calcified cells that indicated breast cancer in my right breast. I had a breast biopsy. The result: TNBC that had spread beyond the milk duct. Given my family history and gene mutation, my oncologist recommended a bilateral mastectomy, and I agreed it was time. As added protection, adjuvant therapy was recommended. Four chemotherapy treatments, three weeks apart.

I believed in doing all I could to get rid of any chance of recurring breast cancer, but I knew that chemotherapy brings its own set of negative side effects. My luck of

the draw was experiencing an unusually extreme reaction to the two chemotherapy drugs I was given - docetaxel and cyclophosphamide. Case studies show that, while distinctly uncommon, unanticipated serious complications, notably interstitial pneumonitis, can occur.

## Cancer Was Just the Beginning

I now have a disease called interstitial lung disease, or ILD, which causes scarring (fibrosis) of the lungs. My lungs are nearly 100% negatively affected either by scarring or inflammation. The scarring causes stiffness in the lungs which makes it difficult to breathe and get oxygen to the bloodstream. Lung damage from ILD is often irreversible and gets worse over time. My ILD is the direct result of my breast cancer chemotherapy.

The action of simply sitting up and pulling myself up in my bed is enough to make my oxygen saturation level drop to the low 70 percent. At those levels, I find myself gasping for breath. Everything I need to do takes longer than it should. I've had to learn how to do all the basic living functions from my bed. Each time I move around, I have to take time to recover my oxygen level afterward.

Now, living with a chronic disease, I know my condition will change over time and often not positively. While I may get it under control, I will continue to worry that it could worsen at any moment. I live daily with the knowledge that my lifespan has been shortened, but I don't know by how much, and am unsure how to best plan out my remaining days.

## Living With Chronic Disease

Research has shown that how I, and others with chronic diseases like mine, deal emotionally and mentally with our new reality can have a significant impact on the quality of the lives we have left. We can choose to be victims or masters of our disease.

Various authors have identified at least three stages that people dealing with chronic diseases tend to move through.

In the initial stage, you might experience frustration over why it is happening, becoming obsessed with finding answers. In the mid-journey stage, you may be filled with mixed emotions: challenged by others who question or doubt your struggles, concern that your health issues are beginning to define you, panic over the "end."

The last stage is resolution. You are faced with the radical acceptance that chronic illness is not cured, only managed. This is your new reality. Honor yourself by acknowledging your struggles and feelings, which may include pain, confusion, frustration, sense of loss, exhaustion, depression, anxiety, anger, resentment, desire to want to give up, jealousy toward others who don't deal with this, or a wish that someone would manage this for you.

I encourage you to hang onto the belief that there truly is life beyond these challenges. Try to find a way to do whatever it is that gave you joy before the challenges, even if modification is required, or try to find something new that you can do.

Lastly, give yourself time to grieve. You didn't sign up for this tribulation, and that may cause you to have tears, anger and deep sadness. Once you've fully grieved what was, you will be able to move forward and take back your power. Believe that you are more than your disease and more than capable of handling what is to come.

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# LOCALFOUNKS

BY MARY WANSER

Basil Benjamin and Mike Kovacs at Alexandria Oaks Park.

Mike Kovacs and his wife, Chelsea Hamilton, moved to Avondale in November 2020 from New York City. They were ready for a change of pace, a change of weather and a change of taxes.

Kovacs and Hamilton tend to be analytical people and embarked upon "Operation Sunshine State." For quite some time, they researched a variety of locales throughout Florida. Jacksonville was the only city that ticked all their boxes.

"We picked Avondale for its charm, walkability and lifestyle. We absolutely love it here!" Kovacs said.

Both are professionals in the finance arena - Kovacs at the regional headquarters of Circle K in the Regency Square area, and Hamilton as partner at the downtown office of PwC, the U.S. division of Britain's PricewaterhouseCoopers.

In addition to employment opportunities and old oak trees, the vintage architecture of Jacksonville was another drawing card for Kovacs and Hamilton. They bought a historic house built in 1924 at the corner of Pine and Ingleside.

"It's a great house, but it wasn't set up for our lifestyle," Kovacs said.

So, they hired a general contractor and are currently in the midst of a major renovation. Of all the remodeling projects, the most prominent is having a bedroom converted into a wine room. They are wine collectors with a variety of cork preferences from all over, and they need to accommodate their accumulation.

"We don't like to discriminate when it comes to wine," Kovacs said.

Their collection now consists of close to 10,000 bottles.

"I probably shouldn't admit it. We're crazy!" he said.

The couple are also foodies. As with wine, it's apparent that they don't discriminate when it comes to eateries either. They have a long list of favorites. Kovacs likes that



## MIKE KOVACS

Mike Kovacs and Graham Basworth hiked through Kyrgyzstan.



Graham Basworth and Mike Kovacs at Ala-Kul Lake, Kyrgyzstan.

there are so many to choose from just around the corner from their home.

"We love Orsay. More recently, Josephine's we've really enjoyed. We spend a fair amount of time in San Marco, and we were just at Oceana. Southern Grounds is great for coffee and snacks. Mojo's is fantastic," Kovacs said.

To remain active in the community, the pair not only support local restaurants but also attend community events like home and garden tours and live music shows in Avondale. Every Saturday finds them at Riverside Arts Market. Their favorite vendor is Joe, the dairy farmer.

"We buy goat milk, and cow milk, and goat fudge and eggs. He's our go-to guy," Kovacs said.

Kovacs is a member of the Jacksonville Saints, an Australian rules football team that competes at home in Jacksonville and away in nearby cities. Kovacs described the sport as a combination of American football, rugby, soccer and volleyball. He is so new to the team that he doesn't yet know all the positions, only that he's a ruckman because he's tall.

"It's just wacky. A bunch of guys run into each other and then go have some drinks after. It's a good time. I had never played before moving here," he said.

Kovacs loves to travel. Most of the time, Hamilton is with him. But he also likes to hike, and she doesn't mind that he goes on crazy adventures with his friend Graham Basworth from New Orleans. Kovacs and Basworth have trekked Machu Picchu in Peru, the Otter Trail in South Africa, and parts of the Appalachian Trail. On July 19, 2023, the two buddies conquered the remote mountains of Kyrgyzstan. This hike held the most significance for Kovacs.

During the previous summer, Kovacs had suffered a heart attack. That was highly unusual for an active 42-year-old with no symptoms. He learned for the first time that he had a rare, congenital condition. But he also learned that it was fixable. On July 19, 2022, Dr. Kevin Landolfo performed at Mayo Clinic the open-heart procedure that saved Kovacs's life. Exactly one year to the day later, Kovacs crested a 13,000-foot pass in the Kyrgyz Mountains, overlooking the glacier-fed Ala-Kul Lake.

"It was incredible - the scenery, the effort, the emotion - all of it," he said.

He's already planning for future expeditions. Yet, no matter how far he may roam, Kovacs will return again to Avondale, to his historic house, to his wife, and to their two dogs—12-year-old Compass and 1-year-old Bean.

"We expect to be here for a long time!" he said.



The Kovacs Family: Mike, Chelsea, Compass, and Bean.

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Ingleside Avenue tree canopy

# Our Crowning Jewel

## The Riverside-Avondale tree canopy provides more than shade

BY BROOKS ANDREWS, FLORIDA MASTER NATURALIST

In addition to our beautiful homes, merchant districts, walkability, park spaces and historic architecture, the tree canopy of Riverside-Avondale has great appeal. It is a crown jewel that contributes to our community's aesthetic appeal, resiliency, storm water uptake, heat mitigation and real estate value. Residents and visitors alike are immediately attracted to this neighborhood simply because of the urban forest.

We are fortunate that early developers and homeowners saw the value of planting trees as we now enjoy the mature tree canopy, which, depending on the species, may take from 20 to more than 100 years to grow to a size that contributes in a meaningful way to our tree canopy. In 2019-20, Riverside Avondale Preservation led an effort with the city, tapping into the Tree Mitigation Fund. This community-based Re-Leaf Project resulted in the planting of nearly 400 trees in right-of-way areas, valued at \$780,000. This was an important step to replace those trees starting to 'age out' in our neighborhood.

### A Canopy of Good Health

Our urban forest is a major green infrastructure asset that contributes greatly to the health of the air we breathe. Toxic air pollutants such as carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, ground-level ozone, sulfur dioxide and particulate matter can cause adverse effects to human health, disrupt ecosystem processes, and reduce visibility in cities. Tree leaves remove these air pollutants by directly absorbing them or indirectly capturing them on their surfaces. Altogether, the trees in Florida's regions remove over 600,000 tons of combined air pollution each year, saving Florida residents an estimated \$605 million in annual air-pollution-related health care costs.

### Rooted in Water Absorption

Living in Riverside-Avondale, we are quite familiar with storm water and flooding resulting from extreme precipitation events and tidal effects. Impervious surfaces, such as roads, parking lots and rooftops, do not allow stormwater runoff to infiltrate into the soil. Instead, they swiftly direct large volumes of water into nearby stormwater drains that typically discharge into the St. Johns River and its estuaries. As water

“ Altogether, the trees in Florida's regions remove over 600,000 tons of combined air pollution each year, saving Florida residents an estimated \$605 million in annual air-pollution-related health care costs. ”

- Brooks Andrews  
Florida Master Naturalist

flows over impervious surfaces, it can pick up many different pollutants – antifreeze, grease, pesticides, bacteria and fertilizer – becoming a significant source of pollution to local waterbodies.

Luckily, our mature trees serve to take up this water rather quickly after these events. Trees help combat the negative effects of stormwater runoff by capturing rainfall on their leaves and bark, thereby reducing the amount of water hitting impervious surfaces. In addition, tree roots and old fallen leaves can promote soil conditions that allow more water to enter the soil during a rain event and be absorbed by the tree's root system. Collectively, the urban forests in Florida intercept an estimated 50 billion gallons of water a year, resulting in savings of over \$451 million in avoided annual stormwater treatment costs, as reported by the University of Florida.

### Keeping it Cool

According to the National Weather Service and the Center for Disease Control, heat is the biggest weather-related killer. Adam Rosenblatt, a biology professor at the University of North Florida, led an urban heat study last summer in conjunction with the City of Jacksonville and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. He said Riverside-Avondale has much lower heat index values than its neighboring downtown and eastside communities, and one of the big drivers of this is likely that Riverside-Avondale has a decent tree canopy while the others have much less tree coverage. In contrast, these areas have an abundance of heat islands, which are the consequence of impervious surfaces.

### Stop Before You Chop

Additionally, the Riverside-Avondale tree canopy adds to the real estate value of our neighborhood. Nationwide studies indicate the range is between 3.5-15% in added value if the property contains several trees and the home is within an urban forest. Stop to reconsider if you believe trees must be removed from your property. Certain insurance companies promote tree removal in anticipation of storm damage. However, a healthy, well-maintained tree can disrupt damaging wind and rain.

When considering tree trimming or removal, UF/IFAS Urban Forestry Extension Agent Larry Figart encourages all residents to only work with tree-trimming companies that have an arborist certified by the International Society of Arboriculture on staff to assess the health of the tree before trimming or removal.



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# Eagle Eye

BY CONTRIBUTING WRITER PAMELA TELIS

**W**hy do we pause and look up when we see a bald eagle fly over? Is it because it's a very large bird – only the California condor is larger – or because we know the story of its rebound from the point of near-extinction only 50 years ago, or because eagles have represented courage, strength and freedom for our country for over 200 years? For one Avondale resident and EagleWatch volunteer, Pamela Telis, she wonders if it might be one of “hers.”

The Audubon EagleWatch Program started in Florida in 1992 and is a statewide community science program of volunteers who document and monitor bald eagle nests. Knowing where eagles are nesting and tracking any changes in nest location is critical to being able to accurately respond and protect nests from disturbance issues. The nesting season in Florida is from October until May. Some pairs are already returning to spruce up their nests, greet their mates, defend their territory and prepare for the next few months of chick raising.

Florida is home to the one of the largest breeding populations of bald eagles in the lower 48 states; Alaska has the largest. Bald eagle nesting territories are concentrated around inland lakes and rivers and along coastlines where fish, their primary food source, is plentiful, giving them the nickname “fish eagle.” Bald eagles have nest fidelity, meaning they generally use the same nest each year and will mate for life. They share nesting chores and, together, incubate eggs during the approximate 32-day gestation period. Once the eggs hatch – generally only one or two – the real work begins. Both parents bring food and protect the eaglets for about 10-14 weeks until the eaglets can fly. At this point, the eaglets are as big as their parents and mostly dark brown or black; it will take about five years to develop their signature “bald” head. They hang around for a few weeks hoping for a few more free meals, then off they go to start their, hopefully, long and productive life.

While no longer listed under the U.S. Endangered Species Act or the Florida Endangered and Threatened Species Rule, bald eagles are protected by other federal



An eagle's nest, or aerie, high in a pine tree.



Two bald eagle eaglets, still too young to fly or to have developed their signature white head, in their nest.

and state laws. It is illegal to disturb nesting eagles or remove a bald eagle nest at any time of year without a federal permit. With laws and programs like EagleWatch, the number of breeding pairs in Florida has grown from a low of less than 80 pairs in the 1970s to the most recent U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service estimate of 2,500 nesting pairs.

As Telis begins her fourth year as an EagleWatch volunteer, she reflected on the trauma of last year's nesting season. Usually, by January, she would see the first eaglet head pop up above the nest rim, but the adults weren't seen often during her visits. They weren't in their favorite perching tree along the river, and things were too quiet at the nest. She knew something was wrong.

Then in March, a deceased adult eagle was found on the ground near the nest. Sadly, the nest did not produce any young that season.

As the new season begins, Telis often wonders if one of the grown chicks from this nest is ready to start a family of his own, or if the surviving adult will find a new mate. Sometimes other species like great horned owls or osprey take over abandoned eagle nests.

“The vacancy sign is up for my nest. I'm excited to see what will happen this nesting season,” said Telis.

Learn more about EagleWatch at [cbop.audubon.org/conservation/about-eaglewatch-program](http://cbop.audubon.org/conservation/about-eaglewatch-program).

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Nadine Terk with Stephanie Pyren-Fortel



Nadine Terk with Roan Antelope from Endangered Species Project, 2013.

BY PEGGY HARRELL JENNINGS

If you are interested in having your artist, event or experience covered in our *Locals Care: The Artbeat* column or *The Beat Goes On* calendar, let us know all the details at [editor@residentnews.net](mailto:editor@residentnews.net).

Paintings and sculptures interpret our emotions, offer moments of beauty, challenge us or offer social commentary on the times in which we find ourselves as tiny specs whirling madly through space. For a moment we pause, reflect. The arts are personal for both the creator and the viewer.

Imagine an intertwining of visual art created with a social conscience and an empathetic awareness of the individuality of animals and sensitivity to the human spirit. Nadine Terk is a creator of such art – as well as a musician, teacher, curator and poet. Terk has a Master of Arts degree in Japanese art history from Columbia University in New York. Her many projects offer personal insight while touching our local and global community in myriad ways. Her abstract paintings, visual interpretations of the physics of light and musical sound waves, were produced during an artist residency with the Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival.

During her time as Artist in Residence at White Oak Conservation Center, Terk completed a series of portraits of endangered animals ([endangeredspeciesartist.com](http://endangeredspeciesartist.com)) before moving on to the poignant, multi-media project, There4U ([there4uproject.com](http://there4uproject.com)) where she recorded the stories of breast cancer survivors as she painted their portraits in her studio. Terk said the work “pushed the boundaries of intimacy between artist and sitter.”

“I feel so lucky to have had so many incredible experiences as an artist here in Jacksonville, especially as participants in the There4U project shared the details of their cancer journeys. The goal of this collection [was] to create language and normalcy around an experience that can be lonely and alienating,” said Terk.

An accomplished violinist, Terk is founder of the all-volunteer Civic Orchestra of Jacksonville. She has played in over 24 concerts during the orchestra’s eight years of providing free “symphonic music for all.” One of her fondest memories is watching a smiling child conduct the orchestra from his seat on the front row.

“The concerts bring a diverse community together for a shared experience,” said Terk.

She served as an art history teacher and curator at the Jacksonville Museum of Contemporary Art before establishing her studio practice and is currently working on her first collection of poetry. As a creative, Terk had the opportunity to be a guest speaker at the opening event for the Jacksonville Chapter of the National League of American Penwomen (NLAPW), a group of published authors, award-winning artists, musicians and dancers.

“Nadine’s [Engaging the Community as Artists] presentation captivated the members’ attention and supplied a dose of positivity. She amplified the awareness of the role of the artist to give to society,” said NLAPW president Stephanie Pyren-Fortel.

For more about Nadine Terk, visit [nadineterk.com](http://nadineterk.com).

## The Beat Goes On: Upcoming Events

**October:** Members of the NLAPW will be conducting workshops and exhibiting artwork at the State Conference in Daytona Beach, including Susan Brandenburg and Stephanie Pyren-Fortel

**October 15:** Reception from 2-4 p.m. for Paul Ladnier, the featured artist at The Art Center, Oct. 9 through Nov. 1. Visit [tacjacksonville.org](http://tacjacksonville.org).

**October 16:** Jacksonville Artists’ Guild’s Season Opener, “All that Jazz” at the Ortega River Club. Visit [jacksonvilleartistguild.org](http://jacksonvilleartistguild.org).

**October 22:** Free concert by the Civic Orchestra of Jacksonville, “Magical Harvest Festival” at 5 p.m. at St. John’s Cathedral featuring conductor Marguerite Richardson and organist Tim Tuller. Visit [civicorchestraofjacksonville.org](http://civicorchestraofjacksonville.org).

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# RESIDENTS Junior



James McCranie

## McCranie Assumes Role as Online Student Ambassador

Sophomore James McCranie is Bolles' Global Online Academy (GOA) Student Ambassador. In this position, he is responsible for promoting the virtual classes and serving as a resource for his peers enrolled in GOA courses. McCranie pursued the position as part of his leadership project for the Bolles Global Scholar Program: a new academic track designed to teach students global leadership and competence skills.

"My role is to mentor people, assist them with their Global Online Academy journey and provide them with information that I didn't know, that would have been helpful to know before taking a [GOA] class," he said.

Bolles has partnered with GOA since 2017, offering students courses from schools across six continents and more than 30 countries. The virtual classes span a wide range of subjects, including Entrepreneurship in a Global Context, Filmmaking, Fiction Writing and Bioethics. McCranie took a health science and physical education course this past summer through GOA with a teacher based in Bogota, Colombia. He worked alongside peers in China and India to complete his coursework.

Bolles President and Head of School Tyler Hodges said he is a strong supporter of GOA as it expands available electives and helps students develop virtual interaction skills.

"Almost every college student these days is taking at least one online course during their college experience - and often several - so this is a great skill to learn," Hodges said. "You have to learn how to interact [virtually] and make sure you're able to share your ideas really well with your peers and instructor online, which isn't always the easiest when you're used to doing it in person."



## Bolles Students Unite for #MauiStrong

Bolles students on all four campuses raised funds the week of Sept. 4 for those affected by the Maui wildfires. Participating students collectively raised \$4,150 to support Maui Nui Strong, a Hawaii-based initiative that is providing direct relief to individuals, families and businesses impacted by the natural disaster.



Bolles senior Katherine Asbury of the Upper School Student Council was essential in organizing this effort. Upper and middle school students, faculty and staff members who participated at the upper school were allowed to wear jeans and a Hawaiian shirt on Sept. 8 for a special #MauiStrong dress-down day. Lower school students who contributed received floral leis to wear.

In addition to charitable fundraising, Bolles encourages students to stay involved in the community through its annual Club Day, where roughly 75 upper school service and special interest clubs promote their initiatives to students.

## A Welcoming WEB

Select eighth graders on the Bolles Middle School Bartram Campus welcomed incoming sixth graders and new students as part of the WEB program during the first week of school.

WEB, which stands for "Where Everybody Belongs," is an international middle school program that trains eighth grade students to mentor sixth graders throughout the first year of their middle school experience. WEB leaders serve as friendly faces for new students to turn to as they navigate their new hallways. Throughout the school year, leaders visit their assigned advisory groups every week.



"It's truly one of my favorite things about middle school and being with the students. It's always a highlight of my year and my days," said Bolles Middle School Counselor Brynne Plant.

Bolles President and Head of School Tyler Hodges said he's seen firsthand the significant difference the WEB program has made for incoming sixth graders on the Bartram Campus.

"It's hard for any of us, when we're somewhere new, to ask for help or ask a question, but certainly, I think it's easier for a peer to ask another peer rather than an adult sometimes - especially in middle school," Hodges said. "Anything we can do to help ease that process and make those students feel more at home...I'm super appreciative of the eighth graders."

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National Merit Semifinalists Isabel Bassin, Daniel Ji, Alex Meyers-Labenz, William Schilling, Aryan Shah and Ashkon Shirazi.

# Six Named National Merit Semifinalists

Six senior students from The Bolles School were named among the 16,000 semifinalists in the 69th annual National Merit Scholarship Program: Isabel Bassin, Daniel Ji, Alex Meyers-Labenz, William Schilling, Aryan Shah and Ashkon Shirazi.

The students will continue in competition for 7,140 National Merit Scholarships – worth nearly \$28 million – that will be offered next spring. More than 1.3 million juniors from about 21,000 high schools around the country entered the 2024 scholarship program by taking the 2022 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test, also known as the PSAT/NMSQT®. That test served as an initial screen of program entrants. The semifinalists represent less than 1% of U.S. high school seniors.

More than 90 percent of semifinalists are expected to attain finalist standing.



Jacksonville locals and CISV delegates Landon Vihlen, Liam Hammond and Piper Lynch with other Youth Meeting participants in Santander, Spain.



Karsyn Wilkins, Tessa Rasch, Harper Vihlen and Avery Lee-Duffell with CISV leader Taylor Bousquet.

CISV attendees from the Ortega, Avondale, Riverside and San Marco communities.

## Building Global Citizens

Twenty youth from Avondale, Ortega, St. Nicholas and San Marco represented CISV Jacksonville at international and national CISV programs this summer. The programs help participants develop skills to become informed, responsible and active global citizens to make a difference in our community and the world.

Youth Meeting program participant Liam Hammond said, "I really enjoyed the experience that I was able to attend. It was incredible, super fun and really cool to meet other people from around the world."

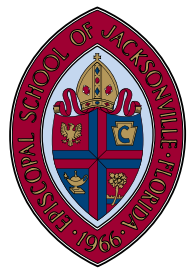
The youth attended programs in Norway, Spain, Brazil, Canada and Mexico, as well as domestically in Michigan and Washington, D.C. While CISV Jacksonville sends over 40 participants to programs all over the world, it also hosts a camp in Jacksonville each summer to approximately 25 international students.

"My Village to Bergen, Norway, was an amazing experience where I got to make lots of new friends, learn about their cultures and try different kinds of food. I love the CISV friendships I have made here in Jacksonville and all around the world," said Tessa Rasch.

CISV Jacksonville also hosts a free, two-week program for rising fifth and sixth graders called FACES of Jacksonville. Those interested in participating in CISV Jacksonville should visit [jacksonville.cisvusa.org](http://jacksonville.cisvusa.org).



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William Rosenberg



Anabella Platt



Evan Van Brunt



Julia Dinzlbacher



Lindsey Chappell



Nia Atcherson



Victoria Ero

## Episcopal's Scholarly Seven

Episcopal School of Jacksonville's William Rosenberg was selected as a National Merit Semifinalist for 2023-24. The National Merit Scholarship Program is an academic competition for recognition and scholarships. High school students enter the National Merit Program by taking the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) and by meeting program entry and participation requirements. Approximately 15,000 Semifinalists are notified that they have advanced to Finalist standing.

In addition, six Episcopal seniors: Nia Atcherson, Lindsey Chappell, Julia Dinzlbacher, Victoria Ero, Anabella Platt and Evan Van Brunt, were invited to participate in the College Board National Recognition Programs for having a GPA of 3.5 or higher and identifying as African American or Black, Hispanic or Latino, Indigenous, or Native.



Coach Paula Falls, owner of Gyminators Gymnastics

## National Gymnastics Day Celebrated at Gyminators

It was a day of celebration for Gyminators Gymnastics, the local spot for experiencing all things exercise, stretching and learning a lifelong love for staying in shape. The gymnasts and teams of instructors had their hands full as they welcomed guests, current students and parents that were looking to learn more about a great activity for their energetic children.

Nationwide, the event was celebrated Sept. 16, but Gyminators welcomed guests to enjoy this special day locally, Sept. 9. The event featured an all-day festival of games, food trucks, music, entertainment and unlimited gymnastics. The facilities are in the Riverside Village Shopping Center on the corner of Blanding Boulevard and Shirley Avenue, at 4603 Shirley Ave.



Instructors had their hands full, as the gym was full of children of all ages enjoying the celebratory occasion.



Social Coffee House owners Mariel and Arrelious Benn with the student crew of "The Bridge" podcast.

## Students Sound Off on New Podcast

Riverside Presbyterian Day School (RPDS) launched its pilot episode of "The Bridge," a student-led podcast focused on cultivating curiosity, creativity and connection within our community in May 2023. "The Bridge" was created by fifth and sixth grade students in the Midweek Media Afternoon Academy.

The goal of "The Bridge" podcast is to cultivate a space where students can explore new creative elements such as writing, sound mixing and graphic design while providing an outlet to explore and foster connections both in and outside the school community.

In the first episode of the 2023-24 season, the student podcasters dove into some coffee talk with owners of Social House Coffee, RPDS parents Mariel and Arrelious Benn. "The Bridge" is available on Spotify or by visiting [rpds.com/media](http://rpds.com/media).

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Lorri Reynolds with Chris Dunn

# A Four-Legged Fundraiser

## Pet walk supports animal therapy endeavors

The 6th Annual Pet Partners World's Largest Pet Walk was held on Saturday, Sept. 23, at St. Johns County Equestrian Center. In addition to the walk, the event included activities from the North Florida chapter of Pet Partners, a horse-and-dog tack and equipment sale, a horse-and-rider schooling event, vendors and food. The fundraiser supports local and worldwide efforts in animal therapy programs.

"We appreciate everyone who raises money for Pet Partners," said Lorri M. Reynolds, event organizer and board member with Pet Partners of North Florida. "The World's Largest Pet Walk initiative provides a positive space for anyone to spend time with their pet while also benefiting the community by raising vital funds to help share the love of a therapy animal with children and adults in need of emotional and mental health support."

The North Florida chapter of Pet Partners focuses on bringing visiting pet therapy teams to facilities, schools or businesses that can use a positive diversion through the human-animal bond. The animal therapy educators and handlers work with nine species of animals for animal-assisted therapies and interventions: dogs, cats, equines, rabbits, guinea pigs, domestic rats, birds, mini-pigs and alpacas.



Students at Episcopal School of Jacksonville display their 3D-printed models of Native American homes.

# 3D Printing Brings Native American Studies to Life

Episcopal School of Jacksonville, St. Mark's Campus fifth graders recently brought their studies on Native American culture to life thanks to a 3D design application, 3D printer and a lot of imagination. They used iPads and computers to develop realistic three-dimensional prototypes for long houses, tepees, pueblo homes and other historic artifacts in the Innovation Lab. Complete renderings created in Tinkercad were synched with a 3D printer to bring models to life in a tangible form. Students added color to their projects with colored Sharpies.

"It is fascinating to watch how this cross-curriculum effort adds to students' excitement about what they are learning," said Katie Perkins, fifth grade instructor. "Instead of simply reading a textbook, they have the chance to think conceptually and bring what they read about to fruition."



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# Now That's the Spirit

## Youth programs RISEUP and YoungLife centered in faith

BY LUCY RACHELS

As the school year gains momentum, kids and families ease into a regular routine with pockets of weekly free time. The question arises: On which extracurricular activities or leisurely pursuits should students dedicate themselves?

Two of Jacksonville's faith-based organizations, RISEUP and YoungLife, offer unique, worthwhile events for adolescents where they can spend time with friends, connect with peers older than them and experience Christian faith.

RISEUP, a Christian, nonprofit organization, whose mission is to provide youth with an opportunity to encounter Christ, was founded and has been working in Jacksonville since 2015. RISEUP currently spreads their message through bi-annual events and additional smaller events at select parishes. The events at parishes began this year.

The larger bi-annual events, which take place at The Bolles Middle School campus, are multiple-hour services that center around the idea of having an encounter with the Holy Spirit. The events have many different components to them, beginning with a pre-party, which includes games and time to mingle, followed by a "hype the crowd" event, then a concert and a speaker. The final step is adoration, and the event closes out with a post-party, where attendees can participate in line dances or listen to a DJ. The most recent like this was on March 25, which sold out with about 500 attending; the next is slated for Saturday, March 2, 2024.

"There is nothing else like it. It is the most moving thing in the world to see a 13-, 15-, 17-year-old feeling the spirit and understanding they're in a place where everyone loves them," said Jenny Studer, president of RISEUP's board.

When asked what she wants to see regarding RISEUP, Studer said, "I definitely want to see the big events continue to sell out and for us to need to consider a bigger venue, and also to see more people attend those smaller parish events so they have that opportunity to be moved."

With the growing enthusiasm for RISEUP's events, Studer mentioned she and the board are exploring ways to enhance interaction with kids.

"Most kids don't get to go to a faith-filled concert that has adoration and a speaker, which is what makes RISEUP services really unique. That's why we are going to continue our mission and hit as many kids as we possibly can with a moment with the Holy Spirit," she said.

While RISEUP offers larger-scale events to celebrate and practice faith, YoungLife takes a more "relational approach," hosting weekly and monthly club events, as well as a multitude of retreats and camps.

YoungLife is a worldwide organization for adolescents, dedicated to introducing those adolescents to Jesus Christ and helping them walk in their faith. Additionally, YoungLife places a strong emphasis on meeting kids where they are.

"We're very, very relationally focused. We're meeting kids on their turf where they're comfortable - at their sporting events, school plays, their lunchroom

- and earning the right to share about Christ with them," said Marlena Skinner, regional administrator for YoungLife in Northeast Florida.

In addition to engaging with kids' everyday activities, YoungLife shares Christian messages through Club, a monthly, bigger group format meeting with games and gospel; and Campaigners, a weekly, small group Bible study for kids who are looking to grow deeper in their faith. College-age and older individuals lead Campaigners and serve as mentors for the participating kids.

"We, as leaders, want to walk with them, pour into them, minister to them and equip those kids to go out and disciple others," said Skinner.

YoungLife was founded in 1951 and has been working in Jacksonville since 1958. It is currently serving 14 different communities in Jacksonville, with programs at Bolles, Episcopal, Bishop Kenny, Riverside Presbyterian Day School, and the beaches, and is relaunching ministry in Arlington at Terry Parker High School this year.

When talking about the relaunching, Skinner said that it has been "super, super exciting, and what makes [her] excited each day is thinking about how to reach the next kid."

With a focus on discipleship and walking in faith, YoungLife's end goal is to have kids give their life to Christ and disciple others.

"When you hear about a kid giving their life to Christ, [you] get chills every time. It's a really special feeling, and it's a privilege to be part of an organization that has that as their mission," said Skinner.

To learn more about RISEUP or YoungLife, visit their websites at [riseupyc.org](http://riseupyc.org) and [northeastflorida.younglife.org](http://northeastflorida.younglife.org), respectively.

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Aidyn Mae Gottlieb



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Daryl and Tessa Gottlieb get Aidyn ready to leave for medical day care.

# San Marco Family Undaunted by Diagnosis

BY WINDY TAYLOR

On a typical Wednesday morning, the San Marco home of Daryl and Tessa Gottlieb looks a lot like any other family home in Jacksonville. Quincy, 6, bounces between the living room couches and the kitchen. Aislyn, 18 months, has just awakened and is ready for her breakfast. And Aidyn, two and a half, is strapped into her highchair, observing the gentle commotion.

That's where the similarities end.

Aidyn has an incredibly rare genetic disorder called FOXG1 syndrome, which has fewer than 1,000 diagnosed cases worldwide. This syndrome occurs when a mutation in the FOXG1 gene results in poor connections between the halves of a developing brain, which leads to a range of neurological symptoms and developmental delays. Aidyn lives with uncontrollable movements in her arms and legs, visual impairments, chronic reflux, seizures, and is unable to walk, speak or feed herself.

Despite these conditions, Aidyn has the same likes and dislikes as any other child her age. After a contentious hair-brushing session, she was rewarded with her headphones.

"She loves music," Daryl Gottlieb said. "We've listened to Alan Jackson's 'Precious Memories' album at least ten thousand times."

Tessa Gottlieb spoke about Aidyn's love for all things water. "We take walks by the river, visit the Riverside Arts Market," she said.

The Gottliebs have an assistive flotation device for Aidyn with neck support, so she can float freely in a pool.

"She loves swimming!" brother Quincy said.

Like most children with FOXG1, the journey to Aidyn's diagnosis began when she was just a few months old.

"We knew there was something going on, but we didn't know what," her father said. "We noticed vision impairment, not tracking [objects], not making eye contact. She was having regressions, neurologically. She would faceplant during tummy time, arms sprawled out, with no control."

With the help of their pediatrician, Dr. Kim Dal Porto at Carithers Pediatric Group, the Gottliebs "ran the gauntlet," as Daryl Gottlieb put it, culminating in genetic testing that provided Aidyn's diagnosis.

There is no cure of FOXG1 syndrome, and managing the condition requires intensive therapies and medications. Aidyn attends a medical day care where she is attended by trained nurses at all times. She receives physical and other therapies alongside other children who are affected by complex medical conditions. Prior to her enrollment at the day care, the Gottliebs had a dedicated nanny to help them with Aidyn's daily routine.

The Gottliebs have leaned on their community, especially during the early days

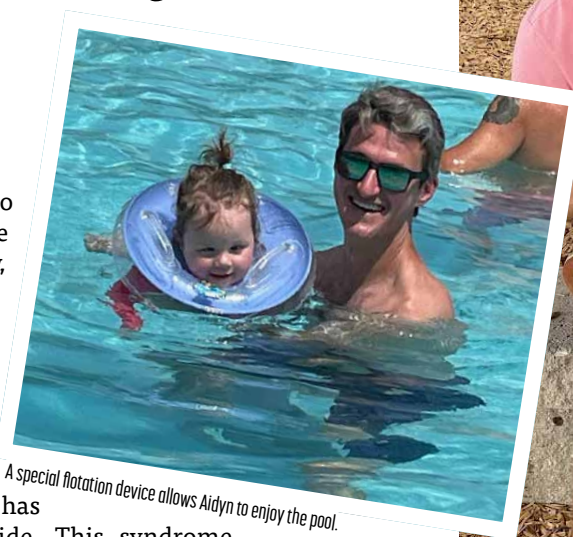
after Aidyn's diagnosis. Tessa has found a FOXG1 support group online, as well as receiving comfort and support from Aspire Church in San Marco, where they attend.

"They're still doing a Meal Train for us," Tessa Gottlieb said, gesturing to the week's meal-delivery schedule. The church also trained a volunteer to be with Aidyn on Sunday mornings in the church's nursery.

Aryn Lentz, a former neighbor of the Gottlieb family, has also stepped in to help by serving as committee chair for an upcoming fundraiser for FOXG1 research.

"We're working with Believe in a Cure, who is already pioneering research and working towards a clinical trial," Lentz said. "While [FOXG1] affects such a small group of people, there are links to Alzheimers and brain tumors," meaning that the research could have far-reaching implications for other diseases.

The Aidyn Mae Hope Fund charity event will take place on Nov. 9 at The Garden Club in Riverside. For more information, or to purchase tickets, please visit [webelieveinacure.org/aidyn-mae-hope-fund](http://webelieveinacure.org/aidyn-mae-hope-fund).



A special flotation device allows Aidyn to enjoy the pool.



The Gottlieb family - Daryl, Aislyn, Quincy, Aidyn and Tessa



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# THE WAY WE WERE

## Roger Vega: Unlocking the Past

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

**R**oger Vega is the one-man team behind his locksmith company, serving as the face and workforce of Piners Locksmith Service. He is also the keeper of a Jacksonville legacy that predates the beginning of his company and stretches back to Piner's Grocery, the neighborhood grocery store that would serve as an anchor to the Miramar community, whose former patrons keep it alive with memories and stories told.

"It's great, I love it," he said. "Because there's people that ask all the time about Piner's and they actually tell me stories how their grandparents used to go in there, or older folks who tell me how they used to go there when it used to be a bicycle shop. It feels good to be able to continue on a legacy."

Vega came to Northeast Florida from New York, by way of Miami, and has called this area home for more than 20 years. While he has been part of Piner's history for nearly half of that, he has been locksmithing since 1981, when he opened his first locksmith business.

He traveled back and forth between Jacksonville and Miami for several years before landing here permanently and says the people of Jacksonville are what make this the place he wants to be.

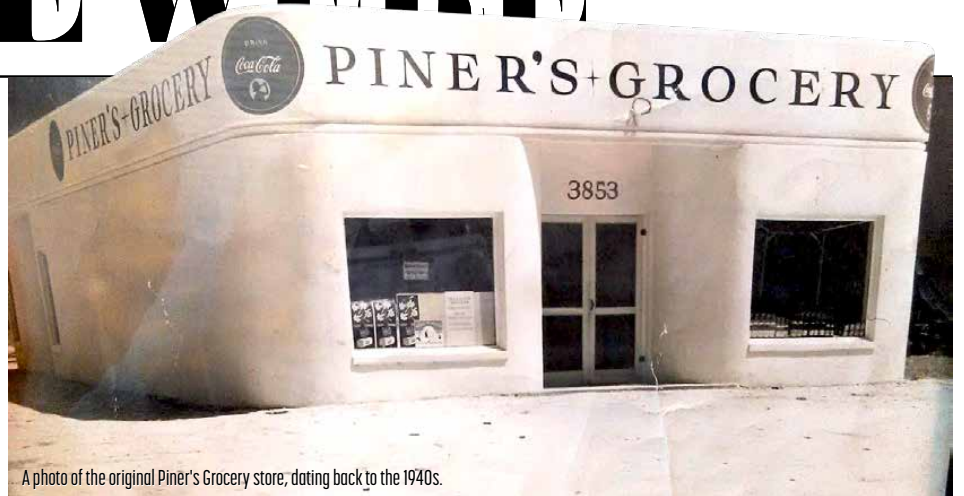
Piner's Grocery went through several iterations along the journey: Following the grocery store, it became a bicycle/hardware shop before eventually becoming Piner's Lock and Safe in 1962. It anchored Miramar Plaza for many years before Vega closed the storefront in March 2020, though, of course, he still runs his business by traveling to his clients anywhere within a 75- to 85-mile radius.

Vega worked under Richard Sigler, who Vega said was the manager of Piner's Lock and Safe since the 1960s, working for George Piner, Jr. George Piner, Jr. was the second Piner to run the business, succeeding the first George Piner who opened the original Piner's Grocery. Vega said he has fond memories of sitting in the office with Sigler, listening to his stories and learning from him.

When Sigler decided the time had come to retire, Vega took the opportunity to carry the Piner business into its next chapter. While he originally had plans to expand the business and move it to the Westside, Vega now prefers his small business the way it is.

Today, where Piner's Lock and Safe once was, stands the newly renovated Miramar Plaza, which underwent an extensive exterior facelift last year. Vega recalled the old building, which he said "really needed a makeover."

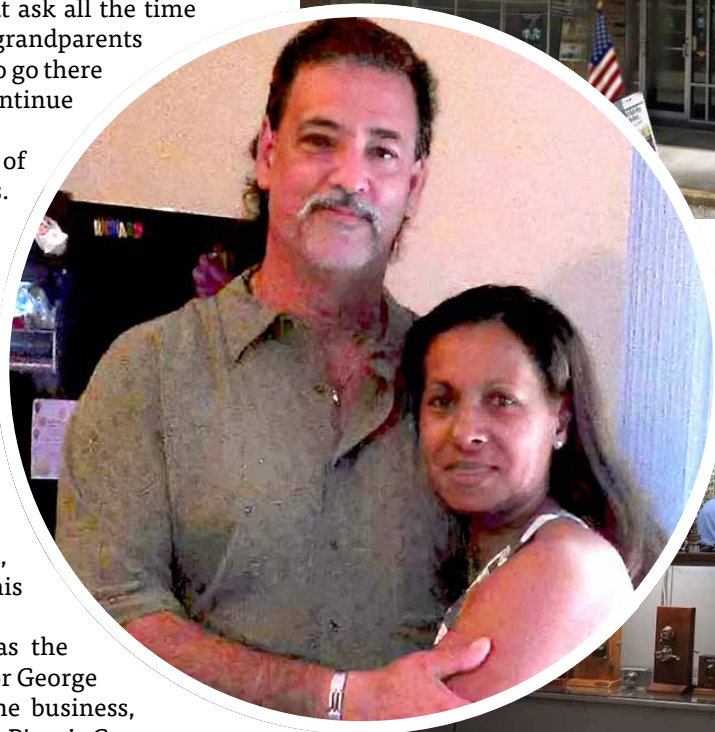
"You could tell the roof was leaking [in places], they had the old asbestos ceiling,"



A photo of the original Piner's Grocery store, dating back to the 1940s.



Piner's Lock & Safe anchored the old Miramar Plaza shopping center for years before Vega closed the storefront in March 2020.



Roger Vega, with his wife, Ana, says he is proud to carry on the Piners name with his locksmith services company.



An interior shot of the Piner's shot at its former location in what is now the renovated Miramar Plaza.

he said. "It really needed to be done. It's kind of nice that people enjoyed coming to an old place, and they even talked about it, but it really did need a makeover without a doubt. As far as what they did now, I think they did a fantastic job."

While he loves his customers and loves carrying on the Piner's legacy, Vega said he equally loves being a small business owner and the freedom it affords him. While he never thinks he'll truly and fully retire, he knows he would be "very picky" if the time ever came to sell the company.

"I'm just lucky that I can carry on Piner's," he said. "I love what I do."

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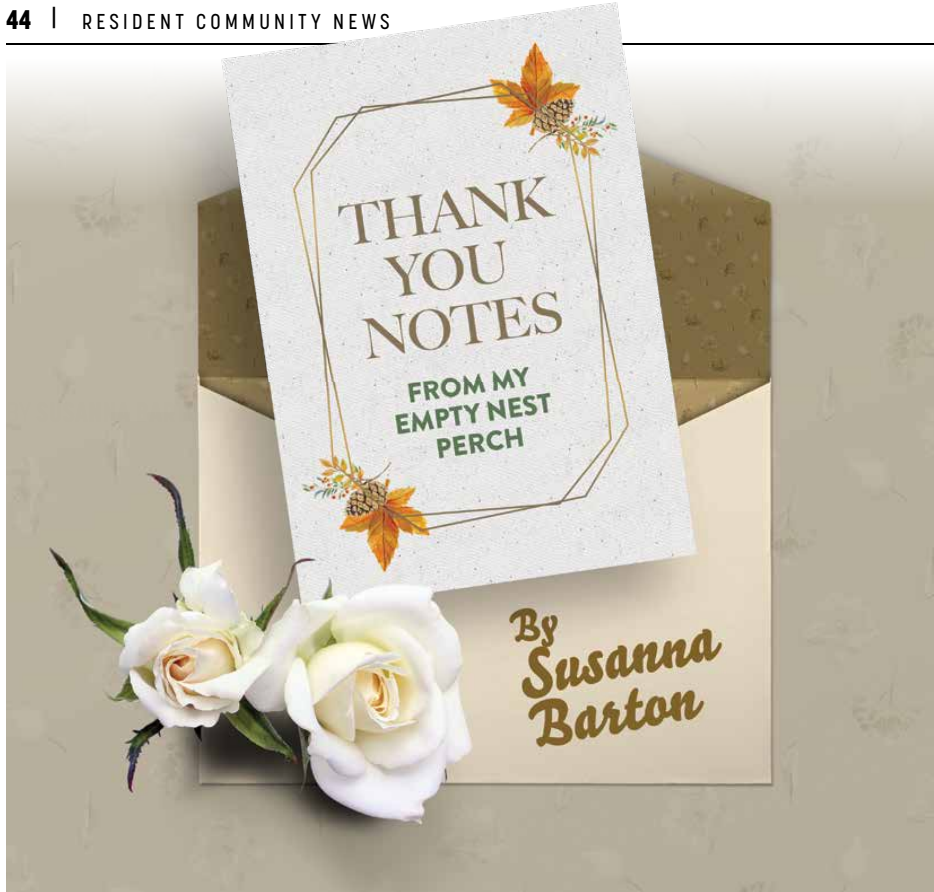
### Building From The Ground Up

CONSTRUCTION PLANNING FOR THE CURRENT ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Construction is one of many industries experiencing problems such as worker shortages and supply chain issues. While this is a constant concern during any project, our team is experienced and plans ahead for any issues that may arise. During the initial stages of project planning, we take into account potential cost increases, time delays, and explore ways to overcome these from day one.

We always maintain open and transparent communication with clients, suppliers, and employees to ensure all stakeholders are aware of changes to project schedules, materials, budgets, and availability. By planning and preparing ahead, we're able to ensure the success of our commercial construction projects without any major stressors.

What holds true for every project is a deep respect for the time, money, and trust each client has invested to grow their respective companies. This respect is core to the culture at The Herron Group and is brought to every new project.



In my "other" life, I obsess about geri-issues and all the planning and conversations we should be having now about our golden year greatness. Through an online community called Grand Plans, I stir up awareness of geri-issues that catch most of us by surprise and provide a supportive platform for discussion, experience-sharing and venting. And there are lots of the latter because, IYKYK. You should visit sometime - I promise your children will thank you!

All this handwringing and chardonnay slamming over future geri-challenges got me thinking about our own Resident Community - and how thankful we can be to live in neighborhoods that mitigate some of the biggest problems

senior citizens face during their sunset stroll: issues like access to elder care resources and services, senior living options, walkability and connection to community support. Our Resident Community is long on these strengths, and that is a tremendous blessing! If you're not thankful for these geri-perks now, stick around - you will feel differently one day!

This is not everyone's senior story in Jacksonville. Over the summer, I was asked to join Mayor Donna Deegan's subcommittee on eldercare, a role I felt honored - and scared! - to fill. I've learned there are complex challenges and great opportunities at play when it comes to providing senior care in Jacksonville.

While seniors in our neighborhoods face the same fundamental issues as everyone else in Northeast Florida and around the country, our Resident Community's unique location, design and character make it a little easier to manage for the folks who live there. We have a lot to say grace over when we're talking about planning life's next stages.

If you want to "age in place," our neighborhoods are among the best places in Northeast Florida to do so.

Here's why:

Our neighborhoods are walkable. Fundamentally, our historic neighborhoods were designed be less car-dependent than newer areas of Jacksonville. We are fortunate to have sidewalks and bike paths on non-highway roads that connect us to nearby retail centers, public parks and buildings, places of worship, medical facilities, clubs and spaces to enjoy the outdoors. If you can walk, bike, scooter or roll, you won't be in a pinch when your loved ones suggest it's time to hang up those car keys. (Editorial comment: this will happen to ALL of us one day, so let's be prepared to accept it before we accidentally hurt ourselves or someone else!) Thanks to our neighborhoods' walkability, you can get anywhere you need to go sans vehicle - a very key ingredient to maintaining independence and a sense of adventure during our senior years.

We have ample access to transportation - both public and private. We have options when it comes to public transportation. Bus stops are easy to access and can get us to areas across greater Jacksonville. Trolleys, ferries and the Skyway also are accessible modes. The Jacksonville River Taxi provides a more scenic way to get across town, and

Go-Tuk'n, a pay-to-ride, JTA-partnered shuttle service, can move people around the Riverside Avondale area. Of course, there are plenty of taxis, ride-share and scooter options in the neighborhoods, and the train station is kind of nearby, too, for those who choo-choo-choose that kind of travel arrangement. Transportation options are key for older adults to enjoy an on-the-go lifestyle.

Our neighborhoods promote community spirit. One of the most important ingredients to healthy senior living is access to a supportive community. Our neighborhoods were built on this strength. Through all phases of life here, we have myriad opportunities to be a part of faith communities, schools, special interest and activities groups, public and private clubs, restaurants, support gatherings and community service undertakings. This becomes increasingly important as we age because we need people to hold us accountable for our well-being and health. Connections are key during our senior experience. We need people to see us and look after us, and we need to do the same for others. Again, our neighborhoods promote community by their very design - so we won't have to look very far to find it.

Our neighborhoods are full of options when it comes to senior living. No matter what kind of senior living arrangement you envision for yourself - be it a retirement community, assisted living center, senior housing or in-home living arrangement - you can find it in or very near to our neighborhoods. That means you don't have to leave the people and neighborhood you've known to up your senior housing game. There are too many options to list, but there's everything

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from the Cathedral Terrace, Care and Residences in Downtown's Cathedral District to Riverside Presbyterian House, the Towers of Jacksonville, Ascension Living St. Catherine's Laboure, Brookdale, Taylor Manor and Residences, Brooks and Starling at San Jose, and more. Those are just a small sampling. And there are plenty

condominium scenario where I can take naps on the balcony, walk to the grocery and lounge by the pool (that I don't have to clean) surrounded by pretty landscaping (that I don't have to weed).

Our neighborhoods are near the city's biggest medical centers. Senior healthcare and medical treatment are minutes away when you live in our

the city's top medical facilities is a geriplus of epic proportion.

It's easy to exercise here. Not much more to say about that. Our proximity to parks, riverwalks, sidewalks, tennis and pickleball courts, golf, gyms and quiet streets makes exercise – a key part of healthy aging – a total breeze.

Our neighborhoods have senior support resources. Need adult daycare? All Saints Early Learning and Community Care Center has you covered. Need a physical therapist after that hip replacement surgery? Get down to Jacksonville Orthopaedic Institute stat. Looking for guidance on cleaning out or staging your home for sale so you can move to that condo overlooking the river? Just call Commander Staging and Interiors. Need an estate sale company to manage your purge? Take a gander at the sale signs next time you're cruising the 'hood. Desperately seeking a perm, trim or hairdo? Chop, chop – time to visit the corner barber shop or beauty parlor. Whatever service you're seeking, you are sure to find them in or near our Resident Communities. For the best recommendations, ask your neighbors! You don't have to reinvent the wheel when it comes to finding a business, service provider or support organization to help you git-r-dun.

The people who live here are community-focused: they are in it to help you win it. Our Resident Communities are populated by people drawn to the concept of being neighborly. That means a lifestyle where people look out for each other, support each other and fill each other's needs. As the Montell Jordan song goes, "This is How We Do It" (or "This is Howie Dewitt" depending on your pop culture fluency). Plus, there are tons of

young people and children around who can help you with your technology needs – and relevancy if you want to know more about popular songs, memes and emoji use.

Every day we can be grateful to live in homes surrounded by people, businesses, resources and services that can help make our Golden Years great.

“ **One of the most important ingredients to healthy senior living is access to a supportive community. Our neighborhoods were built on this strength. Connections are key during our senior experience. We need people to see us and look after us, and we need to do the same for others.** ”

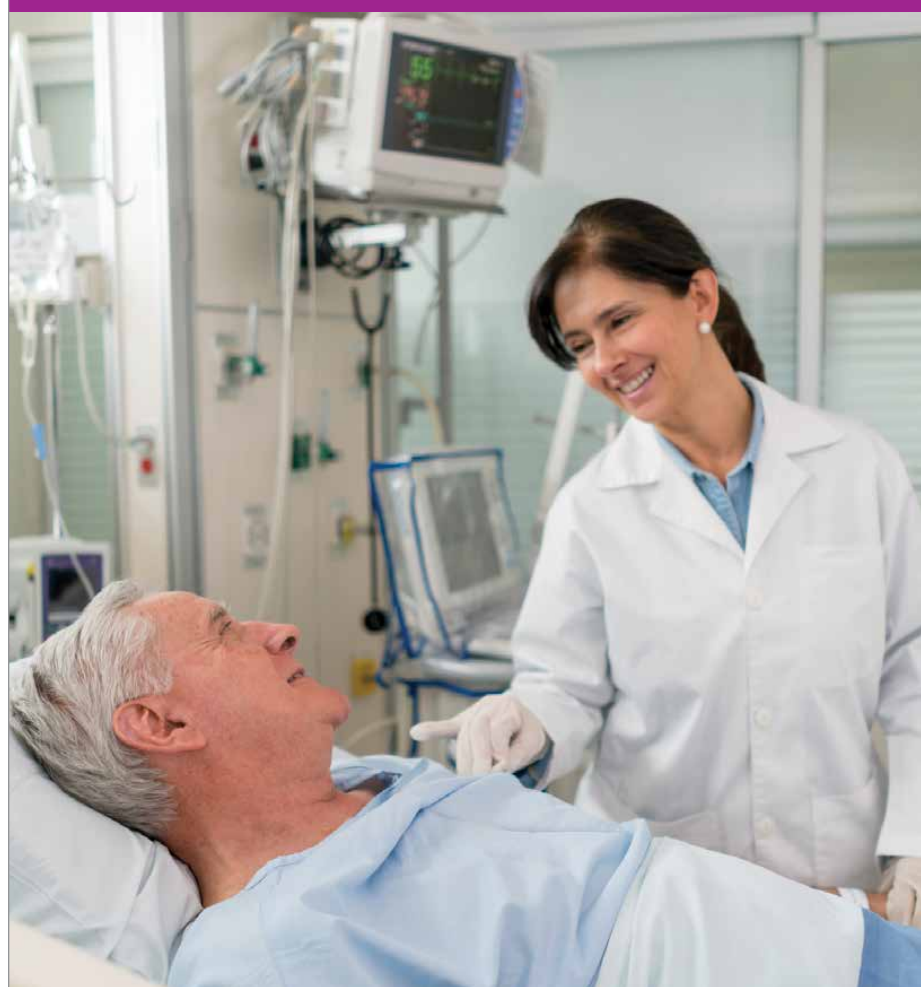
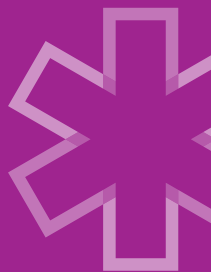
of longtime residential construction and renovation companies around here who can help you redesign your current home for long-term senior living.

Plus, there are plenty of condominium, townhome and apartment options with a broad range of price points and rental rates in the neighborhoods for those of us who are just interested in simplifying, paring back and settling into an easier, everyday housing setup. This is my plan. I have my eye on a riverfront

Resident Communities. In the Riverside/Avondale/Ortega area, Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside, and all the medical specialist offices nearby, are just a hop, skip and jump down the street. UF Shands also is an option nearby. San Marco and San Jose residents can zip over to Baptist Medical Center, HCA Memorial Hospital, Brooks or Ascension Southside. These places are all within a 5- to 10-minute drive for most people. And timing is everything as we get older. Living near

**Susanna Barton hopes she will be a silver fox one day like her late mother and thinks wearing wrinkles, droops, sunspots and sag is totally hip. She raised her family in Granada and has written professionally for The Jacksonville Business Journal, The Resident News, Jacksonville University and The Bolles School. She currently manages an online community called Grand Plans, which addresses geri-drama and all things elderly on mygrandplans.com. Each month, she will share reflections on neighborhood qualities for which she is grateful.**

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IN MEMORIAM

# Tonia Lynne "Tammy" McKinley

November 15, 1968 – July 30, 2023

Tonia Lynne McKinley, who was lovingly known as "Tammy" by her family and friends, passed away on the evening of July 30 while in hospice care. She died due to complications from lung cancer. Her final contribution to her community was to donate her body to science in the hopes of finding a cure for the cancer that took her life at age 54. She leaves behind relatives in Kentucky.

A Realtor with Watson Realty Corp. in Ortega, Tammy was best known to her fellow Realtors as the agent that sold 648 E. Union St. in December of 2018 for \$4.6 million. The sale was especially important to the City of Jacksonville, because "in less than a year, the Union Terminal Warehouse will begin a new renaissance as a home, business, and entertainment cornerstone for the growing bold city," according to News4jax.

"Her hope was that her battle with this greedy disease does not end with her, but that scientists will find out more about it and help others in the future," said Lorri Reynolds of Watson Realty.

Aside from her talent in real estate, Tammy was also an exceptional artist and avid supporter of the Riverside Arts Market.

"When she died, she was surrounded by family and friends. She knew she was loved," Reynolds said.



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# The Importance of Events

by Elainah Ehrlichman

Being a group of ten funeral homes in the Jacksonville area, some may wonder why Hardage-Giddens hosts and sponsors events that are not related to funerals. The short answer to that question is: We love to celebrate life and everything that comes with it! Though we specialize in death care and funeral services, we also understand that having a support system to lean on when you need it is essential to the healing process. This is why hosting events that allow people to come together is so important to us. Our ultimate goal is for you to view our locations not only as places which you can lean on for support during some of your most difficult times, but also where you can come to enjoy community-based and themed events in an effort to form long-lasting, mutual relationships.

We understand that the families that come to us for help typically reach out in times of extreme emotional distress, so this is our way of giving back to both our families and the incredible communities and charities that surround us. Since we specialize in death care and funeral services, we feel that it's important to also focus on the positives in life, not just the hard times. We try to make our events as meaningful (and as fun!) as possible so that everyone can come together, mingle, and have a wonderful time. We do our best to adjust the perspective dial so we can view things from a celebratory stance. Even with funerals, we try to promote the notion of looking at a service as a way

to celebrate your loved one's life and accomplishments. We're big on coming together and recognizing that even though an experience may be incredibly difficult, we can still be happy for the milestones and achievements your loved one reached during their life, as well as their irreplaceable lasting impact. We want our families to truly understand that after the funeral is over, we are still here, and we want to stay in touch. This is another aspect that's great about the events we hold, as it's a way for families to get to know one another, for us to check in with them, and overall, for everyone to be reminded of the joy in life. You could even think of our events as "meet and greets" because they are open to everyone, not only families that we've previously served!

Many of our events are community-focused, but some are also themed and based around the holidays. Some of our past community-focused affairs include our recurring Classics & Coffee for a Cause event, in which we have free coffee and pastries, a charity drive, and of course, a car meet! We have also hosted events to raise funds and awareness for cancer and other diseases, like charity walks and lemonade stands. Additionally, each year we partner with Wreaths Across America to show our support for our fallen veterans and those currently serving in the armed forces. Each year, Hardage-Giddens also proudly sponsors the Jacksonville Kingfish Tournament and the Jacksonville River Garden Classic. Our holiday and

themed events that we've thrown have been barbecues, open house tours of our facilities, Luminaries, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Memorial Day, Veteran's Day events, and more. We have so many exciting events planned for the near future, like our recurring Classics & Coffee for a Cause event, a "Galentine's" (Valentine's) painting day, and even a Halloween celebration!

Community outreach and providing a space where you can celebrate the good in life is our way of ensuring we do our part in helping local communities while creating incredible mutual bonds between ourselves, our neighbors, and the families we serve and have yet to serve. Our mission is to be there for you before, during, and after any funeral service, and these events are a fantastic way to encourage families to come together and form lasting relationships with one another and us.

Make sure you're following our Facebook pages so you can stay up to date with all of our exciting upcoming events! We also do monthly giveaways (September's giveaway prize was a Yeti cooler!), so make sure you're keeping an eye out for those as well. Thank you for continuing to trust Hardage-Giddens to take care of you during your time of need; now, let us give back to you and do what we can to create a long-lasting, beautiful relationship. We'll see you at our next event!

We're so excited to announce that our next Classics & Coffee for a Cause event is coming up! We'll be partnering with Angels for Allison and Vagabond Coffee Co. again for an amazing charity drive and some delicious complimentary coffee and snacks! If you have a car you'd like to exhibit at the event, feel free to stop by as early as 8:30 AM to find a spot. No entry fee or reservation is required, and all makes and models of cars are welcome. We look forward to seeing you there!

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