



In This Issue



Deborah Wesley with Michele McManamon

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Hank and Mary Cox to serve as honorary chairs of DESC Defenders gala

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Robert E. Lee Class of 1954 to host 70th reunion

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'Too dangerous to attempt'



Fishweir parents Valerie and John Boote, with their children Avery and Oscar, contemplate the roundabout traffic and railroad crossing children would have to navigate at Edgewood Avenue South near Roosevelt Boulevard on the walk to and from Ruth N. Upson Elementary School.

Traffic, transportation issues concern families facing possible school closures

By Michele Leivas

When Laura Bearl and her husband moved their family to the Fishweir neighborhood, it was specifically so their children would have just a five-minute walk to the highly rated elementary school.

Under Duval County Public Schools' (DCPS) current Master Facility Plan proposal, however, that 5-minute walk would become roughly 40 minutes if Fishweir Elementary School were to close and its student population consolidated into Ruth N. Upson Elementary School.

"I have this grand notion of maybe riding my bike with a little chariot beside it [for my younger children], but I certainly couldn't do that for my elementary school-aged child," Bearl said. "She would have to ride her bike, and then I would have to figure out how to get her bike home."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

DCPS reassigns principals amid ongoing concerns for student safety

Koek to lead Riverside High

By Jennifer Logue

Students returning to Riverside High School Aug. 12 will be greeted by a new principal this year, as the Duval County Public Schools shifts administrators among schools amid a renewed focus on student safety.

Former Mayport Middle School Principal Chris Koek has assumed leadership of Riverside High, succeeding Timothy Feagins, who has assumed the principal's role at Douglas Anderson School of the Arts. That school's principal – Tina Wilson – transitioned to the administrative position of supervisor of exceptional education services for the Duval County Public Schools.

Wilson stepped down as principal of Douglas Anderson



Chris Koek



Timothy Feagins

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

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Letters TO THE EDITOR

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More support needed for more art, more culture

As we think about family nights, our children's recitals and plays, even a date night out, we are reminded of the value of our quality of life.

As the City of Jacksonville's leading local arts agency, the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville has proudly served as the trusted steward of the city's funding for arts and culture nonprofits and organizations for decades. We do this through two main programs: the Cultural Service Grant (CSG) Program and our Capital Grant Program.

Arts and culture organizations are not only essential to our city's vitality but also drive our creative economy. Over the last year, these nonprofits generated over \$114 million in economic impact, with downtown cultural organizations accounting for \$105 million of that total. Over the past four years, the city received an average of \$32.65 for every dollar awarded through the CSG program, sustained nearly 1,500 jobs and produced over 6,000 events and performances in our city. According to Americans for the Arts, nearly 2.1 million attendees spent an average of \$87.24 per person per event beyond the cost of admission, significantly surpassing the national average of just over \$35. The ROI in the arts is tremendous.

When I stepped into my role as executive director during the COVID pandemic, local funding for arts and culture was at the same amount as it was 20 years ago. Since then, we've had multiple years of dynamic growth, talent acquisition, piloted a capital grants program and had a recent historic investment for our individual artist community, all in partnership with the City of Jacksonville, stewarded by the Cultural Council. These bi-partisan investments and increases over the years show us how much arts and culture are valued in helping to move our city forward. Despite this transformative and dynamic growth, it is only sustainable if the funding is sustained with it.

The recent unprecedented statewide cuts in arts funding impacted 30 Duval County nonprofit organizations by \$2.6 million – 23 of these are CSGs, including the Cultural Council itself. These nonprofits are now facing difficult decisions in having to reduce programming and in some cases, close their doors. We know from

Americans for the Arts that nearly 90% of attendees reported they would feel a great sense of loss if the activity or venue they attended was no longer in existence. This speaks to the pivotal role arts and culture play in our communities.

As we think about the future of Jacksonville and how we shape it together, we think about a vibrant downtown with activated parks, and our arts and culture sector is the thread that runs through them all. Arts and culture help build our identity and all the things that make this city a great place to live, work and play, not just for us, but for generations to come.

The combined impact of the proposed city budget and the state budget cut remind us how critical it is to fund our nonprofits as they weather hard financial decisions that can have a rippling effect on our community. Any reductions in funding to our arts organizations will change the momentum we have experienced and the renaissance we feel.

We are deep within the City of Jacksonville's budget season and your voice matters. We encourage you to contact your City Council representatives today through our website where you can send them an email that quantifies the information shared or reach out to them directly to champion for the arts and culture sector.

State and city support remain critical, but public funding alone will not meet the full scale of need. Civic and private funding – from our local businesses, philanthropic foundations and individuals – is key to ensuring our cultural economy thrives. Another way you can support these nonprofits is by attending their events and contributing to them directly. You can find a list of these organizations on our website.

If you are able, consider stepping in the gap as a champion investor to help provide relief and support to our arts and cultural organizations that help serve families, women, military, veterans and over 368,000 youth across Jacksonville annually. Together, we can make a direct impact on our city, in real time.

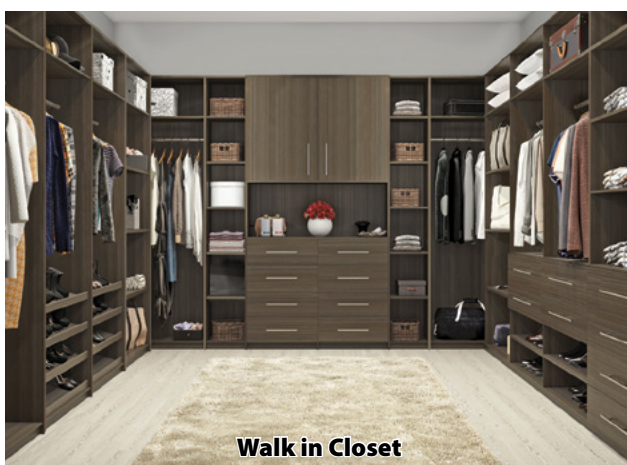
Diana Donovan is the executive director of the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville, which serves as the Local Arts Agency (LAA) for the City of Jacksonville. She is also a resident of the San Marco neighborhood. For more information visit: culturalcouncil.org/moreforall

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Deegan unveils \$1.92 billion budget proposal



Mayor Donna Deegan unveils her proposed 2024-25 budget July 15 before a full house in city council chambers.

By Michele Leivas

Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan presented her proposed 2024-25 budget during a special address held July 15 in city council chambers.

The proposed budget includes \$1.92 billion for the general fund – a \$165 million increase from the previous fiscal year. The five-year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) proposed budget for 2025-2029 is \$1.95 billion, with \$489 million allotted for 2025.

The city council must approve the budget proposal before it goes into effect Oct. 1.

“This balanced budget creates generational investments in our key priorities, infrastructure, health, economic development and public safety,” Deegan said in her address. “Our budget proposal confronts the unexpected reality of ad valorem revenue increases that are significantly lower than projected.”

Jacksonville saw exponential population growth last

year, welcoming an additional 70,000 new residents – making it the fourth largest population growth nationwide. This population increase, Deegan said, necessitates allocating virtually all of the city’s ad valorem taxes for “critical public safety needs.”

Other factors, such as increased insurance rates and commercial property vacancies to the rebalance of the residential rental market, resulted in the city receiving \$62 million less in property tax revenue than anticipated.

“We already knew it was going to be a year that was going to be lower than last year,” Deegan said.

A list of budget highlights, provided by the mayor’s office, includes renovations for city venues like the Ritz Theater, 121 Financial Ballpark, VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena and Performing Arts Center (\$25.1 million in 2025); infrastructure updates to the downtown riverfront, including the Northbank Riverwalk and bulkhead and the Northbank Marina (\$15 million in 2025/\$115 million total) and two docks and riverwalk development for the Southbank

Riverwalk (\$13.2 million in 2025). For a full list of the budget highlights, please visit residentnews.net.

“Now is not the time to withdraw from our bold vision,” Deegan said. “It’s thinking small that has kept us mired in mediocrity, a city with more potential than progress. We were elected to do hard things; we have to be smart, and we have to lean in.”

Capital Improvement Plan - District 7

Deegan said the proposed \$1.95 billion five-year CIP budget has been combed through to remove inactive projects that never went beyond the conceptual phase, the inclusion of which posed a threat to the city’s financial strength and credit rating.

“Today our CIP is leaner, more responsible and more representative of reality,” she said.

District 7 City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso said with the recently executed stadium deal, Deegan prepared for a “slimmer, more agile” budget than previous years.

“...[It’s] still pretty tied in to a lot of the priorities that she had in the first budget,” he said.

Peluso said he’s looking forward to the completion of several projects currently underway within the CIP, including Artists Walk and the new skatepark beneath the Fuller Warren Bridge in Riverside.

Additionally, he is eager to see the completion of the Park Street Road Diet, which began construction earlier this year.

The proposed CIP also outlines recurring infrastructure maintenance projects involving road resurfacing and sidewalk construction.

“We have some critical areas here in Riverside Avondale that I kind of want to take a look at,” Peluso said.

Affordable housing and homelessness programs remain a priority for Peluso, who served on the council’s Special Committee on Homelessness and Affordable Housing, particularly in light of Florida’s new law HB 1365, which “prohibits counties and municipalities from authorizing or otherwise allowing public camping or sleeping on public property without certification of designated public property by DCF (Department of Children and Families)...” Beginning January 2025, under this new law, residents, business owners or the attorney general, will be able to file a lawsuit against the city alleging a failure to comply.

Deegan has allocated \$10 million in her new budget proposal for homelessness programming to comply with this new law.

“I think that \$10 million will get us a long way to where we need to go on that front,” Deegan said.

DCPS reassigns principals CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

following a tumultuous year at the school in which five teachers were removed from the classroom since 2023 for multiple investigations of inappropriate conduct between teachers and students.

Student safety

The principal reassignments come as the Duval County Public Schools experiences a transition at the very top, with new superintendent Dr. Chris Bernier assuming leadership of the school system in July from interim Superintendent Dr. Dana Kriznar. On June 27, shortly before stepping down, Kriznar issued an eight-page plan to improve student safety in relation to child abuse, use of illegal drugs and employee sexual misconduct.

“One of our primary goals as a school district is to ensure the safety of our students,” the report stated. “While individuals associated with Douglas Anderson have been at the center of attention, the safety of all students is the focus of our plan.”

Policy recommendations in Kriznar’s plan include mandating the removal from student contact of any person arrested or alleged to have engaged in child abuse, bodily harm or sexual misconduct, including indecent exposure.

That recommendation follows the revelation in April that Douglas Anderson algebra teacher Chris Allen-Black had remained in the classroom for six weeks after being arrested for indecent exposure at Walt Disney World.

“The issues that emerged from the events at Douglas

Anderson revealed areas of weakness and opportunity that must be addressed,” the report acknowledged.

Other recommended policy changes include stating “unambiguously” that “employees texting, interacting on social media and/or being alone with students who are not their family members may be grounds, following due process, for disciplinary action up to and including termination.”

The announcement of Allen-Black’s arrest followed the removal from class of four other Douglas Anderson teachers, including Jeffrey Clayton, who in June was sentenced to 10 years in prison after pleading guilty to sexual misconduct with a student.

To read the DCPS safety plan, visit residentnews.net.

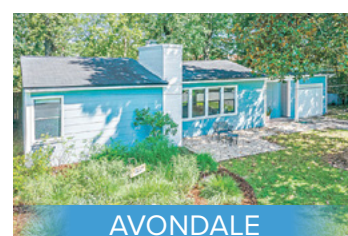
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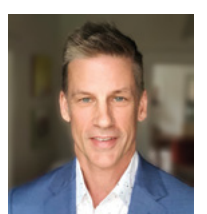
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A graphic depicts the various work zones along the Northbank Riverwalk and their associated closures and timeframes.

Sections of Northbank Riverwalk close for construction projects

By Michele Leivas

Beginning this fall, the Northbank Riverwalk will experience a series of temporary closures and construction work zones, with some of those closures already underway to allow for construction on long-awaited riverfront projects.

In early July, the city closed the Riverwalk between Pearl and Main streets and the McCoy's Creek Work Zone from Jackson Street to the Acosta Bridge. Corkscrew Park will remain accessible via Pearl Street until this fall, when the park will close until Fall 2025 for construction of the Northbank bulkhead replacement by CSX. The Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department will provide updates should the park be able to open sooner.

According to the city, this project "will resolve subsidence and issues along that length of the Riverwalk [between the Acosta Bridge and W. Coastline Drive]."

Once construction begins on the CSX bulkhead project, detours will be established for pedestrians and cyclists to bypass the Riverwalk from Jackson Street to Main Street.

While Riverwalk construction will not impact vehicular traffic, the city said that drivers will see detours from other projects, including the Emerald Trail's Hogan Street Connector, the Park Street Road Diet and the Adams Street and Forsyth Street Two Way Conversion.

Additional projects spurring temporary closures include the McCoy's Creek restoration, the Riverfront Plaza – the forthcoming park on the Jacksonville Landing site – and the Jacksonville Musical Heritage Garden behind the Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts.

Office units for remote workers proposed for Ortega Blvd.



The proposed Ortega Carriage House project would run along Ortega Boulevard with its main entrance off Manitou Avenue.

PUD rezoning application submitted for 'Ortega Carriage House' project

By Michele Leivas

A local business owner is proposing to demolish her existing building on Ortega Boulevard to build a 19,000 square-foot building that would house 18 commercial office units.

A Planned Unit Development (PUD) rezoning application has been submitted for redevelopment of the current Bulls Dixon Companies building to construct "The Ortega Carriage House." Property owner Gayle Bulls Dixon said the project – situated on just under an acre across two parcels located at 4230 and 4218 Ortega Blvd. – would replace the existing building, which she said is deteriorating. The new building would be a "shell building," with plumbing, HVAC and electricity and individual units for purchase and buildout. The interiors will be customizable based on the needs of each private owner.

"We expect that our neighbors will be the purchasers, and this will fill a great need for additional space outside of our homes within our community," said Dixon, adding that the project already has five early buyers. "We see neighbors being able to walk or bike to their office/unit."

Attorney Cyndy Trimmer, who is representing Dixon in the PUD application, said market research studies indicated a demand for such facilities, which could be used by remote workers who lack office space within their home.

"Since COVID, a lot of people are using these type of things to build their own personal offices that they don't have space at their house to build out office space," she said.

To address this, the project proposes a two-story building with a secured, gated entrance and private parking for unit owners. Dixon would retain three of the 18 units, maintaining two of them as office space for herself and her son, Cameron Dixon, who is her partner on the project. The third would be transformed into a lounge or clubhouse space for fellow owners.

Units would range from approximately 1,131 square feet to just over 2,100 square feet, with the clubhouse occupying 950 square feet.

Dixon said she and her son have been working on this project for two years with fellow young entrepreneurs Kai Winchester and Wells Madison.

"They have chosen several local charities to support with some of the proceeds from the project, including Nemours, Hayden Hurst Family Foundation and Angels for Allison," Dixon said.

Community concern

Trimmer said much of the community concern surrounding the project was less with the intended use and more about what the building would look like. In an interview with *The Resident Community News*, Dixon addressed concerns that the development would be "a metal barn."

"'Barn-type of monstrosity' is the word that I hear... That's just incorrect," she said.

Dixon said she has been meeting since January with neighbors and community members to collect feedback and address any concerns or objections. The updated application on file with the city reflects the architectural and design updates based on what Dixon gathered from neighbors, including elements on the side of the building facing Ortega Boulevard to ensure it complements the main entrance off Manitou Avenue.

The development team includes Summit Construction and Almond Engineering.

"They worked really hard to build something that is in character with what is there," Trimmer said, "and something that they want to drive down the road and take pride in."



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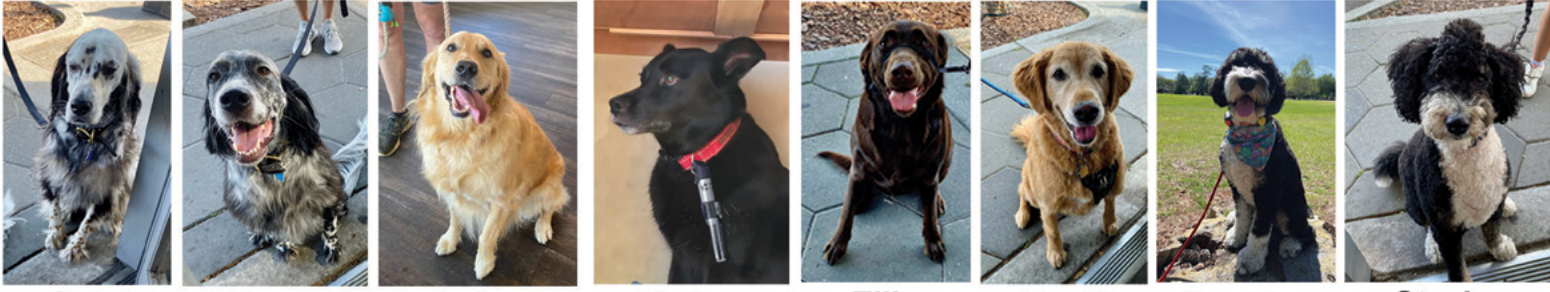
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4157 WATER OAK LANE
 5 BR | 3 BA | 2,758 SQFT
 Listed By Nancy Cusimano
 904-728-0981



\$469,000
12868 CHETS CREEK DR. N.
 3 BR | 2 BA | 1,883 SQFT
 Listed By Edmund Akers
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\$459,000
2964 OLD ORCHARD RD
 3 BR | 2 FULL BA | 1 HB | 2,376 SQFT
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 3 BR | 2 BA | 1,696 SQFT
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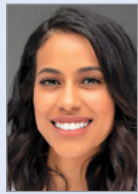
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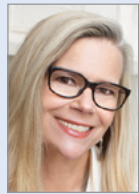
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Groundwork receives \$1 million grant for Emerald Trail's Riverside Link



Community meeting Aug. 21
 Groundwork will share the draft design concept for the Riverside Link at a community meeting later this month:
 Wednesday, Aug. 21 | 6 p.m.
 Fire Union Building | 625 Stockton St.

the beneficiaries of the Weavers' generous commitment to improving our community and the lives of our residents," CEO Kay Ehas said. "This grant is a wonderful continuation of the work Mrs. Weaver has done in Riverside including the restoration of the historic John Gorrie High School into residences and her support of the John Gorrie Dog Park, which the Emerald Trail Riverside Link will connect to. Her legacy in Jacksonville - and in Riverside - is indelible."

Connecting the city

The 34-mile Emerald Trail will connect 14 historic urban neighborhoods to downtown, the St. Johns River, McCoys Creek and Hogans Creek. It will link 16 schools, two colleges, three hospitals, 21 parks and the Regional Transportation Center, along with other destinations like restaurants, shopping and businesses, with an additional 13 schools and 17 parks located within three blocks of the trail.

Currently, 40% of the trail is complete, under construction or in design by Groundwork and the City. These include the LaVilla Link which opened in May; Hogan Street, which is expected to be under construction this summer; Hogans Creek, which is in design and expected to be under construction in 2026, and McCoys Creek which is in various stages of construction or design.

The five remaining trail segments will be designed and constructed by Groundwork Jacksonville in partnership with JTA and the City of Jacksonville. The work will be funded by a \$147 million Neighborhood Access & Equity Program Grant from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) that JTA and Groundwork were awarded in March of this year, with a local match from the Local Option Gas Tax and private funders.

Groundwork Jacksonville was formed in 2014 by the City of Jacksonville in partnership with Groundwork USA, along with support from the National Park Service and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Groundwork Jacksonville has received a \$1 million grant – the largest, single private donation in its history – to fund the lead sponsorship of the Emerald Trail Riverside Link.

The donation is part of Delores Barr Weaver's Legacy 2024 grantmaking plan which included a \$61 million contribution to her donor-advised fund at The Community Foundation, the largest in the foundation's history.

"Investing in projects like the Emerald Trail ensures that people in the surrounding neighborhoods are included in the quality-of-life benefits that result from this

important work," Weaver said. "For me, it is gratifying to see the entirety of the Riverside area benefit from this Emerald Trail link."

Groundwork Jacksonville is one of several local charities benefiting from the historic philanthropic gift, which focused on grantmaking to causes and selected nonprofits Weaver has supported for many years.

Previously, Weaver contributed nearly \$60,000 toward the McCoys Creek restoration design and \$250,000 for the Emerald Trail LaVilla Link.

"Groundwork Jacksonville is grateful to be among

City ramps up for Metropolitan Park redesign



Metropolitan Revitalization design team member Joe Loretta (left) discusses design elements of the Tailgate Plaza Concept with Jacksonville residents at the June 25 open house.

By Michele Leivas

More than 40 years after its groundbreaking, Metropolitan Park is on its way to a redesign. The Metropolitan Park Revitalization design team, led by Denver-based Civitas, Inc., is analyzing community feedback following a June open house and an online survey that closed July 16.

The design team presented the community with three potential concepts — The Quilt, The Weave and The Tailgate Plaza — and posed a series of questions requesting feedback on various design components from each concept, which will ultimately lead to a final design for the 15-acre park.

"We'll get that feedback and then we'll work with the city and our design team to kind of refine a preferred concept and pull it all into a single idea — or a single idea with maybe a series of alternatives for some smaller spaces," said Civitas Principal Scott Jordan.

Design options

The Tailgate Plaza concept was designed "to celebrate Jacksonville's rich sports culture," with a large sports lawn and an open plaza area for tailgating or smaller events among its design features and elements.

Inspired by the Gullah Geechee quilting tradition, The Quilt concept features five major areas, including Recreation Row, Stitched Plaza, the Loop Lawn, the Riverwalk Procession and a fitness garden.

The Weave concept also pulls its inspiration from the Gullah Geechee heritage and features its own variants on similar elements: the Discovery Plaza, the View Lawn, a Braided Riverwalk, the Car Grove and the Secret Garden.

The community will have an opportunity to share input at another open house to be scheduled for the fall.

Civitas was announced as the lead company for the revitalization project earlier this year and launched the six-month, community-based design effort with an initial open house in April. The June 25 gathering, held at the Jacksonville Public Library main branch downtown, was the first time design concepts were presented to the community.

The trio of concepts and associated survey questions allowed residents to mix and match their favorite components, aesthetics and other elements from each design rather than requiring them to choose their favorite overall design.

"We've set it up to allow input in regards to a mixture of different concepts throughout the whole thing," said Joe Loretta, vice president of planning and landscape architecture deputy practice leader for project partner Half Associates. "So, the anticipation and the end goal is there may be elements of each design concept that get incorporated."

Resident Shaun Lafferty lives near the downtown area and said he and his family are "very invested" in downtown projects.

"We love taking our family around those areas, so any project that can enhance the surrounding areas of downtown is very important to us," he said at the June 25 open house.

According to Park, Recreation and Community Services Director Daryl Joseph, this is the first redesign for the downtown park.

"Stakeholder and community engagement is critical to a successful design for Metropolitan Park," Joseph said. "Community engagement will continue as design plans progress through public open houses."

A project spokesperson said the final design concept will reflect community input and be presented at the Downtown Development Review Board.

Depending on review and approval times, Jordan said he expects the "detailed design and construction documents" to take approximately 12 to 16 months to complete.

\$16 million in funding was secured for the park's redesign in the previous Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) budget. The proposed FY 2025-29 CIP budget, which Mayor Donna Deegan presented to the city council on July 15, provides an additional \$10 million.

The project is expected to break ground in 2026.




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JCA begins multimillion dollar expansion



A new all-ages splash pad is one of the components of the JCA's renovation and expansion project.



The JCA's early childhood youth programs will have a new home through the campus expansion.

By Jennifer Logue

A multimillion-dollar renovation and expansion of the David A. Stein Jewish Community Alliance (JCA) has kicked into high gear, with construction of pickleball courts the latest visible sign of the project's progress.

Part of the JCA's \$18.4 million Building Our Future Together capital campaign, the pickleball project began to take shape July 20, as 100 cubic yards of concrete – approximately 391,500 pounds – was poured onto the JCA campus for the new courts, which are expected to be ready for play in late August or early September.

The new courts are just one component of the extensive 18-month expansion project which, when complete, will add more than 15,000 square feet of additional space with a new two-story building. In addition to expanding its preschool and kindergarten program with several new rooms for art, education and creative development, the Youth Services department will add five new classrooms, a technology room, a tutoring room and a common area for children in the after-school program.

CEO Adam Chaskin said the organization plans to break ground on the expansion project this fall.

"This will allow the JCA to remain a valuable community asset for at least another generation, as it has been for the past 36 years," said Chaskin, noting that an average of 7,500 people make use of the JCA's programs and services each week.

In addition to the new facilities, all of the JCA's existing facilities are being renovated and upgraded as well, Chaskin said.

"There isn't a part of the facility that isn't being touched," he said.

The Selevan Family Aquatics Center will be expanded and enhanced with a new, all-ages splash pad with parent viewing area, heated outdoor pool, new family changing rooms, lifeguard break room, updated locker rooms, a new indoor pool deck and resurfaced indoor pool. Renovations to the facility's fitness and wellness center, meanwhile, will include new equipment and a more spacious fitness center, along with a new "wellness wing" with a larger personal training studio, Pilates studio and an outdoor fitness area.

New and expanded art and pottery studios will be located in the facility's lobby, while improvements to the Bessie Setzer Frisch Auditorium will include a new curtain, lighting updates and ceiling-mounted microphones as well as backstage upgrades.

History, security

The JCA's updated lobby will showcase Jewish history through the Setzer Family "History of Jewish Jacksonville" display and a 27-foot interactive wall on Israel, while security enhancements to the J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver Welcome Area will increase the facility's safety for both members and guests.

Chaskin stressed, however, that while the JCA is proud of its history, its programs are open to all.

"We are not a religious organization – we are here for the entire community," he said, noting that more 60 percent of the JCA's members are not Jewish. "We are just proud to be able to offer outstanding programs and services to the community."

Chaskin anticipates the JCA will hold a groundbreaking for the next phase of the project in the fall.

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Carlucci legislation spurs closer look at zoning overlays



City Councilmember Rahman Johnson shares his concerns about a “flawed” zoning code at Councilmember Matt Carlucci’s July 18 public meeting.

By **Michele Leivas**

The city’s planning and development department is taking a closer look at how zoning overlays are created following a public meeting held by At Large Group 4 City Councilmember Matt Carlucci last month.

Held July 18 at City Hall, the meeting was spurred by legislation Carlucci introduced in May following the approval of the controversial Lofts at Southbank project. Carlucci’s legislation would require a two-thirds vote to approve planned unit development rezoning applications that would supersede zoning overlays.

Following a brief history on the origin and evolution of overlays within Jacksonville, the conversation veered into issues some meeting participants saw in a “flawed” zoning code. Rather than creating “stringent” regulations where zoning overlays are concerned, City Councilmember Rahman Johnson suggested the focus be placed on the zoning code itself.

“The overlay is simply an amendment to try to fix something that’s broken and we know the zoning code is broken,” Johnson said.

While she didn’t disagree with the challenges that come with a “one size fits all” zoning, Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) CEO Lori Boyer argued that overlays make sense in “diverse” areas like the north or west sides of Jacksonville that are just now seeing development for the first time, or historic and well-developed areas.

“If Council were careful about when they allowed an overlay and when they didn’t allow an overlay, it may be not just a Band-Aid, it may be a solution,” she said.

Councilmember Michael Boylan voiced his own concern over the emergence of “frivolous” overlays, particularly, he said, when there is no legal or municipal procedure in place to create one. He suggested a two-thirds vote also be required to approve an overlay if a two-thirds vote were required to supersede one.

At the meeting’s conclusion, the planning and development department was tasked with the directive of creating a procedure through which zoning overlays should be created before Carlucci’s legislation advances.

“I appreciate planning department’s support, the planning commission’s support and I appreciate the input that will make it a better product,” Carlucci said.

Following the meeting, city Planning and Development Director Brett James said this is an opportunity to create “overarching guidance” for overlays where none currently exists in the zoning code.

“As I researched the topic in preparation for today, there’s no section that says ‘Overlays: This is where they’re appropriate; this is how I use them; these are the criteria. Nothing like that,” he said. “There’s just the overlays that have been created. I think this is actually really good.”



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New retail space under construction in Murray Hill



New commercial space is coming to the corner lot at Edgewood Avenue South and Plymouth Street.

By Michele Leivas

Construction is underway for a new retail building at 1195 Edgewood Ave. South in Murray Hill.

According to county records, the parcel was purchased in June, with a building permit for the shell issued June 13. Pamela Howard, property manager with TSG Realty,

told *The Resident* the new 4,750-square-foot building will offer three bays of roughly 1,580 square feet for future tenants “unless we decide to work with a user to take the whole building during construction.”

A dedicated parking lot will also be built behind the

building.

“We are targeting local businesses and hope to bring great new retail and food options to the neighborhood,” Howard said.

The development team includes Rich Farmer of Building Dynamics and architect DCoop.

Howard said construction will not impact the community’s iconic Bill Murray mural on the adjacent building facing the Roosevelt Bridge, noting that there will be a 10-foot gap between the mural and the new construction.

Traffic enhancements

The new building will be the latest enhancement to the busy Murray Hill intersection, which recently saw the installation of a new traffic circle by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and a new mural on either side of the Roosevelt Bridge. Murray Hill Preservation Association (MHPA) President Greg Beere said he hopes this development will spur activation or renovation of its vacant neighbor at 1185 Edgewood Ave. South – the building upon which the Bill Murray mural is painted – which is currently available for lease.

“The streetscape’s looking good and the more activation and the more things we have going on there, the better it is for the community,” Beere said.

Howard said spaces in the new building will be listed for lease by mid-August, with construction expected to be completed by the end of the year.

Supervisor of elections urges voters to update their signatures with elections office

Primary election is Aug. 20, general election Nov. 5

Duval County’s supervisor of elections is encouraging voters to update their signatures on file with the elections office in advance of the upcoming Aug. 20 primary and Nov. 5 general elections.

In a statement, Supervisor of Elections Jerry Holland noted that an individual’s handwriting can change over time,

and a voter’s signature must match the one the elections office has on file. This is particularly important for those who plan to vote by mail (VBM.) The supervisor of elections must receive signature updates before a voter’s VBM ballot is received.

“We follow the proper chain of custody procedures on

all ballots, especially VBM ballots,” the statement said. “Returned ballots remain sealed until the signature is validated...if the signatures match, the VBM ballot will be opened and counted.”

If the signatures do not match, the elections office will mail an affidavit to the voter with instructions on how to correct the discrepancy. The deadline to submit the form is by 5 p.m. the second day after the election.

The Florida Voter Registration Application is available on the Duval County Supervisor of Elections website as well as all public libraries and may be submitted in person or by mail. For more information, visit duvalelections.gov or call 904-255-VOTE (8683).

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'A solvable problem' Feeding Northeast Florida marks opening of new facility



CEO Susan King and City Council Past President Ron Salem join with board members to cut the ribbon on Feeding Northeast Florida's new facility.

By Jennifer Logue

Community leaders joined with city, state and federal officials July 18 to mark the opening of Feeding Northeast Florida's new food bank facility on Old Kings Road.

U.S. Congressman Aaron Bean, City Council Past President Ron Salem and Vice President Kevin Carrico were among the officials who joined with the food bank's board of directors and nonprofit partners to cut the ribbon on the newly renovated 110,000-square-foot facility.

President and CEO Susan King said the new building will reduce significantly the organization's operating costs.

"That's going to enable us to put as many dollars as possible into feeding our neighbors," King said. "It's also going to be an inviting gathering space for the community, for education and for people to come together to address this very solvable problem."

State-of-the-art

For Feeding Northeast Florida's staff and volunteers, the years that went into fundraising, purchasing and renovating their new home were worth the wait. Prior to moving into the new facility, the food bank's operations were split between two different locations – a warehouse for shelf-stable foods and a refrigerated facility. The warehouse – where volunteers would receive, sort and repackage food – had no air conditioning or nearby restrooms.

"I was working out of a guard shack," King recalled with a laugh.

The newly renovated facility – known as the J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver Campus – offers both warehouse and refrigeration space in one location, along with air conditioning, restrooms and work space for up to 100 volunteers – more than four times the number the previous facility could accommodate. It also features offices and a conference room for staff as well as several community spaces, including an education room, a community culinary kitchen and an all-purpose event space.

"This was a labor of love for all involved," King said. "We've turned an ugly duckling into something very special for the community."



The new facility provides both warehouse and refrigeration space as well as room for more than 100 volunteers at a time to receive, sort and package more than 34 million pounds of food each year.

She stressed, however, that the significance of the new building lies in what it will allow Feeding Northeast Florida to accomplish.

"It's not just a building," she said. "It's a solution to a problem."

Doing more

Last year, Feeding Northeast Florida distributed 34.5 million pounds of food across its 12-county service territory that encompasses 8,300 square miles. Approximately 65% of that food is fresh – including dairy, meat and produce items. That food provides meals for some 85,000 people a day.

The organization is also a key partner to state officials during hurricanes and other disasters, King noted, providing hundreds of thousands of hot meals, food boxes and logistical assistance.

All of those services will be enhanced thanks to the new facility, officials said.

"This allows us to do more," Board member Dipak Rahjansa said. "We can now accept and distribute more food, operate more efficiently and accommodate more volunteers."

Board member Mia Jones agreed. "The opening of this new facility is a great opportunity to start a new book – not just a new chapter," said Jones, CEO of AGAPE Community Health Center. "It's going to change lives and be a cornerstone for a community in need."

See more photos from the Feeding Northeast Florida ribbon cutting on page 23.

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Goodbye Sun-Ray, hello FIVE Live music venue coming to former theater in January 2025

By Jennifer Logue

Jacksonville residents barely had time to mourn the passing of the Sun-Ray Cinema last month before it was announced that a live music venue would take its place in the historic 5 Points theater.

The Sun-Ray screened its last films Saturday, July 6. Two days later, Nashville-based venue management company Marathon Live announced plans to renovate the theater for use as a live entertainment space. The company said it expects to hold a grand opening for the new venue – to be known as FIVE – in January 2025.

“The venue aims to honor the rich, cultural history of the neighborhood,” the company said in a brief news release.

In 2022, Marathon Live announced plans to open another live music and events space in Jacksonville’s Rail Yard District. To be located at 1505 Dennis St. in the Dennis + Ives mixed-use development, that entertainment venue is expected to accommodate from 1,000 to 2,000 people, while FIVE would host smaller events.

“FIVE will strategically complement as a smaller component to the existing Dennis + Ives project that Marathon Live continues to develop in the Rail Yard District,” the release said.

A spokesperson for the company declined to provide additional details.

Founded by Josh Billue in 2011, Marathon Live began with Nashville’s Marathon Music Works and has expanded to manage live entertainment venues in historic urban neighborhoods across the country. In addition to Nashville, the company has venues in Chattanooga, Little Rock, St. Louis and Kansas City, MO. Jacksonville would be the first city where the company manages two venues.

End of an era

The Sun-Ray’s closing marks the end of nearly a century of cinematic history for the 5 Points theater. Originally opened as the Riverside Theatre in 1927 – the same year as the Florida Theatre – it was designed by noted local architect Roy Benjamin, who assisted on the Florida Theatre project and later designed the San Marco Theatre, which soon will become home to a pizzeria.

The Riverside Theatre earned the distinction of being the first Jacksonville cinema to show talking pictures. In the 1940s, it was remodeled and renamed the Five Points Theatre, and over the ensuing decades was closed for brief periods. It later became a playhouse and Club5 – a live music venue – before becoming the Sun-Ray in 2011.

Since then, the cinema had developed a loyal local following. In April, however, the building that houses the cinema was sold to Union South Partners, which did not renew the Sun-Ray’s lease. Worried fans started an online petition in an attempt to save the cinema from closure.

A month later, Marathon Live founder Billue filed articles of incorporation with the Florida Department of State’s Division of Corporations for an LLC known as JRFMJAXTOO. The address for the new corporation was 1028 Park St. – the cinema’s address – prompting speculation that the theater’s days were numbered.

On June 28, the Sun-Ray’s Facebook page announced what it said would be the cinema’s last full week of programming, prompting an outpouring of comments from its patrons.

“A devastating loss for the Jacksonville community,” commented Giovanna Federico. “May your sun rays shine bright somewhere else.”



The Sun-Ray Cinema will be renovated to become FIVE, a live music venue slated to open in January 2025.



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Baptist Health welcomes new board chairs and members



Deborah Pass Durham

Baptist Health recently appointed new officers and members to three-year terms on the boards of directors for the Baptist Health system, Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville, Wolfson Children’s Hospital and Baptist Health Foundation.

Potentiae Founder and Principal **Deborah Pass Durham** was appointed chair of the board of directors for **Baptist Health**, while **Kristi Garside**, head of Global Consumer Strategic Execution for Citigroup, was named the board’s vice chair. New board members include **Diane Raines**, a nurse, health care consultant and principal of Raines & Associates; and iMethods CEO **Clint Drawdy**.



Kristi Garside

Attorney **Asghar Syed** was appointed chairman of the board of **Baptist Jacksonville**, while Jacksonville Public Education Fund President **Rachael Tutwiler Fortune** was appointed vice chair. New Baptist Jacksonville board members include **Nathaniel “Nat” P. Ford, Sr.**, CEO of Jacksonville Transportation Authority; pulmonologist **John Kelly Wachira, MD**; and **Sanford “Sandy” Zimmerman**, senior vice president of wealth management at Morgan Stanley.

Rx360 Founder **Martin VanTrieste** is the new chairman of the board of **Wolfson Children’s Hospital**, while the **Baptist Health Foundation** board will be chaired by **Cleve Warren**, chief investment and advancement relations officer for Florida State College at Jacksonville Foundation.

“Baptist Health’s mission to improve the health and well-being of the community is strengthened by the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of our board members,” Baptist Health CEO **Michael A. Mayo** said. “With their expertise in fields as varied as finance and transportation, we look forward to leveraging their insights as we continue to challenge ourselves to meet the evolving health needs of our rapidly growing region.”



Kyle Musser

Musser joins Greenscape

Kyle Musser has been named director of development at Greenscape of Jacksonville, where he will lead fundraising efforts to plant, promote and protect trees in Northeast Florida.

Musser’s career is rooted in building relationships, connecting donors with opportunities to make a difference at organizations including the University of North Florida and the Jacksonville Symphony.

“We are thrilled to have Kyle on board at Greenscape,” Executive Director Lisa Grubba said. “He brings a new level of organizational expertise that will be critical as we approach our 50th year of caring for Jacksonville’s precious urban forest.”

A Jacksonville native and Avondale resident, Musser holds degrees in music performance and business from the University of North Florida. He serves on the Lanakila Garden Foundation board of directors and the Placemaking Steering Committee for Riverside Avondale Preservation.

Catholic Charities adds Eileen Seuter as regional director



Eileen Seuter

Eileen Seuter has joined Catholic Charities Bureau, Inc. as regional director of its Jacksonville office. In her new role, she will oversee all planning and direction of the organization’s operations and programs in Duval, Clay, Nassau and Baker counties.

Seuter has more than 30 years of experience in the nonprofit field, working with vulnerable populations in the areas of foster care, substance use disorder, mental health and homeless assistance services. She previously served as chief operating officer with LSF Health Systems and most recently as chief development officer at Sulzbacher.

“We are thrilled to have Eileen on board leading our Jacksonville office,” Catholic Charities CEO Anita Hassell said. “The work that Catholic Charities does is vital to the community, and Eileen’s expertise will be invaluable as we continue to strengthen our programs and support the community.”

A native of Jacksonville, Seuter received her bachelor’s degree in Anthropology from the University of Florida and her master’s degree in social work from Florida State University.

“(Catholic Charities’) commitment to serving those in need resonates deeply with me,” Seuter said, “and I am eager to contribute to our mission of putting faith into action to serve the most vulnerable in our community.”

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Our program features talented and dynamic women who will delight, inform, and entertain you. Our keynote speaker, **Dr. Ellen Glasser**, is a former FBI agent, city mayor, unifier, and a staunch advocate for women in leadership roles. The evening’s theme “Finding Your Voice in Challenging Times” also showcases our annual Sheros and Heros. These special awards recognize individuals who work tirelessly to improve the lives of women in our community.

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JA President Shannon Italia finalist for award



Shannon Italia

Junior Achievement of North Florida President **Shannon Italia** was named a finalist for the 2024 Karl Flemke Pioneer Achievement Award.

The award is presented to first-time JA presidents “who have demonstrated exceptional contributions and accomplishments within the organization.”

Italia was one of six finalists for the award, which was presented during the Junior Achievement USA® National Leadership Conference to be held July 15-18 in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Karl Flemke Pioneer Achievement Award pays tribute to the late Karl Flemke, who served as president of Junior Achievement from 1982 until his death in 1994.

Boys & Girls Clubs honor Holly Tyrrell as ‘Community Champion’

The Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida has recognized **Holly Tyrrell** as its 2024 Community Champion.

A member of the Beaches Boys & Girls Club Advisory Board since 2015, Tyrrell was honored for her leadership in advancing the club’s growth and fostering a deeper connection to the community. Under her guidance, the McKenzie’s Beaches Boys & Girls Club



Holly Tyrrell

launched two fundraising campaigns: McKenzie’s Beaches Golf Tournament and McKenzie’s Beaches Bash – events that have raised more than \$900,000 to further the club’s mission. She has also personally mentored teens at the club through its “Money Matters” financial literacy program.

The “Community Champion Award” is presented annually to an individual who has “demonstrated exceptional dedication, leadership and commitment to the 56 clubs that support over 5,000 young people” in our area.



Jackie Hardwick

Hardwick receives Fulbright fellowship

Jackie “Jewel” Hardwick has received a Fulbright fellowship that will enable her to travel to Taipei, Taiwan to serve as an English teaching assistant. A 2024 graduate of Colby College and 2020 graduate of The Episcopal School of Jacksonville, Hardwick began studying Chinese in middle school. While a student at Colby, she served as communications chair for the Student Government Association’s executive board and participated in numerous campus clubs and organizations. She also completed internships and study abroad experiences in Boston, Washington, DC, London and Taiwan.

Founded in 1946, the Fulbright program enables participants to study, teach and conduct research abroad while exchanging ideas and forging connections.



Greg Urmann

Greg Urmann returns to Berkshire Hathaway

Greg Urmann has rejoined the real estate team at Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty.

Urmann has nearly 20 years of experience in the industry, with extensive experience in relocation services.

“We are thrilled to have Greg Urmann return to our team,” Managing Broker Josh Cohen said. “Greg’s extensive experience and genuine empathy make him an invaluable asset to our firm. He has a proven track record of turning obstacles into opportunities for his clients, ensuring that their real estate transactions are not just successful but also enjoyable experiences.”

Urmann holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Mercyhurst University.

“I am excited to return to Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty,” Urmann said. “This firm’s commitment to integrity and excellence aligns perfectly with my own values. I look forward to continuing to serve the Jacksonville community and helping families find their dream homes.”



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Underwood's President Michael Richards (left) succeeds Clayton Bromberg, who remains chairman of the local jeweler.

Underwood's names Michael Richards president Clayton Bromberg remains chairman

Underwood's has appointed **Michael Richards** as president of the jewelry retailer with stores in Jacksonville and Ponte Vedra Beach. He succeeds longtime President and Chairman **Clayton Bromberg**, who will continue as company chairman and remain active in the business.

Richards joined Underwood's as a store manager more than 30 years ago. In his new role, he will lead the company's overall corporate culture, vision and operational functions.

"In the past three decades, Michael's expertise and passion for the jewelry industry, along with his achievements in leadership outside of the business, make him the ideal leader for Underwood's," Bromberg said. "In 2020, he took a more active role in operations and executive leadership, and it has been a natural progression to name him as president officially.

"I am very proud of the leader he has become," Bromberg continued, "and look forward to seeing the company continue to thrive under his direction."

Richards began his jewelry career in high school at Harper's Jewelry while taking gemology classes at the Gemological Institute of America (GIA). After high school, he worked at T. K. Dodrill Jewelers and pursued a business management degree at Marshall University. He joined Underwood's in 1990 as a store manager and completed his GIA and AGS coursework, earning the title of Certified Gemologist in 1991. He was promoted to vice president in 2008 and to chief operating officer in 2018.

"I am honored to step into the role of president and continue the legacy of excellence that Underwood's is known for," Richards said. "Clayton's dedication to the business and his commitment to customer satisfaction have made him not only a mentor to me and the generations of staff but a respected figure in the industry and a pillar in our community. His vision and leadership have been pivotal in upholding the value and reputation of Underwood's."



Kayla Collins



Shea Hansen

Soluna welcomes Collins, Hansen

Soluna Yoga + Spa has welcomed **Kayla Collins** and **Shea Hansen** to its team of yoga instructors and massage therapists.

Collins, a licensed massage therapist and yoga instructor, has studied in both Jacksonville and Bali. Her specialties include prenatal yoga as well as Reiki and Pranayama.

Hansen is a licensed massage therapist who completed the Alpha School of Massage's 900-hour program, receiving her license in 2018. In addition to traditional Swedish and deep tissue massage, she specializes in sports, hot stone and prenatal massage.

Realtors aid Twilight Wish Foundation



The staff of the Avondale office of Coldwell Banker Vanguard Realty present a \$1,000 donation from CBV Cares to the Twilight Wish Foundation, which grants wishes for senior citizens. CBV Cares is the nonprofit to which Coldwell Banker Vanguard real estate agents make donations for distribution to worthwhile charities and nonprofits.



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Bolles names Allison Chandler director of global learning and engagement



Allison Chandler

The Bolles School has named Social Studies Department Chair **Allison Chandler** director of global learning and engagement.

A faculty member at the school since 2006, Chandler has been involved with the Department of Global Learning and Engagement since 2017, when she joined with Spanish teacher Carrie Ezzell to co-chair a task force to review the school's global learning offerings.

"We are thrilled to have a talented, thoughtful educator like Allison take on this critical role and continue the momentum of the Department of Global Learning and Engagement," Associate Head of School Andrew Forrester said. "She has been an invaluable faculty member for the past 18 years, giving her a unique perspective as she takes the helm of the department. We look forward to seeing the innovative programs and opportunities she will surely bring to the table for our students."

Chandler holds bachelor's degrees in Psychology and History as well as a Master of Arts in History from the University of North Florida, and her professional development has centered primarily on global studies. She is also a Dewan Teaching Fellow and a two-time recipient of the Duane Ottenstroer Excellence in Teaching Fellowship.



Susan Masucci

Ruckus turns 18

Jacksonville integrated marketing agency Ruckus recently celebrated its 18th birthday. Founded in 2006 by CEO **Susan Masucci**, the company has grown into a team of 12 creative professionals specializing in brand strategy and design, digital media, video production, reputation management, community relations and more.

Ruckus clients include leaders in the health care and real estate development sectors as well as social services and the arts.

Mark LeMaire to return to Community Foundation for Northeast Florida

Mark LeMaire will return to the Community Foundation for Northeast Florida later this month as vice president of strategic donor initiatives.

In the newly created position, LeMaire will oversee strategic grantmaking for the foundation's grantees. He rejoins the organization after serving as president and CEO of United Way of St. Johns County.

Previously, LeMaire served for nearly a decade in multiple leadership roles at The Community Foundation, including in grantmaking and donor services in Duval, Putnam and St. Johns counties.

"Mark LeMaire brings a wealth of experience working with donors and nonprofits to maximize the impact of philanthropy in our region," said Isaiah M. Oliver, president of The Community Foundation.

LeMaire has an M.A. degree in Sociology from the University of South Florida, a B.A. degree from Southeastern University and more than 20 years of nonprofit experience.



Mark LeMaire



Linzee Ott

Linzee Ott named CEO of Build Up Downtown

Linzee Ott has been named CEO of Build Up Downtown, the organization's board of directors announced last week.

In her new role, Ott will lead the organization in its mission to advocate for and facilitate smart development, preservation and public spaces in Downtown.

"Linzee Ott has the experience, vision and passion for Downtown we have sought for some time to lead this organization," Board Chair Alex Sifakis said. "We look forward to working together to elevate Downtown and turn potential into true vibrancy."

Ott brings a decade of public service and nonprofit experience to Build Up Downtown. A past president and current board member of the San Marco Preservation Society, she was recently elected chair of

the Downtown Development Review Board (DDRDB), on which she has served since 2022, most recently as vice chair.

She succeeds Matt Brockelman, who served two, one-year terms as DDRDB board chair.

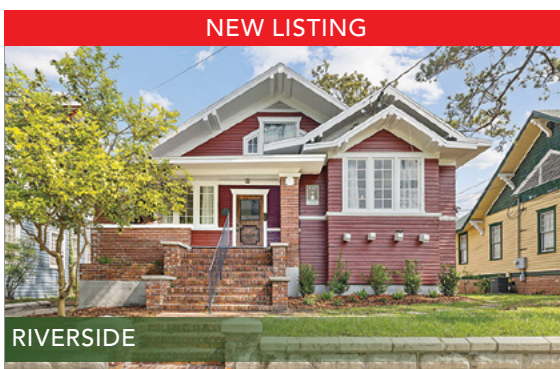
"Linzee understands the unique characteristics of downtown's neighborhoods, and I believe she'll effectively balance various stakeholder perspectives during the design review process," Brockelman said. "I am grateful for her willingness to serve and look forward to supporting her as she leads the board."

A Jacksonville native, Ott holds bachelor's degrees in International Affairs and Political Science from Florida State University.



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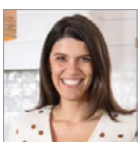


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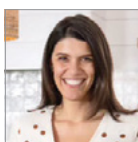


NEW LISTING

MURRAY HILL

4723 RAMONA BOULEVARD - \$359,900
3 BR / 2 BA / 1,344 SQFT.

Charming & inviting, welcome home to this move-in ready brick bungalow nestled in historic Murray Hill! Bright & sunlit interiors reveal a spacious living & dining area adorned with original hardwood floors, crown & picture molding, & a functional wood-burning fireplace. A rare find in the neighborhood, you'll discover 3 spacious bedrooms & 2 tastefully renovated bathrooms, along with an interior laundry closet. The kitchen features modern touches such as marble countertops, solid wood cabinets, large farmhouse sink, & stainless steel appliances, alongside the original ironing board neatly tucked away in its cabinet. Recent updates to the roof, HVAC, plumbing, & electrical systems ensure peace of mind. The backyard includes a storage shed & a screened-in lanai, perfect for enjoying a bug-free barbecue. Situated on charming Ramona Blvd, this home benefits from a prime location that offers residential tranquility & the urban conveniences of restaurants, shops, cafes, & beautiful parks!



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Meet Allie, a dedicated real estate agent committed to a smooth buying and selling experience. Based in Jacksonville's Riverside neighborhood, she brings a down-to-earth demeanor and a love for community to her work. Outside of real estate, Allie loves traveling and discovering new destinations.

What is your real estate superpower?

My real estate superpower is understanding clients' needs and finding their perfect home with dedication and empathy.

Why did you choose real estate?

I chose real estate because my background in investment properties sparked a passion for helping people find valuable and meaningful investments. I love guiding clients through the process and seeing the joy in finding their perfect home or ideal property.

Why do you love Jacksonville?

I love Jacksonville for its vibrant neighborhoods, beautiful beaches, and strong sense of community. It offers a perfect blend of city life and natural beauty, making it a wonderful place to call home.



Hair Peace recently welcomed several new stylists to its growing salon team. Front row, from left: Nina Keen, Brianna Gregory and Bre Crum. Back: Emily Thornton, Alicea Vymetal, Saige Kicklighter, Anaya Lorenzini, Laurelin Carlill, Valerie Miranda and Megan Fritz.

Hair Peace welcomes new stylists to salon team

Hair Peace recently welcomed several new stylists to its salon team. **Laurelin Carlill** specializes in color and places a high value on hair cutting “because I see them as complementary aspects of artistic expression.” **Valerie Miranda** joined the salon in June. “I’m a mother, hairstylist, artist and everything in between,” she said. “I enjoy layered haircuts, highlights and color. As the world of beauty is ever changing, I would love to continue observing and learning more throughout my career.” **Alicea Vymetal** is a new member of Hair Peace’s Design Associate Program. “I’m looking forward to broadening my education, attending workshops and working toward specializing in hair color as well as hair cutting,” she said. Also joining the team as a design associate in June was **Nina Keen**. “I’m a lover of all things wavy, curly and coily, specializing in textured hair,” Keen said. “My goal is to create your dream hair one curl at a time with a cut, color, or in-depth curl routine.” **Bre Crum** has staffed the Hair Peace front desk since April, after salon representatives visited her school during a career fair. Upon her graduation from cosmetology school, she plans to join the salon’s Design Associate program, specializing in extensions and color.



Shawn Naugle

Clarke Schools names Naugle president and CEO

Clarke Schools for Hearing and Speech has named **Shawn Naugle** as its new president and CEO. Naugle brings more than 17 years of experience in nonprofit leadership to Clarke, which teaches children who are deaf or hard of hearing how to listen and talk. Bilingual in English and Spanish, he led his previous organization to its highest student enrollment in 11 years, increased net assets by \$15 million over three years and achieved a 30% increase in community and business partnerships.

“We are thrilled to welcome Shawn Naugle to Clarke,” said Michael Budner, chair of Clarke’s Board of Trustees. “As a father whose family has directly benefited from Clarke’s services, I can confidently say that Shawn’s vision, passion and compassionate approach truly embody Clarke’s mission.” Naugle holds a bachelor’s degree in Psychology from the University of Denver and a master’s of Public Administration from Strayer University.

Cup of Jōb café opens in Murray Hill

Cup of Jōb Community Café held a grand opening party July 7 for its new coffee shop in Murray Hill. Located at 934 Edgewood Ave. South, the Murray Hill café is the second Cup of Jōb location started by Lifework Leadership, a nonprofit leadership development program. The original Jacksonville Beach café opened in 2019.

“As a nonprofit, the beach location was our first attempt at a ‘redemptive entrepreneurial’ enterprise, where we focused on job placement for some of the homeless individuals surrounding the beach,” Lifework Executive Director **Dr. Tammie McClafferty** said. “Now, we are thrilled to offer the same environment in Murray Hill.” While the Beaches location aided homeless individuals, McClafferty said, the Murray Hill location will focus on employing women who have come out of sexually abusive environments.



Lifework Executive Director Dr. Tammie McClafferty and her son Canon (right) joins Cup of Jōb Manager David Drew at the new Murray Hill location.



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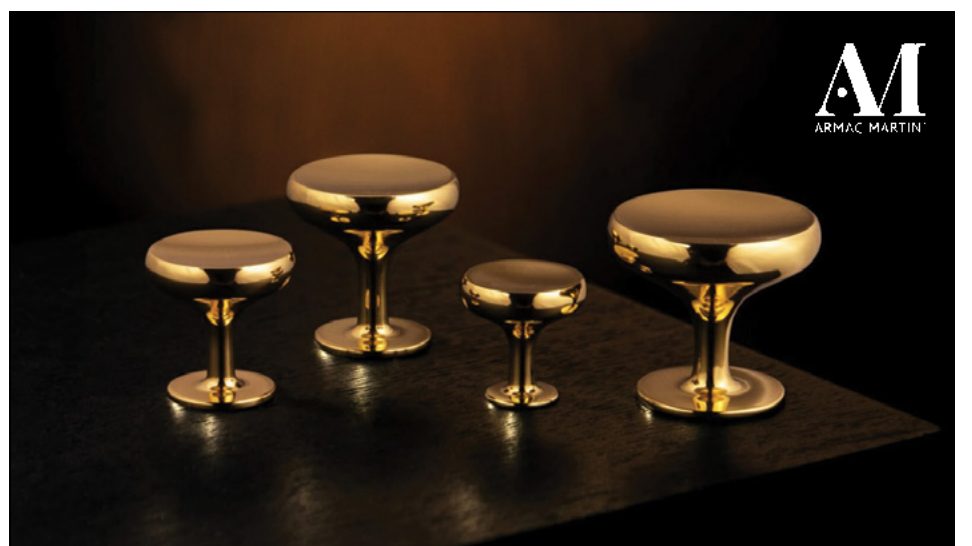
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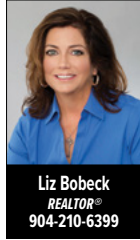
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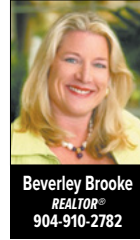
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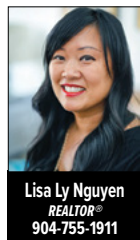
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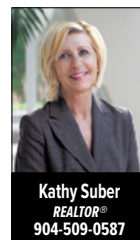
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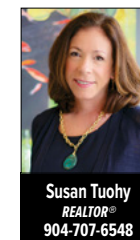
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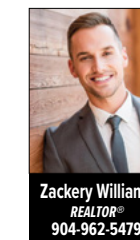
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Black Republicans host 'Faith, Family and Freedom' event



Lt. Col. (Ret) Allen West with Dwayne E. Clark Sr. Mike Mears with Shamari Lewis and Dr. William H. A. Collins Pastor Lionell Jenkins with Terrance Freeman



Laura Collins with Gary Dickinson Ken Amaro with Dwight Brisbane Reggie Blount with Lt. Col. (Ret) Allen West

Former Lt. Gov. Jennifer Carroll and Jacksonville City Councilmember Terrance Freeman were among the political leaders who welcomed Lt. Col. (Ret.) Allen West to a July 25 gathering of local Black Republicans at Epping Forest Yacht and Country Club.

Organized by the Coalition of Black Republican Americans (COBRA), the "Faith, Family and Freedom" event aimed to empower grassroots Republicans to achieve their potential and increase voter turnout through leadership, education, family values and engagement.

Since 2022, the group said it has exceeded by three times its goal to grow registered Black Republican voters in Duval County.

Mary and Hank as honorary co-Defenders gala



Dick and Melissa Lewis with David Clarke



Alex Benavides with Lani Reddington

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Mary and Hank Coxe to serve as co-chairs of DESC



M Korn with Hank Coxe and Debbie Pierson

The Downtown Ecumenical Services Council (DESC) announced that Mary and Hank Coxe would serve as co-chairs of the 2024 DESC Defenders: Generations gala at a volunteer kickoff event held at The Bedell Law firm. The Coxes have assembled a volunteer host committee for the gala, which will be held Sept. 26 at the WJCT Studios. The DESC Defenders gala raises funds to provide emergency assistance to those facing poverty. In addition to emergency financial support, DESC provides families with new and gently used clothing, food and social work support. The 2023 gala raised more than \$350,000.

Community leaders attend food bank ribbon cutting



Feeding Northeast Florida CEO Susan King (center) with board members Poppy Clements and Lisha Wise



U.S. Rep. Aaron Bean and congressional intern Daniel Kaye



The Jax Chamber's Ashley Folladori and Goodwill of North Florida's Rachael Mueller



Nick Leonard and Sam Cabot



Morgen Sullivan and Dipak Rahjansa

Feeding Northeast Florida's ribbon cutting ceremony for its new state-of-the-art facility brought together government officials and business leaders with representatives from many of the partner nonprofit organizations who work with the food bank to fight hunger across the organization's 12-county service area.

SEE STORY ON PAGE 14



LAGOS



The Red Canoe (detail)
Sarah Crooks, Art Ventures Grantee
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Fishweir parents Valerie and John Boote and children Avery and Oscar wait to cross eight lanes of traffic at the Roosevelt Boulevard and Plymouth Street intersection near the FSCJ Kent Campus.

'Too dangerous to attempt' CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Fishweir parent Valerie Boote agreed. "It's a very, very busy spot," she said. "They have to cross train tracks at both points to make it down to the street that Ruth Upson is on. I just can't fathom children doing it."

As Duval County students prepare to return to school, families across the city are experiencing a sense of uncertainty following the release of the proposed Master Facility Plan. Released in the spring, the MFP proposes addressing a \$1.4 billion budget deficit in part by closing nearly 30 schools – including several A-rated schools or historic schools such as Fishweir Elementary, John N.C. Stockton Elementary, Ortega Elementary and West Riverside Elementary. Under the current proposal, students from Stockton and Ortega elementary schools would be consolidated into Venetia Elementary School, while Fishweir students would attend Ruth N. Upson. West Riverside students would be relocated to Central Riverside.

Traffic and transportation concerns

The proposed school consolidations would result in significant changes for families used to walking their children to school. To get an idea of what that walk would be like for Fishweir students, Bearl organized a group walk from Fishweir to Ruth Upson. She said pedestrian safety remains a top concern for families like hers. "Jacksonville changes over time," she told *The Resident*. "There's more people,

there's more cars. Roads are wider, the speed limits are faster, so I really just wanted to experience all those things. I wanted to document those things, so that people who are unfamiliar with the area would get some kind of evidence to what's going on so it's not so abstract."

Bearl created a YouTube video documenting the walk and the two routes Fishweir students could take to get to Upson. One route – which involves crossing Roosevelt Boulevard at the Florida State College at Jacksonville-Kent Campus, was deemed "too dangerous to attempt," with the group citing the road's width, poor visibility, lack of crossings on the other side and a history of traffic fatalities.

Instead, the group crossed Roosevelt Boulevard at Edgewood Ave. South, traversing just over two miles between the two schools.

"We crossed Park Street, that was a little hairy, we crossed Roosevelt, that was even scarier," Bearl said in the video.

School Board Chairman Darryl Willie said that historically, DCPS has transformed closed schools into a bus hub where students can catch buses to their new schools.

"We've done that for a number of schools when they've consolidated before," Willie said. "I'm assuming we'll use something similar to that if we move forward with any sort of consolidation or closures, but it will be on a case-by-case basis."

A 'whole new plan'

During the summer, DCPS hosted district-wide community forums, followed by a series of smaller Feeder Pattern Community Review Group meetings to gain input and feedback to inform the creation of a new MFP.

"This is going to be a whole new plan," Willie said. "You're going to see a whole new (school closure) list."

West Riverside Elementary parent Stephanie Garfunkel was part of those focus group meetings and said she appreciated the opportunity to participate.

"I was really pleased that the district gave us an opportunity to have a deeper conversation about the facilities plan," she said.

For Garfunkel, one of the major takeaways from those meetings was that DCPS needs to find the right approach when considering a school for potential closure.

"...The community really wants to make sure that the district is looking first not at the cost of the building of a school but actually how successful that school is at attracting students, serving a diverse student body and what kind of academic outcomes that school is achieving," she said.

At the July 2 school board meeting, several parents shared their concerns regarding what they said are discrepancies in facilities index assessments and so-called Castaldi analyses of a school's physical condition.

Fishweir parent Valerie Boote noted

what she called major discrepancies in Fishweir's report, such as replacing both vinyl flooring she said was in "excellent condition" and a chainlink fence – much of which was replaced just four years ago – at a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Willie said such discrepancies are not uncommon, because Castaldi reports only include items that are past their useful life, whereas a facilities index report is more robust and thorough. He added, however, that the school board took note of such questions and concerns.

"We have the facilities and operations team doing a mini audit, so to speak, where they're actually going in and checking in on some of those numbers," he said.

At the July 2 school board meeting, newly sworn in Superintendent Dr. Charles Bernier emphasized that the new MFP proposal would be yet another draft for which additional community input would be sought before it is finalized.

Willie said it is likely that this revised MPF will include changes to the school closure list, although "it won't be the last, sort of end-all-be-all list."

He also said he expects the current school board to be the one to vote on the final MFP proposal. The election for school board representatives in districts 1, 3, 5 and 7 will be held Aug. 20, but the winners of that election won't begin their terms until November.

"The idea is that we vote on it with this board that's intact," Willie said.

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Meet the candidates:

Duval County Public Schools Board Election

By **Michele Leivas**

Nine Jacksonville citizens have emerged as the candidates running for seats on the Duval County School Board following last month's qualifying period.

The seats for districts 1, 3, 5 and 7 are up for election and will be

decided in the Aug. 20 primary election, when the polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Early voting will be held Aug. 5 through Aug. 18 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

More details on the Aug. 20 election, including early voting locations, can be found at www.duval elections.com.

District 1

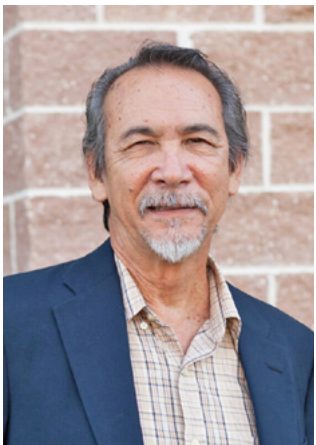


Nadine Ebri

Dr. Nadine Ebri has served for a decade as an educator in Duval County. She holds a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education and master's and doctorate degrees in Educational Leadership. Her platform includes "commitment to innovative and quality educational experiences, amplifying our community's voice and advancing transparency and safety in education."

Ebri lives in Jacksonville with her husband and young daughter.

<https://www.votenedineebri.org/>



Tony Ricardo

Tony Ricardo is a former teacher at Andrew Jackson High School and New Covenant Christian Academy. A District 1 resident since 1960, he has been a member of First Coast Christian Center for 27 years, serving in various roles. He has owned and operated Ricardo Designs since 1992.

Top issues for Ricardo include "world class curriculum," "personalized instruction," "safe classrooms" and "parental rights."

He and his wife have three children and six grandchildren.

<https://www.votetonyricardo.com/home>

District 3



Rebecca "Becky" Nathanson

Rebecca Nathanson is a Jacksonville native who grew up in the Miramar neighborhood. She holds a bachelor's degree in Human Resources from Peace College and has built a career in HR across various specialties and as an instructional design consultant.

Nathanson's platform includes "improved literacy scores," "school safety and student discipline" and "accountability."

She and her husband live in Lakewood with their teenage son.

<https://voteforbecky.com/>



Cindy Pearson

The District 3 incumbent running for re-election, Pearson grew up attending Duval County schools. She holds a bachelor's degree in English and a master's in Recreation Studies. Pearson has been recognized as the DCPS Outstanding School Volunteer by the Florida Department of Education. Her priorities include "student achievement," "financial management," "competing for students" and "safety."

She lives in District 3 with her husband and three children.

<https://votecindypearson.com/>

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District 5



Reginald "Reggie" Blount

Reginald "Reggie" Blount is a lifelong Jacksonville resident and military veteran. He holds a bachelor's degree in Business Management and a master's degree in Public Policy. His military career of 30-plus years included multiple combat tours and he also contributed to the Army Provincial Reconstruction Team. Blount currently works as a life skills curriculum writer for the Biscayne High School mentorship program and as a lead assessment coordinator at Florida State College at Jacksonville.

He and his wife have six children and six grandchildren.

<https://www.reggieblount2024.com>



Nahshon Nicks

Dr. Nahshon Nicks is the founder of Team Nitro MMA and the former CEO of First Coast Leadership Foundation. Nicks said his own struggles with reading as a child and the support he received from a teacher inspired his own career in education. He holds a bachelor's degree in Education, a double master's from Strayer University and a doctoral degree in Christian Education from New York Theological Seminary.

Nicks said his priorities as a school board member would include recruiting and retaining talented teachers, ensuring fiscal responsibility and forging partnerships with the business community to create apprenticeship opportunities.

<https://www.votennicks4jax.com/>



Hank Rogers

Hank Rogers has lived in Jacksonville for nearly 25 years. He holds a bachelor's degree in Political Science and a master's in Public Administration. He is currently the COO for I'm A Star Foundation. Previously, Rogers served as an assistant in the Florida House of Representatives, a substitute teacher and as a guardian ad litem. He serves on several boards for organizations and committees in Jacksonville.

His platform includes "student safety and mental health" "student achievement," "educators and support staff" "fiscal responsibility" and "accessibility."

<https://votehankrogers.com/>

District 7



Melody Bolduc

Melody Bolduc is a Jacksonville native who holds a degree from University of North Florida. She began her teaching career at Wolfson High School in 2000 and worked in the public school system until 2014. Bolduc is the founder of Keys Education Resource Center. She is in the process of completing the final requirements for her doctorate degree. Her platform includes "school safety," "attracting and retaining excellent teachers" and "career and technical education."

Bolduc lives with her husband and their two teenage daughters.

<https://www.melodybolduc.com>



Sarah Ann Mannion

Jacksonville native Sarah Ann Mannion is an attorney with more than 10 years of experience in bankruptcy law. She holds a bachelor's degree from the University of North Florida and a law degree from Florida Coastal School of Law. Mannion has served on DCPS school advisory councils and PTAs and is a past president of the Jacksonville Women Lawyer Association. She is a board member and past chair of the Women's Center of Jacksonville.

Her platform includes retaining and supporting our highly qualified teachers, prioritizing safety for our students and maintaining fiscal responsibility for our budget.

Mannion is a wife and mother of three.

<https://sarahforschoolboard7.com/>

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School Board District 5 candidates sit down for parent-led interview



DCPS District 5 candidate Reginald Blount shares his stance on various issues facing the DCPS community in a one-on-one interview with Fishweir parent Tiffani Bibb at Myrtle Ave Brewing on July 20

By Michele Leivas

Potential school closings, student safety and school vouchers were among the issues candidates discussed at a recent School Board District 5 candidate meet and greet held at a July 20 candidate event at Myrtle Ave. Brewing.

Organized by the Save Historic Schools Coalition, the event gave families the opportunity to meet and mingle with the district’s three candidates – Reginald Blount, Nahshon Nicks and Hank Rogers – before each candidate sat down for individual recorded interviews with Fishweir Elementary School parent Tiffani Bibb.

“My top priority is to fight to keep our local neighborhood public schools open,” said Nicks. “...I feel like they are holders of rich tradition, right history.”

Nicks also called for a need to highlight skilled services and other programming offered through DCPS, like speech, that may not be offered on a daily basis at schools outside the DCPS system.

“I want our families to know that DCPS should be the first option and not an alternative option.”

Blount echoed that sentiment, stating he is opposed to closing schools and citing the budget to be at the root of the problem.

“When you dive into the financial aspect, a lot of things haven’t been done right,” he said. “...It goes way back: This can have been kicked down the road for a long time.”

Blount said he would call for an

independent statewide forensic audit of the last four years to help determine what led to the current state of the budget and where the board could “cut off the fat.”

“You can’t begin to fix it if you’re doing the same thing over and over,” Blount said. “Do a statewide audit, independent...to find out what are we doing. Are we overspending in contracts? Are we overspending in maintenance? That’s been a big one.”

Rogers reflected on the role the voucher program has played in the decision by some parents to opt out of traditional public schools and utilize other choices available to them for their children’s education, stating that it is “really draining” traditional public schools.

Rogers added that while these traditional neighborhood schools have “amazing” programming, more needs to be done to get the word out about what DCPS public schools have to offer.

“Unfortunately, we are not telling the story,” Rogers said. “We have to be about the business of aggressively marketing our schools...”

Each one-on-one interview was recorded and will be posted to YouTube and shared via the S.O.S. – Save Fishweir Elementary Facebook page.

The election for Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) districts 1, 3, 5 and 7 will take place Aug. 20, with early voting occurring Aug. 5 to 18. Registered voters can visit www.duvalelections.com to find their designated voting precincts and early voting sites.

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DCPS policy change leaves some students ineligible for bus transportation

By Michele Leivas

Duval County middle and high school students living less than two miles from their assigned neighborhood school are no longer eligible for bus transportation, according to an updated Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) board policy.

The permissible distance from a school bus stop to a student’s primary residence has also been extended by a half mile.

The policy change was announced July 22, just weeks before the start of the 2024-25 school year, with DCPS notifying families of this policy change.

The new transportation policy could impact roughly 1,100 students.

According to DCPS, the implementation of these updates will align the district with state law.

Families are required to register for bus transportation to determine eligibility. While the initial period for bus registration ran through July, families are still able to begin the registration process at <https://dcps.duvalschools.org/Page/31291>.

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Carson Bechan, William Rachels, Matt Potter, Johnny Froats and Barrett Runnels



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Here, there and everywhere

By Peggy Harrell Jennings

Here!

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Professional musicians **Piotr Szewczyk, Chris Chappell, Ellen Olson and Linda Minke** performed the winning pieces from 48 submissions from all over America for the Young Composers competition sponsored by **Sharon Scholl. Elijah Denning Atkin** took 1st place with *Dance of the Saints*, **Alexander Joseph Unseth** 2nd place and **Seungehan Lee** 3rd place.

Beauty abounds at The Flip Flop Shop on Oak St. in 5 Points and at Good Sandwich on 8th and Silver in Springfield, where **Leilani Leo**'s latest paintings are on exhibit. Then put on some traveling pants for the Amelia Island Dance Festival, where Leo is featured artist in September.

Happy Medium Books Café' on Park Street lives up to its name. It's the happening place for poets and authors to gather on second Sundays at 2 p.m. to present readings, and the reception for **Debbie Grisnik** and **LuAnn Dunkinson**'s art exhibit was totally fun – especially since award winning artist **Phil Sandusky** popped in and now has a presence in the gallery. **Stephanie Pyren-Fortel** was on hand to sign her children's books for the cheerful crowd.

There!

John Bunker's beautiful paintings grace the walls at The Davis Gallery at Mayo Clinic, the Cummer Museum Shop, Cathedral Book Store and Flip Flop Shop. The Jacksonville Watercolor exhibit at Reddi Arts on Main Street was lovely and well attended. Check them out online for

upcoming events and workshops.

Dr. Wayne Wood, author of *Jacksonville's Historical Heritage* and architect **Angela Schifanella** wowed the crowd with their interesting presentation as part of Riverside Avondale Preservation's Summertime Historic Homeowner's Workshops special event series at Riverside Church. A specialist in residential architecture, Schifanella and husband **Alan Wilson** designed Balis Park, home of San Marco's lion statue. From bungalows and stately mansions on Riverside's "Row" to the development of Avondale, the captivated crowd could play a merry game of "Name that Architecture" – Queen Anne, Mediterranean, Tudor, Prairie, to list a few – on the drive home through the neighborhood. *ARchiTecture* at its best.

Everywhere!

Jacksonville Artists' Guild has exhibits at The Downtown Library and at North Point Dental, 11257 Alta Drive, where patients can be soothed during procedures by viewing more than 45 images by 21 artists.

Mandarin Museum Director **Brittany Cohill** guided Jacksonville Fine Arts Forum members on a tour of the museum and schoolhouse. In addition to focusing on author Harriet Beecher Stowe (*Uncle Tom's Cabin*), the tour featured a display of artifacts found from Dr. Keith Holland's underwater exploration of The Maple Leaf, a Union boat that capsized in the St. Johns River during the Civil War. Members were enthralled with The Stowe Gallery's display of renowned



Angela Schifanella and Wayne Wood

Jacksonville artist/teacher **Memphis Wood**'s brilliant fiber work, paintings and clay pieces curated by **Nofa Dixon** and **Dr. Elizabeth Heuer**. A major influence on Jacksonville's arts community, Wood was influential in founding the Jacksonville Art Museum – now MOCA – and was a pioneering member of the original Crown Craftsmen organization. Her work and legacy continue to be celebrated throughout the area.

So, beat the heat! Cool your heels in a gallery, museum, at a concert or attend a lecture about the arts in our historically rich and artistically vibrant community. As Gustave Coubet said, "Art is knowledge made visible."

Go! See! Learn!



Stephanie Pyren-Fortel



John Bunker

THE BEAT GOES ON!

Aug. 7, 5-8 p.m.

Reception during ARTWALK

Downtown Library, Jacksonville

Artists' Guild "Pack Your Bags" exhibit through Sept. 5

Featured artist: Annelies Dykgraaf

Lino/woodcuts and paintings on the second floor.

Also: Docent-led tours of the permanent collection.

Aug. 14 Deadline

Open call to artists for "View From My Window"

Michel Dunlap, juror

TAC Gallery

320 E. Adams St.

Visit Tacjacksonville.org for details

August 28, 5-7 p.m.

Reception

"SYMBIOSIS- Reflections on Coexistence"

by artist Larry Wilson

Nathan H. Wilson Center for the Arts

FSCJ South Campus

Aug. 28 – Oct. 10

Do you know of an upcoming event or accolade that helps pump the rhythmic Artbeat of Jacksonville? Send the announcement to us at editor@residentnews.net for consideration in *The Beat Goes On*.



Chief Curator Holly Keris discusses a 19th-century quilt made by former slave Harriet Powers.

Cummer explores the 'Fabric of a Nation' through quilt exhibition

By Jennifer Logue

At first glance, the brightly colored textile appears to be a typical example of traditional American quilting.

Assembled from scraps of red and green floral cotton surrounded by a simple white muslin border, the quilt is inscribed with names like Emmie and Harold, Ruth and Miyoko, Nancy and Setsuo – the names of the children who made it.

What makes this quilt particularly poignant is that it was made by 4th grade students at the Poston War Relocation Center – a Japanese American internment camp in Arizona where more than 18,000 men, women and children were held during World War II.

The quilt is just one of the more than 40 textiles now on display at the Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens as part of *Fabric of a Nation: American Quilt Stories*. Running through Sept. 29, the nationally touring exhibition was organized by Boston's Museum of Fine Arts (MFA).

"With this exhibition, we invite visitors to consider not only the objects themselves, but also the stories of their makers and the narratives – often left untold for too long – that they wish for us to remember," said MFA Curator of Textiles Jennifer Swope.

Cummer Chief Curator Holly Keris echoed those sentiments. "In her introduction to the exhibition, Jennifer said that we tend to think of quilts as something soft and comforting," Keris said. "But quilts can also help us think about hard topics."



This brightly colored quilt was made by 4th grade students at a Japanese internment camp during World War II.

The American experience

Featuring quilts from the late 17th century to the present day, *Fabric of a Nation* captures moments in American history through the textile traditions of the period – from early American history through the Civil War and the Great Depression to the present day.

"It's a very wide swath of American history we can see through these quilts," Keris said. "It's really the highlighting of the individual stories behind the quilts that

makes this exhibit so very special."

One quilt dating from the late 19th or early 20th century, for example, appears to be a faithful depiction of the American flag. Look closer, though, and names appear carefully stitched amid the stars and stripes. According to Keris, the quilt was made as a fundraiser for the women's suffrage movement, with the names acknowledging those who made donations.

Among the names listed: Susan B. Anthony.

"You can see through the use of the American flag that they were trying to equate the suffrage movement with a national movement," Keris said.

An elegant red silk bedcover from the late 17th century, meanwhile, once adorned the bed of Massachusetts Governor Increase Sumner. Family lore says that Sumner took his final oath of office while lying on his deathbed beneath the quilt before dying soon thereafter.

Telling stories

Storytelling is a recurrent theme throughout the *Fabric of a Nation* exhibition, both in the stories communicated through the quilts' imagery and the stories of the artists who created them.

A late 19th century textile known as the Pictorial Quilt depicts scenes from the Bible – from Adam and Eve to Moses and the serpent, Jonah and the whale and more. Its artist, Harriet Powers, was born into slavery and following the Civil War and her emancipation, she began exhibiting her quilts at local fairs.

One of Powers' quilts is now in the Smithsonian Institution.

The Cummer exhibition also features a trio of quilts made during the Depression in the rural African American quilting community of Gee's Bend, Alabama.

"I think these quilts really speak to the ingenuity and resourcefulness of these women," said Keris, noting they were made from feed sacks and whatever other materials the women had on hand. "So, they combine the practicality of keeping their family warm while still being very artistic,



Bisa Butler's *To God and Truth* was inspired by an 1899 photo of the Morris Brown College baseball team.

beautiful quilts."

In some cases, history has inspired contemporary quilters to bring the past to life through their art. An 1899 black and white photo of Morris Brown College's African American baseball team, for example, was the inspiration behind artist Bisa Butler's 2019 quilt "To God and Truth."

"*Fabric of a Nation* presents the

spectrum of our uniquely American story through the handiwork of those who have lived it since the founding of our nation," Cummer Museum CEO Andrea Barnwell Brownlee said. "We are honored to host this special exhibition featuring a collection of textile masterpieces by an extraordinary variety of makers that reveal a rich – and richly complicated – story of the nation's shared history."

Linda Purl to perform 'Mame'

Noted actress Linda Purl will appear at the Florida Theatre Aug. 24-25 in a concert presentation of the Broadway musical, "Mame."

Purl – well-known for her TV roles on "Happy Days" and "Matlock" – will perform the title role of Mame alongside Jacksonville native Dorothy Bishop as Mame's caustic "frenemy," actress Vera Charles. Jacksonville native Joey Chancey will serve as the production's conductor and music director.

Performances will be presented Saturday, Aug. 24 at 7:30 p.m. and Sunday, Aug. 25 at 2 p.m. Tickets are \$38.50, \$53 and \$73 and are on sale now at www.floridatheatre.com or the Florida Theatre Box Office at (904) 355-2787. A limited number of \$200 VIP tickets that include the closing night party will also be available.

United Way accepting grant proposals

United Way of Northeast Florida is accepting grant proposals to support programs that address basic needs and financial well-being.

The agency has issued a request for proposals (RFP) for a \$5 million grant pool, from which it will fund programs for 18 months that will "produce meaningful outcomes." Submissions will be accepted from 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organizations in Duval, Baker, Clay, Nassau and northern St. Johns counties.

The deadline for submitting grant proposals is Saturday, Aug. 17. To apply or for more information, visit unitedwaynefl.org/community-partners.



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LOCAL FOLKS



The Powells on a trip to Italy

Rhiannon Powell



Rhiannon Powell

By Jennifer Jensen

Rhiannon Powell moved to Jacksonville when she was 8 years old and only left once when she attended the University of Florida. In 2002, after graduation, she moved to Riverside and began working at Ascension St. Vincent's as a nurse in the emergency department.

"And I just stayed here ever since," she added.

In 2003, she and her husband, Kevin, bought a home in Murray Hill and completely remodeled it. "We saw that growth and progress," she said. "It's been great to see the transition of that area."

When they first moved to Murray Hill, Community Loaves operated out of a church's kitchen, and they delivered baked goods by bicycle to the Powell's home. She said it's been amazing to see them thrive along with other businesses in the area.

Now the Powells live in Avondale in a home they have been renovating since purchasing it in 2021.

"We pretty much do all the labor ourselves," she said. "It's definitely been a labor of love."

They spent the first six months demolishing the house. It was a construction zone for quite some time, as the family refurbished the home's hardwood floors and completely renovated the kitchen and bathrooms. But the project is nearly complete.

"We love this neighborhood," she said. "We can walk or ride our bikes to places, and it has such character and history."

She and her husband grew up in Orange Park. While they attended different high schools, the couple graduated the same year and had several mutual friends. They don't recall ever meeting, though, until they both worked at the same Orange Park restaurant when Rhiannon Powell was in her last year of college. Kevin had just gotten out of the military.

"We just kind of started hanging out, and then four years later, we were married with a kid," she said.

Their oldest child, Kaden, is 20 years old and a sophomore at the University of Florida. Son Jackson is 14.

When they were deciding where to live, the couple knew that neither of them wanted to go back to living in the suburbs.

"It's been great to raise our kids here," she said. "We've made some great friends along the way in the neighborhood. And I wouldn't live anywhere else."

It also helps that work is close by. While she covers all four hospitals in the area, Powell's office is in Riverside. She started working at the Riverside hospital after nursing school and never left. She had both of her children at that hospital



Kevin, Kaden, Rhiannon and Jackson on vacation in Oahu, Hawaii



Rhiannon Powell and her husband, Kevin Powell

as well. Over the years, she worked her way up from a nurse in the emergency department to the manager of nurse education.

Yet Powell didn't immediately pursue nursing after graduating from college. Halfway through nursing school, she switched to business. After working for Merrill Lynch for a year, however, she realized that wasn't for her.

"I was like, 'Oh, I don't like this,'" Powell said. "I made a mistake."

She decided to go back to college and finish nursing school, working as a tech while completing her degree.

Serving the community

Powell said she always knew she wanted to give back to her community. Her father was a firefighter and paramedic, and she remembers him teaching first-aid classes and bringing home the CPR dummy.

"I just knew that I wanted to do something in emergency medicine," she said. "And I was always drawn to the ER, and I do love it. It is chaotic, but it's definitely controlled chaos."

"The ER is where I knew I could give the most back to my community," she continued. "Sometimes you're the first to see these patients and you can recognize the emergencies. It's just a great way to connect and to try to make a difference in someone's life."

After working as an ER nurse, she transitioned into education and training. The hospital didn't have a nurse residency program for emergency nurses, so Powell developed the first program there.

"When you come out of school with a nursing shortage, you have to hire brand new nurses into specialties," she said. "It's not ideal, but it's reality."

She wanted to train these new nurses and create a safe space for them to learn.

"I love having that impact with new nurses and giving them the tools they need to be able to safely care for our patients," she said. "It's been great to see how it's evolved."

Since starting that program, she now oversees all nurse education.

"Health care is very dynamic," she said. "And education is even more important with our nurses, that we make sure they are equipped with the tools they need to do their job every day."

In addition to giving back to her community through her career, Powell also finds time to give back in her personal life. She has been a member of the Junior League for eight years, serving in numerous leadership roles, and is also actively involved in CISV, a nonprofit that offers international camp-based, family exchange and local community programs. In addition to serving on the organization's board, Powell and her family have hosted students from the Czech Republic, while son Kaden has visited several countries and served as a program leader last summer in Spain. Son Jackson, meanwhile, was heading to Switzerland this year.

When Powell isn't serving her community or renovating her home, she enjoys boating and attending University of Florida and Jaguars football games with her family. She also loves to travel: She has visited Italy three times and is working on getting her dual citizenship from that country, which is where her great-grandfather was born.

And when it comes to selecting destinations, she said, the family's criteria is simple.

"We like anywhere where we can go, be outdoors and go on an adventure."

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By
**Susanna
Barton**

Thrift like a boss at local second-hand stores

As “back to school time” rolls around, it’s time to pop some tags and show gratitude for all the opportunities we have in our Resident Community to thrift like a boss! Plus, National Thrift Store Day is coming up this month, so the time is nigh to celebrate buying stuff secondhand.

ICYMI, thrifting is a shopping trend that is here to stay. According to NARTS: The Association of Resale Professionals, there are currently more than 25,000 resale, consignment and not-for-profit resale shops in the United States. The market is big and growing. According to a 2023 sales report from online thrift retailer ThredUp, 75 percent of consumers have shopped or are open to shopping for secondhand apparel. Some 83 percent of Gen Zers have shopped or are open to shopping secondhand apparel, while one in three apparel items bought in the past 12 months was secondhand.

These trends have staying power, too, according to the ThredUp report. The U.S. secondhand market is expected to reach \$75 billion by 2027, showing a “strong growth trajectory.” Its growth was five times that of the regular retail market.

Dang, y’all! People are investing serious cash in used clothing and other home goods, both around the country and in our own little corner of the universe.

My first introduction to thrifting was by a former colleague and Riverside grande dame, who invited me to tag along on a thrift store adventure she’d planned with some boarding students. She showed us how to look for the good stuff and purchase what caught our eye and captured our imagination. We visited The Thrift Store on Emerson, the Salvation

Army Family Store and several other spots on Beach Boulevard, and maybe a few others I can’t recall at the moment. My takeaway from that experience was, if this Fashionista Extraordinaire who looks absolutely fabulous in every outfit she owns can rock the thrifting experience, so could I.

I haven’t looked back since. Buying clothing at the manufacturer’s suggested retail price feels really hard now and borderline stupid.

As a teenager, my daughter, Marley, also embraced thrifting, and we became a force on the used threads scene. Here are a few places in the neighborhood we love and why:

- **The Goodwill** on St. Augustine Road, south San Jose Boulevard and Lenox Avenue. It’s hard to beat Goodwill in these parts. All three stores in our Resident Community are big and clean and full of fun finds. You can really get your thrift haul on at the Goodwill.
- **The Thrift Store** on Emerson Street. This place is an adventure, and there are plenty of gems to be found in the racks here. But if you don’t like crowds or you get creeped out by intercom voices that repeat “Welcome to The Thrift Store,” this may not be your spot. **AngelAid Thrift Store** is in the same shopping center, but I’ve not been in there yet to check it out.
- **The Hubbard House Thrift Store** on Beach Boulevard is a real winner. It’s much smaller than the other stores and has a great inventory of nice women’s clothing and furnishings. You’ll have to check their schedule, but most times I go, everything is 50 percent off, which is fun.

• **The Salvation Army Family Store** out Beach Boulevard is a little bit out of our neighborhood, but it’s worth the trip. You can find great furniture pieces there, along with jewelry and tons of apparel. Again, they also seem to have a pretty consistent 50 percent off sale, but I’m not sure exactly when.

• **The St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store** on San Jose Boulevard and St. Augustine Road is a real winner. It’s huge, but very well organized, and they carry a lot of home goods and furniture. And the clothing they sell is authentic and often vintage, meaning you can find some real finds on the racks – not the SHEIN and other fast clothing pieces that make shopping at some thrift stores totally annoying. If you see SHEIN or just a single S, M or L on the tag, keep moving!

• All down **Edgewood Avenue** there are some sweet little thrift and resale stores to investigate. I haven’t been in them, but I always want to when I’m driving through.

• **5 Points Vintage** is awesome, with a side of awesome sauce. The booth vendors in there have some really cool inventory, and you simply must check out the fun earring collection at the front of the store. Marley and I have found some real prizes in this store.

Of course, there is a whole other market of consignment and overstock retail businesses in our neighborhood that are not exactly thrifting in the Goodwill sense of the word but are great places to flex your savvy shopping skills. One of the best examples is **Solomon Ventures** on Art Museum Drive. They have new overstock inventory from other vendors and also sell a few used or vintage pieces from time to time. Their sales include frozen seafood, refrigerated items, nonperishables, health food and

even mannequin head wig stands. You literally never know what you’re going to get or find there, but that’s why they call it Solomon’s: where shopping is an adventure.

Getting more into the consignment/retail overstock arena are stores like **Fifi’s** on Hendricks Avenue and **C.U.T. Consignment** in the Miramar Shopping Center. C.U.T. is great because they get a lot of new collections from boutiques in our region. So, at C.U.T., you’re usually buying brand new clothes or items, but without the brand new prices. That store is beautiful. I highly suggest it to anyone looking for current fashion or good-smelling candles or designer handbags. They have lots of sizes and it smells heavenly in there – which is definitely not the case when you’re shopping at thriftier places.

And it wouldn’t be a thrifty piece if I didn’t mention all the antique stores in our neighborhood. Most of these are focused on furnishings and home décor, but a few of them – including the **San Jose Antique Market** – have a few booths with clothing, jewelry and other fun finds.

All that to say, we are very fortunate to have so many thrift shopping options in our Resident Community. If you haven’t jumped in and popped some tags yet, it’s time to give thrifting a go. Not only is it a greener, more environmentally friendly way to shop, but it’s also a fun way to spend your time and local retail dollars.

Plus, it’s like hunting: you never know what you’re going to find, and when you do pick up something good, it feels like a real prize.

Susanna Barton thought she found something really amazing and valuable at the Goodwill the other day – a Kika Vargas blouse – until further research showed the piece was actually a Kika Vargas FOR TARGET collab. Darn you, fast fashion!



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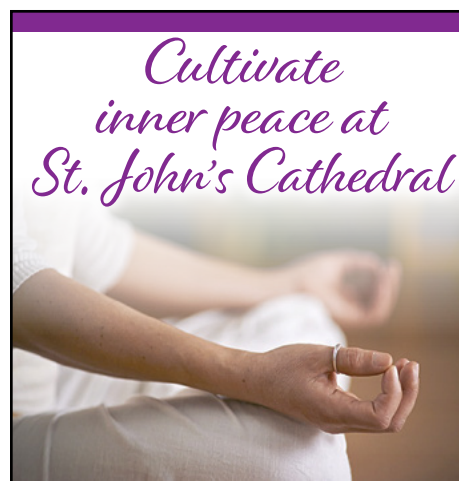
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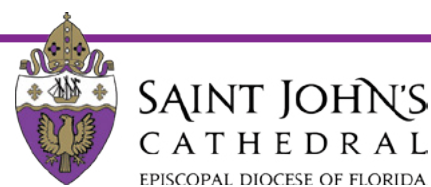
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'The healthiest place on earth'

The Farm at Okefenokee offers eco-friendly lifestyle, cultivates connection to nature

Located about an hour north of Jacksonville in Folkston, Georgia, the Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge is a nature-lover's paradise – offering more than 350,000 acres of recreational splendor and a pristine wildlife habitat for a myriad of endangered species.

Nestled at the entrance to this UNESCO World Heritage-nominated site is a residential community dedicated to living a healthier, more eco-friendly life. Known as The Farm at Okefenokee, the regenerative farming community sits on more than 705 acres of rolling pastures. When completed, the community will feature 250 sustainably built cabins set amid a working farm, complete with more than 200 animals, hiking trails and access to 70 miles of boating.

"Residents will learn and participate in regenerative farming that improves soil health, increases biodiversity and cultivates amazing harvests," Chief Technology Officer William Nance said. "Education allows them to choose varieties that offer more antioxidants or vitamins that prevent health problems."

Farm Co-Founder Doug Davis said the benefits to the health of both residents and the land are significant.

"Most people are appalled to learn how modern food is produced, though few can do much about it," Davis said. "Choosing the right food eliminates many toxins and additives, and healthy food begins at ground level.

"Revitalized soil and carbon sequestration

such as gardening, fermentation and canning.

"Imagine living on a 705-acre regenerative farm teeming with heirloom fruits, vegetables and heritage animals," said Manager of Animal Welfare Karyn Chester.

After participating in farming activities, residents can stroll over to the apothecary, where a trained and certified herbalist offers organic herbs along with balms crafted from beeswax, olive oil and chili peppers grown on the farm.

Yet healthy food isn't regenerative agriculture's only intent. The practices maintain animal husbandry that allows livestock to live their preferred lives as they evolved to live: grazing in pastures, foraging for insects and berries and gathering in flocks and herds. The concepts

they eat, they are also cultivating something equally important, founders say – a sense of community that has been eroded by technology and modern life.

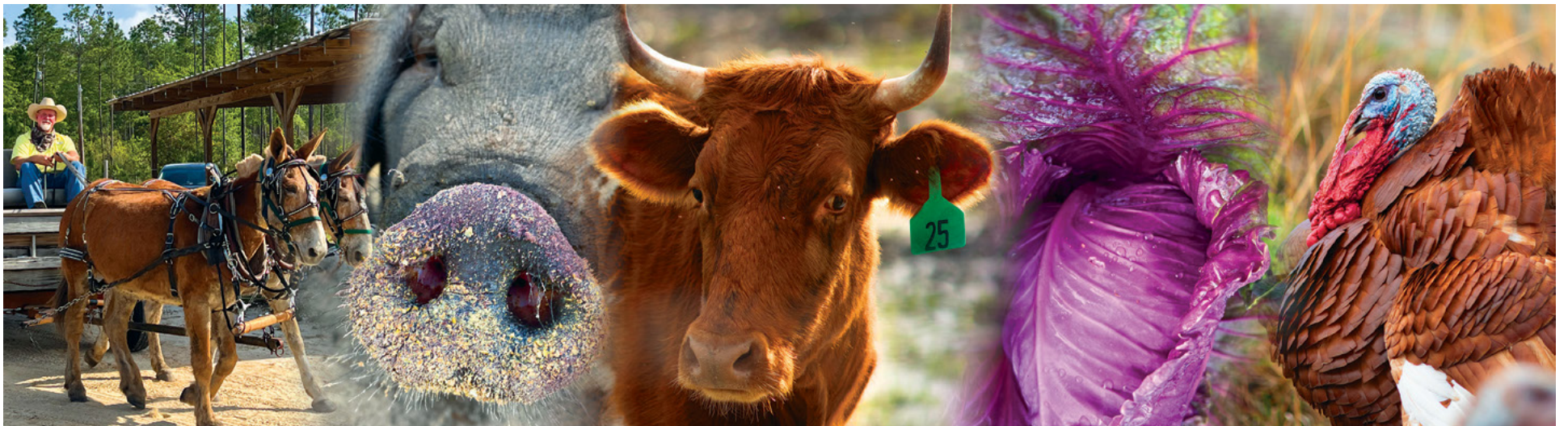
To that end, each group of cabins is situated to create a micro-village, with amenities such as vegetable gardens, natural grasslands, forests and opportunities to fish and swim. Solar-lit pathways and gathering spots for classes also create a sense of belonging.

"Where tight-knit bonds flourish, so does overall well-being," Meyer said. "At The Farm at Okefenokee, fostering community isn't just a goal. It's a cornerstone of our ethos."

That sense of community extends beyond The Farm, he added, with residents participating in local traditions within Charlton County.

It takes a village

So, what's the process for becoming part of The Farm at Okefenokee sustainable lifestyle? The first step, Meyer said, is to select one of the community's lots, which are being released for sale



"We are a pioneering community that takes all aspects of healthy living in mind," said Co-Founder Jeff Meyer, who refers to the farm as "the healthiest place on earth." "By recognizing fundamentals of good health and eliminating negative elements, we create an environment that converges nature with nurture."

Back to nature

At The Farm at Okefenokee, residents can participate in growing and consuming their own food by taking part in community-supported agriculture. While conventional farming focuses on producing higher yields year after year, regenerative agriculture focuses on the future, Meyer said, seeking to improve the health of soil, water, crops and people by working with nature rather than against it.

At The Farm at Okefenokee, on-site experts offer guidance in regenerative farming techniques so that residents can grow their own organic produce.

"Where else can you bring fresh milk to your cabin and craft fresh cheese, ride horses through Georgia pine groves or pet baby goats, then step outside and clip fresh herbs for dinner?" Meyer said.

Along the way, residents will participate in agricultural practices that benefit the earth as well.

protect the Earth," he continued. "Compost means plants absorb more nutrients and transmit them to their edible leaves and fruit. Organic pest control eliminates toxic sprays altogether. At (The Farm), the produce grown is good for you and the planet."

Residents may participate in farm work as little or as much as they want – from shoveling soil or collecting eggs from the chicken coop to learning traditional skills

also focus on worker well-being, ensuring that those who grow food are treated ethically and fairly.

"Through authentic regenerative farm living" Davis said, "we fulfill the people's longing for wholeness by restoring our interconnectedness and balance."

Cultivating community

While residents are cultivating the food

using a phased approach.

"We're currently selling lots in our second village called The Orchard," said Meyer, adding that the first phase, The Standing Gardens, has sold out.

Orchard lots begin at \$225,000 "but we anticipate that they will sell quickly and continue to increase in price and value," he said.

Future phases include The Pasture, The Rookery, The Equine Village and The Grove.

Once new residents have selected a lot, they select an all-cypress cabin. Built with natural materials, each cabin features an expansive front porch and deck, a modern kitchen, large den, spacious master suite and one or two guest rooms. Cabins may be purchased as primary year-round residences or as vacation homes.

"By purchasing a lot and building a cabin, you become a co-owner, which allows you to choose how often to visit and introduces foods and opportunities that may not be available to most consumers," Davis said. "Our surroundings play a critical role in shaping our quality of life which, in turn, directly impacts our health outcomes."

For more information on The Farm at Okefenokee, visit <http://www.okefarm.com> or email info@okefarm.com.



ANIMAL HOUSE

Five Star Veterans Center goes to the dogs... ...and cats...and ponies...

By Julie Kerns Garmendia

The first clue that the Five Star Veterans Center is not a typical therapeutic counseling center is that CEO Col. Len Loving, USMC (Ret.), is shadowed everywhere he goes on the 3 ½ acre campus by a super-sized red German shepherd.

Athena, the colonel's silent best friend, was saved from a puppy mill years ago. And then there are the miniature ponies on the front lawn.

Those are the resident attention hogs: friendly pony Cupid and grumpy Romeo, who likes to nip. Jackie is a community cat born on the property who claims everyone and freely roams inside and out via open windows and doors. Multiple dogs are owned by resident veterans, including two who are away at training but will soon return. Two siblings, golden retriever puppies Remy and Willow, love to ride in their veteran's backpack and accompany him kayaking.

A few residents have cat companions who happily reside in their veteran's

and maintain their on-site stable, which was constructed by Home Depot. Five Star Veterans Center has been Home Depot's National Charity of the Year twice. A veteran built the ponies' corral.

"The ponies seem to love hanging out meditating, and their calm energy is amazing," Lead Case and Operations Manager Amanda Mills said. "When veterans feel ready to help care for the animals, they gain confidence and benefit from responsibility and accountability. The veterans who choose to care for the ponies also like to pet, groom and talk to them or quietly spend time together."

Mills began cleaning at the center six years ago before working her way up to her current position. A former addict who beat her addiction 11 years ago, Mills has experienced homelessness, which she believes gives her unique insight.

The integration of pets into Five Star campus life acknowledges the role they can play in the treatment journey of



Veteran J.B. kayaking with his golden retriever puppies, Remy and Willow.

service dogs are more than just pets; they can alleviate some symptoms of PTSD for veterans. It is the first and most extensive clinical trial to assess this intervention technique.

Overcoming PTSD

Opened in December 2012 at the Arlington site of a vacant 1960s nursing home, the nonprofit Five Star Veterans Center was founded to serve as a safe place for veterans ages 22 to 55 to find help and the therapeutic tools needed to heal from mental health issues and physical trauma post-military service. Col. Loving serves as CEO, while his wife serves as chief administrative officer.

Its core mission is promoting veterans' well-being and successful return to school, jobs and everyday social life within their communities. Individualized treatment plans provide mental health services, physical care, critical support and vital opportunities. There are weekly individual and group counseling sessions, education and job readiness training and support, community

& Stripes Academy launched by the Jacksonville Humane Society (JHS) with assistance from the City of Jacksonville Military & Veterans Affairs Department and support from the Jacksonville Jaguars and Farah & Farah law firm. The free, six-week job skills program provides a path to obtaining a career as a veterinary medicine technician or in animal welfare, dog training, behavior and care. Participants who successfully complete the program receive job placement assistance.

JHS CEO Denise Deisler said veterans may volunteer at the shelter or receive formal classroom instruction and hands-on training from animal care professionals. The program is a passion project for Deisler, a U.S. Air Force (USAF) disabled veteran who is married to a retired USAF veteran and has a son currently serving active duty in the Air Force.

"Paws & Stripes offers two routes for veterans, or past and present military spouses, to transition to new careers while gaining the mutual benefit of caring for shelter animals in need of comfort and compassion," Deisler said. "Sometimes veterans' skills, training and discipline are not recognized when they return and attempt to enter the workforce, but we highly value them."

Deisler noted that one of the program's first graduates, veteran Kevin Kane, became such an enthusiastic champion of Paws & Stripes that he was hired to manage the program and later promoted to the humane society's facilities manager.

Passport to Independence

Philanthropist Delores Barr Weaver has been an important friend to Five Star Veterans Center since 2013, when she heard three military veterans tell their painful stories. Her compassionate response was to fund the Passport to Independence program through a two-year grant of \$200,000 the first year and \$150,000 the second, including matching donations.

An intensive six- to 12-month program, Passport to Independence guides veterans in creating an individual plan to achieve their goals. It is not a lock-down program. Five Star Veterans Center provides stable on-site housing and 24-hour mental health services coordinated by case managers and mental health counselors.

Readers who wish to support the Five Star Veterans Center may donate to its current fundraising campaign to pay for an estimated \$770,000 needed for plumbing repairs. The center is also launching a capital campaign to raise funds for the potential purchase of a large lot across the street from its current facility. Plans for that property include constructing a two-story building of affordable, basic rental apartments that will allow program graduates to live close to the center, providing them with easy access to continued counseling and services.

Monetary donations for other purposes or material donations are also appreciated, as are individuals or groups interested in volunteering.

Resources

Veterans' Crisis Hotline:
Dial 988 – Press 1.
Five Star Veterans Center
www.5svc.org
(904) 723-5950



Suzie Loving with veteran Patrick L. feeding apples to mini pony Cupid.



Veteran with Molly, 6, his bull terrier.



Five Star Veteran Luke with his Catahoula mix Blue, 2.

private residential room. True to their independent feline nature, none of the pet cats could be persuaded to pose for a photo in *The Resident*.

Both Five Star ponies were rescued from the slaughterhouse and are living a dream life interacting with veterans, staff and visitors. Client veterans may request to help feed, exercise and care for the ponies

combat veterans struggling with PTSD and other invisible wounds like mental health issues, traumatic brain or physical injuries, depression or anxiety. A recently published report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)* highlighted the results of a 10-year study by University of Arizona researchers. The study found the most definitive evidence to date that

outreach programs, group outings and activities and equine and art therapy.

In addition to Col. Loving, most staff team leaders are military veterans, whose battlefield experience gives them an inherent understanding of veteran clients. They know that military service can lead to mental health issues, substance abuse, financial issues or homelessness. There is no one or simple solution to healing veterans suffering from complex mental health issues.

Five Star Mental Health Director Sara Simpson, a licensed mental health therapist, said that the animals boost morale and positively influence everyone. She and other staff often spend lunchtime or breaks outside with the ponies.

"The animals build connection by showing interest or affection," Simpson said. "Petting or spending time with them re-directs focus away from personal struggles, which can bring relief and relaxation."

Simpson said that veterans deal with their unique form of trauma while experiencing life's ups and downs.

"I have such respect for veterans," she said. "Like everyone, they want to be listened to and for someone to care. It is an honor to help them along their healing journey."

Gaining skills

Another community outreach program with which Five Star partners is the Paws



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THE WAY WE WERE



Marlene Goodwin



Bill Watson



Dotty Laumer and Billy Katibah



Sponsors of the Robert E. Lee - Andrew Jackson football game

'A simpler time' Robert E. Lee Class of 1954 to host 70th reunion

By Jennifer Logue

Marlene Goodwin recalls getting ready to go to the 1953 Thanksgiving Day football game between Robert E. Lee High School and its gridiron rival, Andrew Jackson High. Goodwin – then a senior and known as Marlene Nall – laughs when she looks at photographs taken at that popular annual tradition.

“We went to those games in high heels, dresses and hats – we even wore corsages!” Goodwin said. “And the boys were in suits!”

Goodwin, 88, is once again reminiscing about her high school years, as the Robert E. Lee Class of 1954 prepares to celebrate its 70th reunion. With a Sept. 26 dinner at Timuquana Country Club and a brunch the following day at the home of class member Dotty Laumer Risley, it is an event with special meaning.

“This will likely be our last big reunion,” she said.

A simpler time

A River City native who grew up in the Lake Shore neighborhood, Goodwin has fond memories of the Jacksonville of her youth.

“It was a simpler time,” she said. “We didn’t lock our doors at night – we felt safe. Families only had one car – if they had one – and we had no A/C. As kids, we played kick the can and chased fireflies... we felt safe to be out after dark. But you knew when dinnertime came, you were expected to be at that dinner table!”

There was no eating meals in front of the television, Goodwin noted; most families didn’t have one.

“We would gather around the radio,” she said. “We had come through the Depression and World War II – we grew up knowing that fathers and brothers and family members went to war. It was all about doing without – and doing whatever you could to help your country.”

Patriotism was particularly strong in the city of her youth, Goodwin noted.

“Jacksonville was a Navy town,” she said. “We all appreciated the importance of what the military did for us.”

Due to a lack of available military housing, Goodwin added, many families – including her own – would rent out rooms in their home to young Navy couples.

“They became like members of your family,” she said. “That whole way of life – all of that formed the people we became.”

High school days

When the Class of 1954 entered Robert E. Lee High School in 1951, Harry Truman was president. Gasoline was 29 cents a gallon, Tony Bennett was on the charts with “Because of You” and movies like “The African Queen” and “The Day the Earth Stood Still” were being shown at the Five Points Theatre.

Jacksonville only had three high schools at the time, and Robert E. Lee was one of the largest.

“There were so many clubs at school,

there was plenty to do,” said Goodwin, recalling her participation in the Y Teens and Spanish Club. “We had sports, a school newspaper, an annual and a wonderful glee club that put on shows like

Reserve and the government before starting a family. After raising her children, she returned to work, eventually retiring as an office manager for the Reynolds & Reynolds company.

Lifelong friendships

Much has changed since Robert E. Lee’s Class of 1954 graduated – including the school’s name. In 2021, it officially became Riverside High School.

“But it will always be Robert E. Lee to the Class of 1954!” Goodwin said.



Mr. B.B. Mendoza congratulates Budd Porter on winning a new car in the statewide driving competition.

‘The Merry Widow’ and ‘Cinderella.’”

But most of all, Goodwin remembers her classmates. Names like Mildred Way, Wilson Smith, Bill Watson and Budd Porter populate her memories of the Class of 1954.

“Our valedictorian was Betty Jane ‘BJ’ Anderson Langley, and she had the cutest little Henry J car,” she said. “I would see her coming and say, ‘Here comes BJ in her little Henry J!’”

The boys had short haircuts and the girls wore full skirts, with penny loafers or black and white saddle shoes that were polished every night.

“We were well groomed!” Goodwin said. “And we ‘went steady,’ which seems very different than what young people do today.”

A particular memory Goodwin recalls was when Porter was selected to participate in a statewide driver’s education contest. Under the direction of Mr. B.B. Mendoza, Porter practiced driving loops outside the school for weeks, eventually taking the top prize in the competition.

The prize: A 1954 Pontiac Chieftain. “Winning a new car in 1954 was pretty exciting!” Goodwin said, noting that many years later, when she toured the high school after its restoration following a fire in the 1980s, she was surprised to see a photo, blown up to life size, of Porter and Mendoza standing beside the car in 1954.

When graduation came, the girls wore long, white dresses – many of them handmade by their mothers – and carried bouquets of red roses.

Following graduation, Goodwin married and worked for the Federal

Over the years, the classmates have stayed in touch. Many students, like Goodwin, married someone from their class, and for many years an annual weekend fishing trip was held to renew old acquaintances.

“We’ve had wonderful reunions over the years, with as many as 200 attendees from our class of 372,” Goodwin said, noting that past reunions have drawn graduates living in Indiana, Virginia, the Carolinas and elsewhere.

With many class members now deceased, however, she expects that this year’s 70th reunion will have approximately 50 attendees, who will gather and reminisce about that class of bright, hopeful young men and women with their whole lives ahead of them.

“It was just so wonderful,” she said. “It was almost like an ‘Age of Innocence,’ living in that special time.”

Members of the Robert E. Lee High Class of 1954 who would like to attend the 70th reunion may contact Marlene Goodwin at 904-384-1001 or flowblue1936@gmail.com.



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Celebrating the Life of



William Cordell Mason

William Cordell Mason, EdD, FACHE, and CEO and president emeritus of Baptist Health, died July 2, 2024. He was 86.

Jacksonville knew him as “Mr. Baptist,” with his 20 years as president and chief executive officer of Baptist Medical Center and Baptist Health. He joined Baptist in 1978 and during his time there, saw its expansion to include new hospitals in Fernandina Beach, Jacksonville Beach, Baptist South, Wolfson Children’s Hospital, and helped to plan the future growth and expansion of the system that continues to dominate market share.

His formal career in health administration began as a foreign service officer in the U.S. State Department in the 1960s, when he was assigned to the U.S. Agency for International Development. He lived in several Asian countries, principally Vietnam, where he was aide de camp to Ellsworth Bunker, U.S. ambassador to Vietnam, stationed in the U.S. Embassy in Saigon. His assignment included planning and developing a new medical school and teaching hospital for the Vietnamese government.

Two lifetime ambitions arose from that time:

the establishment of Wolfson Children’s Hospital in Jacksonville, and the Life Flight Helicopter Service of Baptist Medical Center. Both came directly from his involvement in the Vietnam War and the sight of the thousands of maimed and wounded children, and the transportation of the injured and dead soldiers from the Southeast Asian jungles to combat field hospitals.

After leaving the State Department in 1969, he earned a master’s degree in Health Administration from Trinity University in San Antonio, and then went to Africa during the early 1970s as president and CEO of the Baptist Medical Center in Mbeya, Tanzania, East Africa.

After four years in Africa, he was assigned the responsibility of designing and building another new Baptist Medical Center in the city of Bangalore in southern India, where he lived for another four years. He and his family returned to the U.S. in 1978, where he became affiliated with Baptist Health in Jacksonville. In 1993, he married Juliette Baldwin Woodruff.

Upon retirement in 1998, he became chairman of the boards of Baptist Health and Baptist Health Foundation.

After teaching at UNF for several years with a joint appointment in the College of Health and the College of Business, he spent five years as president of the FSCJ Foundation and completed a scholarship endowment campaign. He retired from the boards of Baptist Health, Baptist Medical Center, and Wolfson Children’s Hospital after 35 years, while continuing to be deeply involved in the Baptist Health Foundation.

He is survived by his wife, Juliette Baldwin Mason, and his sister, Melinda Mason Means (Noble) of Duncan, OK; and by his brothers-in-law, Norman Lee Shaheen, San Antonio, TX; Richard Oran Baldwin, Jr., Winter Park, FL; and James Robert Baldwin, New Smyrna Beach, FL. He is also survived by three children and two stepsons: Michael Cordell Mason (Deneice), Dallas, TX; Rebecca Mason Malone (Jay), South Bend, IN; Holly Melissa Mason (Chris Nelson), Asheville, NC.; Graham Thomas Woodruff (Marcus Franklin), Jacksonville, FL; and Richard Jeffries Woodruff (Caelyn Casanova), San Francisco, CA. He has 18 grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

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