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Compassionate Cuisine

Nancy and Brent Zimmerman, along with Amber Wilson, Ellie Heekin and Sarah and Will Moorer paired compassion and cuisine while supporting Ascension St. Vincent's Community Outreach Program at the 21st Annual Delicious Destinations presented by Miller Electric on Sept. 9.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 24](#)



For the Love of Creatives, Arts and Culture

Diana Donovan, Kendall Sisisky Valliere, Kimberly and Richard Sisisky, and Blaire Sisisky Sherman celebrated the 2023 Arts Awards honorees at the Sept. 21 Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville event at Venue 841.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 22](#)

Hitting the Refresh Button

A collaborate effort between District 5 City Council Member Joe Carlucci, the San Marco Merchants Association and the San Marco Preservation Society is bringing some updates and enhancements to San Marco Square.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 5](#)

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Bulldog Pride



Students across all four Bolles campuses brought their Bulldog best to many Homecoming activities, including a parade held Sept. 25 on the Upper School San Jose Campus and Lower School Whitehurst Campus. The 2023 Homecoming Court and many athletes participating in fall sports waved at their peers and lower school students who lined the sidewalks, enthusiastically cheering and awaiting any candy tossed their way.



It's All In the Mix

Anliese Ennis, alongside Brian Simmons, Kris Tiefenthaler, and Jim and Sam Register enjoyed cocktails and camaraderie at the Sept. 7 Mix and Mingle event hosted by the San Marco Merchants Association and the San Marco Preservation Society.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 33](#)

New Digs for JSO Division

The Jacksonville City Council approved a new lease for office space at the Florida Blue Building in Brooklyn to house Jacksonville Sheriff's Office Homeland Security Division. The new space will be nearly 60,000 square feet across three floors.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 5](#)

Gridlock Woes at Wolfson

A raised concrete median installed over the summer has caused gridlock traffic and raised safety concerns at Samuel W. Wolfson High School.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 8](#)

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JSO Identifies Suspect in Hendricks Avenue Double Homicide

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

At a Sept. 13 press conference, the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office (JSO) announced the clearance of the Hendricks Avenue double shooting that took the lives of Paige Pringle and Tara Baker and identified 22-year-old Ty Christopher Head as the suspect who perpetrated those murders.

An arrest cannot be made, however, as Head committed suicide in Nashville, Tennessee the day after the double murder.

At the news brief, JSO Chief of Investigations Alan Parker shared the known details and circumstances surrounding the homicides.

Utilizing various law enforcement technologies, and in collaboration with the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF), JSO was able to identify Head as a suspect, discovering his vehicle – a grey Volkswagen Passat – matched the description of the vehicle seen driving behind Pringle's white SUV moments before the murder.

JSO worked with the Wilson County Tennessee Sheriff's Office to confirm Head had taken his life the day following the murders.

Investigators were able to match the 9mm casing recovered from Head's suicide scene with those recovered at the scene of the double murder. Parker added that just before the Sept. 13 press conference, ATF forensics confirmed the 9mm handgun recovered from Head's suicide was a match for the weapon used in the Hendricks Avenue shooting.

Parker added that the motive behind the murders remains unknown. "When Head took his own life, he blocked the only avenue for investigators to conclusively answer this question," he said. "Murder, even when we understand the motive behind it, is a senseless act of violence. We cannot ever find sense in a senseless act."

According to Parker, Head had no criminal record and there was "nothing documented on his mental history that [JSO is] aware of" despite an "extensive" search. Head did have a history of substance abuse and was living in a sober house for addiction "just prior to the double murder."

"While we cannot provide the deceased victims' family members with justice through the court system, it is our solemn hope that by providing them with some factual answers concerning these murders, we can impart to them some sense of peace," Parker said.

Parker added that any new information would be released through JSO's Public Information Office. As of Sept. 21, JSO had no new details to share.



Michael Fackler

Fackler Appointed Acting General Counsel

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

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

"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.

Fackler's 20 years of legal experience includes being a partner at Milam Howard Nicandri & Gillam P.A. and previously clerking for the Honorable Harvey E. Schlesinger, U.S. District Court Judge for the Middle District of Florida.

Fackler's appointment comes following the withdrawal of Deegan's initial appointee, former District 7 City Council Member Randy DeFoor. After meeting significant opposition for her appointment, DeFoor issued a statement.

It 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."

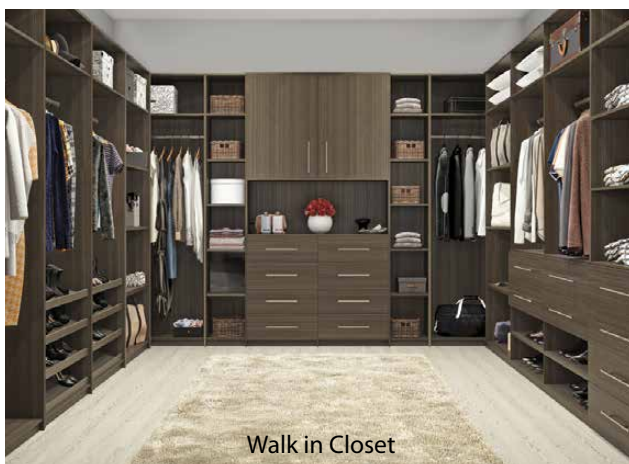
The Qualifications Review Committee (QRC) will begin reviewing Fackler's qualifications, per the city charter, in October.

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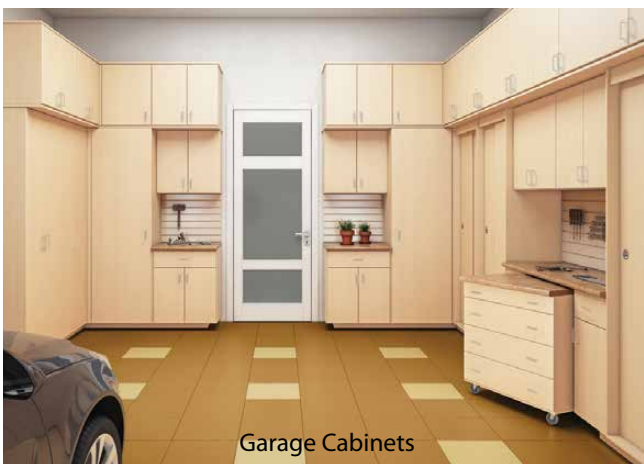
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Urban Odor Study Report Revisited

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 “reseated NH₃ 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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A Refresh Ahead for San Marco Square

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

San Marco residents will soon see some changes and enhancements coming to San Marco Square and Balis Park under the initiative named San Marco Refresh 2.0.

Refresh 2.0 is a collaborative effort between the City – via District 5 City Council Member Joe Carlucci – the San Marco Merchants Association (SMMA) and the San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS). Conversations surrounding the initiative began earlier this year as all parties got together with their own respective “wish lists” for updates and enhancements to the square and its park.

“One of the big catalysts was we have been talking about addressing the trash cans in the square for a long time and that’s one of the items that isn’t clearly defined as far as whose responsibility it is, and it comes with a pretty big price tag so we were all trying to work together to see what the solution was,” explained SMMA President Leah Roesler.

Carlucci was able to secure \$150,000 in funding for the initiative.

Among other things, this funding will provide for the highly-anticipated Bigbelly Element trash bins. These bins will have a larger capacity than the ones currently in the Square; they are fully enclosed, protecting from rainwater and overflow and preventing any kind of scavenging. Its chute interface allows people to pull open a chute opening to dispose of garbage; the garbage will then slide down into the bin once the chute is closed, eliminating the possibility of stray trash missing its mark and falling out onto the ground.

Plans also include adding aesthetic enhancements to the long, rectangular fountain in Balis Park by installing some decorative tiling around the external fountain wall – though that portion of the project is slower-moving.

“We’re moving slowly on it because we do want to make sure it’s done right and we want to make sure it fits [aesthetically],” he said.

Carlucci said they are working with the San Marco Tile Company to find tile reminiscent of the Square’s Italian namesake.

Funding for the tiling upgrades will “probably be coming out of Refresh funding, potentially some of it could come out of Parks funding, and then I have district-specific funding that I can pull from, too,” Carlucci said.

The Square and Balis Park will also be seeing some landscaping updates. In addition to swapping out some plants that may not be thriving and other re-landscaping efforts, changes are planned to the grassy area by the Windy Days bronze art sculpture facing the San Marco Theatre, which SMPS President David Paulk explained is a popular spot for children to play while parents enjoy the paved area near the gazebo.

“It’s kind of trampled some of the grass around there,” he said. “So rather than fight a losing battle of resodding and replanting shrubs, we’re going to make that a better area to congregate and put more of a hardscape to encourage what’s already happening and support what people love about the space already.”

While the Refresh 2.0 projects are underway, the City of Jacksonville Parks, Recreation and Community Services will also be doing its own maintenance work in Balis Park, including routine maintenance on the fountain equipment, pressure washing, painting and other work, Carlucci said.

The initiative has also served as a catalyst to kickstart other projects, Roesler added, including some lighting updates to the Square.

“It is exciting to be able to have this kind of partnership where the three groups – the City, [SMPS] and [SMMA] – can come together and make a game plan and actually execute on it and just feel supported by one another,” Roesler said.

Carlucci said the targeted completion date for the elements of Refresh 2.0 is this Thanksgiving.

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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Einar C. Rohlin, right, stands in front of the 1939 Hendricks Ave. building with a colleague. Karie Kovacocy and Karen Rohlin Schulman recreate the photo Schulman's father took 71 years ago in front of the building at 1939 Hendricks Ave.

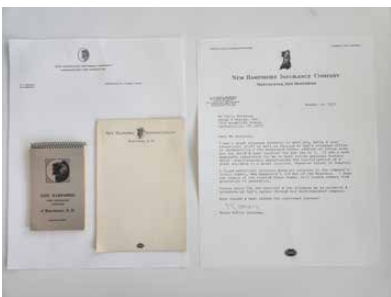
1939 Hendricks: A Gem Restored; History Revisited

BY JENNIFER JENSEN

The building at 1938 Hendricks Ave. recently received a much-needed revamp thanks to architecture and design firm Group 4 Design and Incipit of Florida LLC. It was most recently used as the Jacksonville men's club before it was condemned by the city in 2019. The two companies purchased and renovated the 69-year-old building in a \$2.5 million project that took about a year to complete.



Old newspaper articles that featured Einar Rohlin and The New Hampshire Insurance Co., which was one of the first occupants of the building.



A notebook and notepad featuring the old New Hampshire Insurance Co. logo and letterhead.

Group 4 Design Architectural Design Principal Karie Kovacocy said the process was a "labor of love" and they were determined to restore the building to its 1952 midcentury modern glory.

"With every surprise within a wall, or discovery during demolition, we stayed true to our vision and stayed the course," she said.

They choose the building because of its location, history and potential.

"This has been a structure that has withstood the test of time," Kovacocy said. "It was a solid structure that has had a very colorful history that needed to be restored. As architects and designers, we can see the potential through boarded up windows, layers of dirt and neglect."

The building serves as an example of one of the firm's design principles: adaptive reuse. The entire structure is original, as well as every opening in the exterior envelope. It had just been covered up for decades, Kovacocy said. A lot of the floors, ceilings and structural members were left exposed so visitors can see the marrying of the new and old throughout

the building.

The remodel caught the attention of someone with a deep connection to the building, one who could share a wealth of history about it. Karen Rohlin Schulman, daughter of Einar C. Rohlin, former vice president of The New Hampshire Insurance Co., reached out to Group 4 Design after seeing the remodel featured in a magazine. Her father, was also the resident secretary of the Southern Department at Jacksonville, first occupied the building back in 1952. Schulman felt compelled to visit and share her connection to the architectural gem.

Schulman toured the office and shared details and memories she had of the building with the staff at Group 4 Design. She also brought along items that belonged to her father, including original business cards, a published article about her father's move to Jacksonville, the original New Hampshire Insurance Co. letterheads, and an article about New Hampshire's Old Man of the Mountain, also known as "Stone Face," crumbling down. Stone Face was the insurance company's logo. She also showed them a black-and-white photograph of Rohlin standing in front of the building, which she and Kovacocy decided to recreate.

"It was a truly amazing experience and we're so thankful to have met Karen and learned more about the history of our building," Kovacocy said.

Pop-Up Park(ing) Day comes to San Marco

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

A parallel-parking spot in front of San Marco's Aspire Church was transformed into a miniature urban garden to celebrate Park(ing) Day on Friday, Sept. 15.

Park(ing) Day originated in San Francisco in 2005, created by the group that would become Rebar Art and Design Studio. Today, it is a "global, public, participatory project where people across the world temporarily repurpose curbside parking spaces and convert them into public parks and social spaces to advocate for safer, greener and more equitable streets for people."

According to Bree Stern, president of the Northeast chapter of the Florida Nursery Growers and Landscape Association, this year was the first time Park(ing) Day had returned to Jacksonville since 2012.

Each year's Park(ing) Day is themed, with this year's theme being "pollinators."

With the help of volunteers from St. Johns Country Day School, Stern said the parallel-parking spot had been transformed with various plants, most of which were native to Florida, by 9:45 a.m. and within 15 minutes, they were already seeing butterflies, bees and other pollinators visiting the miniature urban garden.



Bree Stone, Leah Roesler and Margie Fox stand in the transformed parallel-parking spot in front of Aspire Church.

"It's amazing just how quickly of an impact it can make of being able to provide a resource to pollinating insects and animals, and then also how great those pollinating insects are for the food chain for the rest of the ecosystem," Stern said.

All the plants were donated by University of North Florida Botanical Gardens and Liberty Landscape Supply.

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."

Active inventory in the area rose 10.9% while new listings increased by 12% in August. The median sales price for single-family homes fell 3% to \$383,000.

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.

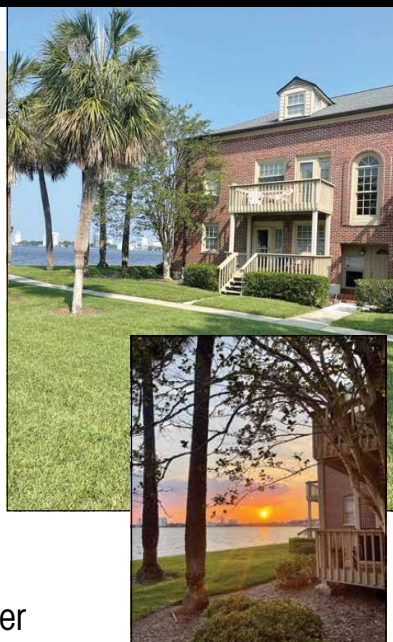
"The median sales price was reduced slightly due to buying power," said Galavis.

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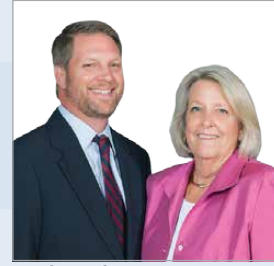
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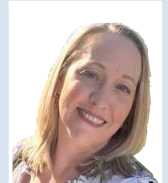
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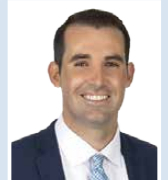
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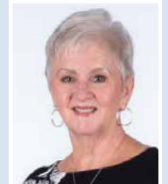
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Traffic Congestion, Safety Concerns Lead to Removal of New Pedestrian Crossing at Wolfson

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The new school year got off to a slow start for staff and families at Samuel W. Wolfson School for Advanced Studies as traffic features installed over the summer in front of the school on Powers Avenue caused traffic congestion and raised safety concerns.

District 3 School Board Member and Wolfson parent Cynthia Pearson said she first saw the construction as she dropped

off her daughter for soccer camp and began making inquiries with the school principal, chief of police and Duval County Public School (DCPS) Facilities Department to see what she could learn about the incoming changes, which, once completed, were a raised concrete median and crosswalk.

“From the DCPS side, we really didn’t have advance notice that this was happening and didn’t understand the rationale for the placement of the

median where it was in front of the school,” she said.

As families returned to campus for orientations ahead of the new school year, Pearson began seeing posts on social media about the traffic features; some expressed concerns over the impact they would have on safety and traffic flow while others asked if anything was being done about them. Wolfson’s PTSA encouraged people to submit their concerns to Pearson via e-mail.

“From that, I think I ended up with about 80 parent e-mails from the beginning of school through the first week of school and into the second,” Pearson said.

Pearson reached out to her city council counterpart, District 5 City Council Member Joe Carlucci, for assistance. Carlucci connected with the Traffic Engineering Division and advocated for the median’s removal prior to the beginning of the school year. Though that request was denied, Carlucci said the division agreed to “have another conversation” if the traffic features were causing problems.

As the school year started, Pearson documented traffic conditions in the morning and afternoon and drove various routes to the school during those peak drop-off and pick-up times in order to have an idea of what people were experiencing. She sent that documentation and feedback on to Carlucci, who had also begun receiving e-mails regarding the situation.

“Traffic Engineering was out there four different times – two times in the morning and two times in the afternoon – to monitor traffic flow, make sure there weren’t any queues of long lines and it obviously proved to be unsafe and caused a lot of long lines and long queues that were just unnecessary,” Carlucci said.

Pearson said that throughout the process of her collaborating with Carlucci and him, in turn, working with the city traffic engineers, her question was, “Why there?”

In an e-mail, City of Jacksonville Traffic Engineering Division Chief Christopher W. LeDew wrote, “The location for the crosswalk was determined during the Traffic Engineering review of the residential development that is being built east of Powers Ave. across the street from Wolfson High School. Traffic Engineering asked the developer to provide a pedestrian crosswalk at the front of the school.”

“The original concept was to have

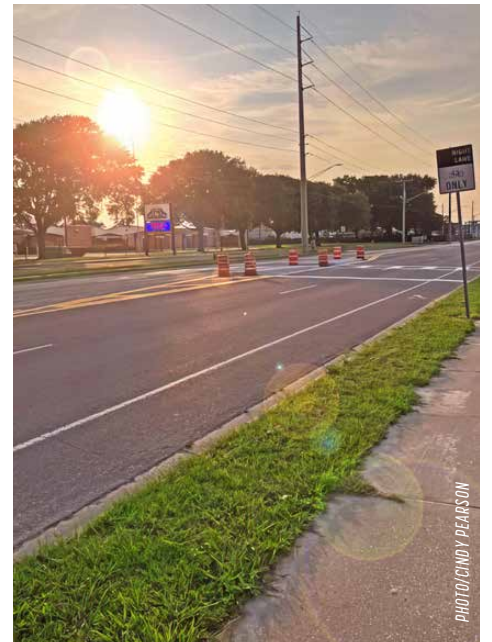


PHOTO: CINDY PEARSON



PHOTO: CINDY PEARSON

The recently installed pedestrian crossing will be removed during the December holiday break.

the pedestrian crosswalk align with the front doors of the school, where sidewalk exists. The final plan shifted the crosswalk to the south to avoid a JTA bus stop. This change made the left-turn out of the parent drop-off loop driveway more difficult. Traffic Engineering received many complaints, observed the

“From the DCPS side, we really didn’t have advance notice that this was happening and didn’t understand the rationale for the placement of the median where it was in front of the school.”

– Cynthia Pearson
District 3 School Board Member

turning movement conflicts, and decided to remove the pedestrian crossing to improve vehicular safety,” it further read.

LeDew added that while the developer paid for the installation of the traffic features, which were requested by the city, the City of Jacksonville would be assuming the costs for the removal. There are currently no plans to reinstall these features at another point along Powers Avenue.

According to LeDew, removal work is being scheduled during the holiday break in December “for safety reasons to avoid traffic congestion during school times.”

The Resident News reached out to the developer for comment but did not receive a response by press time.

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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.

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.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 11

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).

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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.

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“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.”

– 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, the San Marco community already has its own locally-owned ride service on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

Initially launched at the Beaches, Beach Buggy moved into the San Marco community in 2019 to offer a complimentary, eco-friendly ride service in the area. One of the owners, Dustin Kaloostian, explained the idea behind the company was to “to impact the community in a positive way.” Beach Buggy’s free ride service is made possible through various sponsorships, including the Jacksonville Transit Authority (JTA) and North Florida Sales, distributor for Anheuser-Busch.

“Because of [San Marco’s] size and densely populated area, there was more

of an opportunity there,” Kaloostian said. “Between the business districts and the most-densely populated residential areas is actually a pretty short distance, but it’s a little too far to walk, so that’s where we saw the opportunity.”

Beach Buggy currently operates two, 10-seater electric vehicles in San Marco, though Kaloostian added it is hoping to expand Beach Buggy’s hours and fleet in the community. While the service is free, tips for the drivers are welcome.

To use this community amenity, people can visit www.beachbuggyapp.com to access shortcuts to the Android and Apple versions of the Beach Buggy app. Current operating hours and any pertinent messages are updated regularly through the app. A map of the San Marco service area is also available.

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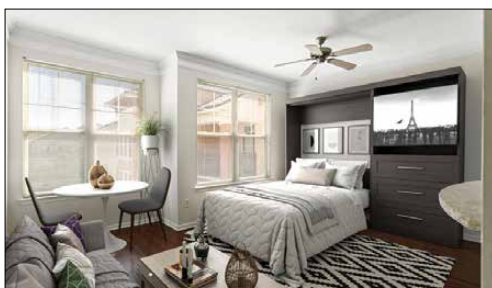
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Council Says “Hard Pass” to Hospitality Tax

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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A Man On a Mission

David Paulk's plans for San Marco

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

The San Marco Preservation Society (SMPS) has a new leader at its helm.

Immediate Past President Lauren Carlucci ceremoniously passed the keys to President David Paulk at the SMPS annual meeting in June, and the new leader has hit the ground running.

Prior to his presidency, Paulk served as a general board member from 2020-2022 and chair of the membership committee. Last year, he served as Carlucci's vice president.

"In that year, he helped to streamline and optimize the organization's internal functionality. I know SMPS will continue to strive to improve and preserve the San Marco community under his leadership," said Carlucci.

“It's an honor to be chosen by the board. We've accomplished a lot, and I'm excited to push the organization forward.”

- David Paulk, President, San Marco Preservation Society.

In the early months of his presidency, Paulk has already overseen capital improvements for Preservation Hall and South Jacksonville City Hall, internal improvements to board processes and worked with the San Marco Merchants Association and District 5 Council Member Joe Carlucci on planned improvements and enhancements to Balis Park and San Marco Square.

Next year, with the San Marco neighborhood celebrating its centennial anniversary and SMPS its 50th, Paulk said it's a "great opportunity" to market and



San Marco Preservation Society Immediate Past President Lauren Carlucci hands the keys to President David Paulk at the organization's annual meeting in June.

raise funds to allow for growth within the organization.

"Of the larger neighborhood groups in the urban core, SMPS is the only one without an executive director, and while we do have a very active board who puts in a ton of hours, it's just tough when people are doing it out of the good of their hearts and while they're juggling multiple other things in their lives," he said. "I personally would love to get a full-time staff person on to continue our mission and to help be more present at City Hall for some of these zoning issue and just be able to raise funds via grants and partnerships with individuals and organizations."

Throughout the year, SMPS hosts several community events, both on its own and in conjunction with other organizations. Its Storytime in the Square has been a long-standing monthly event in San Marco Square on the first Saturday of every month, however Paulk said more Saturday morning events will soon be added to SMPS's community calendar to continue to activate the square, including a group exercise class hosted by Bitty and Beau's on the second Saturday of the month and a yoga class hosted by Hot Spot Yoga on the third Saturday. All these events will be free and designed at an introductory level with no skills or experience required.

"It's a real honor to be chosen by the remainder of the board," Paulk said. "It's a very active board who does a lot throughout the course of the year, so it's definitely not something I take lightly or casually. It's been very busy, and we've accomplished a lot already. Just excited to continue to push the organization forward and hopefully set up the next president to have even more success."



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.



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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

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.

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.



Mother-and-son team Troy and Chris Winn

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.

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Aiden Simonetta
 Broker Associate/Instructor

Philip Simonetta
 Broker-Owner/Instructor



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.



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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Radiology

New Names Atop Wolfson's Board



Erin Wolfson



Mia Jones

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 She-roses 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.

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."



Volunteers in Medicine Cuts Ribbon on New Outpatient Facility

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

Volunteers in Medicine (VIM-Jax) celebrated its 20th anniversary by opening its newest location on just off Philips Highway on Tuesday, Sept. 12.

A ribbon cutting ceremony was held at the new Dorion-Burt Clinic at 3728 Philips Hwy., Suite #34. Ceremony participants included Mayor Donna Deegan, VIM-Jax Board President Dr. Barbara Darby, Dottie Dorion and the family of Dr. Jim Burt.

"Volunteers were in the beginning and always will be the heart and soul of this program," said Dorion. "Thanks to all of you: the volunteers, the donors, the friends and families. You have all made us what we are today. I am ever so grateful. Thank you. God bless you all."

Since its inception, VIM-Jax has provided free medical care to the working uninsured of Northeast Florida. In figures, VIM-Jax's two decades of service equates to more than 4,400 medical and administrative volunteers, and 100,837 visits by 23,415 patients.

"VIM serves individuals who are working but can't afford the high cost of health insurance," said VIM-Jax CEO Jennifer Ryan. "Our patients work hard, and there's a big mismatch between their typical earnings and the rising costs of necessities. If they have to choose between taking care of their families and getting health care, they'll avoid going to the doctor. As a result, new patients often show up at VIM experiencing a health crisis that should have been prevented."

This new clinic will replace the organization's former downtown location in its "iconic" blue building. For 19 years, VIM-Jax provided comprehensive primary care and specialty care from its downtown clinic. The Dorion-Burt clinic resulted from the sale of the downtown building in March of this year and a recognized need for expanded services.

"The open house at the new Dorion-Burt Clinic is a joint celebration of our past years of service as well as our anticipation of more great times ahead," said Ryan.



Garvie Crowned Miss Freedom USA Woman

Local resident Niki Garvie, 52, has been crowned Miss Freedom USA Woman at the national pageant in Jacksonville, Florida. She plans to use her reign to amplify her platform on organ donation. Garvie became an organ donor advocate after learning two of her three daughters suffer from polycystic kidney disease, or PKD. PKD is a chronic, genetic disease which causes uncontrolled growth of cysts in the kidney, often leading to kidney failure.

Garvie is a Donate Life Ambassador for Donate Life America and a PKD Community Ambassador for the PKD Foundation. She hopes to help increase the number of lives saved and healed through organ, eye and tissue donation, while developing a culture where donation is embraced as a fundamental human responsibility. Today, more than 100,000 people are waiting on the national transplant waiting list for lifesaving organ transplants and 85% of these patients are waiting for a kidney. With no cure for her daughters' PKD, she also will work to increase

awareness, research and government funding for the disease.

As Miss Freedom USA Woman, she also looks forward to promoting our local military community and its supporting organizations, especially Five Star Veterans Center, which provides homeless veterans with housing, education, job preparedness, and health and wellness services.

When crowned, Garvie, a mother of three girls, said she realized that being herself and letting her personality show was "truly enough." She said although she entered the national pageant to help develop her own self-confidence, she now embraces the responsibility of being an example for others.

"Today, we all constantly see images and messages about how we should look and act. Many of us struggle to know who we are and to be proud to stay true to ourselves. It was freeing to know I can just be me, and that be ok. That really is the beauty of freedom," she said.

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Leslie and George McCaughan with Cathy and Rob Stursberg with son Will



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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The Other Side of the Tracks

BY MICHELE LEIVAS

San Marco Square's Balis Park and its majestic lions, lined on both sides with restaurants and shops, may be the immediate image one conjures when thinking of the historic community. Or perhaps it's Hendricks Avenue's active corridor of small businesses that springs to mind.

One neighbor has rallied community leaders to shift their focus to another section of San Marco – East San Marco, just past the railroad tracks on Atlantic Boulevard – which he argues is a section of the community that deserves its turn to catch up with the rest of its neighborhood.

Carlos Bouvier has lived in East San Marco in the residential area behind the hotels on Philips Highway for several years and has watched San Marco evolve while this area, he feels, was left behind.

"The old days, this part was completely separated from San Marco. There were a lot of prostitutes and drug dealing. It was pretty awful," he said. "But then it changed. When the highway came, the houses started to be sold. The hotel started to take more care and put [up] security and clean up better. Things started changing."

Now, with the addition of several new apartment complexes in the immediate area – the Barlow Apartments, The Exchange Apartments, the San Marco Promenade Apartments and Eastborough San Marco – Bouvier sees the tide changing even more for his neighborhood.

With that in mind, he invited District 5 Council Member Joe Carlucci, San Marco Preservation Society President David Paulk and San Marco Merchants Association President Leah Roesler to join him on a neighborhood walk in August so they could see the infrastructural improvements the neighborhood still needs despite the development that has grown around it. Jay Master, owner of the Scottish Inn Motel, joined them as well.

A primary point of concern for Bouvier was the lack of streetlights, curbs and sidewalks on Perry Place. While not a long street, it is very active in the evenings with pedestrians taking their dogs to a nearby dog park at the corner of Perry and Mitchell Avenue, and vehicles as people return home from work.

"I never realized that [Perry Place] was so heavily utilized by pedestrians and their dogs," said Carlucci later in a telephone interview.

Moving forward, Carlucci said he will be bringing representatives from the Public Works Department to the area to show them some of the issues Bouvier brought to his attention. Projects costing less than \$100,000, he explained, can be completed on a normal schedule. The larger projects costing more than \$100,000 – installing curbs throughout the neighborhood, for example – would have to be included in the Capital



San Marco Merchants Association President Leah Roesler, District 5 City Council Member Joe Carlucci, Scottish Inn Motel Owner Jay Master and San Marco resident Carlos Bouvier tour the residential area of East San Marco.

Improvement Plan (CIP). Given that the coming year's CIP was just recently approved in August, the neighborhood would likely have to wait for curbs for another year.

"If we're kind of piecing the sidewalks together on this one street and another street over here, we might be able to get those done not in the CIP, which could potentially be faster," said Carlucci.

Overall, Bouvier said he feels "the goal of the walk was achieved."

"There was an impact there," he said.

In a later e-mail, Paulk wrote, "SMPS will do our part to work with the city and East San Marco to continue a dialogue with the residents to support their needs. This is a historic area dating back to the 1940s, so maintaining the historic character of the neighborhood as development continues to be drawn to that area is very important to our organization."

"I appreciated that Carlos took the time to involve the association and bring [SMPS] and the City all together," Roesler said. "It was nice to see somebody taking a proactive approach to nurturing that relationship and bringing all of us to the table."

In a Sept. 22 comment on a social media post by *The Resident News*, Carlucci stated that there is "progress in the works." He wrote, "Sidewalks on Perry Place will be starting soon. Bethune Ave [sic] drainage is being addressed. Lighting along Perry Place has been sent to JEA for poles 2004, 2100, 2150 and 2230. Underground pipe leak at Mark and John (still looking for Matthew and Luke) is going to be replaced. Not repaired. Replaced with new popping. And other items are still being worked through."

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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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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.



Kalynn Franklin with Caitlyn Brunell, Amber Wilson and Leah Adams

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John Pappas and Shawna Cratsley

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.



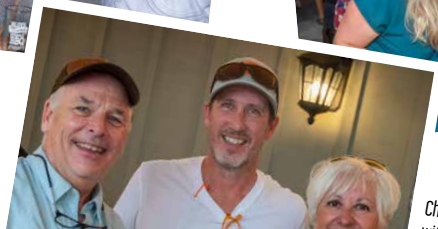
True Blues



Keith Maas, Carolyn Klucha and Kevin Stone



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



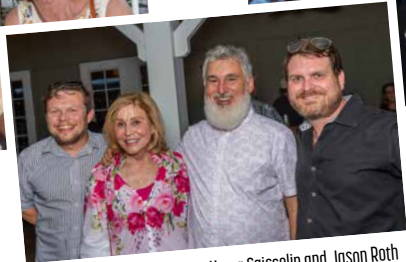
Chad Munsey, center, with Rich and Judy Prokapeak



Bill Parker and Janice Lamattina



Beth Carper and Shannon Greene



Matt Martz with Irene Lazzara, Numa Saisselin and Jason Roth



Ginny and Doug Schlosser



Michelle Rawls with Kristina Abbasi and Neda Lankarani

Lou and Jan Walsh with

Bite-sized B

Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation held its signature food and wine fundraiser, Delicious Destinations presented by Miller Electric, on Sept. 8-9 at the Port of Jacksonville. Delicious Destinations hosted its Celebrity Chef By the Sea Luncheon, for the ensuing evening. The event included its namesake food and wine offerings.

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



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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.




Ellen Houts with Martha Mewbourne, Kendra McCrary, Cordelia Jones, Denise McHale, Beth Langley, Janet Reagar, Katie Belton, Meg Folds and Julie Howard




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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



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Cindy Mastice with Jenn DiPaula

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.

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



Lisa Pearson and Abigail Jewett with Rebecca Carrigan and Erin Gordon



Lauren and Andrew Steif with Georgette Dumont and George Candler

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

“ We are so thankful for the community's unwavering support and dedication to our mission. ” – Denise Deisler, CEO of JHS



Holly Smith with Dana McEwan and Jon Poli



Nina Waters with Jacob Hofstra, Keleigh Morrison and Lex Waters



Laura and Mike McGinnis



Jessica Chiu with Tee Ngo



Theresa Scordo and Denise Deisler with Lawrence Nicolas



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Emcee Rich Jones with Lily

Boots and Bling



Jennifer and Ben Garrett

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



Sara Hunt

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

– Carla Montgomery
Executive Director for Child Cancer Fund



Childhood cancer fighter Lily

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.”



Andrea Laliberte

From Healing to Helping

One woman’s journey from breast cancer to benefactor

Reprinted and adapted with permission from Ascension St. Vincent’s Foundation.

A normal day going to chemotherapy turned life-changing for Andrea Laliberte. In 2020, Laliberte was undergoing treatment for breast cancer. An Ascension St. Vincent’s oncology nurse told Laliberte about one of her former patients, an older gentleman who had been going through extensive chemo treatments. One of his appointments was scheduled on his birthday. On that day, she said he arrived at the hospital’s chemotherapy center with 20 \$50 gift cards. He handed the cards to the nurse and asked her to give them to patients who needed help.

The nurse explained to Laliberte that often she hears patients waiting to go in for chemotherapy ask about smaller monetary items, such as validated parking. To some patients, that \$3 ticket adds up. Laliberte realized those gift cards would go a long way for someone living paycheck to paycheck while fighting a deadly disease.

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

Laliberte ended up assisting on a much bigger front, donating \$50,000, with \$10,000 earmarked for the Foundation’s mobile mammography unit, and \$40,000 dedicated to developing a new Oncology Support Services fund to help oncology patients pay non-medical bills so they could fully focus on healing. Then in 2022, she donated another \$400,000 that allowed Ascension St. Vincent’s to formally launch the Oncology Support Services Program.

Recent research shows that about 20% of cancer patients end up with medical debt that gets referred to collection agencies. Almost 10% of patients file for bankruptcy.

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

This new fund will help cancer patients with everyday costs that may get neglected while they undergo treatment. Cancer care can be financially toxic, and Laliberte hopes her philanthropy will end the vicious cycle for patients struggling to make ends meet. Just as the story about the gift card inspired her, she hopes her gift will inspire others to give what they can.

For more information about the Oncology Support Services Program at Ascension St. Vincent’s, visit givestvincents.org/community-outreach.

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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.

Life still has meaning.



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LOCAL FOLKS

BY MARY WANSEER

"I love, love, love being back in Jacksonville!" said Laura Lothman Lambert. And this time, she's here to stay.

"Jacksonville is a very special place to me, having grown up here," she said.

Lambert first arrived in Florida at seven years old when her family moved to the San Jose area of Jacksonville from Atlanta, Georgia. She and her younger sister, Kristin, grew up in a family where public service and giving back to the community were values instilled from an early age. Their dad, Dr. Louis Lothman, is a Presbyterian minister who served as a life and family therapist, and their mom, Judy Lothman, is a hospice nurse.

A graduate of Stanton College Preparatory School's IB program, Lambert went on to major in English literature at Davidson College in North Carolina. After her 2001 graduation, she lived in Japan for a couple of years, teaching English to Japanese high school students. In Tokyo, Lambert passed the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) before returning home to Jacksonville.

While applying to law school, Lambert taught eleventh-grade English for two years at Paxon School for Advanced Studies. In 2007, she graduated magna cum laude from the University of Florida's Levin College of Law.

Lambert's first job out of law school was working as a clerk in Jacksonville for the Honorable Harvey E. Schlesinger, U.S. District Judge. She moved back to Georgia to fill the same role in Atlanta for the Honorable Phyllis A. Kravitch, U.S. Court of Appeals Judge. Then, Lambert moved even farther north to Washington, D.C., where she served as a trial attorney for the Department of Justice. She was grateful to come back home again to Jacksonville in 2014 to serve as an assistant U.S. attorney and then as an assistant state attorney for Melissa Nelson.

"She brought me on to look at the juvenile program," Lambert said.

Today, Lambert is a United States Magistrate Judge for the Middle District of Florida, appointed on November 4, 2021. She said she'd always had an "eye" toward public service, though she never dreamed that someday she would become a federal judge. She was sworn in by Judge Schlesinger, for whom she had worked as a clerk more than a decade prior. Now, they work together in the same downtown federal building, the Bryan Simpson United States Courthouse on North Hogan Street.

"This courthouse has always felt like home to me," Lambert said.

It is where she had held her previous positions as clerk and assistant attorney before advancing to the judge's seat. One positive difference between then and now is that she no longer has as long of a commute.

Watching the other judges practice, working for them and now with them, has been a learning experience for which Lambert is super grateful.

"I am their colleague now, so it's really special," she said, somehow reminiscent of the classic television series *Welcome Back, Kotter*.

"One of the coolest things about my job is we get to swear in new citizens," Lambert said.

This year, when she performed the naturalization ceremony at the annual World of Nations Celebration, her daughter's Girl Scout troop led The Pledge of Allegiance.

"It was awesome," Lambert said.

When she is not sitting on the bench, Lambert is playing on the court – tennis, that is, one of the sports she partakes in regularly, in addition to watching her son's baseball games. She also likes taking runs on trails. Lambert and her two children delight in a number of outdoor activities.

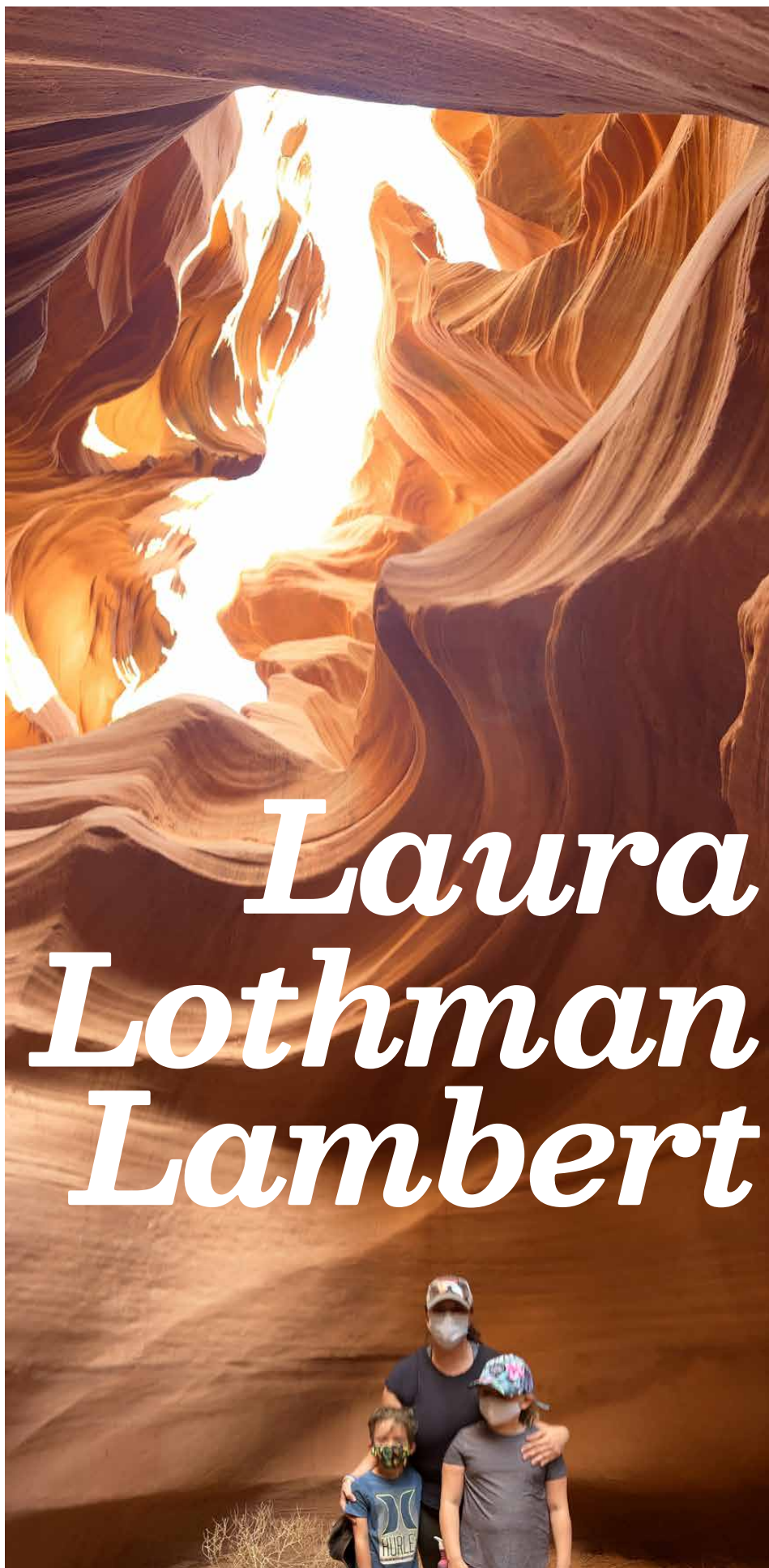
"Every summer, we're trying to hit national parks," she said.

But even when they are not traveling to parks out of state, they find lots to do close to home.

"I do believe that Jacksonville is a very special place. We love to be outside and enjoy all the beautiful trails and beaches that we have here in the Jacksonville community," Lambert said. "I consider myself a Jacksonville girl!"

“I do believe that Jacksonville is a very special place. We love to be outside and enjoy all the beautiful trails and beaches that we have here in the Jacksonville community. I consider myself a Jacksonville girl!”

– Laura Lothman Lambert



Laura Lothman Lambert



With her son and daughter on a family trip in Antelope Canyon, Arizona.



Laura Lothman Lambert in Zion National Park, Utah.



Lambert on a run in Washington, D.C., where she served in the Department of Justice.



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Merchants Host Mix and Mingle at ForeScore Golf

On Thursday, Sept. 7, a group gathered to enjoy a drink with San Marco Merchants Association and San Marco Preservation Society. San Marco and Southbank residents, employees and business owners were in attendance to enjoy craft cocktails, wine and

good company while networking with local business leaders and other local leaders. Regardless of membership in either organization, the quarterly social events are a great way to get to know your neighbors and members of your business community.



Scott and Katherine Wohlers with Hannah Windsor



Desiree Bailey and Adam McDonough with Candace Singleton and Leah Roseler

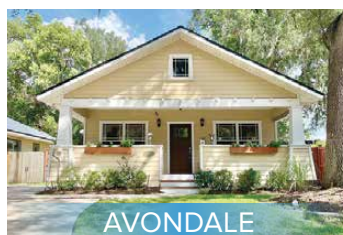


Leah Roesler with Cadie Fletcher and Sam Register

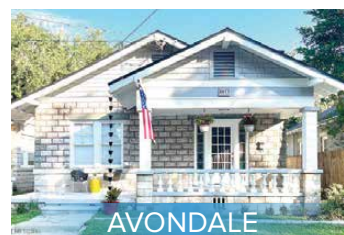
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Eagle Eye

BY CONTRIBUTING WRITER PAMELA TELIS

Why 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.

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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.

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) before moving on to the poignant, multi-media project, There4U (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.

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.

October 16

Jacksonville Artists’ Guild’s Season Opener, “All that Jazz” at the Ortega River Club.

Visit 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.

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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.

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Deacon Katie Bennett with The Right Reverend Samuel Johnson Howard

Teacher Bennett Ordained

Katie Bennett, San Jose Episcopal Day School's Kingdom Theatre and drama teacher, was ordained by The Right Reverend Samuel Johnson Howard, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Florida, on Sept. 6, 2023. The Reverend Stephen C. Britt, rector at San Jose Episcopal Church, assisted in the service. Bennett's family, along with church members, friends, students, and faculty surrounded Bennett during her ordination to the diaconate.

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 Dinzelbacher, 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.



Isabella Hutchin

Hutchin's Perfect Score

Bishop Kenny High School student Isabella Hutchin earned a rare perfect score on a college-level Advanced Placement® (AP®) exam in spring 2022. She was one of only 357 of students in the world to earn every point possible on the AP Research exam. Colleges and universities around the world utilize AP scores for college credit, advanced placement or consideration in the admission process.

"The Bishop Kenny Community is proud of Isabella's achievement on the AP Research exam. She is also a National Merit Commended Scholar and a very active student on campus and in her parish. Isabella truly exemplifies the Spirit of a Crusader," said Principal Todd Orlando.

"AP courses and exams are college-level, requiring great focus and persistence among participating students," said Trevor Packer, head of the Advanced Placement Program. "We applaud the educators who encourage students to challenge themselves, who motivate and encourage diverse students to achieve their academic potential."



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Students from the Fellowship of Christian Athletes at Wolfson.

Student Activities Take Center Stage at Wolfson

In August, students at Wolfson School for Advanced Studies were encouraged to attend the school's annual club fair, at which upperclassmen and club sponsors host a booth promoting their club. Every student at Wolfson is encouraged to play a sport or join at least one club, many of which are service-based. Each club – including special interest clubs like baking club Whisktakers, and the board-game-focused Table Top Club – engages in a minimum of one community service event each semester. Most will also participate in the school's annual Trunk or Treat event, which is slated for Oct. 27 at 6 p.m.



Teacher Andrew Goldberg with his Wolfson civics students.

Wolfson's New Civics Career Academy

Samuel Wolfson School for Advanced Studies is one of three schools in Duval County to offer the state's new Civics Career Academy. Andrew Goldberg joined Wolfson this year to coordinate and run this new academy. Almost 80 students are enrolled in the program, which is anticipated to double next year.

The state has invested heavily in this new program, providing schools that are running this program with \$50,000 for materials that will enhance civics education within this academy, as well as the resources to bring on an additional instructor who is specially trained in teaching civics. Students participating in this new program will also have the chance to go on a variety of field trips fully funded by the program, including one to Washington, D.C.

The goal of this civics program is to provide high school students with the skills and content needed to pursue public sector careers. Students will have the opportunity to prepare for industry certifications, including PMI Public Management Ready.



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](https://www.rpds.com/media).

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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."

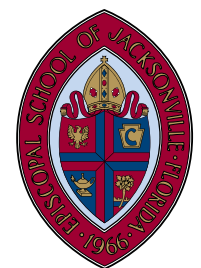
With a focus on discipleship and walking in faith, YoungLife's end goal is to have kids give their life to Christ and disciple others.

"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 and 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.



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

Roger 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," 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."

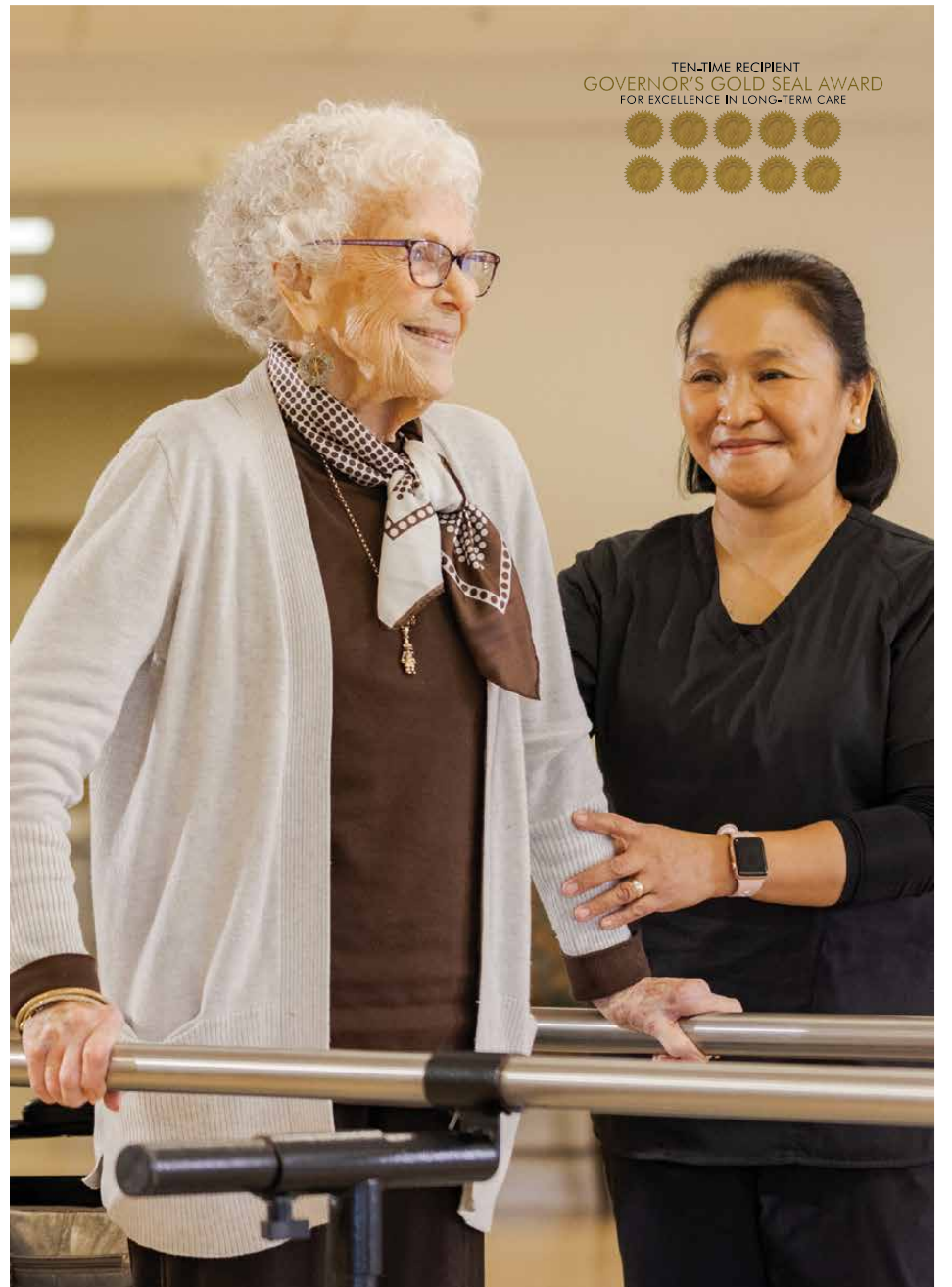
While he loves his customers and loves carrying on the Piner's legacy, Vega said he equally loves being a small business owner and the freedom it affords him. While he never thinks he'll truly and fully retire, he knows he would be "very picky" if the time ever came to sell the company.

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



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

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



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



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

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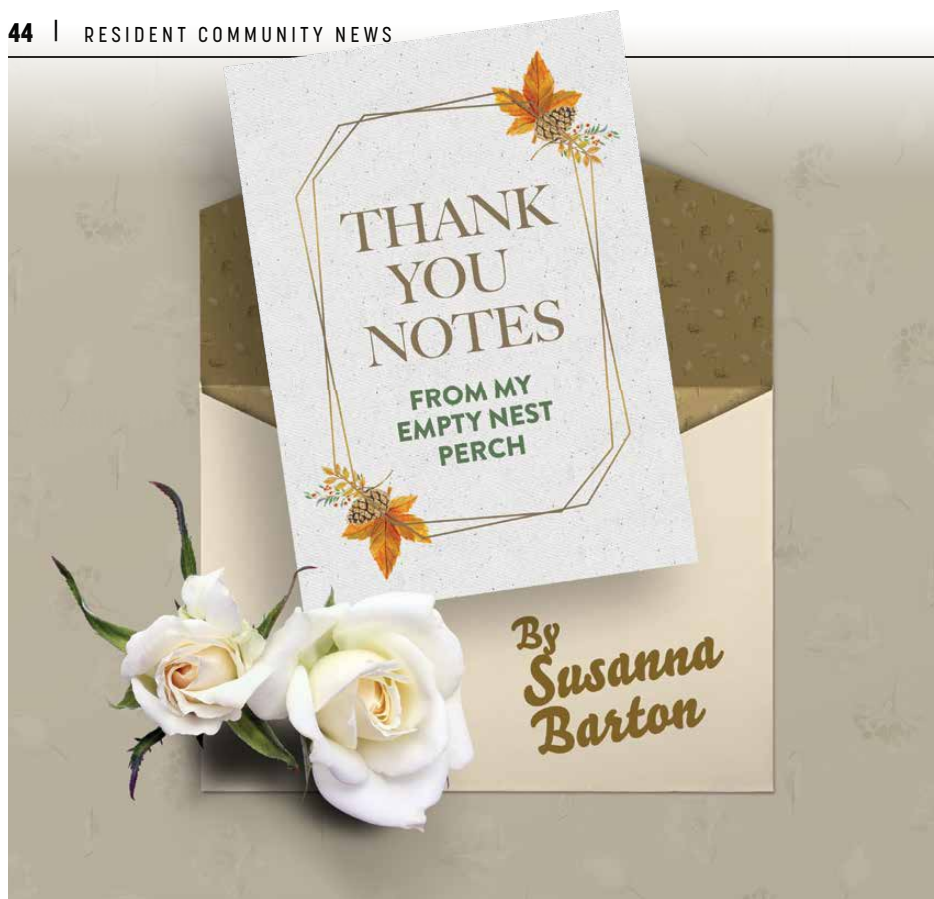
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In my “other” life, I obsess about geri-issues and all the planning and conversations we should be having now about our golden year greatness. Through an online community called Grand Plans, I stir up awareness of geri-issues that catch most of us 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 to 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.

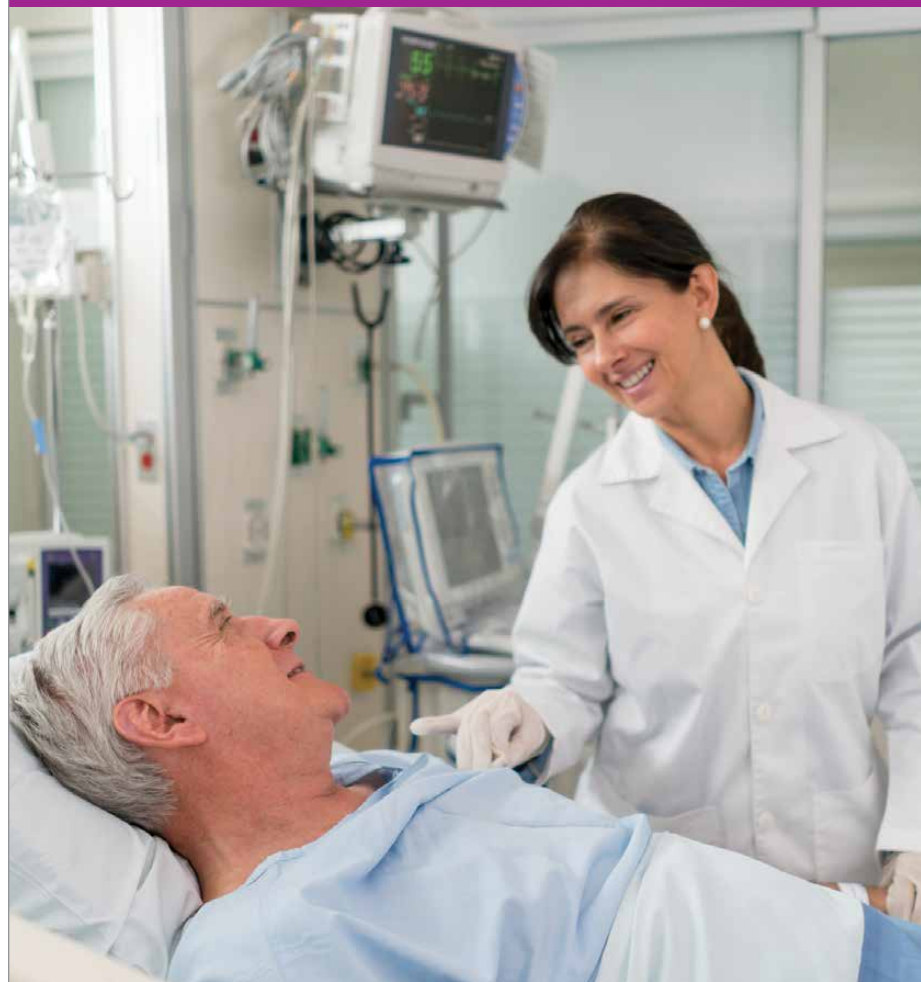
We have ample access to transportation – both public and private. We have options when it comes to public transportation. Bus stops are easy to access and can get us to areas across greater Jacksonville. Trolleys, ferries and the Skyway also are accessible modes. The Jacksonville River Taxi provides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

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.”

“[The church project] started with just a comment on Twitter. [It shows] you can actually comment and start something good.”

– RJ Caster
Greyshirt Volunteer with Team Rubicon



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

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 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 to complete their background check and online FEMA training modules.



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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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Al before weight loss surgery.

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


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