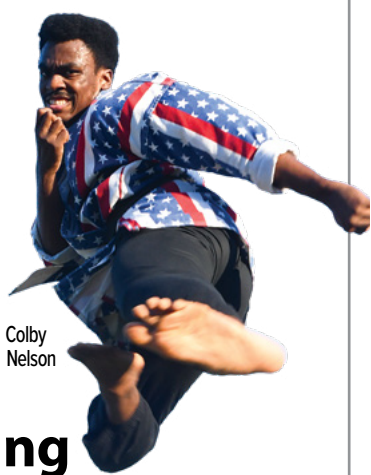


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Honoring the fallen...

The Navy Southeast Band entertains residents at the Memorial Day concert and picnic held at Memorial Park.

Marian Morgan Photography

# A constitutional issue?

## Proposed anti-hate crime bill sparks debate



Bill co-sponsors deliberate the language of the proposed ordinance changes at a recent meeting. From left: councilmembers Rahman Johnson, Jimmy Peluso, Reggie Gaffney, Ju'Coby Pittman and Michael Boylan; and Senior Assistant General Counsel Jason Teal.

By Michele Leivas

As Jacksonville prepares to celebrate Independence Day, community discussion continues on proposed changes to the city's ordinance codes that some say could potentially have constitutional implications by limiting free speech.

At a June 11 public meeting, representatives of 904ward, the

League of Women Voters Jacksonville and Jax Queer Coalition expressed their support for Ordinance 2024-334, which would strengthen punishments for violations of certain city ordinances if those violations are found to be "committed with the primary purpose of expressing, or attempting to promote animosity, hostility or malice against a person or persons or against the property of a person or persons because of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation,

READ MORE ON PAGE 6

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# Resident News welcomes Jennifer Logue as managing editor



the right fit for our unique publications,” Publisher Seth Williams said. “We are pleased to welcome Jennifer to our hard-working, dedicated team.”

Logue’s background includes writing for a daily newspaper in Massachusetts and working for 10 years at public broadcasting leader GBH in Boston. Her editing experience includes serving as a magazine editor for 10 years for Phoenix International Publishing and as managing editor of the *Ponte Vedra Recorder* newspaper and *First Coast Register* magazine. She holds a degree in Journalism from American University in Washington, D.C.

“Jennifer’s commitment to journalism and community is exceptional, and she’s already demonstrated that throughout her career,” Williams said. “Now, she can bring that passion to the heart of our communities.”

Logue said her love of local journalism began as a child, when her first job was delivering papers for her city’s daily newspaper. A decade later, she wrote her first front-page article for that same newspaper – and more than 30 years later, she said she still believes passionately in the power and the purpose of local community journalism.

“At a time when we are barraged 24/7 by content from hundreds of TV channels, web platforms and media outlets, it has never been more challenging to find thoughtful, credible news that is both informative and useful,” Logue said. “Community newspapers exist because they connect local residents in ways that other media sources can’t.”

That’s even more important, Logue said, in a city the size of Jacksonville.

“We’re the largest city in the contiguous United States – larger than New York, Chicago and even Los Angeles,” Logue said. “Having a newspaper that focuses on specific neighborhoods within that large, local landscape helps foster a stronger, more vibrant, more engaged community.”

Williams agreed. “Our personal philosophy is that community journalism is still and will be the future of newspapers, because we provide what other media outlets do not,” he said. “There are many other avenues to get news, but only in your local newspaper can you find local content that impacts your day-to-day life.”

“Having a newspaper that focuses on specific neighborhoods within that large, local landscape helps foster a stronger, more vibrant, more engaged community.”

– Jennifer Logue  
Managing Editor

Jacksonville’s historic districts attract people for a plethora of reasons.

For some, it’s walkability. For others, it’s architecture.

For Jennifer Logue, it’s community journalism.

As the new managing editor of *The Resident Community News*, Logue will oversee editorial content for the newspaper as well as the *Circles* magazine spotlighting North Florida’s nonprofit and philanthropic community.

Drawing on her decades of experience in community journalism and communications, she will ensure that *The Resident* keeps community members informed and up to date on the local issues that matter to them.

“After searching for an experienced managing editor for over a year, we were thrilled to find someone who is

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# Letters TO THE EDITOR

The views and opinions expressed in the Letters to the Editor belong solely to the respective authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of this publication or its editorial team.

## West Riverside is a model public school

Public schools are foundational to our communities. They help our children learn academics, life skills and to get along with people from different walks of life.

West Riverside Elementary is a model public school. It has an exceptional dual language program. Half the students are native English speakers and half are native Spanish speakers. Half the day is taught in English and half in Spanish. It's the oldest continuously operating school in the state of Florida, nestled in the heart of Riverside/Avondale in a building designed by Henry Klutho.

It exemplifies the type of school that should remain open as the Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) navigates ballooning costs, for the following reasons:

1. Academic performance: We are an A-B school over the last two years. We're on track to have a strong school grade again this year.

2. Diversity: The latest demographics from Florida Department of Education show our students are 20% Black, 43% Latino and 31% white. Our school serves 74% socioeconomically disadvantaged students. And it is serving them well, as our school grade shows: All groups of students at West Riverside are showing strong learning gains.

3. Specialized programming: We are home to the dual language program, as well as a VPK program and an outstanding summer camp serving kids from Ortega, Avondale, Riverside and more.

4. Growing enrollment: West Riverside has an expected enrollment of 361 or more students for next year. That's a 26% increase from 2021 to 2024-2025, as our school grade has been improving.

The district's facilities report estimated school demand based on the population of children in the school zone. This is erroneous thinking. School choice has been in place so long in Florida, including magnets at DCPS, that parents are no longer thinking about schools in terms of attendance zone. Nor are parents making decisions based on whether a school is traditional public, charter or private, especially now that vouchers are available regardless of family income.

To parents, the operator of the school is secondary to the reputation, performance, location and unique offerings of the school itself in its unique market. If you close parents' school of choice, many will leave DCPS altogether.

“Public schools are foundational to our communities. They help our children learn academics, life skills and to get along with people from different walks of life.”

– Stephanie Garry Garfunkel

If the district wants to compete in this environment, it's critically important to identify the schools that are “loss leaders” for the district. Restaurants offer happy hour to get customers in the door who would otherwise go elsewhere. The same is true of schools like West Riverside and other small, well-loved elementary schools. They encourage parents to attend DCPS schools at the start of their child's education, making it more likely they will continue in DCPS for middle and high school, ultimately driving revenue for learning.

In my case, I am the parent of two daughters at West Riverside: a rising second grader and a rising VPK student. I bought a house near West Riverside in the hopes that my children could go there.

My husband and I met as Peace Corps volunteers in the Dominican Republic. We are native English speakers but also fluent in Spanish, and we wanted our children to know the joys of being bilingual. My rising second grade student is reading on a fourth-grade level in English, and she can also read in Spanish!

One day, my daughter came home from school and proclaimed that she was the smartest student in her class. Then she added, “But I'm not the smartest kid in my Spanish class.” West Riverside is teaching her to read and write, and it's also teaching her humility. The world is a big place, and we're not always the smartest one in the room. We all have something to learn from others.

– Stephanie Garry Garfunkel

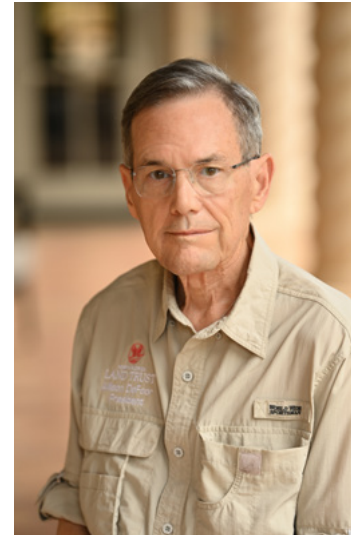
## Conservation easements protect Florida's natural resources

Conservation easements are an important tool for preserving land in Florida. They allow landowners to keep the land they own and love, often for generations, and sell their development rights. Everyone wins.

Some opinion columnists have recently written about conservation easements in a less flattering light. As president and CEO of the North Florida Land Trust, I am delighted to respond and try to set the record straight.

Our mission is to protect and preserve the irreplaceable landscape that surrounds us, and conservation easements are one tool in our kit. Many old Florida landowners aren't flush with cash – many are torn between the struggle to survive and the desire to save the land that has (sometimes) been in their family for generations. When developers come calling, the price for the land can be very enticing. Conservation easements allow us and other land trusts and government agencies a way to offer landowners some financial relief while protecting the land.

Conservation easements are legally binding agreements between a land trust or government agency that permanently limits uses of the land to protect its conservation values, as specified in the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) 170(h). Conservation easements offer flexibility for landowners in protecting their land with oversight from a trusted partner – and the IRS. They allow the landowner to retain ownership and continue using the land for things like timber, hunting or farming while pocketing the value of development rights. The landowner can't build additional structures on the property beyond those reserved in the deed and can't sell it for development. An easement may apply to all or a portion of the property.



Allison DeFoor

“At North Florida Land Trust, we have approximately 4,000 acres in our portfolio that are protected by conservation easements, and we have helped to save thousands more acres using this very important conservation tool.” – Allison DeFoor

The cost of purchasing all the natural spaces from landowners or large timber and ranching entities would be impossible without the conservation easement tool. We simply don't have unlimited cash to buy all the remaining green spaces in Florida. One of the ways we can afford to preserve property is through conservation easements. It is fair to the taxpayers and landowners and has proven popular.

The opinion articles that I mentioned earlier point out what they call a “loophole” in the conservation easement agreement, but I strongly disagree with that language. I will not deny that a conservation easement agreement can be reversed, as can most things if someone really wants it to happen, but reversals are rare and are definitely not the norm. Getting rid of this conservation tool because of rare instances could be devastating for conservation. It is an alternative for us when a fee simple purchase is not an option. Sometimes, the property is not for sale at market prices. Hundreds of thousands of acres are owned by large timber and ranching entities that are not for sale, or the outright purchase and management of the land would bankrupt the state. Rather than having no protection, a conservation easement will protect the property, and the chance of a release from the agreement is rare.

At North Florida Land Trust, we have approximately 4,000 acres in our portfolio that are protected by conservation easements, and we have helped to save thousands more acres using this very important conservation tool. Our land stewardship team checks up on our holdings annually to ensure the landowners comply with our mutual agreement. We have never reversed a conservation easement under our management and don't have any plans to do so in the future. Having a trusted third party, like the North Florida Land Trust, there to enforce the conservation purpose is a very useful way to protect our state's natural resources. Land trusts are historically ferocious guardians of the property rights inherent in a conservation easement. North Florida Land Trust will always be a tiger in protecting lands entrusted to us, which is summed up in our motto: In Land We Trust.

– Allison DeFoor

Allison DeFoor is the president and CEO of North Florida Land Trust. He served as Everglades Czar for Florida. His family has been in Florida since it belonged to Spain.

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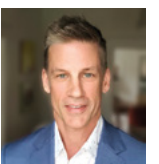
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# Proposed hate crimes ordinance sparks debate

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

gender identity, marital status, national origin, age or disability.”

The ordinances in question pertain to noise violations, unlawful signage (to include snipe signs and projections), littering or disruption of public order.

A pair of amendments was proposed at that same meeting by Councilmembers Michael Boylan and Rahman Johnson. Boylan’s proposed amendment suggested minor changes in the language for “clarity” purposes, while Johnson’s amendment proposed referring to the bill as “Johnnie Mae’s Law” in honor of Johnnie M. Chappell, a Jacksonville woman who was the victim of a racially motivated drive-by shooting in 1964.



Terrance Freeman

Senior Assistant General Counsel Jason Teal, meanwhile, responded to questions regarding who would be responsible for determining what constituted “hate.” Teal advised that a county judge would have the ability “to add this enhancement, if evidence demonstrated,” once it was determined that a law had been broken.

## Offensive speech vs. hate speech

The proposed ordinance has been criticized, however, for possibly infringing on residents’ constitutional First Amendment right to free speech. At a May 28 city council meeting, several speakers rose in opposition to the proposal, voicing concerns regarding possible scenarios whereby individuals could face harsh punishments – including higher fines and jail time – for sharing their views on signs or other materials that would be regulated by the proposed ordinances.

City Councilmember Terrance Freeman, meanwhile, charged the city council members who sponsored the bill with “virtue signaling” to make headlines.

“Using the legislative process to virtue signal will not magically make all hate disappear,” Freeman said in a statement. “At best, this is cheap

political pandering. And frankly, as a black man, it is insulting.”

The Duval County GOP agreed, praising Freeman for publicly opposing it.

“This bill is not only likely unconstitutional, but would force our first responders to become the speech police,” Party Chair Dean Black said in a statement. “City Hall Democrats should focus their efforts on addressing the issues of Jacksonville rather than further dividing us for cynical political gain.”

*The Resident* reached out to the Duval County Democratic Party for comment, but as of press time did not receive a response.

City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso, one of the bill’s sponsors, said it would not impact constitutionally protected “offensive” speech.



Jimmy Peluso

“This is not a bill to stop people from being offended – people can still say offensive and mean things,” he said. “If you pass out stuff that’s just an opinion piece where you say some controversial things, that’s not hate, right?”

“People say things online or in person all the time that can be mean,” Peluso continued. “But it’s definitely not considered hate speech.”

Rather, he said, the proposed ordinance would increase fines and punishments for the specified violation where the alleged perpetrator is targeting a specific group of people and inciting violence.

## What is hate speech?

According to the national nonpartisan Freedom Forum, there is no U.S. law that defines or limits hate speech. There are instances, however, where speech considered to be hateful falls outside First Amendment protections, including: defamation, true threats, fighting words and inciting imminent lawless actions.

“Importantly, speech that is not protected by the First Amendment is not judged on the viewpoint expressed,” the Freedom Forum noted, “but rather based on specific, narrow definitions and the direct harm the speech inflicts.”



District 12 City Councilmember Randy White is the 2024-2025 city council president.



District 4 City Councilmember Kevin Carrico is the new 2024-2025 city council vice president.

## White, Carrico take the helm as City Council president, vice president

By Michele Leivas

City Councilmembers Randy White and Kevin Carrico officially began their terms as City Council president and vice president July 1 following a June 20 installation ceremony in the council chambers.

White and Carrico were elected to the leadership roles at a May 28 special council meeting where White emerged as the sole candidate for council president.

“I will always treat you fair and try to get you to the places you want to be in your council or in your district,” White said, addressing the chamber following the council’s unanimous vote for him.

White serves as the District 12 councilmember and previously sat as council vice president under former Council President Ron Salem. A Jacksonville native, he previously served 32 years with the Jacksonville Fire and Rescue Department, retiring in 2011 as deputy director assistant fire chief. He is the vice chair of four standing committees for the city, including the Finance, Rules and Personnel committees and the Duval County Tourist Development Council. He is also a liaison to the Jacksonville Aviation Authority, a member of the Jacksonville Fire Museum Advisory Board and vice chairman of the North Florida Transportation Planning Organization.

District 4 Councilmember Carrico was elected council vice president on a 15-4 vote over Councilmember Michael Boylan.

Following the vote, Carrico addressed his constituents. “It’s when we’re at the community meetings where we’re helping the people who need us the most,” he said. “That’s the work of what this is, and I look forward to balancing these roles and leadership and also serving my district. Just know that I’m here to make your lives better.”

The vice president of operations for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Northeast Florida, Carrico is a member of the council’s Personnel and Finance committees and serves as the chair for the Land, Use and Zoning Committee.

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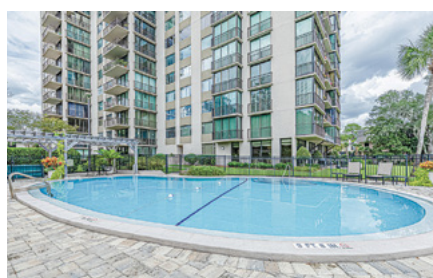
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# Carlucci bill would require 2/3 approval to supersede zoning overlays

By Michele Leivas

Following the controversial approval of a Planned Unit Development application for the Lofts at Southbank project, At Large Group 4 City Councilmember Matt Carlucci has introduced legislation he hopes will add additional protections regarding PUD applications for projects that conflict with an area's zoning overlay.

A public hearing has been continued to July 16 to consider Bill 2024-0373, which would amend the zoning code "to prohibit PUD zoning applications which allow deviations from zoning overlays unless approved by a two-thirds vote of the full council."

This would alter the current procedure, which requires a simple majority vote.

"I think it merits a two-thirds vote of the council to break an overlay," Carlucci said. "Overlays are not just a typical zoning; they're zoning that's been modified by community input."

## Broken overlays

Currently, there are 11 zoning overlays within the City of Jacksonville: Downtown, Springfield, Mayport Road and Waterfront, San Marco, Riverside/Avondale, Industrial Sanctuary Areas, Black Hammock Island, King/Soutel Crossing Area, Arlington Area and the Cedar Point and Sawpit Road Area.

Carlucci said his proposed legislation is "a direct result" from the approved PUD rezoning of the Lofts at Southbank mixed-use development to include self-storage as well as workforce housing residential units and ground-floor retail/restaurant space. Opponents to the rezoning argued for its denial in part because they said the self-storage component was not permissible under the Downtown Overlay.

During the April 16 public hearing at the Land, Use and Zoning (LUZ) Committee meeting, attorney Steve Diebenow countered these claims, stating a PUD "does a lot more than just create the use [of self-storage]" and that the Downtown Overlay does not prohibit the use of a PUD.

"Nothing in the overlay prohibits the use of a PUD," Diebenow said. "Contrast that with San Marco or the Arlington overlays. Those both have specific restrictions on the use of the PUD."

"The Downtown Overlay doesn't have any language to



that effect," Diebenow continued, "and as a result, there's nothing that prohibits a PUD from being used downtown to create this use."

Carlucci said this is not the first time an overlay has been broken. He said the San Marco overlay was broken in 2020 with the passage of another rezoning for an apartment complex that allegedly violated the overlay's maximum height restriction of 35 feet. According to the Planning and Development Department's report for the project, the developer complied with the overlay's height restrictions by using the "weighted average" of the height of the apartment building and its accompanying parking garage.

Though the application of the buildings' "weighted average" height was contested by some, the city council ultimately voted in favor of the development, thus breaking the overlay, said Carlucci, adding that the Black Hammock Island Overlay also was broken shortly after it was created.

The Planning Commission Advisory Report recommends approval for Carlucci's bill by both the Planning and Development Department and the Planning Commission. Though no one spoke in opposition to the proposed legislation, the report did note that "there was a concern that this may stifle development of non-controversial rezonings."

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# Rising from the ashes

## DIA approves \$15.45 million incentive package for RISE Doro

By Michele Leivas

The Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) has approved a multimillion-dollar incentive package for the RISE Doro project as the developer prepares to rebuild the luxury apartment complex that

went up in flames earlier this year.

Acting in its capacity as the Northbank Community Redevelopment Agency, the DIA at its June 28 meeting unanimously approved the \$15.45 million incentive package that includes a Multifamily REV Grant (\$11.45 million), a Workforce

Housing Completion Grant (\$3 million) and a \$1 million Emergency Rapid Response Grant. The city would provide the workforce housing completion and emergency rapid response grants.

A DIA staff report said construction costs for the rebuild are estimated at \$79.1 million – a 57% increase from the original construction budget resulting in an increased capital investment from the developer.

RISE: A Real Estate Company President Greg Blais told committee members he anticipates an 18-month construction timeframe, aided by the fact that RISE was able to save the existing parking garage structure from the fire.

The Downtown Development Review Board (DDRB) gave its final approval on the project at its May 2020 meeting, and this rebuild will adhere to that approval. The DIA had also approved a \$5.7 million REV Grant in 2020, when the project first went before the board for incentives, although DIA CEO Lori Boyer pointed out in an e-mailed statement that “no incentives were paid out under the prior agreement.”

The Doro will feature nearly 5,000 square feet of ground-level space for retail, commercial and restaurant use, a seven-story parking garage with a minimum of 280 parking spots and 247 multifamily residential units, including 15 one-bedroom townhomes, 173 one-bedroom units and 61 1,025-square-foot

two-bedroom units.

Plans for the rooftop include a pool for residents and an additional 2,700 square feet for an indoor/outdoor bar for public access.

A new addition to The Doro is the commitment to have 85 of the residential units be workforce housing for prospective tenants not making more than 120% of the Area Median Income (AMI). The recording of a Land Use Restrictive Agreement (LURA) will ensure maximum rents are in place for at least 30 years.

The development had been nearly complete when a three-alarm fire consumed the structure in late January. The fire burned for several days before the 100-plus responding firefighters were able to extinguish it. According to published reports, the cause of the fire has yet to be determined.

Boyer called the fire a “tragic loss for Downtown” and said she welcomed the opportunity to see the project rebuilt.

“I am equal parts excited and grateful that Rise Development is ready to start reconstruction of The Doro project,” Boyer said. “Despite increased construction costs creating a financial gap, Rise has waded into that challenge more than halfway, investing more private capital. To help bridge the remaining gap, and to support both the city’s and DIA’s shared desire to provide more workforce housing, additional financial incentives have been offered.”

# Five Points Merchants Association marks one year

By Michele Leivas

A year after a newly revived merchants association took shape in Five Points, the group is seeing signs of progress as it works to rally the area’s small business community and strengthen partnerships with other organizations.

“This first year has been very good for getting people together, listening to everyone’s ideas and taking action,” Five Points Merchants Association President Stephen Ezell said. “It’s something that all the merchants should be proud of.”

### A foundational year

Five Points is known for its eclectic collection of restaurants, bars and boutiques and its unique, bohemian vibe. Yet the community has struggled to maintain an active and engaged merchants association over the years. Past iterations of the association stretch back decades, with neighborhood icon Gunnel Humphreys, the former owner of Edge City boutique, working alongside her husband, Tom, on one of the earliest versions of it.

“I think I was it at the very beginning,” Humphreys said. “Tom and I planted all on Park Street in Five Points,” she said. “We planted and I would do artwork for the banners.”

With Five Points nestled within the Riverside community, the new merchants association is working closely with Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP).

RAP Executive Director Shannon Blankinship said she

is pleased with the progress the association has made in its inaugural year, particularly with obtaining its 501(c)3 status.

“I think that is a really huge accomplishment that took a long time throughout the year to be able to do,” she said. “But to be able to say that it’s done a year later is really important.”

Ezell said he is particularly proud of the association’s new subcommittees that address specific issues and causes impacting the community. These subcommittees now meet multiple times throughout the month, independent of the monthly general meetings, and have made progress in their own right.

“Everybody’s taking action,” Ezell said.

### Community improvements

Among the initiatives which the Five Points Merchants Association is launching in collaboration with RAP is a project to enhance the neighborhood’s landscaping. Through the improvements, residents and businesses will soon see new trees planted and others removed, including several palm trees along Park Street that Blankinship said had become “outsized,” posing a danger to area power lines.

Several quotes had estimated that the palm tree removal would cost more than \$12,000, Blankinship said, but

because of the infrastructural interference, JEA has agreed to remove the roughly six to eight palm trees at no cost to the Five Points Merchants Association.

“Some of the palm trees on Park Street are close to growing into the primary utility lines on the street, so JEA would likely have needed to remove them in coming years,” JEA Media Relations Coordinator Karen McAllister confirmed. “With that in mind, JEA is collaborating with Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP) to assist with tree removal at their request.”

JEA will not be responsible for the tree replacements.

Plans are to replace the palms with the Eagleston Holly, and Blankinship said RAP and the merchants association are working to establish “an all-Florida native plant palette” for the larger relandscaping plans for the Five Points area.

“We’re seeking to design exclusively with native plants in order to be better stewards of the neighborhood as well as connect ecologically with Riverside Park and to be able to have that natural walkway into Five Points,” she said.

### Addressing litter

Trash is another concern that the Five Points Merchants Association hopes to address. *The Resident* recently reported on new funding RAP received through a city neighborhood micro-grant program introduced by District 7 City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso. Part of the micro-grant funding will be used to address Five Points’ litter problem through the acquisition and installation of Bigbelly Element trash cans. The cans’ much larger capacity will be able to fit empty pizza boxes – a problem for the current, smaller receptacles, which are often seen topped by the empty boxes, exacerbating the litter problem.

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# Restaurant planned for San Marco Theatre

## Electric Dough Pizza Co. files construction permits for historic cinema site

A Jacksonville hospitality company has submitted construction permits to open a pizza restaurant at the site of the San Marco Theatre, paving the way for a new dining option in the beloved historic cinema.

CuliVino Hospitality Management and Consulting said that the submission of permits by Urban Partners begins the countdown for the start of construction of Electric Dough Pizza Co. Expected to open in late 2024, the new restaurant will be the latest concept from Chef Tom Gray – the culinary force behind Prati Italia at St. Johns Town Center and Town Hall, located just across San Marco Square from the former San Marco Theatre.

“We are excited to bring our newest restaurant to this iconic San Marco location, and we look forward to seeing our concept come alive when we welcome locals and visitors later this year.” – Chef Tom Gray

“Electric Dough Pizza Co. has reached an exciting milestone with the submission of the project’s construction permits,” said Gray, who announced the concept and location earlier this year. “We are excited to bring our newest restaurant to this iconic San Marco location, and we look forward to seeing our concept come alive when we welcome locals and visitors later this year.”

The new restaurant will feature Gray’s rectangular artisan pizzas featuring a handmade, Roman-style, long-fermented dough with Detroit-style crispy edges. The name Electric Dough refers to the electric ovens imported from Italy in which the pizzas will be baked, producing a crunchy crust.

Along with pizza, Electric Dough Pizza Co. will offer seasonally inspired salads and a rotating selection of gelato and sorbets. Beverages will include a full cocktail bar, domestic and imported beer, wine, craft sodas and zero-proof offerings. Plans also call for Electric Dough Pizza Co. to feature a retail area, offering take-and-bake frozen pizzas, fresh pastas, from-scratch sauces, house made pimento cheese and other products.

### Historic design

Gray has engaged Atlanta architecture and interior design firm ai3 to create the 4,200 square-foot restaurant within the framework of the 1938 art deco theatre, which was designed by Jacksonville architect Roy Benjamin. The building’s current owner, TSG Realty, has committed to maintaining the building’s historic façade.



St. Johns Riverkeeper Lisa Rinaman joins Captain Steve Cobb and research participants Soraya Aidinejad, Abby O'Neill, Ellie McComas and Meagan Lamey.

# St. Johns RIVERKEEPER expedition monitors growth of vital river grasses

## Research team seeks answers to restore vegetation critical to river’s health

By Jennifer Logue

Steve Cobb has fond memories of growing up in Jacksonville and spending time on the St. Johns River.

“I grew up fishing and shrimping and later got a boat, so I’ve spent a lot of time on the river,” Cobb said. “I just fell in love with it.”

Today, as chairman of the board of St. Johns RIVERKEEPER (SJRK), Cobb puts his love for the St. Johns River into action. In May, Cobb served as captain of SJRK’s SAVE Our River’s Grasses Expedition, a four-day research voyage to measure and analyze the river’s significant loss of submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV). Initially launched in 2023, the five-year project seeks to find solutions that will bring back the river’s grasses, which the St. Johns Riverkeeper Lisa Rinaman said are a vital part of the river’s habitat.

“The river grasses are the kidneys of the river – providing biofiltration, fish habitat, flood protection and more,” Rinaman said. “Without them, the St. Johns could turn into a dead zone, which is absolutely unacceptable.”

### A ‘double whammy’

Cobb said the “double whammy” of hurricanes Matthew and Irma impacted the river’s eelgrass. “When they hit, combined with higher salinity, higher water, (the grasses) never came back,” he said.

Rinaman agreed.

“We’ve been tracking the loss of eel grass due to saltwater intrusion for more than a decade,” Rinaman said. “But after Hurricane Irma, we saw the water levels were higher for an extended amount of time. We expected the grasses would come back pretty quickly after that – but they didn’t come back.”



Members of the SAVE Our River’s Grasses expedition recently conducted a four-day expedition to measure the river’s grasses.

Tannins washing into the river darkened the water, Rinaman added, blocking the sunlight from reaching the grasses. Blue green algae also blocks sunlight, further impeding eelgrass growth.

During the recent SAVE Our River’s Grasses expedition, a team of research scientists and biology students surveyed an 80-mile stretch of the river between Doctors Lake and Lake George, measuring grass beds, conducting water quality testing and assessing possible solutions to restore the habitat. Testing sites included spots behind the homes of residents eager to see the river’s health improved.

“Some of these folks have lived in their homes for decades, so we get to hear their stories about their relationship with the river,” Rinaman said. “So, it’s been a great relationship builder for us with so many people.”

Ben Williams, an avid fisherman and founder of Fisherman’s Dock Seafood Market, offers his dock for the research project.

“All of our river communities’ economies depend on a healthy river,” Williams said. “And the health of the St. Johns depends on healthy eelgrass.”

### Signs of success

Findings from the five-year project will be analyzed to identify viable solutions to boost eelgrass growth. And already, Rinaman said, there are signs of improvement.

“It’s been out of balance, but we’re seeing some exciting signs that we may have a really good grass season,” she said. “We found some really beautiful, healthy grass near Mandarin.”

Reopening the Rodman Dam – which would allow water from the Silver Springs and Ocklawaha rivers to enter the St. Johns – has also been suggested as a solution.

“By opening it and allowing the fresher, clearer water to make it to the St. Johns, it would offset some of the darker, cloudy water as well as offset saltwater intrusions and allow eelgrass seed to make its way down through the Ocklawaha,” she said. “So, the benefit to eelgrass of reuniting the rivers is multifaceted.”

The Florida Fish and Wildlife commission also has experimented with protective enclosures to spur SAV growth.

“One of the (testing) sites has those enclosures and the grass is as long as your arm,” Rinaman said. “We’re trying smaller enclosures at each of our sampling sites to see if it can be helpful to get at least sections of the grasses to grow to maturity, so they have enough energy to seed and spread.”

Bryce Yazdiya contributed to this article.

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Vagabond Coffee Co. Owner Will Morgan adds his name to the sign-up sheet for MHPA's Beautification Committee.

# Murray Hill community forum focuses on supporting small businesses

By Michele Leivas

Traffic improvements, more attractive streetscapes and a comprehensive plan were among the topics discussed at a Murray Hill community forum June 11, when the Murray Hill Preservation Association (MHPA) hosted a panel discussion on the Edgewood Avenue corridor's potential as a small business hub.

Held at Spruce's new location at 3644 Post St., the event brought together Murray Hill residents with small business owners, professionals and city officials, who shared insights and hopes for the community. Panelists included Christian Harden, co-CEO of commercial real estate

brokerage firm NAI Hallmark; the City of Jacksonville's Director of Small Business Initiatives Brian Bergen and Director of Planning and Development Brett James; Fishweir Brewing Co. Co-Owner Broc Flores; Strategic Relationships & Counsel Founder Jeanne Augspurger; Literary Lounge Co-Owner Mariah Jones; and Chancho King Co-Owner Chason Spencer.

James brought with him a copy of the Town Center Vision Plan for Murray Hill, which was created in 2004. James said he is working to secure funding for "community plans" or "district plans" to help guide community development, which could be an

avenue to be explored in Murray Hill.

"It would look at certain goals of the community: What you want to achieve, the vision, which is really where you're headed," he said. "And measurable objectives would be established to know you're moving in that direction, know what you need to do."

Physical components like the streetscapes would also be considered, which he noted are already being addressed with the roadwork underway along Edgewood Avenue South.

The Florida Department of Transportation has committed more than \$7 million to area improvements, including resurfacing roads, constructing a roundabout at Edgewood Ave. and Plymouth St., and installing bike lanes, lighting and signage upgrades.

"That's a good sign," James said.

He added, however, that because of "very flat" projections for property tax revenue for the coming year, the budget for a comprehensive plan and related improvements is expected to be tighter.

"There's money out there, they're just really constricting wherever they can, so I don't know how much, if any, I'll get for what I want to do," he said. "If there are benevolent organizations that want to put some money toward this, certainly we want to have those conversations."

In an interview the following day, MHPA Board Member Dawn Emerick said a comprehensive plan or community plan is "a tool we should consider" when addressing what the community envisions for Murray Hill.

"I think that (the panel discussion) was an opportunity for us to look at what all of our options were," she said.

### New energy

Emerick said the panel discussion resulted from MHPA's new leadership

– including new President Greg Beere – which she said has brought new energy and drive to engage residents and small business owners.

"[MHPA] has always been this pillar in the community, trying to organize and mobilize and really just be a good staple in our community," Emerick said. "... And then you just had this new young energy that was kind of coming onto the board. It's just been really kind of remarkable to see sort of this shift, if you will, of engagement."

Emerick added the event was "a call to action" for the community to become more engaged in Murray Hill improvements.

"We really do have an opportunity to shape Murray Hill the way we want to see it in the future," she said.

Beere said MHPA faced a few "rough" years between the pandemic and the Edgewood Avenue South roadwork, which has prevented the organization from hosting Hilloween, its major fundraising event.

"It's been tough for us to engage the community," said Beere, who first joined the board during the pandemic.

Beere said one of his priorities for the organization is to build a foundation to pass on to the next cycle of leadership when the time comes, which led to MHPA's rebranding and creation of a new website. With those activities completed, he said, MHPA is focused on increasing community engagement to address what he called a "huge disconnect between the community and its businesses."

"Part of that is just to open up the communication and make sure we're supporting not only the community, the neighborhood, but also the businesses," Beere said. "We don't want to be a merchants' association for them, but we want to be their supporters – because we feel like the neighborhood really thrives when we have a really vibrant commercial corridor."

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Afternoon sunlight streams through the once bricked-over southwest windows of the Florida Casket Company building as work continues at the Jacksonville History Center.

# Building a home for history

## New Jacksonville History Center moves forward

By Michele Leivas

The Jacksonville History Center is making strides, both on the adaptive reuse and renovation of the Florida Casket Company building and the exhibits the building will house once renovations are complete.

The Jacksonville Historical Society — now rebranded as the Jacksonville History Center (JHC) — broke ground on the museum last October, and the project has been progressing since then. A building permit was issued May 30 for interior renovations costing \$1.15 million. Days later, on June 3, an electrical permit was issued as well.

“We’re off to the races,” said CEO Dr. Alan Bliss, noting that the buildings’ once bricked-over windows are once again open and utility work is underway.

Once completed, the ground floor of the three-story building will be a dedicated space for historical displays and exhibits; the second floor will be developed as a

venue for performances and events. The third floor will be transformed into an expanded archives and research space.

While site work continues at the 104-year-old building, JHC Board Chair David Auchter said a committee of historians is being convened to curate JHC’s featured exhibits to “tell an accurate and balanced story of the community.”

“There’s no single person who can make those judgments, but we’re going to pull together a group of historians and academics who can make sure we get that story right,” Auchter said. “The exhibits will range from human rights to musical heritage, commerce to sports, so we want to make sure we get it right.”

The creation of a museum dedicated entirely to Jacksonville’s widespread and impactful history has been a long time coming and City Councilmember Matt Carlucci, who has been a vocal advocate for the project, said it

“warms [his] heart” to see progress.

“This is going to be something that’s going to have a lot of ways and different experiences on how to understand who Jacksonville is,” he said. “Jacksonville is a collection of a lot of different people with different histories and different cultures depending on the sides of the town, and this is the place to collect a lot of those stories and to tell them.”

Earlier this year, Carlucci introduced funding legislation to get the project across the finish line. Councilmembers Ken Amaro, Joe Carlucci and Chris Miller joined him in introducing the bill, with Raul Arias, Jimmy Peluso and Ju’Coby Pittman signing on as co-sponsors. The legislation provided an additional \$2.02 million in funding to complete the building’s transformation.

Previously, the City Council had approved \$50,000 toward the project in 2020 and \$500,000 in 2022. Through its own capital campaign, JHC raised \$750,000 for the project as well.

According to the legislation, the project is estimated to cost \$3.4 million.

Bliss said he anticipates construction being completed during the first half of 2025.

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Architecture & History of Riverside and Avondale  
Wayne Wood, Historian  
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Caring for your Historic Home  
Angel Corrales,  
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**JULY 11**

The 4 Points & Homeowners Insurance  
Daniel Miller,  
Brightway Insurance  
David Gray Electrical, Plumbing,  
Heating & Air  
Lins Electric  
Celtic Construction Solutions

**JULY 25**

River Friendly Yards,  
Native Plants, & Trees  
Jimmy Orth, St. Johns Riverkeeper  
Adam Arendell, FNPS Ixia Chapter  
Joe Anderson, JEA

### **GIVING HOMEOWNERS THE TOOLS**

Along with Springfield Preservation and Revitalization, RAP organized the “Restore Jacksonville” conference, which was held over three days in 2007. Some two-dozen speakers offered instruction on restoring historic homes.

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# VyStar Foundation awards grants to 12 military and veterans' nonprofits

The VyStar Foundation will distribute more than \$200,000 among 12 local nonprofits that support military and veterans' service programs. Awarded through the foundation's third grant cycle, the funds were directed to programs that address health and basic needs, mental health services and workforce development.

"Providing much-needed support to these organizations is a privilege," said VyStar Foundation President Patricia McElroy. "The spirit of philanthropy is deeply embedded in our identity, and we remain committed to supporting our brave service members and acknowledging the sacrifices made by them and their families."

**“Providing much-needed support to these organizations is a privilege. The spirit of philanthropy is deeply embedded in our identity, and we remain committed to supporting our brave service members and acknowledging the sacrifices made by them and their families.”**

— Patricia McElroy  
VyStar Foundation President

Grant recipients include:

- American Red Cross (Northeast FL) – Funds will be used to expand the Armed Forces Family Emergency Communications & Resiliency Workshops program to recruit and train additional volunteers to keep service members and their families connected during emergencies and build resiliency in the military community.
- Clay County Rescue Mission (Northeast FL) - The grant will contribute to the end of homelessness by providing sustainable and short-term housing and support to military individuals and their families.
- Golden Isles Veterans Village Inc. (Southeast GA) - Funds will be used to purchase clothing, hygiene items and kitchenware for units at the Savannah tiny home village serving homeless veterans, leading residents towards a path of self-sufficiency. The program will also include cooking classes for veterans who have been chronically homeless.
- Hart Felt Ministries Inc. (Northeast FL) - Funds will help veterans 70 and older stay in their homes by providing housing and grocery assistance to alleviate hunger and help prevent eviction and possible homelessness as well as premature entry into an already-taxed long-term care system.
- Heart of Florida United Way (South Central FL) - Funds will enhance the current Mission United program by increasing marketing/promotion activities.
- Here Tomorrow Inc. (Northeast FL) - The grant will provide funding for Here Tomorrow's Military Peer Support program, which provides free, no-wait mental health support for members of the military and veterans.
- Hope4Veterans Inc. (Northeast FL) - The grant will expand Hope4Veterans' P2P Therapeutic Art Program in Clay, Duval and St Johns counties. The funds will also help provide childcare during the sessions.
- Marion County Veterans Helping Veterans Inc. (South Central FL) - The Operation Upward Momentum

- program assists veterans with hands-on service and mobile outreach for their basic living needs, while assisting them in job placement, community involvement and self-sufficiency in Alachua, Bradford, Citrus, Clay, Lake, Levy, Marion, Putnam and Sumter counties.
  - MOACC Good Deeds Foundation Inc. (South Central FL) - Funds will be used to provide monetary support to active-duty military veterans and their families to meet their basic needs as part of the MOACC Good Deeds Fund.
  - Navy League of the United States Mayport Council (Northeast FL) - The grant will provide resources through the "Food is Essential! Ask any Sailor Before Payday" program to address food insecurities for military members and their families at Naval Station (NS) Mayport during the periods prior to the bi-monthly pay periods when the military member's paycheck funds are low.
  - Operation Lifeline Inc. (Northeast FL) - The Heroes to Housing: Veteran Workforce Development program addresses workforce development and education, with a focused commitment to supporting transitioning military service members through comprehensive vocational training in the construction industry.
  - Thomas University (Southwest Georgia) - The grant will enhance Thomas University's Counseling Center capacity for veteran and student support and strengthen its ability to provide high quality care to veterans, military members, and their families.
- VyStar Foundation supports nonprofit organizations in Georgia, North and Central Florida. The nonprofit provides resources for individuals and families struggling with food and housing instability along with local and international disaster relief and humanitarian aid. Grants are available to 501(c)(3) organizations whose purpose and mission align with the foundation's strategic giving pillars of military, youth and community building.



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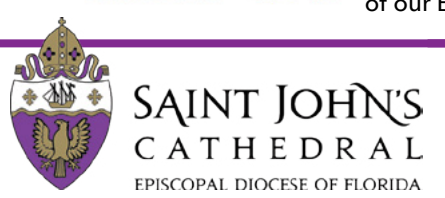
St John's Cathedral teamed up with Free Wheelchair Mission to provide the transforming gift of mobility to people with disabilities in developing nations.



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# MOVERS & SHAKERS



D. Samuel "Sam" Inman

## Community First Credit Union names Inman new president and CEO

**D. Samuel "Sam" Inman** has been selected as the new CEO and president of Community First Credit Union of Florida, assuming the position Aug. 31 after a brief transition alongside retiring CEO John Hirabayashi.

A Jacksonville native, Inman most recently served as Community First's chief financial officer and chief risk officer and has held various leadership roles since joining the organization in 1990. He started at the credit union as an assistant accounting manager and became its first internal auditor. Rising through the ranks, Inman joined the senior leadership team as CFO in 1997.

Board of Directors Chair Malinda Prudencio said the board conducted a comprehensive national search before selecting Inman for the position.

"Sam was the top candidate among some of the finest credit union leaders in the country," Prudencio said. "We believe he is the best leader to secure and expand Community First's future."

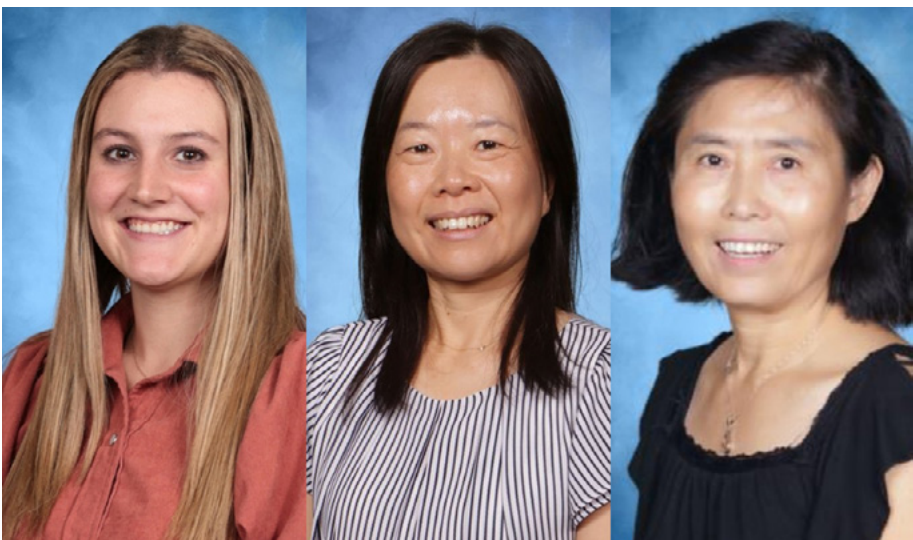
Inman played an instrumental role in growing Community

First's assets from \$156 million to \$2.7 billion, with \$344 million in retained earnings since joining the organization more than 34 years ago.

"The credit union is an incredible local asset for our membership and our region," Inman said. "I look forward to continuing the culture of engagement with our employees, members and community."

A graduate of the University of North Florida, Inman was born on Jacksonville's Northside and is a graduate of Englewood High School. He was a "little brother" in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program when he was growing up in Jacksonville and is passionate about serving the community's youth and nurturing public education.

Inman has served on many boards and committees, including Learn to Read, the Teach Conference and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Northeast Florida. This month, he assumes the position of chairman of the board of the Nonprofit Center of Northeast Florida.



## Bolles language teachers nominated for 'Most Valuable Teacher' awards

Three Bolles language teachers have been nominated for the Florida Foreign Language Association's "Most Valuable Teacher" awards.

**Mary Caroline Gillam, Ying Li and Cheng Mei Rothschild** were nominated to receive the award, which recognizes teachers who have advanced instruction and/or enhanced students' language acquisition through enrichment activities such as participating in a competition or festivals.

FFLA will celebrate all MVT nominees at its upcoming conference, to be held Sept. 26-28 in Kissimmee.

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WPI Class of 2024

## Emerging philanthropists complete Weaver Philanthropic Initiative, award \$55,000 in grants

Eleven emerging philanthropists recently completed the 2024 class of the Weaver Philanthropic Initiative, awarding grants totaling \$55,000 to support nonprofits that align with their philanthropic missions.

A program of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, the initiative is a hands-on learning program about strategic philanthropy. The 2024 class participated in six months of facilitated learning, studying frameworks for strategic philanthropy to clarify their personal giving approach.

After exploring community issues and defining their philanthropic priorities, each class member chose a nonprofit in which to invest. The Community Foundation matched each participant's grant with discretionary dollars, resulting in a grant of \$5,000 to each of the following nonprofits:

- 904WARD
- Ability Housing
- Boys and Girls Club of Northeast Florida
- Child Guidance Center
- Daniel Kids
- Feeding Northeast Florida
- Florida Nonprofit Alliance
- Here Tomorrow
- Jacksonville Jewish Center
- Read USA
- Ronald McDonald House Charities of Jacksonville

"The Weaver Philanthropic Initiative is a powerful experience that helped me think more strategically about my own philanthropy, with a clearer understanding of how to align future giving with my motivation and values, as well as a more complete understanding of the landscape of need and opportunity in our community," said **Melanie Cost Young**, one of the 2024 participants. "It helps foster a multi-generational sense of generosity, a gift that I look forward to sharing with my family, as well."

In addition to Young, 2024 participants included **Ansley Busch, Brian Bush, Maureen Bush, Marion Cangemi, Stephanie Harden, Brooke Michaelis, Shelita McGowan, Erik Rostholder, Entrice Rowe** and **Jake Wolfburg**.

The Community Foundation has been identifying and guiding the next generation of philanthropists through this program since 1999. In 2013, in recognition of the philanthropic leadership of J. Wayne and Delores Barr Weaver, the initiative was renamed the Weaver Philanthropic Initiative. There are now more than 100 alumni of the initiative, now in its 25th year.

"It has been a privilege to work with the 2024 class of the Weaver Philanthropic Initiative," said Tom Caron, vice president of donor services. "These young leaders have demonstrated their commitment to making their community a better place through strategic philanthropy, and we are proud to support them in their philanthropic journeys."

## Gator Bowl elects volunteer leadership team

The Gator Bowl Sports Board of Trustees recently elected its 2024-25 full slate of volunteer leadership during its last quarterly meeting.

Serving as chairman for the coming year will be **Andy King**, vice president at GFL (Green For Life), an environmental services company. **Sara Pomposo** will serve as chairman-elect. The vice president of marketing and brand strategy for BHRS Companies, Pomposo previously served as publisher and market president of the *Jacksonville Business Journal*. During that time, she was actively involved with Gator Bowl Sports, spearheading the development of the Bowl'd Ladies membership group.

Past Gator Bowl Chairman **Scott P. Keith** will serve as audit and compliance committee chairman, succeeding longtime committee chair **Henry Beckwith**, who retired earlier this year. Keith is regional vice president at Pinnacle Financial Partners.

Rounding out the 2024-25 volunteer leadership team, appointments include:

Secretary (Trustee): **John Duce**, senior vice president, Middle Market Banking, Wells Fargo

Co-Treasurers (Trustees): **Daniel Kennedy Murphy**, owner, Sea Warrior Stables, LLC (Trustee); and **Greg Smith**, Retired (Trustee)

Team Selection Chairman (Trustee): **Alan Worley**, president & CEO of Money Pages and 3D Digital

Vice Chair, Charities: **Paul Jones**, CEO, W.W. Gay Mechanical Contractor, Inc.

Vice Chair, Hospitality: **Bill Dixon**, senior vice president, wealth advisor senior portfolio management director, The Lighthouse Wealth Management Group at Morgan Stanley

Vice Chair, Marketing: **Kevin Craig**, regional director, external affairs, AT&T

Vice Chair, Membership: **Pat McManamon**, senior partner, Sandler | The Ruby Group

The above volunteer leadership team is joined by more than 250 members who represent business leaders across the First Coast.

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OCTOBER 25 AT 7:30 PM
- NIGHT RANGER**  
OCTOBER 26 AT 7:30 PM
- ROCK THE BOX 4 FEATURING AARON LEWIS**  
NOVEMBER 10 AT 7:00 PM
- ALWAYS LORETTA WITH THE COALMINERS**  
JANUARY 16 AT 7:30 PM
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JANUARY 19 AT 7:00 PM
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Dr. Andrew Stec

## Stec appointed Nemours chief medical officer

Dr. Andrew Stec was recently named vice president and chief medical officer (CMO) at Nemours Children’s Health, Jacksonville. Stec transitioned from his previous role as vice chair of the Department of Surgery to chief medical officer, providing oversight of the medical operations and faculty.

“After an extensive external and internal search, and vetting of the most qualified candidates, we are fortunate to have recruited

a leader from within Nemours Children’s,” said Dr. Michael Erhard, North Florida Region president. “I look forward to working with Dr. Stec to create the healthiest generations of children in Northeast Florida and beyond.”

Dr. Stec, a board-certified pediatric urologist, joined the urology team at Nemours Children’s as division chief in September 2019. He is currently an associate professor of urology at the Mayo Clinic College of Medicine and Science and is an active member of numerous professional societies including the American Urological Association and the Society of Pediatric Urology. His clinical interests focus on robotic, minimally invasive surgery and complex urologic reconstruction.

## Reed joins England-Thims & Miller



Kristen Reed

Kristen Reed has joined the Jacksonville office of England-Thims & Miller as a planning manager. Reed brings extensive experience in urban and regional planning to ETM, where she will work with the infrastructure and development consulting firm’s clients on private land development and public planning projects across North Florida.

Founded in 1977, ETM offers planning, development consulting, traffic and transportation engineering, construction management and other services to both public and private sector clients throughout Florida.



Rachael Mueller

## Planned Giving Council elects new officers

The Planned Giving Council of Northeast Florida voted May 9 on its incoming slate of officers for the 2024-25 operating year. The officers were: **Rachael Mueller**, president; **Mariette Brodeur**, immediate past president; **Ken Thompson**, treasurer; **Tania Yount**, secretary; **Tonnie Alliance**, membership co-chair; **Kellie Kelleher-Smith**, membership co-chair; **Michelle Adams**, symposium co-chair/webmaster; **Meredith Jespersen**, symposium co-chair; and **Jennifer Kifer**, marketing chair. At-large members included **Teri Ketchum**, **Chris McGurn**, **Beverly Flanagan**, **Demika Jackson** and **Olivia Bush**.



Meg Hixon

## Hixon joins CSI as chief legal officer

Meg Hixon has joined the executive team at CSI Companies as chief legal officer.

In her new role, Hixon will provide strategic counsel, helping CSI to navigate complex legal matters. She joins CSI after 18 years of legal practice with Rogers Towers, P.A. and Orr Cook.

“As a new member of this dynamic team, I am eager to contribute my skills and expertise to fuel our company’s growth,” said Hixon, an Ortega resident. “I am excited to join a team dedicated to innovation and excellence and look forward to turning challenges into

opportunities and driving our organization to new heights of success together.”

Hixon holds a degree in Business from the University of North Florida and a J.D. from the University of Florida.

## Deegan introduces African American Advisory Board members at Juneteenth ceremony

Mayor Donna Deegan introduced members of Jacksonville’s inaugural Mayoral African American Advisory Board during the city’s Juneteenth observances last month.

Advisory board members include:

- **Kimberly Allen**, CEO of 904Ward
- **Lee Brown, III**, former director of human resources at Edward Waters College
- **Audrienne Burgin**, director of diversity in business at University of North Florida
- **Dawn Curling**, executive director, Jax Melanin Market
- **Barbara Darby**, president, North Campus, Florida State College at Jacksonville
- **Latrina Dowdell**, executive director, The 32209 Experience Inc.
- **Kelly Frazier**, president, Northside Coalition of Jacksonville
- **Kiara Nixon**, community crimes strategies coordinator, Southern Poverty Law Center
- **Ronetta Wards**, vice president, Jacksonville Public Education Fund
- **Errol White**, assistant vice president, Bank of America
- **Marques Wilkes**, director of accelerated degree programs, Edward Waters College



Deegan created the advisory board by executive order in February, announcing its formation during the city’s Black History Month event. Its purpose is to “act as a liaison between the African American community and city government.”

“Your mandate,” Deegan told board members, “is to be my eyes and ears for the African American community by making sure that my priorities align with its aspirations.”

The African American Advisory Board is expected to meet at least once a month, with the first meeting anticipated for July or August.

Jacksonville also has mayoral advisory boards for Hispanic Americans, Disabled Americans and Asian Americans.



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Michael Mayo

## Baptist Health CEO recognized as healthcare leader

Baptist Health CEO **Michael Mayo** was named to the “Becker’s Hospital Review” list of great leaders in health care for 2024.

The list recognizes healthcare leaders who embrace change and are transforming care delivery. Honorees were also recognized for “using innovative digital technology, novel care delivery approaches and creative care solutions to shape the future of health care.”

Mayo was praised for setting new goals for diversity, equity and inclusion and his leading role in launching the Blue Zones Project health initiative in Jacksonville.

The president and CEO of Baptist Health since 2021, Mayo leads more than 14,000 team members and more than 2,000 medical staff in advancing the mission of the nonprofit health system serving Northeast Florida and Southern Georgia.



Florida Forum Co-Chairs Maxine McBride and Randy DeFoor

## DeFoor, McBride to chair Florida Forum Speaker Series

**Randy DeFoor** and **Maxine McBride** will serve as co-chairs of the 2024-25 Florida Forum Speaker Series. A signature event of The Women’s Board of Wolfson Children’s Hospital, the Florida Forum is responsible for bringing world-class speakers to the First Coast.

DeFoor is an attorney and businesswoman who served as a Jacksonville City Council member from 2019 to 2023. A longtime member of The Women’s Board, she is the daughter of founding member Marian Poitevent.

McBride is president of Clockwork Marketing. She has been involved with The Women’s Board, the Florida Forum and the First Coast Design Show for many years.

“I am honored to be working with these women on the Florida Forum series,” said The Women’s Board President Kendra McCrary, noting that the speaker schedule would be announced soon. “As in past years, we anticipate welcoming tremendous speakers to our events who are inspiring and memorable. We are proud that the Florida Forum raises awareness and funds for Wolfson Children’s Hospital, supporting its mission to provide the highest quality of advanced pediatric healthcare and helping to make a positive impact in our community and beyond.”

Funds raised by the Florida Forum support The Women’s Board of Wolfson Children’s Hospital’s commitment to raise \$1.5 million for two new Kids Kare Mobile Intensive Care Units (ICUs) by the end of 2024. The Mobile ICUs are part of the hospital’s Neonatal and Pediatric Critical Care Transport fleet, which includes necessary life-support equipment for the transportation of critically ill and injured infants and children.

Since 1992, the Florida Forum has hosted renowned speakers from around the world while raising more than \$10 million for Wolfson Children’s Hospital.



Lucy Klausner

## Klausner joins ECS4Kids

Episcopal Children’s Services (ECS4Kids) welcomes **Lucy Klausner** as vice president of resource development. In her new role, she will serve more than 27,000 North and Central Florida children and families.

Klausner is a development professional with nearly two decades of experience building relationships and cultivating charitable gifts. She moved to Jacksonville in 2018 to oversee the national corporate and foundation development for Pace Center for Girls, where she led all development efforts, including purpose-driven partnerships and large-scale volunteer efforts.



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Fran Root and Joann Purdie with Jerry Ferguson Memorial Scholarship award recipient Leila Jane Davis

# Woman's Club of Jacksonville awards \$49,000 at scholarship luncheon

The Woman's Club of Jacksonville presented \$49,000 in scholarships to 22 students at its recent Scholarship Award Luncheon held at the San Jose Country Club.

The 21 recipients – including high school seniors and college undergraduates – received a total of \$44,000. In addition, Wolfson Senior High School senior **Leila Jane Davis** received the \$5,000 Jerry Ferguson Memorial Scholarship named in honor of The Woman's Club of Jacksonville's former president and longtime member.

Earlier in the year, The Woman's Club awarded six grants totaling \$21,644 to local worthy organizations whose work aligns with the club's mission to support activities that lead to the "improvement, benefit and advancement of womankind in every direction."



Josh Cohen

## Josh Cohen promoted to regional broker manager

Berkshire Hathaway HomeServices Florida Network Realty has promoted **Josh Cohen** to regional broker manager.

Cohen joined the company in 2004 as a Realtor and has experience working with its Relocation and REO divisions. In his new role, he will work with brokers and managers throughout the company on professional development and coaching. He will also continue to lead the company's Avondale and San Marco offices, where he has served as managing broker since 2017.

## Kellie Kelleher-Smith joins B&C Financial Advisors

**Kellie Kelleher-Smith (CAP®)** has joined B&C Financial Advisors as a wealth advisor.

Prior to her new role, Kelleher-Smith served as the leader of the Jewish Community Foundation of Northeast Florida, where she successfully oversaw the foundation's merger with the Jewish Federation of Northeast Florida. She worked for the American Cancer Society for four years as one of the first national philanthropy directors, growing regional philanthropic investments to fund the building of the Richard M. Schulze Hope Lodge on the Mayo Clinic Florida Campus.

Kelleher-Smith is a registered investment advisor representative and holds the Chartered Advisor in Philanthropy® credential from The American College of Financial Services.

"We are pleased to welcome Kellie to our team of talented professionals," said Allan Cohen, co-founder and president of B&C Financial Advisors. "Her expertise in philanthropic planning for high-net-worth individuals enhances our firm's holistic approach to money management."

Kelleher-Smith serves as a board member and immediate past president of the Women's Center of Jacksonville. She also serves on the board of the Planned Giving Council of Northeast Florida and the Jacksonville Jewish Center. She holds a bachelor's degree from Nova Southeastern University and a Master of Science degree from Bridgewater State University in Massachusetts.



Kellie Kelleher-Smith

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Sophia, Kendra and Ricardo Rodriguez

# McGala raises \$620,000 for Ronald McDonald House Charities®

The 2024 Ronald McDonald House McGala raised \$620,000 to support the organization's mission of aiding families whose children are undergoing medical treatment.

Held May 11 at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort and Spa, the annual event featured a touching story from the Rodriguez Family featuring 8-year-old Sophia. Other highlights included a history wall, live entertainment, auctions and a red wagon tribute.

Proceeds from the event will enable the Jacksonville Ronald McDonald House to continue providing lodging, transportation, meals and a supportive environment so that families can focus on the health and well-being of their children.

"The success of this year's McGala is a testament to the incredible compassion and commitment of our supporters," said Joey Leik, CEO of Ronald McDonald House Charities® of Jacksonville. "Funds raised go toward providing comfort, care and a sense of normalcy to families during one of the most challenging times of their lives. We are deeply grateful to everyone who contributed to making this night a success."



Allegra Jaros with daughter Jaden



Meg and Peter Kuchar



Joli Craver and Carla Montgomery



Hannah and Sherry Phillips



Elecia Goodman and Reign Jefferson



Nemours CEO Dr. Larry Moss and First Coast Energy CEO Aubrey Edge

# Continental cuisine highlights 'Night with Nemours Taste of France' gala

More than 400 people dined on French food, wine and desserts at the recent "Night with Nemours Taste of France" gala.

Held May 10 at the Ponte Vedra Inn & Club, the evening featured dinner and entertainment, including music from the Jacksonville-based Bold City Classics and a mind-bending performance by mentalist and magician Oz Pearlman.

Nemours Children's hematologist/oncologist Dr. Michael Joyce and retired Nemours hematologist/oncologist Dr. Cynthia Gauger were honored for their decades of dedicated service and care for Nemours patients and families. Aubrey Edge, president and CEO of First Coast Energy and president of the Daily's Foundation, also was honored for his contributions to Nemours and the Jacksonville community.

Proceeds from the gala support the Nemours Children's Compassionate Care Fund, which helps provide world-class care wherever the need is greatest.

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# Changing Homelessness marks 50th anniversary with Sneaker Ball

Changing Homelessness celebrated its 50th Anniversary June 20 with a “Home for All Sneaker Ball” that raised \$225,000 for the organization’s services for those experiencing homelessness.

Hosted by NFL Hall of Fame member LeRoy Butler, the gala saw guests including Mayor Donna Deegan and former Sheriff Nat Glover don everything from evening gowns and tuxedos to track suits with their favorite sneakers. The evening also served as an anniversary celebration for the organization, which was founded in 1974 by a group of local ministers and residents to help Jacksonville’s homeless. Today, Changing Homelessness is the lead agency for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development’s Continuum of Care grant, providing training for 40 member agencies that serve residents in need.



Joanna Pajcic, Curt Pajcic, Dr. Kia Mitchell, Robyn Sieron, Kortney Wesley, Tammy Hodo, Keitha Nelson and Karel Danzie

[View more event photos at residentnews.net](https://residentnews.net)

# Gala highlights Women Veterans Week of Recognition

Local women were honored for their military service recently at the annual Women Veterans Recognition Gala.

Held June 15 at the Southbank Hotel at Jax Riverwalk, this year’s gala celebrated World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War era veterans as “Trailblazers” and featured a presentation by Michelle C. Allen, state director of the Florida Veterans’ Employment and Training Service.

“The gala was a night to remember,” said Dee Quaranta (USAF ret.), president and CEO of Northeast Florida Women Veterans. “We saw tears of gratitude, smiles and awe on the faces of veterans and family members.”

The gala was the culmination of a week of programming to honor women veterans that included a church service, a proclamation ceremony at Jacksonville City Hall, a VA women’s health fair and social gatherings to spark fellowship and support.

“We strive to ensure women who served are not invisible,” Quaranta said, “and know that their service to our country is appreciated.”



Simone and Olivia Ridgell



Linda Brenner, Cindy Addison and Heather Brenner



Kenneth Holmes with Graceson and Kela Chatman



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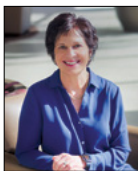
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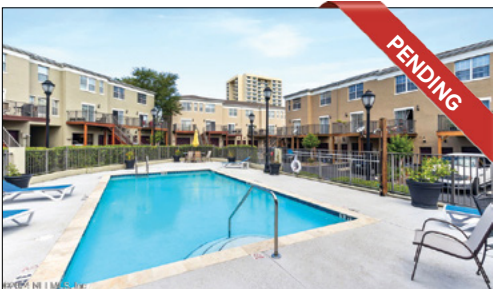
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Rail Yard District Business Council board members welcome Mayor Donna Deegan to the inaugural Local-Motion Luncheon.



Brothers Phil and John Azar represent Azar Sausage, a third-generation family-owned Rail Yard District business.



Standard Feed & Seed's Ashley Pass, Frank Wallmeyer and Geoffrey Williams with Florida Hardware's Don Thiemann

# Local-Motion Luncheon celebrates resurgence of city's 'Rail Yard District'

## Local business council presents first All Aboard Award to LISC Jacksonville

By Jennifer Logue

City officials joined with community leaders and business owners June 12 to celebrate the resurgence of Jacksonville's Rail Yard District and discuss how the area can become a vibrant economic engine for the city.

Held at The Glass Factory, the inaugural "Local-Motion Luncheon" was sponsored by the Rail Yard District Business Council (RDBC) – a nonprofit founded in 2017 to champion the historic Jacksonville neighborhood that many in attendance said has been often overlooked.

"RDBC is more than just another nonprofit," said Beaver Street Fisheries President Jeff Edwards, the business council's immediate past president. "It's a beacon of hope, a catalyst for change and a driving force for empowerment."

While the business council's initial focus was on making the neighborhood more attractive by repairing streets and sidewalks and improving drainage, Edwards said, the group hopes to play a central role in the rebirth of Jacksonville's Urban Core by encouraging development that brings more residents to the area.

### Historic yet hidden

The origins of the Rail Yard District go back to the 1800s, when the railroad first came to Florida. Today, the area bounded by I-10, I-95 and Downtown Jacksonville is home to more than 10,000 residents and 350 businesses that together employ more than 6,000 people and generate \$3 billion in annual revenue.

Yet despite the strategic location and a strong business base dating back decades, local leaders say, the area has lagged behind other Jacksonville neighborhoods.

"There are so many strong neighborhoods in

Jacksonville, it's incredibly easy to get lost in the shuffle," District 7 City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso told luncheon attendees. "I'm extremely excited by what's happening here."

Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan, the event's keynote speaker, agreed.

"While the Rail Yard District is only 4.5 square miles, it packs a very big punch," she said. "This has been quite the energetic, can-do group since they put this organization together."

Deegan detailed some of the major initiatives now occurring in Downtown Jacksonville that her administration believes will spur revitalization across the Urban Core. In addition to the record \$147 million grant the city received to complete the Emerald Trail project years ahead of schedule, Deegan said, the stadium deal recently approved by the City Council will inject millions of dollars into downtown projects for workforce housing, riverfront beautification and more.

"That will allow us to reinvest in those neighborhoods that have been left behind for far too long."

### Honoring partners

A highlight of the Local-Motion Luncheon was the presentation of the RDBC's inaugural All Aboard Award to LISC Jacksonville in recognition of its help and support in revitalizing the Rail Yard District.

"The vision of LISC is how do we make some of our most challenged communities into destinations – places that people want to live and raise families?" LISC Jacksonville Executive Director Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen said in accepting the award. "Thank you for welcoming the stranger to the table to help you be all you can be."

RDBC's Edwards went even further.

"The concept of the Rail Yard District would not have been possible without the support of LISC," he said.

Naming the area the "Rail Yard District," in fact, was a conscious effort by the business council to create a positive new brand for the neighborhood. In a video shown at the luncheon, local architect Thomas Duke said that when he first moved his business to the neighborhood, clients had a hard time identifying where his offices were. That changed, he said, with the Rail Yard District rebrand.

"It's been night and day," he said. "You really have a sort of pride in being here."

Current RDBC President Annie Murphy of Eco Relics said the next step for the business council is to hire an executive director to advance the group's goal of adding more residents to patronize the growing number of businesses that call the Rail Yard District Home.

"The history, character and diversity of the Rail Yard District give us a unique placemaking opportunity to make it a shining star in Northeast Florida," she said. "The RDBC demonstrates how businesses partnering with residents can truly elevate a community to new heights."

RDBC Board Member Frank Wallmeyer noted that his company, Standard Feed & Seed, has been located in the Rail Yard District for nearly 80 years. He believes organizations like the Rail Yard District Business Council create opportunities for businesses to support one another and improve the community.

"I'm a big fan of the collaborative process," Wallmeyer said. "Through (RDRC), business owners can share their challenges and opportunities to create synergy. The more that we can help bring new businesses and residents to the neighborhood, the better it will be for everybody."



Jeff Edwards and Annie Murphy of the Rail Yard Business District Council present LISC Jacksonville Executive Director Dr. Irvin PeDro Cohen with the council's inaugural All Aboard Award.



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# The Young Independents

It's time to celebrate Jacksonville's Young Independents – the bright, passionate, entrepreneurial up-and-comers who are making an impact in our community. From kicking their careers into high gear and supporting charitable causes to enjoying all the River City has to offer, these emerging leaders are lighting up the local landscape in a big way. Let's get to know a bit about these young go-getters: what sparks their interest, what touches their hearts and what they love about the city we call home.



(Top Row) Brooke Brown, Angelina Budnik, Nick Diaz and Nicole Hamm  
 (Bottom Row) Alex Stone, Colby Nelson, Fiona Parkinson, Bryce Yazdiya and Gabriela Haddad

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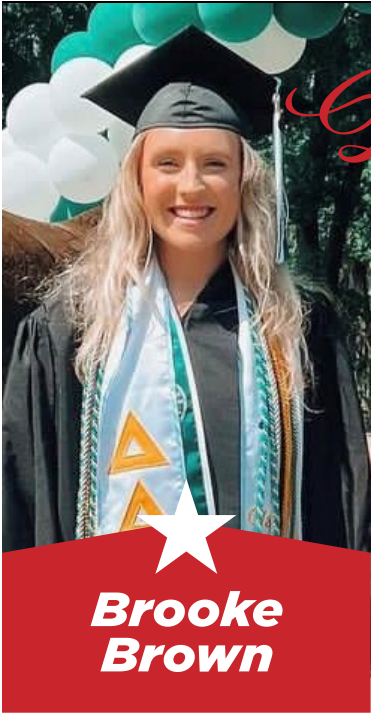
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**Brooke Brown**

**B**rooke Brown’s interest in educating people about breast cancer began at an early age. “When I was really young, my grandmother died of breast cancer,” said Brown, 23.

A Jacksonville native, Brown began volunteering for The Donna Foundation, the nonprofit founded by breast cancer survivor – and now Mayor – Donna Deegan. While still in high school, Brown self-published a fundraising cookbook, collecting recipes from local celebrities and breast cancer survivors. The cookbook went through several printings, raising thousands of dollars to provide financial assistance to women undergoing breast cancer treatment.

“I loved doing the cookbook, because everyone was so eager to help and be involved,” she said. “Cooking and recipes just bring people together, and what better way to raise money for a good cause than by bringing people together?”

Brown also made breast cancer awareness her platform while participating in local pageant

programs. In addition to being named Miss River City Outstanding Teen 2018, she was named Jacksonville’s Distinguished Young Woman 2019, a Whataburger Hometown Hero and was also one of 23 students selected for Youth Leadership Jacksonville 2018. In 2019, she was the first recipient of the Florida Times-Union’s new Aspiring EVE Award – a category created with Brown in mind to recognize accomplished teen girls.

After graduating from Christ Church Academy in 2019, Brown attended Jacksonville University, earning both a bachelor’s degree in Economics and Marketing and later an MBA. While attending college, she worked as a hostess at Taverna in San Marco – an experience she credits with teaching her valuable lessons about the business world.

“The restaurant industry is like no other – you learn so many things,” she said. “It teaches you to solve problems on the fly, to think on your feet and you learn so much about customer service by interacting with different personalities.”

Now employed as a case manager with personal injury law firm Nooney & Roberts, Brown is “getting her feet wet” with a goal of pursuing a legal career. When she’s not applying to law schools, she can be found doing Pilates at HiReformance Institute, taking a yoga class at Hot Spot Yoga in San Marco or browsing among the tents at the Riverside Arts Market.

And she continues her passion for breast cancer education and awareness by volunteering on the marketing committee for Pink Ribbon Jax, which raises money to provide free mammograms to those who lack insurance coverage.

“At the time my grandmother died, there weren’t a lot of resources available,” Brown said. “I’m so glad to be alive at a time when we are changing that.”



**Nick Diaz**

**N**ick Diaz has called Jacksonville home for about 18 months and is settling into the First Coast nicely.

He grew up in Tampa, went to school at the University of Central Florida and moved here for work.

“There’s much more of a community feeling in Jacksonville than there is in a lot of the larger cities in Florida,” said Diaz, who likes to explore Riverside and San Marco in his spare time.

“There’s a lot of things to do in Jacksonville, but there are also times when it feels almost like a small town – in a good way.”

Diaz works as a quality engineer at Allied Plastics, where he gets to wear many different hats.

“We’re not a huge company, so I’m able to do a lot of different things, which keeps things kind of fresh for me,” he said, adding that his favorite part of the job is seeing a product progress from the initial development stages through to final delivery. “Every day is a new journey.”

While his career occupies much of his time these days, Diaz loves to go home after work and play music. He’s proficient with multiple instruments.

“Music is something that moves me in my free time,” he said. “It’s something I’ve always loved to do since I was a kid.”

He also worked as a disc jockey in college and still takes the occasional DJ gig at a club or private party.

On the weekends, though, you’ll find this self-described outdoorsman on one of Jacksonville’s beaches.

At some point in the future, Diaz said he hopes to pursue a master’s degree. But for now, he’s enjoying all that Jacksonville has to offer.

**A**t 21 years old, Angelina Budnik knows what she wants and isn’t afraid to pursue it.

This ambitious Jacksonville native graduated from high school at age 16, attended college for two years and began working as a medical assistant. But the COVID pandemic prompted her to reevaluate her career choice.

“Things changed a lot in the medical world once COVID started, and I just decided on a whim to go to a nail program because I always had a creative side to me,” Budnik said.

In February of this year, she started her own business – Nails by Angelina – working out of her own studio space in Riverside’s Sola Salon. Budnik says it was easier than she expected.

“When I initially decided to go out on my own, it was kind of terrifying... but I had a really good support system of friends, family, and all of my clients,” said Budnik, who proudly professes to be a creative extrovert.

“I’ve always wanted to do something in relation with people in my career and I like the creative side to it,” she continued. “I feel like I’m able to make a better connection with my clients, which is really important to me, because I don’t want anything to feel transactional.”

Budnik also paints live portraits at weddings with her sister, Esther, who is a full-time artist. She said it’s a fun side gig that also combines her two passions: art and people.

“I absolutely love meeting new people... and when we work these weddings, we’re



**Angelina Budnik**

**“When I initially decided to go out on my own, it was kind of terrifying. But I had a really good support system...”**

typically seeing around 100 new faces,” she said. “So, you come across all sorts of people. It’s a pretty cool environment to be in, and it’s always something slightly different.”

When she’s not working, Budnik is spending time with her large family. In addition to her five brothers and sisters, her parents and a 1-year-old niece all live in Jacksonville. Budnik and her siblings are also first-generation Americans: Their parents immigrated separately to the United States from Belarus and met here in their 20s.

When Budnik and her siblings get together, they love to play a (somewhat) friendly game of pickleball. You’ll find them at Donner Park Pickleball Court in Atlantic Beach or the courts at Blue Cypress Park in Arlington.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 28

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**Gabriela Haddad**

Gabriela Haddad – “Gaby” to her friends – has been making charcuterie boards since she was 5 years old. “My mother is a very bougie lady,” the 27-year-old Jacksonville native joked. “She throws lots of events and loves to host people. And so, every time she would have an event, I would love to help her put all the cheeses and meats and fruits together.”

A trip to Italy as a teenager cemented her passion for creating beautiful gourmet spreads with the finest ingredients – a talent that would ultimately lead to starting her own business, G’s Charcuterie.

But being an entrepreneur wasn’t always the plan, Haddad said. Both of her parents and her brother are physicians. Haddad would accompany her parents on medical mission trips as a younger girl and help serve impoverished communities.

After two years at UNF on the pre-med track, however, Haddad’s passions began to shift. She changed her major to Communication with a focus in Public Relations, and after earning her bachelor’s degree, pursued a master’s in Communication Management with a Business concentration.

In the fall of 2022, she took the plunge and launched her charcuterie business, which offers her a creative outlet.

“My favorite part of the job is seeing an empty table, and then creating a vision of what it can turn into... I love seeing the vision come to life, and then seeing it be devoured,” Haddad said with a laugh.

Haddad strongly believes in supporting local businesses. She sources all of her ingredients from locally owned shops like Grater Goods in Murray Hill and Cline’s Custom Meats in San Marco. She also gives back to the community by donating charcuterie boards and tables for non-profit events.

In addition to being a business owner, she’s also a third-degree Black Belt who taught martial arts classes at Watson Martial Arts in San Marco for nine years. That experience played a significant role in her decision to start her own business.

When she’s not working, you’ll find Haddad walking with her dog, Paul, to the Riverside Arts Market for some shopping and yoga or enjoying a nice meal with her girlfriends at Taverna.

Nicole Hamm is on a mission to make her native Jacksonville a healthier place to live, work and raise a family.

Hamm, 31, is the executive director of Blue Zones Project Jacksonville. The national movement grew out of the 2004 project that identified five communities around the world – including Sardinia, Italy; Ikaria, Greece; Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica; Loma Linda, Calif. and Okinawa, Japan – where the residents enjoyed significantly longer, healthier lives. So long, in fact, that residents there lived to 100 at rates 10 times greater than the United States.

“Baptist Health was the leader in bringing the Blue Zones Project to Jacksonville,” Hamm said, crediting partners such as Brooks Rehabilitation, Community First Credit Union and other local institutions with joining together to bring the health initiative to Jacksonville.

Hamm’s personal journey to leading the local organization began in 2016, when she graduated from Howard University and returned to the First Coast to work in accounting and later sales at Eastern Quality Foods. She soon began seeking opportunities to become involved in the community. In addition to serving as president of the Beaches Rotaract Club, Hamm joined the board of directors for Beaches Emergency Assistance Ministry (BEAM). She also became involved in the Jacksonville Urban League Young Professionals, was a member of the 2021 class of the Jax Chamber Hightower Emerging Leaders Fellowship and the 2022 class of Leadership Jacksonville. Along the way, she also found time to run for Jacksonville City Council.

“Through these experiences, I started to see how all of the pieces landed together to make our city work,” Hamm said. “We can transform our community, but we have to do it with the community.”

Now Hamm is putting that philosophy into practice through the Blue Zones Project. Drawing on U.S. Census data, the organization has identified the city’s Northside, Westside and East Jacksonville neighborhoods as focus areas for its health initiatives.

“We have four focus areas – People, Places, Policy and Schools,” Hamm said.

In practice, that translates into everything from working with grocery stores and restaurants to offer healthier options to working with City Hall on public transportation issues and the schools with anti-tobacco messages.

In her free time, Hamm can be found enjoying live music in James Weldon Johnson Park, shopping at St. Johns Town Center or relaxing at the beach.

“We’re so lucky to have this great, big body of water next to our city,” Hamm said. “There’s just something so soothing, relaxing and cathartic about being by the ocean.”



**Nicole Hamm**



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Like many First Coast newcomers, 32-year-old Alex Stone moved to Jacksonville while serving in the military.

Originally from Fredericksburg, VA, Stone was stationed at Naval Air Station Cecil Field in 2017 while serving in the U.S. Coast Guard. He was part of an aviation unit that chased down smugglers and rescued stranded boaters off the coast of Florida.

After 12 years of service, Stone took a civilian job as a train dispatcher at CSX Transportation. While he’s not shooting at drug smugglers from a helicopter anymore, his new career is just as fast paced, and the stakes can be just as high.

“The best way to describe it would be air traffic control for trains,” Stone said. “I’ve never pictured myself being able to work a desk job, but it’s a highly engaging job.”

From the CSX Operations Center, Stone monitors real-time activity on up to 700 miles of railroad tracks, carefully overseeing the movements of about 20 trains and just as many maintenance crews each day. It’s an environment where mistakes can be life-threatening to those working on the tracks.

“It’s my job to authorize any personnel or equipment and the movement thereof on the track, down to the milepost to make sure nobody’s going to get hurt,” Stone said. “It’s anxiety-inducing to a certain extent, but I really like that because it keeps me focused.”

Outside of work, Stone is very active. He’s strict about hitting the gym regularly and getting outside as much as possible. He finds the warm Florida weather and sunshine much more agreeable than the mid-Atlantic region where he grew up.

“The heat did take some getting used to, but there’s just lots to do outdoors-wise, whether it’s playing pickleball or playing golf or exploring other parts of Jacksonville,” he said.

Stone also enjoys walking to restaurants and shops in Avondale where he lives. His favorite place to grab a bite is Biscotti’s, joking that he’s “obsessed” with their Smash Burger.

Above all, Stone loves spending time with his 7-year-old Alaskan Husky, Kana. If they’re not out for a walk in one of the Riverside parks, you’ll find them socializing at Kanine Social in Brooklyn or BrewHound Dog Park + Bar in Neptune Beach.

“She’s just a sweetheart and I couldn’t have asked for a better dog, that’s for sure.”



**Alex Stone**



**C**olby Nelson, 25, may be a black belt in karate, but he knows all too well what it's like to feel unsure and unsafe.

The owner of Kolby's Karate Club – which holds classes at Unity Church at 634 Lomax St. – Nelson said that as a child growing up on Jacksonville's Northside, school was not a positive experience for him.

"I was bullied every year starting in the third grade," he said. "I was just being bullied every day for no reason. Eventually, you just get tired of it."

Nelson begged his mother to let him take lessons at a nearby karate program. He credits his first instructor, Lee Barden, with not only teaching him karate, but also giving him confidence in himself.

"He told me, 'You could be one of the youngest karate school owners in Jacksonville,'" Nelson said. "It meant the world to me that someone believed in me."

When Barden passed away, hundreds of current and former students showed up at his funeral service. "It made me realize the kind of impact you could have on people's lives through karate," Nelson said. "I decided I wanted to have that kind of positive impact on people."

He began offering karate classes in parks before moving to Unity Church, where he currently offers family classes for students of all ages. His goal is to find a commercial space where he can open a permanent karate studio serving the Riverside, Avondale, Ortega and Murray Hill areas.

Nelson believes the biggest thing students take away from his karate classes is greater confidence.

"People often lack confidence because they feel they've never been successful at something," he said. "Then they come to karate, and they realize, 'I can do this!' and that confidence translates over to other areas of their lives."

While working toward his goal of finding a commercial studio space, Nelson is offering special classes in women's self-defense as well as a free open house session scheduled for Saturday, July 20 at 4 p.m. Registration is available on Facebook or by calling 904-452-3194.

He also has plans to offer corporate self-defense seminars and team building exercises. "I'm like the energizer bunny," Nelson said. "I have infinite zeal and energy for this!"



**G**rowing up in Jacksonville, Bryce Yazdiya's world revolved around school – he attended Assumption Catholic and Bishop Snyder High School – and sports.

"Hockey, football, golf, basketball, you name it," he said. "I also earned three black belts in karate, but I got too busy to continue with it."

**“During my sophomore year (of college), I volunteered quite a bit for Ron DeSantis's gubernatorial campaign. I also contribute articles to the Florida State Political Review.”**

These days, Yazdiya spends his time in another kind of arena. A dual Political Science/Communications major at FSU, he has combined his coursework with hands-on experience volunteering for political campaigns.

"During my sophomore year, I volunteered quite a bit for Ron DeSantis's gubernatorial campaign," said Yazdiya, who has also contributed articles to local newspapers. "I also contribute articles to the Florida State Political Review."

Future goals include possibly pursuing a career in sports journalism. But for now, the FSU senior said he enjoys spending his free time indulging his love of movies – the Lord of the Rings trilogy is his favorite – reading comic books and playing video games with his brother.

And despite being born and raised in Jacksonville, he never tires of living close to the beach or spending time at some of the River City's many golf courses.

"You can find me anywhere there's a golf course!"

**F**iona Parkinson recalls going to a Fernandina Beach restaurant with her family shortly after moving to Amelia Island from her native New Jersey.

"The owner came over and said, 'I haven't seen you here before; are you visiting or new to the area?'" said Parkinson, 23, who was in middle school at the time.

"In New Jersey, people are always coming and going, and nobody pays any attention," she continued. "So, to have that kind of small-town experience really made an impression on me."

Now an Avondale resident, Parkinson graduated last year from UNF with a degree in English. She is currently pursuing an online master's degree in Library and Information Science at the University of South Florida. It's a program that involves a considerable focus on technology.

"A lot of it involves understanding keywords, knowing how to find information and identifying reliable, credible sources," she said. "It's more technical than I anticipated, but I find it interesting."

Parkinson hopes the coursework will prepare her for a position working in the community – a desire that grew out of working at the YMCA.

"I consider myself to be rather introverted, but working at the Y helped me to become more extroverted," she said. "I really enjoy helping people."

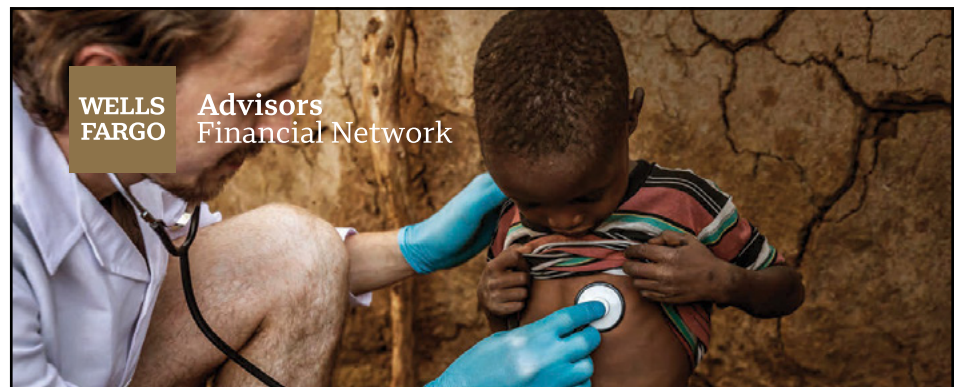


**“I consider myself to be rather introverted, but working at the Y helped me to become more extroverted. I really enjoy helping people.”**

Within the library realm, she hopes to use her degree to help kids improve their reading levels.

In her free time, Parkinson can be found enjoying a cup of coffee at Bold Bean, running through Avondale, roller skating through Riverside's Memorial Park or searching through the stacks at Chamblin Bookmine for books related to her master's coursework. Her current project: developing a lesson plan related to children's fairy stories.

"I told the cashier at Chamblin's, 'I didn't know I'd be reading so many fairy stories to get my master's degree!'"



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# RESIDENTS Junior



Niveah Glover

## Douglas Anderson senior named Poetry Out Loud® national champion

### Niveah Glover wins \$20,000 poetry prize, named U.S. presidential scholar

Douglas Anderson School of the Arts student Niveah Glover was recently named the national grand champion of the 2024 Poetry Out Loud® competition.

Glover recited poems by Patricia Smith, Paul Laurence Dunbar and Ashanti Anderson to take home the \$20,000 grand prize in the competition sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation.

“It was so interesting to delve into other people’s perspectives and turn it into

something that I can relate to,” Glover said.

She was also the runner up in the written Poetry Ourselves category for her original composition, “These Thighs.”

“It’s not an understatement to say Niveah lives up to all the hopes I have for my students,” said Tiffany Melanson, director of Douglas Anderson’s Creative Writing program. “She has taken the lessons she has received on the importance of infusing her art with the truth of her own experiences and used them as fuel to pursue

her ambitions as an artist. She truly is an exceptional student, artist and human being, and it’s been a privilege to teach her.”

Glover credited the school’s Creative Writing program with preparing her for both the competition and her future goals. “The Creative Writing Department has pushed me beyond my dreams,” she said. “The department, its teachers and its curriculum have taught me so many important things. I remember feeling so afraid of my own voice before I became a creative writing student, now I am not afraid of it or my potential.”

In addition to winning the poetry competition, Glover was named a presidential scholar. Currently celebrating its 60th anniversary, the U.S. Presidential Scholars program was created by President Lyndon Johnson to honor the nation’s brightest minds.

Glover was the only Jacksonville student to receive the honor, which is given to just 161 students nationwide each year.



## Students beat the heat at Bolles summer camps

Bolles students have been beating the summer heat by the St. Johns River this summer at the school’s summer camp programs. Summer campers are enjoying the new Powell’s Beach, taking boat rides with their friends and fishing for fun in Marine Biology Camp – one of dozens of specialty camps offered by the school.

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Jonas Wilson, 15, takes the helm of the Jolly II Rover aided by Carsten Bahr, 15, and Parker Stein, 14.

## Troop 35 scouts travel to the Keys for Sea Base adventure

High winds and stormy seas couldn't dampen the spirits of 15 scouts from Jacksonville's Troop 35 last month, when the teens traveled to the Florida Keys to participate in High Adventure Sea Base.

Accompanied by five adult chaperones, the teens drove to Islamorada, where they stayed overnight at Sea Base before driving to Key West and boarding the Jolly II Rover, a square-rigged topsail schooner.

"The plan was to sail and live aboard the ship for five nights," said Brad Wilson, who accompanied his sons, Jonas and Henry, on the trip. "The first two days and first night were lovely with good weather – then the storms rolled in."

Soon, snorkeling and fishing turned to pulling down the sails and seeking shelter as rain and wind gusts exceeding 34 knots battered the Jolly II Rover.

Despite the inclement weather, the scouts had an opportunity to learn how to sail, catch and cook fish and view stingrays, barracuda, tarpon, puffer fish and other sea life while snorkeling. The group also had time to do some sightseeing in Key West.

To be eligible to participate in High Adventure Sea Base, scouts need to be 14 or older, have earned the rank of First Class, pass a swimming test and be medically cleared. Participating Troop 35 scouts included: Akash Gusani, Sidney Moore, Sam Rabil, Matthew Dickson, Carsten Bahr, Ben Hopkins, Dawson Dunkin, Joe Barry, Parker Stein, Henry Wilson, Jonas Wilson, Jackson Black, Cameron Ritchie, Scott Stein and Gavin Ley.



Heather Hanson with children, Ben and Josh meet a visiting Jacksonville Zoo ambassador at "Adventures with Animals."

## Murray Hill Library offering summer programs

The Bill Brinton Murray Hill Branch Library will host "Adventures in Magic" Tuesday, July 2 from 2 to 3 p.m. at the library, located at 918 Edgewood Ave. South.

The event is part of the "Live from the Library" summer event series for children ages 5-12. In addition to "Adventures in Magic," the library will host "Adventures with Animals" Tuesday, July 9 at 2 p.m. Check-in begins at 1:30 p.m.

The July events follow a June session of "Adventures with Animals" sponsored by the Friends of the Bill Brinton Murray Hill Branch Library. The library also hosted a Drop-in Summer Kick-off Party, with more than 60 attendees kicking off a summer of fun and learning. Kids and teens in attendance received their first free summer prize book.

In addition, the Jacksonville Public Library has launched its Free Summer Lunch for Kids & Teens program. Any child 18 or younger can simply show up Monday through Friday at select libraries and receive a free and healthy meal.

For more information on these and other programs visit: [www.jaxpubliclibrary.org/summer-learning](http://www.jaxpubliclibrary.org/summer-learning).



## Ruth N. Upson Elementary celebrates new playground

Ruth N. Upson Elementary School marked the last day of school May 31 with a ribbon cutting ceremony for the first on-site playground in the school's 100-plus year history.

The event marked a dual celebration for the Murray Hill community, as it also saw the removal of a fence that had limited access to the Murray Hill Playground located across the street from the school.

District 7 City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso explained that previously, the Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) had had a shared-use agreement with the City of Jacksonville allowing students at Ruth Upson to use the community playground. New security protocols implemented in the wake of the Parkland school shooting, however, resulted in the community playground being fenced and locked at some times, making it inaccessible by local residents.

"When I came into office, the fence had just come up and we made the commitment to the folks in Murray Hill who were pretty upset that a fence was blocking their ability to use a park that they've been waiting to use," he said.

With the opening of the on-site playground at Ruth Upson, which the public can also use, the Murray Hill Playground once again will be completely accessible by area residents.

Peluso called it a "real huge win-win" for both the school and the community.

"It was a cool joint effort that we were able to make happen."



Janet Masterson Photography

## Debutante season opens with Magnolia Ball

The 2024 Debutante Coterie season opened June 7, as 19 young ladies were introduced to society during the Magnolia Ball at Timuquana Country Club. The debutantes will take their final bow Dec. 28 at the annual Christmas Ball.

The coterie includes (front) Caroline McComb Hobby, Madeleine Graham Runnels, Francesca Caroline Borghese, Emma Katherine Beard and Elizabeth Bowles Ogletree; (back) Reilly Elisabeth Shapiro, Mackenzie Anne Trobaugh, Elizabeth Jane Gray Hager, Courtney Elizabeth Thompson and Virginia Grace Burhyte. Not pictured: Addison Leigh Anderson, Mary Emma Cook, Katharine Lovett Fant, Bridget Elizabeth Monahan, Lilly Anders Moore, Lucy Walton Rachels, Hadley Sims Ropp, Catherine Sims Wachholz and Lucy Avery Williams.



## Big steps, little feet

Oh, the places they'll go! Ortega Playschool's 2024 VPK graduating class poses with copies of the aptly titled Dr. Seuss book as they look to fun-filled summer vacations and big, bright futures.



Trisha and Jeremy Suarez with Ariel, Mason and Elena



Families chat with local authors at the River City Readers summer kick-off event.



Mayor Donna Deegan speaks at 'Adventure Awaits: River City Readers Summer Kick-off at Ed Austin Regional Park.

## A million minutes City celebrates literacy success at River City Readers summer event



Norma and Lidia Nestor

Jacksonville families had a million reasons to celebrate reading last month, when Mayor Donna Deegan, the Jacksonville Public Library and literacy advocates celebrated the success of the River City Readers initiative at a summer kickoff event.

Held June 8 at Ed Austin Regional Park, the gathering highlighted the success of the program and its Beanstack mobile app, which allows parents and guardians to log their children's reading minutes, titles read and other literacy activities. While the program initially set a cumulative goal of 300,000 reading minutes for the year, Deegan announced at the event that participating readers had surpassed 1 million minutes.

"It's just really so important that we all are telling everyone in the city that this is the initiative that will really, into the future, make us a successful city," Deegan said, "because we know that readers are leaders."

Attendees were able to collect free books to add to their home libraries, meet local authors, participate in story times by Jacksonville author Hello Mr. Joe, get their faces painted and more.

Trisha Suarez brought her family out to the event and said this was her first time hearing about the Beanstack app, which can be downloaded from the Apple App and Google Play stores. She said she looks forward to using it to log her children's reading minutes and books read.

"I like events like this because it gets you outdoors and then you get to see all the different authors to encourage [the kids] to read more," Suarez said.

Coral Worley also loved the opportunity to get her little ones outdoors at an event that focuses on reading.

"My kids love reading up to a point," she said. "This is an opportunity to get them out and to see more books."

According to the River City Readers dashboard on the city website, nearly 900 readers have joined the initiative.



Photo Courtesy of Jacksonville Symphony

## Summer enrichment: CAP field trip initiative provides art, cultural connections

More than 80 students from West Riverside Elementary School are experiencing Jacksonville's art and culture scene during their summer vacation thanks to a field trip initiative from the Cathedral Arts Project (CAP) in collaboration with other community and cultural organizations.

Launched June 11 and running through July 18, the program provides free arts and cultural experiences to participating students, who can complete field trip "passports" at each excursion and have access to supplemental worksheets and other online resources to build upon the learning experience at each destination.

"This arts program over the summer gives our kids an opportunity to explore their own creativity," said Dr. Talya Taylor, principal for West Riverside Elementary.

The West Riverside students comprise just a fraction of the thousands of children participating in this summer initiative from CAP in partnership with the Kids Hope Alliance, Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Up to 4,500 students are enjoying field trips to the Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA) Jacksonville, Jacksonville Symphony, Ritz Theatre & Museum, Florida Theatre, Cummer Museum of Art & Gardens, St. John's Cathedral, Jacksonville Dance Theatre and the Jessie Ball duPont Center.

"To experience art in person is an opportunity for inspiration that every child deserves," said Kids Hope Alliance CEO Dr. Saralyn Grass. "We are proud to partner with CAP to make sure all children have access to cultural experiences that are sure to positively impact their lives today and possibly their future, as well."

Dr. Lucy Chen, CAP vice president of advocacy and engagement, said that survey data conducted in collaboration with the University of North Florida indicated that providing children with access to the arts can have a significant impact on their performance in other school subjects, including literacy, math and science.

"We learned that actually having just one or two field trips can drastically improve students' academic achievement," Chen said, "and that is particularly important for elementary-aged students."

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Sarah Crooks



Ed Hall

Strategies,” up through August, finds the common bond between music, dance and various injustices. Hatcher’s solo show, “On A Mission,” graces the walls of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church until July 31.

**Around town**

**Elysa Adams**, student artist in residence at MOCA, was guest speaker and presenter for the Jacksonville Fine Arts Forum recently. Her amazing exhibit, “Voices of Moncrief” at MOCA, is inspiring and educational. The show is up until Sept. 8, then Adams will be attending Rhode Island School of Design on scholarship. You can’t beat that!

Art Walk was hopping with Jacksonville Artists’ Guild members’ opening reception “Songs of Summer” at the Downtown Library (up until July 25). The reception was well attended and lots of fun, as each piece of art has musical accompaniment via tiny recordings and labels like CDs.

**Midge Sclezo** took 1st Place with “Here Comes the Sun.” Juror’s choice went to Marlene Scheer, “A Lonely Road I Walk” and **Roseann Egidio**, “A Pirate Looks at Sixty.” **Diantha York-Ripley’s** work is featured on the 2nd and 3rd floors through July 3. JAG was well represented at Amplified Avondale as well.

Folks were hot footing it to “Popscares” at Southlight Gallery and to the Untitled Art Space at 112 E. Adams St. for “Elysium- Glimpses of Paradise” (up until July 29). Drum roll, please: **Kevin Arthur** took Best in Show for his pastel drawing of Ortega resident Mary Dudley Schmidt at “Nifty – Sixty” exhibit at TAC Jacksonville Gallery (through July 12).

The Women Writing for A Change Book Festival at CORK was an exciting event for authors, illustrators, bookstore owners and attendees. Representatives from the Jacksonville Library were on hand as well as nonprofit Rebel Readers. Ideas and inspiration flowed in panel discussions and creative exchanges, while 12 children’s authors read aloud to the attending children and families.

Award winning Artist **Martha Ferguson**, 1st Place winner in the St. Augustine Plein Air Painters event, gave an inspiring demonstration on nocturnal painting at CORK for the FCPAP (First Coast Plein Air Painters) meeting. Bright of day or dark of night – a painter’s gotta paint, paint, paint, paint, paint! (Thanks, T. Swift for the inspiration.)



Mary Dudley Schmidt and Kevin Arthur



Leila Griffith and Twigg

**By Peggy Harrell Jennings**

“Oh, beat the drum slowly...” in memory of the amazing **Ed Hall**.

A highly acclaimed multitalented artist, political and social commentator, Hall’s works have been published locally and internationally. Despite fighting cancer for several years, Hall was always positive, cheerful, dedicated to his craft and worked diligently throughout his illness and hospitalization. He participated in exhibits, won numerous awards for his cartoons and fine art drawings and designed the logo for The Artbeat column.

Hall’s biting commentary, which he said, “frequently made the missus (Emmy) cringe,” raised political commentary to a higher, more thought-provoking level. His wit, joie de vivre and beautiful renderings will be missed; the arts community and the world are diminished by his loss. Check out Local Folks – Ed Hall in the Resident Community News archives online.

“...and play the fife lowly ...” for beloved Murray Hill resident, arts enthusiast and artist **Leila Griffith** – a beautiful soul who won numerous awards over the years for her paintings exhibited with the Jacksonville Artists’ Guild, TAC Gallery Jacksonville and throughout the Southeast. Her cheerful spirit, smile, kindness and friendship leave a hole in the hearts of her many friends and the arts community family as well. Despite her own personal battle with cancer, Griffith maintained a cheerful outlook, encouraged others and persevered to create works of lasting beauty.

Hall and Griffith leave a legacy of love, beauty and creativity that will live on in the memories of their loved ones and in their artwork as inspiration to others.

**On exhibit**

“A thing of beauty is a joy forever.” – John Keats

Jacksonville artists are continuing that language of creativity in a bounty of exhibits all over town. Environmental artist **Sarah Crooks’** exhibit “The Long Way(t) Home” at The Jessie Corner Gallery through Aug. 21 is a thought provoking and powerful show that challenges the viewer philosophically, as Crooks blends visual art and environmental science and promotes understanding of the world around us.

Also, at the Jessie: **Annelies Dykgraaf** and **Marsha Hatcher’s** exhibit, “Movement

# THE BEAT GOES ON!

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The 74th Anniversary Exhibit Florida Artists Group (FLAG)  
FSCJ South Campus Gallery Nathan H. Wilson Center

**Now Through August 26**

LuAnn Dunkinson and Debbie Grisnik’s paintings  
are on display at Happy Medium Books Café on Park Street.  
Beat a path to their show and enjoy a tasty treat while you are there.

**Now Through September 1**

Off the beaten path at JAA Gallery - Art and Artists of 904 at JAA  
Check out **Scotie Cousin’s** fun and fantastic  
“One Flew Over” display at the airport.

**Call to artists: 2024 San Marco Arts Festival sponsored by The Vault at 1930:**  
visit [sanmarcoartsfestival.com](http://sanmarcoartsfestival.com) or call 904-398-2890 for more information.

## KIDS’ SUMMER CAMP

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For ages 7-14, 2032 San Marco Blvd., [theatrejax.com](http://theatrejax.com)

**July 29 – August 2**

Generation Y Jazz Camp  
For kids in 5th grade through high school; [fridaymusicale.com](http://fridaymusicale.com)

**July 29 – August 2**

Ronan School of Music Rock Camp  
[ronanschoolofmusic.com](http://ronanschoolofmusic.com)

**July 29 – August 2**

Riverside Presbyterian Chorister Camp  
For grades 3-8, [rpcjax.org](http://rpcjax.org)

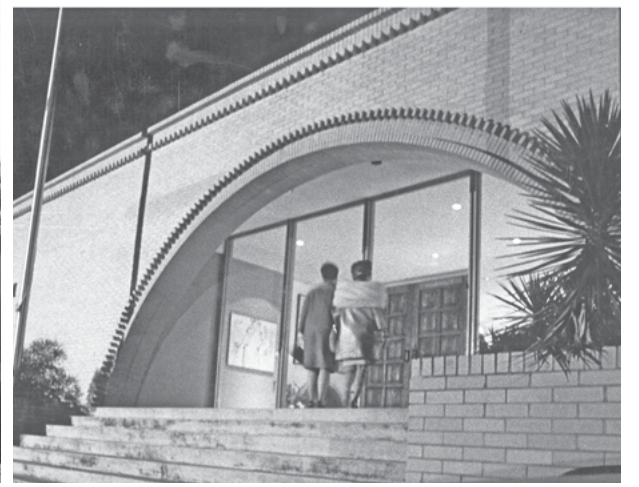
Do you know of an upcoming event or accolade that helps pump the rhythmic Artbeat of Jacksonville? Send the announcement to us at [editor@residentnews.net](mailto:editor@residentnews.net) for consideration in *The Beat Goes On*.



The Fleming Mansion in Riverside was the first physical building for the Jacksonville Art Museum, now known as MOCA.



The museum transitioned to the 1931-built Marsh & Saxelby Western Union building in the late 1990s and reopened in 2003 as the Jacksonville Museum of Modern Art, but was quickly renamed to MOCA.



In the 1960s, the Jacksonville Art Museum relocated to the Koger Center, which allowed for significant growth over the next few decades.

# MOCA: 100 years of beauty

By **Amber Sesnick**  
Guest Contributor

One of Jacksonville’s premier arts and cultural institutions marks its centennial this year, as the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville (MOCA) celebrates a century of showcasing the arts.

Founded in 1924 as the Jacksonville Fine Arts Society, it was the first visual arts organization in Jacksonville and one of the first art museums in the state of Florida. The museum grew out of the work of the Woman’s Club of Jacksonville, which regularly hosted art exhibitions for the public, with the purpose of fundraising for the city’s public schools. The civic-minded women of the club were some of the most influential changemakers in Jacksonville during the early 20th century.

Merrydelle Hoyt – longtime chair of the club’s art department – along with Rose Tharp, Louese Washburn and Edith Harrison created the organization that would become what is now MOCA Jacksonville. These visionary, pioneering women came together to imagine the kind of city they wanted Jacksonville to be. At the core of their vision for a rich, vital and dynamic city were art, culture and education. They believed that beauty was important to society and was something everyone should have access to and benefit from. Beauty, to them, did not begin in the privacy of the home, but belonged in the public square.

## Cutting-edge artists

On March 17, 1924, the Jacksonville Fine Arts Society hosted its first art exhibition – an event that would mark the beginning of the modern art movement in the South. It also established MOCA Jacksonville as the second museum of modern and contemporary art in the country, a focus that has remained throughout the museum’s history. The exhibition included works by 65 cutting-edge modernist artists, including George Ault, Peggy Bacon, Charles DeMuth, John Dos Passos, Wood Gaylor, Thomas Hart Benton, Walt Kuhn, Yasuo Kuniyoshi, Adelaide Lawson, Pablo Picasso, Diego Rivera, Katherine Schmidt, Joseph Stella, Isabel Whitney, and others. Roughly one-third of the artists in the exhibition were professional women artists, a number that was nearly unheard of at that time.

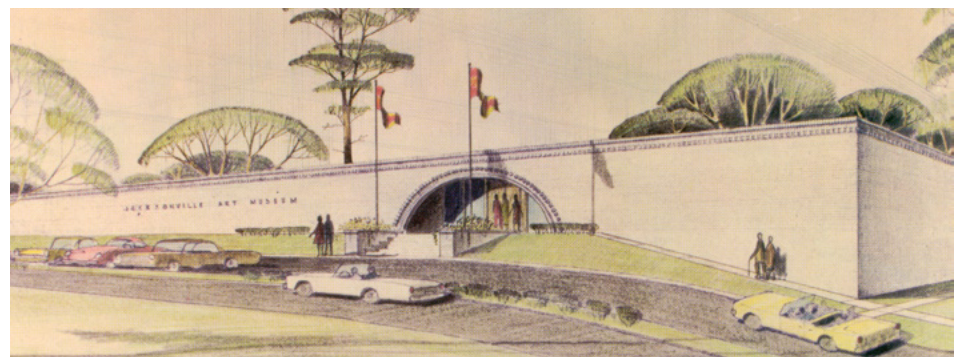
## A permanent home

Over the years, the museum has lived in many locations and has been known by many names. In 1948, the Jacksonville Fine Arts Society became the Jacksonville Art Museum (JAM) and found its first physical building in Riverside’s Fleming Mansion. After nearly 20 years there, JAM relocated to the Koger Center on Art Museum Drive. The new location allowed the museum to grow its permanent collection and reputation. During this time, the museum’s focus was primarily based on the Koger Collection, which was comprised of Chinese antiquities along with significant holdings of Pre-Columbian works. While the collection became more diverse, exhibitions and programming remained focused on exploring the art of the time.

Under the tenure of Director Bruce Dempsey, the permanent collection experienced significant growth in the 1970s and 1980s. Dempsey made noteworthy acquisitions that focused on contemporary artworks from the 1960s to the present. He also fostered donations by creating the Collectors’ Club, which would purchase directly for the museum’s collection. Large bodies of work were acquired, including the Norman E. Fisher Collection, Larry Clark’s *Tulsa* series, the estate of Memphis Wood, and an Alexander Calder sculpture and gouache paintings. Dempsey’s expansion of the print collection included acquisition of works by Richard Anuszkiewicz, Robert Zakanitch and Robert Rauschenberg.



The Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville celebrates 100 years in 2024.



A historic postcard captures the entrance of the Jacksonville Art Museum’s location during the late 20th century.

## Modern art, modern era

In the late 1990s, the museum started to transition to its current location in Downtown Jacksonville. Beginning around 1999, it did not have a public-facing physical facility until the completed renovation of its permanent home in 2003 in the historic Western Union building in downtown Jacksonville. At that time, it opened as the Jacksonville Museum of Modern Art, but changed its name shortly thereafter to the Museum of Contemporary Art Jacksonville to better reflect the focus and makeup of its permanent collection.

During this period, Director and Chief Curator George Kinghorn acquired numerous significant works from Jacksonville collector and philanthropist Preston H. Haskell, including works by Helen Frankenthaler, Paul Jenkins, James Rosenquist and Jules Olitski, as well as a major donation of 96 works from the collection of Donald and Maria Cox, which included artists Jake Berthot, Ilya Bolotowsky and Hans Hofmann.

In 2009, MOCA became a cultural institute of the University of North Florida (UNF). As it celebrates its 100th anniversary, the museum team is working to bring its history into focus while highlighting UNF’s contributions and shared successes.

Over the past century, MOCA’s founding principles – art, education, community building and the democratic power of beauty – have served as an enduring reminder of the museum’s mission to promote the discovery, knowledge and advancement of the art, artists and ideas of our time.

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# The Art of Light

By **Peggy Harrell Jennings**

Glass is one of the oldest artistic materials. Since medieval times, the art of stained-glass windows in churches and cathedrals has served to decorate, educate, inspire awe and offer honor and glory to God. And the churches of Jacksonville are replete with examples of this ancient art form.

## Light reflects divinity

Abbott Suger of St. Denis is called the “Father of Stained Glass” since it was his concept, based on scripture, that light reflects divinity. Over the centuries, decorative art has been created for instruction, storytelling and to depict Biblical symbolism that can be understood at a glance, a concept known as the “poor man’s Bible.” The windows illuminated dim interiors when no inward source was available, both physically and metaphorically. The marriage of stone and glass in highly ornamented pointed arched windows is a distinguishing characteristic of Gothic architecture, and the symbolism often embodies universal concepts, such as Jesus being portrayed as a shepherd.

To create such works, translucent glass, colored by sand and minerals, is fired in a furnace and then assembled puzzle-like to create patterns and designs. Tracery (ornate stonework) and mullions (decorative stone bars) can be simple or highly complex; these offer beauty and stability to complex designs. Inconsistencies in the glass due to variations in thickness can enhance the luminous and translucent quality.



St. Mark’s Episcopal Church rose window



Great Commission Rose Window St. Mark’s Episcopal Church



Alpha and Omega window, Riverside Park United Methodist



Church of the Good Shepherd Episcopal

## Jacksonville treasures

**Ortega Church’s** 16 stained glass windows glow with sunlight streaming through the handmade Murano glass created by master artist Anzolo Fuga of Italy using techniques from his family legacy of distinguished glass blowers and artisans. The first and central window, The Last Supper, was commissioned by church members Virginia and Umberto Pezzulla for the sanctuary and arrived in Jacksonville via Italian freighter in December 1961. The last of the 16 windows depicting the Life of Christ was installed in 1975.

More than 30 windows at **The Church of the Good Shepherd** in Riverside, meanwhile, depict scenes from

the Old Testament through the life of Christ. They were designed by parish member and architect Mellen Clark Greeley, with Corbusier, Lenski and Foster of Cleveland, Ohio, in the Gothic Revival style. Wooden relief carvings by Lang of Germany are integral throughout the architecture, as well as hand-carved limestone and a frieze with a vine of grapes representing Jesus as the “true vine and his followers as the branches.” Signs and symbols abound even in the handmade floor tiles based on centuries-old designs.

Architects Mark & Sheftall made their presence known throughout Jacksonville with schools, apartments, and the Gothic Revival designs of **Riverside Presbyterian Church** and **Trinity Lutheran Church** in Riverside. The rose

window at Trinity has ornate stone trefoil embellishments, while Riverside Presbyterian’s 42 windows, installed in the 1940s, were designed by the esteemed Willet Stained Glass Studios in Philadelphia. “The Passion Window,” designed for the chancel, was installed in 1943 and “The Children’s Window” in 1948. Each magnificent window presents Christ-centered visuals or great figures of Christian theology.

Willet Studios also created the 42 windows in **Avondale United Methodist Church** – another Sheftall design – as well as the 14 windows of Riverside Park United Methodist Church, some of which depict the life and contributions of John Wesley. The stunning works include the magnificent “Ascension Window” and the unique, three-dimensional, John Barrymore-designed window called “Alpha and Omega.”

**Riverside Avenue Christian Church** has retained most of the Gothic elements from Marsh and Saxelby’s 1922 design, which is enhanced with painted and fired windows designed by Roy Comber and artist Richard Millard of New York.

Ships – a common symbol of the gospel – are found in all denominations, but particularly in **St. Paul’s Catholic Church** in Riverside. The 1940 church, with windows by Rambush Studios, is well known for its art and has numerous sculptures and murals throughout.

The 1922-era windows of **St. Mark’s Episcopal Church** in Ortega are treasured features of the church. The Great Commission rose window reminds parishioners to “Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations.” The glowing, circular-shaped rose window of **Murray Hill Baptist Church** symbolizes Christ as the sun, “the way, the truth and the light.”

In juxtaposition with its Gothic neighboring churches, **Riverside Baptist Church’s** windows are subtle, with panes of blue and yellow promoting a sense of peace and awe throughout the massive sanctuary. Two rose windows on facing sides bring light into the cavernous space, designed to lift spirits upward and promote majesty. Detailed carvings, imported 16th-century floor tiles, spindle-backed benches and outside gargoyles give the Addison Mizner-designed church a distinctive aura.

Throughout the historic districts, one can experience what **Church of the Good Shepherd** states as: “Man’s art and craft... man’s devotion and God’s light become God’s radiance of glory.”



Christianna White Fletcher

## Five Jacksonville artists selected for international festival

Four Jacksonville-based artists will be exhibiting alongside juror Christianna White Fletcher and 200 other juried international artists at the 10th annual Geoje International Art Festival in South Korea.

To be held Nov. 1 through Dec. 25, the festival begins at the Haegeumgang Theme Museum and Yukyung Contemporary Art Museum in Geoje and tours museums and cultural institutions across South Korea.

A Jacksonville native and previous owner of Studio Apothecary, Fletcher was selected as a juror for the 10th annual festival after her “Great Expectations” acrylic on canvas garnered a Curator’s Award at the 9th annual festival. As a juror, Fletcher selected local artists Allison Dick, Michele D. Lee, MacTruque and Pablo Rivera for the show. They will join several American and international artists, including Florida artists Camelia Carnahan (Tampa) and Paula Jo Lentz (Pensacola), Chelleby Starr (Missouri), Clara Woods (California) and Nawar Jawad

Kadhim (Iraq).

Several members of the group were in attendance and on display during June’s Amplified Avondale, while Fletcher’s work is also currently available at Lily’s Chic Boutique in Ortega.



Fletcher’s work “Great Expectations” garnered her a Curator’s Award at the 9th annual Geoje International Art Festival.

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# LOCAL FOLKS

# Alexei Acosta



Alexei Acosta films at a Jacksonville Jumbo Shrimp game.



Noelle, Avery and Alexei Acosta

By Jennifer Jensen

Although Alexei Acosta isn't a Jacksonville native, he has an immense amount of love for his new home and wants to use his business to showcase the city the way he sees it.

"I very much, unapologetically, try to be as much of a local as I can," he said. "I really do just love Jacksonville. I've loved every place I've lived, and I never dreamed I'd be saying this, but I think this is my forever home."

He moved to Jacksonville with his wife, Noelle, in 2021 and started Here Boy Productions, a full-service videography company. He focuses mainly on creating visual content for local events and small businesses around Jacksonville.

"I work really hard to push the client to see what their creative limits might be, and then find where my creative limits might be and try to push them both," Acosta said. "I just want to engage with people and be able to tell their stories."

Acosta didn't start with the intention of being a creative videographer. After growing up in Mexico and graduating from Boston University, he moved to Los Angeles to pursue acting. While there, he started a few businesses, including a valet company. His work as a wedding videographer "rekindled" his passion for film and videography – until the pandemic shut down events...and business.

At that time, Acosta, his wife and all his large camera equipment were stuck in a 600-square-foot apartment. Not being "the kind of guy to just sit around and twiddle [his] fingers," he and his wife decided it was time for a move. They chose Jacksonville because Noelle had grown up here, near Miramar.

They bought a house in San Marco because they loved the small-town feel. Acosta said it often reminds him of where he grew up in Mexico: The city of San Juan Teotihuacan is home to one of the four major archaeological sites in Mexico, with pyramids that are more than 2,000 years old.

"I could go up to my roof and see these enormous pyramids – in so many ways, it was such a magical upbringing," he said. "That was probably one of the reasons I was so drawn to San Marco. When I walked down to the corner store I was greeted by the vendor by my name. They knew me. And that's the feel that you have here in San Marco. It really brings me back to my childhood and is definitely not something we could have had in L.A."

Upon arriving in Jacksonville, Acosta felt the best way to learn about the area was simply to drive around. He was instantly "wowed" by the city.

"I loved the murals. I loved the statues. I loved the beach, the atmosphere. I don't know if the locals see this city with as much love as I do, but I want to portray the city the way I see it."

Acosta put together a 90-second video that showcased the city in a new light and blasted it out to everyone he could find. He attended events post-pandemic and networked with other members of the community to build business.

Since then, he and Noelle have had two sons: Avery, 2, and newborn Jameson.

“I don't know if the locals see this city the way I see it, with as much love as I do, but I want to portray the city the way I see it.”

– Alexei Acosta

"It was so hard with Avery because, obviously, no one prepares you for the insanity," he said. "And with Jameson, I definitely felt so much more prepared. I feel a lot more laid back. And with Avery, it's almost as if I have a little sidekick to kind of help me smooth things over."

While his business allows him to make his own schedule and be there for all the little moments, Acosta still worries about balancing work with family time.

"It's a super tricky balance," he said. "I'm of the mindset that these boys are going to fly from the nest eventually. They'll probably want nothing to do with their parents soon enough. So, what's 18 years of full attention? I'm a father first and then a business owner."

Acosta's love of nature and the outdoors was reignited when he moved to the area. The family likes to take long walks, and Acosta recently discovered the now-favorite Hanna Park, where he hopes eventually to take the boys camping.

"With my first boy, I quickly figured out that he was drawn to our walks and drawn to adventures in nature," he said.

Acosta also loves to play the guitar, calling it a "driving influence" in his creativity and identity.

In the future, Acosta hopes to find more of the Mexican community in Jacksonville and expose his children to that culture. Around Halloween, he puts up an altar at the front of his house to honor loved ones who have passed, and he has a dream to start a festive Day of the Dead event to share his culture with others.

"Growing up, it really shaped my sense of background, my sense of my appreciation for life, my appreciation for death," he said. "It would be another way to not only make myself a part of the community but also make the community a part of me as well."



Alexei and Noelle Acosta on their honeymoon in Thailand

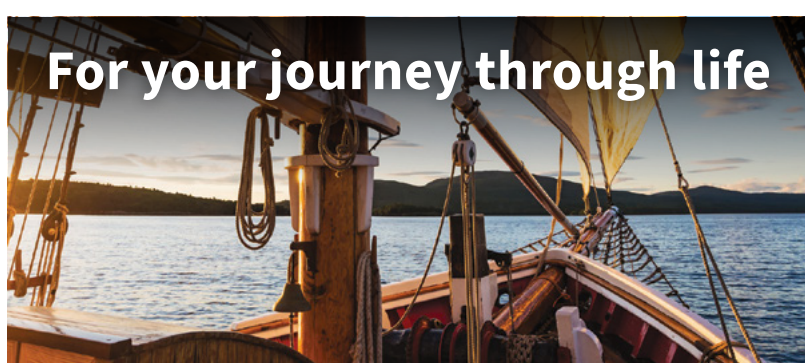
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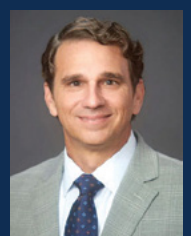
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By  
**Susanna  
Barton**

# The aromas of home

Last month, we talked about the sounds of the neighborhoods, so of course, this month, we're going to sniff out the smells of our Resident Community and why we are so fortunate to whiff it all in.

No matter which side of the river you call home, the morning smells from Downtown's Maxwell House Coffee plant are sure to waft your way, depending on which direction the wind is blowing. Isn't it just divine? We are one of the few neighborhoods in town to enjoy this nutty, roasted aroma. When the bestie and I were running in the wee hours of the morning, it was a little prize for getting up so dang early to exercise. Some days it was so strong, I almost felt like I was drinking the coffee – gave me a real lift, put a zesty spring in my step.

Some mornings, the Maxwell House coffee scent made me hungry for a big breakfast. But it never made me as hungry as the morning smells from the wings place on Hendricks Avenue, or perhaps another neighboring restaurant, during 9 a.m. pickleball matches at Southside Tennis Complex. Geesh. The garlic smells and fried meat are simply overwhelming

and will singlehandedly drive a weak person like me to any open establishment selling food in the area afterward – you know, to over-replenish what few calories I might have burned on the pickleball court earlier.

This may sound very weird, but I enjoy catching someone's scent when we pass on the sidewalk. I have yet to pass someone stinky. My favorite is a couple that smells like they showered in talcum powder. It's such a nostalgic smell; I have a hard time not running after them for a big, hearty, grandmotherly hug. That's the way my grandmother smelled. Scents are memory-makers.

I also enjoy snuffling clean clothes tumbling around in some neighbor's dryer. On walks I often catch this smell, which in my mind is the scent of progress. I use Diva laundry detergent perfume and a friend told me she can smell it in my neighborhood when she's on her walks. That stuff is potent, and if you enjoy people telling you how pleasant you smell, you should buy some stat. Just the other day on a walk, a woman passed me then yelled out, "Do you use that Diva soap?"

When I answered yes, she said, "I knew it!" as if she'd made a daily double on "Jeopardy!"

Another scent that defines our neighborhoods is the smell of actual fire from actual fireplaces during our colder months. Many homes were designed with real fireplaces and functioning chimneys, not the fake ones newer neighborhoods get. Disclaimer: We have a fake fireplace, dammit. Our home was originally built in the 1930s as a one-story brick ranch and architect Bill Jaycox transformed it into a two-story Mediterranean-style beauty in the mid-1990s. We love everything about it, especially its location. But alas, our fireplace is gas and I'm not even sure if we have a working flue. It looks right nice!

Though never fear, we have plenty of fire around here, and after Christmas you can really smell how lit we are if you walk past our backyard firepit – the site of David's annual Christmas tree burnings. He likes to collect discarded trees and drag them to our backyard, where they often sit for months awaiting the perfect burning moment. You're welcome for infusing a campy, backwoods-y, outdoorsman-y odor to the neighborhood. During November, you might also notice a fried bird smell coming from the backyard, as David also likes to share his fryer with other friends needing to cook their Thanksgiving turkey.

And of course, on nice spring and summer evenings, our neighborhoods often smell like seasoned meat as folks flock to their patios and get their grill on. This is my favorite time of the year, mainly because David is a prolific griller and that means I get to eat more delicious food.

A reflection on our neighborhood smells wouldn't be complete without mention of a really repulsive odor, and by that, I mean whatever weird Fabuloso-inspired stink it is that mysteriously seeps into our atmosphere some mornings and sings our nose hairs. Have we ever

figured out what exactly it is? I guess the City Council was on it and researched whether a fragrance factory north of town was to blame. And honestly, I haven't smelled it in a while, so maybe the whole thing is fixed. On the down low, I really like huffing Fabuloso because it tells me wherever I am at the moment is clean and germ-free. But Fabuloso doesn't smell great in the wild; that feels – unnatural and gross. Fingers crossed those smells are a thing of the neighborhoods' past.

In our Resident Community, we are also fortunate to smell the rain come across the St. Johns River. That is a lovely fragrance – it's not fake and deodorizing like that rude Fabuloso blech. A rain coming across the river has that natural, nourishing, earthy scent that indicates a Mother Nature-inspired cleaning. In other areas of town, a rainstorm just makes things smell like wet rubber and dirty asphalt. We get the good smelling rain – the kind that mixes with our brackish river waters and gets strained by the lushness of our mature tree canopy. And that really is fabuloso.

Let's end things on a floral note. Spring is when we get to fill our nostrils with a bouquet of natural sweetness. The confederate jasmine and honeysuckle vines that bloom along fences and gates emit intoxicating perfumes that suggest, "Ahhh, it's another beautiful day in our neighborhood." And it is.

*Susanna Barton likes smelling good, and her signature scent is a mix of Old Spice Timber deodorant, Fragonard Étoile spray and straight-up Jergens body lotion, though she is mostly known for the Diva detergent. A Granada resident, Barton has written professionally for The Jacksonville Business Journal, The Resident, Jacksonville University and The Bolles School. She currently manages an online community called Grand Plans, which encourages healthy conversations about aging and preparing for it, on [www.mygrandplans.com](http://www.mygrandplans.com).*



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# THE WAY WE WERE



Cathie Clark and Brooks Andrews on their honeymoon in Positano, Italy



Brooks Andrews and Cathie Clark celebrate their marriage with their family, including Weston, Lauren, Morgan, Sara, Brooks, Cathie, Lindsay, Doug, Kelly and Taylor.



Brooks Andrews hikes with his dog Finn in North Carolina.

# Brooks Andrews

By Jennifer Jensen

If you have visited Southern Grounds on a Friday morning, you might have noticed a small group of older men chatting and drinking coffee. This group has been dubbed the Koffee Klatch.

It all started in 2023, after Brooks Andrews retired from a long career as a chemical engineer.

“My wife was saying ‘Brooks, you’re retired, you really need some friends,’” he said.

But he had always been one of those guys who never really needed a tight group of close friends beyond family.

“I had always had a lot of people around me business wise, and I had just come off of being a board chair for RAP (Riverside Avondale Preservation), and so I wasn’t devoid of social interaction,” Andrews said. “But she was saying, ‘you just need some closer guy friends,’” Andrews said. “And so, I got to thinking about that.”

He then rounded up six friends for consistent get-togethers rather than having just random meetings here and there. The plan was to meet every two weeks on Friday mornings for coffee at Southern Grounds.

These types of groups can be seen all over the country and have been called ROMEOS, which stands for “Retired Old Men Eating Out.” But that didn’t seem to fit this group appropriately.

“We wanted to go beyond that,” Andrews said. “This group stands for ‘Rogue Older Men Educating Ourselves.’”

“It’s more than just getting together,” he continued. “We talk about what’s on our minds, what’s going on in this city, what someone is excited about, maybe a new book or new topic. We get into some very in-depth conversations, whether it be the Jags stadium or climate change; downtown development; challenges in city, state and federal government; or even our own health.”

The group recently had a serious discussion about serving as caregivers to aging parents. One member recently went through the process of moving his parents into an assisted living facility, and he was able to talk about it and reflect on it in a safe space surrounded by supportive friends.

“It’s helpful to chat about it with others, to see what they’ve done or thought about or have experienced in the recent past,” Andrews said. “It’s been great fun and very supportive and something I would encourage others to do.”

They also discussed the process of nearing the end of their lives, dealing with dementia and how they are handling those situations.

“That’s been helpful for us,” Andrews said. “And that situation speaks to something that each of us needs. I think one of the reasons why we all feel compelled to do this is that we all need mental stimulation. We all need social interaction.”

“(ROME) stands for 'Rogue Older Men Educating Ourselves.' It's more than just getting together. We talk about what's on our minds.”

– Brooks Andrews

The group has quite an array of members from different backgrounds. Andrews is a retired chemical engineer, while the other members include a landscape architect, hospital administrator, attorney, retail executive, educator, nonprofit executive and leadership development consultant.

“We are like minded when it comes to politics and

our vision for Jacksonville, and it’s super helpful that our backgrounds are so diverse,” Andrews said.

The group has started to gain somewhat of a reputation, with several people wondering if they are “solving all the problems in Jacksonville.”

“I’m not sure that it’s well deserved, but it’s kind of fun,” Andrews said with a laugh.

The group tends to dive into important topics facing the city and have voiced their opinions when they feel it’s necessary. They’ve reached out to Councilmember Jimmy Peluso and written letters to the editor.

Lately, the group has been discussing taking on a



specific project. They just need to agree on what that project might be.

“We want to try to make a difference rather than chat about it or get our frustrations off our shoulders,” Andrews said. “We ought to do something that is a little more sustainable and a little more meaning to it in the long term.”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39

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Koffee Klatch Dinner: The Koffee Klatch group meets for dinner with their spouses, including Rick and Susan Pariani, Warren and Faith Jones, John and Cheryl Sapora, Perry and Cindy Reynolds, Chris and Peggy Hildreath, Ted and Nancy Powell, and Brooks Andrews and Cathie Clark.



Brooks Andrews and Cathie Clark with their family

When Andrews isn't hanging with the Koffee Klatch, he enjoys spending time with his wife, Cathie Clark, an interior designer with whom he reconnected through a mutual friend. The couple – who attended the same preschool all the way up to Episcopal and knew each other but weren't friends – have two children each, ranging in age from 30 to 37 years old (Weston, Morgan, Lindsay and Kelly).

The two married in 2021 after 10 years of dating. They waited for COVID to pass and for their children to get settled in their own married lives.

"We've got a combined family of four wonderful kids, two girls and two boys, and now we have six grandchildren under the age of 2.5," Andrews said. And he is currently waiting on another grandchild who will be born very soon.

"That is an added new dimension to our lives," Andrews said. "I didn't think I was ready to be a grandparent, but nobody asked me whether I was, it just sort of happens. And we certainly didn't think it was going to happen this quick, or with so many all at once."

To their grandchildren, they are Gramps and Gram – names they chose rather than leaving it up to chance or the whim of a toddler.

"To watch them grow up and develop little personalities and to be a part of their lives is pretty darn special," he said.

Clark and Andrews spend a lot of time traveling. They take a family trip to North Carolina each fall.

"We try to get as many of our kids together as we can and we rent a big house or cabin," he said. "That's important to us as well."

They also love traveling as a couple, typically taking two big trips a year. This year, they are heading to Switzerland and back to Italy, where they spent their post-COVID honeymoon.

"That's an important part of our life right now," he added.

They have been to Europe, the Caribbean, St. Lucia, Glacier National Park, the Canadian Rockies, North Carolina and many other places.

After retirement, Andrews also decided he wanted to become more involved in the community. In addition to serving on the RAP board, he volunteers with the St. Johns Riverkeeper's RiverX boat trips for fourth through sixth grade students.

"We teach them about environmental issues associated with the river and I'm the salinity guy," he said. "I show

the kids how to measure salinity and different spots in the river and the pros and cons of salt water and our St. Johns River."

He has also served as a kayak guide on Amelia Island, where he has a beach house for getaways and as a place for family and friends to stay.

Andrews and Clark are also huge dog lovers. They have a German short-haired pointer named Finn that was adopted as a retirement gift and "training project" for Andrews. Finn runs alongside Andrews as he rides his bike or strolls among the shops of Avondale

"A lot of the people in the neighborhood know us as Finn's parents."

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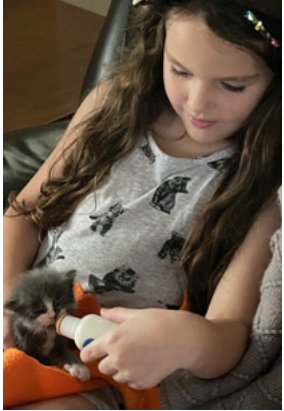
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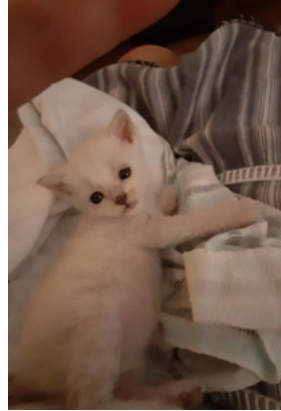
Sarah Earley bottle feeds Harry



Sarah &amp; Harry today



Brenda, Jim &amp; Jonathon Haffner with Nimbus



Atlas posing



Daisy Hardaker &amp; Atlas

## Orphan kitten fosters save most at-risk shelter pets

By Julie Kerns Garmendia

Many visitors to local animal shelters are unaware that there is an ongoing crisis behind the scenes that surges during the spring and summer. Each day, orphaned kittens flood into shelters, and the harsh reality is that shelter staff cannot possibly care for all of them. And while shelter volunteers provide invaluable help, the greatest need is for more community volunteers who are willing and able to foster kittens in their homes.

Newborn kittens up to eight weeks old are the most at-risk animals in shelters because they are fragile and physically vulnerable to illness, infection or disease. In order to survive, they require specific care and feeding every few hours from birth to six weeks old if there is no mother cat to nurse them. There are also other foster needs, including pregnant cats awaiting the birth of their kittens, nursing mother cats with kittens, or cats and kittens with special needs, injuries or illnesses.

Fostered kittens are cared for in private homes until they reach eight weeks old, two pounds in weight and are healthy. Then, they are ready to return to the shelter for spay/neuter and adoption.

### The Hardakers & Atlas

When Tanya Hardaker and her daughter Daisy, 14, learned that Pam Love had foster kittens available, they decided it might be time to adopt since their cat had passed away.

"Instead of just adopting, we began fostering a newborn orphaned kitten," Hardaker said. "Daisy easily learned to bottle-feed and care for the baby she named Atlas."

Love – a longtime Avondale resident and passionate animal rescuer – taught Daisy to bottle-feed and introduced her to another kitten foster, Merry Carter, who hired the enthusiastic teen to help care for her foster kittens through Springfield Kitty Cat Shack Rescue.

Carter said all rescues and shelters need volunteers to bottle-feed, tame, socialize or

care for newborn, ill and injured homeless kittens and cats.

"I hired Daisy to help with my foster kittens because I hoped that with early experience, a motivated teen like Daisy would carry her love for them forward," said Carter, who was a Florida State College professor of medical laboratory science prior to her 2015 retirement. "I believe she will continue to foster, encouraging others to do so."

Daisy's mother believes fostering kittens has been a positive experience for her.

"Daisy is learning to help in her community and other positive life skills, including responsibility and interacting with others," said Hardaker, whose family of nine includes three biological and four adopted children ages 8 to 17. "Our family has a heart for fostering and adopting children without homes. Daisy transferred that into helping homeless animals."

Daisy agreed.

"I love caring for the kittens," she said. "Adults and kids around my age can learn to do it with no problem. It's important to help others, even animals, who cannot help themselves."

### The Earleys & Harry Potter

Heather Earley said her daughter Sarah, 10, always wanted a kitten and expressed her desire constantly by wearing kitten ears and outfits with cats on them. But Benny, the family's Australian shepherd, had other ideas and was aggressive toward cats during walks. The family's loud Conure birds, Jenn and Sunny, were two more reasons a cat did not fit the family.

Things changed, however, when Sarah's father Larry Earley, a home inspector and contractor, heard mewing at a vacant home. He found three newborn kittens in an open cooler lying on its side. The next day, when he returned, two of the kittens were gone. Only a male kitten with

closed, infected eyes had been left behind by the mother cat. Illness is one reason mother cats abandon kittens.

Earley brought the kitten home. After several different pet-feeding bottles were purchased but failed to work, the family sought help on Nextdoor. Pam Love responded, taking the kitten into foster care and starting treatment for its eye infection.

Sarah, then 8, and her younger brother Mathew had fallen in love with the kitten she named "Harry Potter" due to his long hair. Sarah begged her parents to allow her to visit the kitten and help care for him.

"Sarah began learning how to bottle-feed a kitten at a young age with her parents' support," Love said. "Then, they allowed her to learn kitten care once his eye infection cleared."

The runt kitten who survived abandonment and a serious eye infection charmed the entire Earley family, who adopted him. Harry Potter is now a healthy, handsome leader of the pack who controls the family dog and ignores the birds.

### The Haffner Family & Nimbus

Jim and Brenda Haffner and their adult autistic son, Jonathon, became Jacksonville Humane Society (JHS) kitten fosters through the encouragement of their daughter, Marin, who shifted gears from her law degree and found her calling in the animal care field. Now a JHS employee, she recruits family and friends to foster.

The Haffners previously fostered dogs and puppies with Paw Paw's Pet Rescue, but they never fostered newborn kittens for JHS until 2023.

"Our current foster kitten, Nimbus, has won our hearts," said Brenda Haffner. "Our son has severe anxiety, and through learning to help care for kittens, he found comfort, stress relief, learned new skills and has benefited from exposure to new experiences with them."

### How to foster

There is a critical shortage of volunteer kitten fosters for Jacksonville's major animal shelters, situated at two different locations on each side of the St. Johns River: Animal Care & Protective Services (ACPS) located downtown at 2020 Forest St.; and the Jacksonville Humane Society at 8464 Beach Blvd. Both shelters provide free veterinarian services for foster animals, plus supplies, care instructions and staff support.

Anyone who cares about orphaned kittens can learn how to become a temporary foster and care for them at home, helping shelters save countless kittens. Families, couples, teens, singles, retirees, youth (with adult supervision) and people with special needs can all learn to care for orphan kittens. New volunteer fosters can visit either shelter to apply or go to their websites for more information.

Staff or experienced volunteers can provide training for all stages of kitten feeding, including bottle-feeding, which is necessary from birth to approximately six weeks of age. In addition, Love is willing to assist those who find orphaned kittens by offering the training and advice they need to successfully foster or adopt. Her email address is: [pllove2572@gmail.com](mailto:pllove2572@gmail.com).

### Resources

<https://www.maddiesfund.org/orphaned-kitten-care-how-to-html>

Kitten Lady on YouTube: kitten bottle-feeding videos.

Animal Care & Protective Services  
<https://www.jacksonville.gov/departments/neighborhoods/animal-care>

Email: [acpsfosters@coj.net](mailto:acpsfosters@coj.net)

Jacksonville Humane Society  
<https://jaxhumane.org/kittenhelp>

(904) 725-8766

Springfield Kitty Cat Shack  
<https://www.sprkittycatshack.org>

## Orphan kitten care instructions

If a kitten or litter is found outdoors alone, watch to see if a mother cat is nearby or returns to feed the kitten(s). Mothers may roam but return often to nurse their litter. If they are in a safe place and it is possible, leave them alone but help nursing mothers by providing shelter, food and water.

If no mother cat is seen within a few hours, carefully move the kittens to a warm indoor space. Orphaned kittens are defenseless and can be smelled by outdoor predators. Contact the Jacksonville Humane Society or Animal Care & Protective Services for information and instructions regarding how to care for kittens and obtain needed supplies. If unable to care for the kitten(s), discuss intake or other options with shelter staff.

Newborn neonate kittens have folded ears, pink noses and paws and closed eyes

that must open naturally. Never touch or attempt to open the eyes to avoid infection.

The umbilical cord remains attached until it dries and falls off. Do not remove the umbilical cord but allow it to naturally fall off. Never bathe kittens until the umbilical cord drops off, but keep them clean with a warm, wet cloth as their mother would by licking them.

Keep the kittens dry and warm. Kittens under six weeks cannot regulate body temperature and need a room temperature of 80 to 85 degrees. Their mother's body increases that temperature; an extra warmth source such as a heating pad or snuggle safe disk is needed. The disk should be warmed in a microwave for approximately five minutes. Place a soft towel or blanket between the kittens and the heating pad or disk. As an alternative,

fill a cotton athletic sock with 3.5 cups of rice and knot it about mid-calf. Heat the sock in the microwave for one minute to provide 60 minutes of warmth.

Kittens sleep approximately 90 percent of the time except when feeding.

### Kitten Feeding

Newborn kittens must be fed by syringe, dropper or bottle every two hours (every week of age adds another hour between feedings), including overnight. They do not have a gag reflex, requiring them to be fed slowly, with extreme care to prevent choking or aspiration. If the kitten gurgles or bubbles come from the nose, it has sucked formula into the lungs or aspirated. Hold it upside down until choking stops and seek veterinarian care. After each feeding, burp kittens by gently massaging their backs. Until 3 weeks of age, kittens must be stimulated after each feeding with a warm cloth to be able to urinate and defecate.

Only KMR (Kitten Milk Replacer) liquid or powder kitten formula can be fed to neonate kittens. Follow packaging instructions or mix one part powder formula with two parts water. A few drops of Pedialyte can be used in an emergency to prevent dehydration until KMR can be obtained. Cow milk is not nutritious enough and causes diarrhea. Any unused, untouched formula can be stored up to three days in the refrigerator or can be frozen. Uneaten, warmed formula touched by utensils, dishes, hands or the kitten must be discarded to prevent bacterial contamination.

At five weeks, weaning to wet food begins and water should be provided at all times. When kittens reach eight weeks and 2 pounds of weight they are ready to be spayed/neutered and adopted. A small plastic container low enough for the kittens to climb into can be filled with cat litter for the kittens, who will use it as soon as they are steadily able to walk. Clean the litter frequently.

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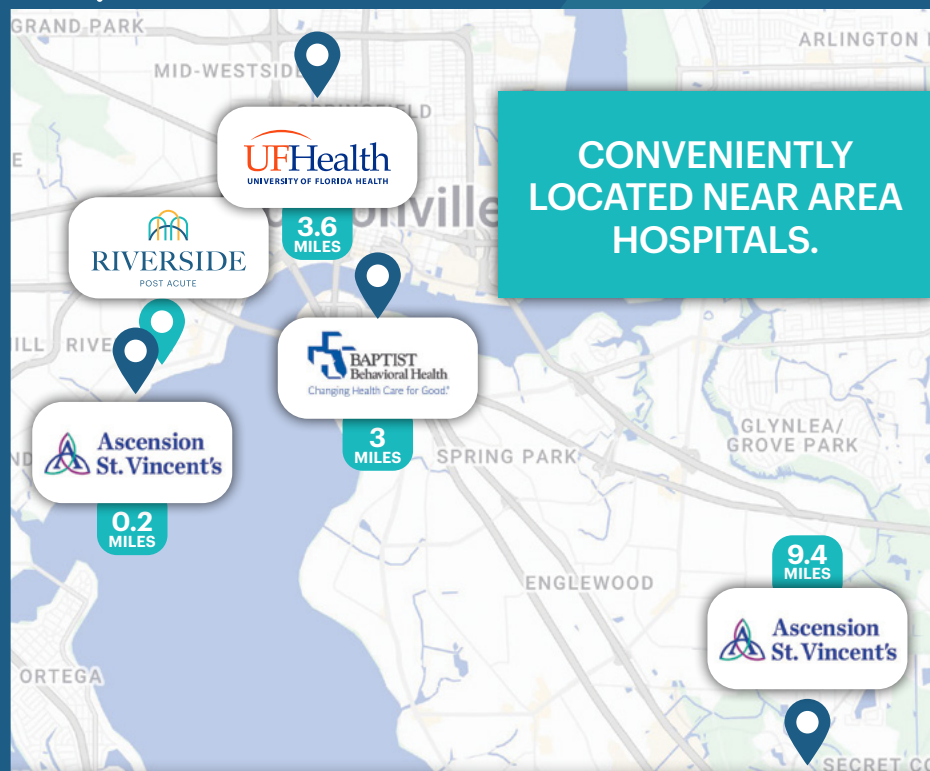
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**John F.  
Gaillard**

John (Jack) Frierson Gaillard, passed away peacefully June 2 surrounded by his family. Jack was born in Jacksonville on July 28, 1934, to Martha Lee (Tillman) Gaillard and Henry Frierson Gaillard. He graduated from the University of Florida and the University of Florida College of Law and practiced law in the state of Florida for more than 60 years.

Jack worked passionately throughout his life to improve and enrich the lives of its citizens. When a new group of more effective medicines resulted in thousands of patients being released from state mental hospitals in the 1960s, Jack used his role as president of the Jacksonville Mental Health Association to create halfway houses for their transition back into the community from what had been a life sentence. He represented many of them in restoring their civil rights.

In his role as president of the Florida Mental Health Association, he led a special committee that drafted and received passage of the state's first community mental health laws that shifted emphasis from large state hospitals to community treatment facilities.

During these years, he also served as chief assistant state attorney for Duval County.

His most prized contribution came in his capacity as committee chair and president of Daniel Memorial Home for Children (Daniel Kids). He led its transition and advancement from orphanage to residential treatment center for emotionally damaged children. To this end, he chaired committees to build new residences, recruit a new CEO and secure additional operating funds.



He also served as president of Jacksonville's Mental Health Clinic (now the Mental Health Resource Center) and as a member of the District Mental Health Board, which the earlier legislation created.

As chief counsel for the State Board of Health (now the Florida Department of Health), Jack led litigation to improve living conditions for guest workers in the Everglades.

In 1967, when the Charter for Consolidated Jacksonville was before the Florida legislature, it was necessary to redraft the judicial article for Constitutionality. He wrote a successful article that streamlined the city's courts system from seven levels to two.

While serving as vice president of legal and public affairs of the Florida Publishing Company (FPC), he was its board member of Area Communications, Inc. In that capacity, he engineered a joint venture with American Telecommunications Company (now Time Warner) to build and operate Consolidated Jacksonville's first cable television system (now Comcast). He also was president of FPC's wholly owned subsidiary TV system in Clay and Nassau counties during their build-out phase.

When Jacksonville's cable system was under construction, he initiated news and advertising services from Florida Publishing Company headquarters advertising services to cable audiences.

Jack served on the board of the MESBIC (a minority lending organization) and chaired the JCCI study on minority businesses in Jacksonville. Jack also chaired the United Way study on the education needs in Duval County. He served on the boards of Hope Haven Hospital, the Child Guidance Clinic, Memorial Hospital, the Jacksonville Urban League and the Ritz Theatre. Through the Church of the Good Shepherd, he also served on FISH duty, where he gave rides to those needing services at the University Hospital (now UF Health Jacksonville).

Jack loved the arts, serving on the board of the Jacksonville Symphony and the Jacksonville Art Museum (now MOCA). With his wife, he collected the works of area artists, and when the irreplaceable E.M. Skinner organ at the Church of The Good Shepherd fell into disrepair, he chaired a committee that raised the funds and oversaw its restoration. He also served three terms on its vestry.

As president of Jacksonville's Arts Assembly (now Cultural Council), he led the acquisition and restoration planning of the Florida Theatre. He also served on the State of Florida Fine Arts Council and shared in founding the St. John's River City Band and the Riverside Fine Arts Association.

He enjoyed bringing performing artists to his native city, among them Ray Charles, Dizzy Gillespie, Dave Brubeck, John Williams and The Atlanta Symphony under Robert Shaw.

His most rewarding activity came as he worked directly with clients, including those of The Salvation Army, Meals on Wheels and Jacksonville's Area Legal Aid, on which board he also served.

Jack treasured Richard P. Daniel, Judge Bryan Simpson and J.J. Daniel as friends, mentors and benefactors. He was blessed with valued assistance in his activities from Stanley Taylor, Ed Hitt, Bob Yates, Trinita Logue, Loraine Ruttger, Carolyn Gentry, Dan Cook, Booth Summer, Steve Tappe and other dedicated colleagues.

His greatest joy was his family, who were fortunate to be regaled by his tales of his complicated and quietly valiant life. Jack shared with his family his values and passions, leaving behind a legacy for history, political science, social justice, civil rights, music, art, mental health rights, dying with dignity and community service.

Predeceased by his parents and his brothers, Samuel Dunlap Gaillard and James DuBose Gaillard (Elaine), he is survived by his adoring wife of nearly 59 years, Patricia "Patsy" Eskew Gaillard; his children, Martha Brice Gaillard, John Westcott Gaillard (Scott) and Rachel deBelle Gaillard; his grandchildren, Julia Gaillard Sandlin and Benjamin Frierson Sandlin; and his brother, Richard Lee Gaillard as well as a host of other beloved family members including the Dunlaps, the Borlands, the Buckmans and the Hendrixes.

# Joseph “Jody” Alva Brandenburg

MAY 23, 1943 ~ JUNE 10, 2024



Joseph “Jody” Alva Brandenburg, 81, the president and funeral director of Hardage-Giddens Funeral Homes and Cemeteries and a leader within the bereavement community, died June 10.

Born on May 23, 1943, to Patricia and Roger Brandenburg, he was raised in Homestead, Florida. From his early years playing baseball for the St. Louis Cardinals to his rise to the corporate offices of Service Corporation International (SCI) as president of the floral division, Jody’s life was defined by hard work and dedication. A veteran of the U.S. Army National Guard, he earned his degree in Mortuary Science from the Dallas Institute of Funeral Service.

In addition to serving as president of Hardage-Giddens until his death, Jody was appointed by governors Jeb Bush, Charlie

Crist, Rick Scott and Ron DeSantis to five, four-year terms on the State Board of Funeral, Cemetery and Consumer Services, serving on the board from 2005 through the time of his death and as its chairman from 2009 to 2022.

Jody was a dedicated member of the Jacksonville community and beloved by many. He was a philanthropist who donated to many charities, including River Garden Senior Services, Community Hospice, Childrens Home Society of Florida, American Heart Association, American Diabetes Association, Rotary Club of Jacksonville, Police Council of Jacksonville, Safari Club International, Cummer Museum Ponce De Leon Society and the Museum of Contemporary Art.

He was also an avid outdoorsman, participating in safaris in Africa and on many

hunts in Argentina and other destinations around the world. He loved to travel with his wife and children, Lorelei and Dale, making New York City a regular Christmas occasion. The family also made countless trips to the south of France, where they enjoyed Cannes and other sights and cultural centers throughout the countryside.

To his family, who cherished his fun-loving personality, Jody was considered Most Valuable Player, inspiring them to be the best they could be.

Jody married the love of his life, the former Janne Ferrell, in 1987. In addition to his wife, he is survived by his brother, Roger Brandenburg (Joan); and his children, Dale Linder (Elizabeth), Joel Brandenburg, Jr. (Ana), Lorelei Figueroa (Juan Carlos) and Elizabeth Brandenburg. He was a caring grandfather to Dale Linder

DiLalla; Joseph Brandenburg, III; Drew Daniel (Ashley); Emily Frattarelli (Josh); Brooke Brandenburg; Alexa Grace Linder; Eleanor Linder; Jackson Linder; Taelor Anne Linder; and two great grandchildren, Atlas Brandenburg and Willow Watson.

The family expresses its deep appreciation to the staff at River Garden Senior Services and Community Hospice for their love and care of Jody. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to River Garden Hebrew Home for the Aged, 11401 Old St. Augustine Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32258; or Community Hospice of Jacksonville, 4266 Sunbeam Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32258.

A Celebration of Life will be held Saturday, July 13 at 11 a.m. in Hardage-Giddens Oaklawn Funeral Home Legacy Lodge, 4801 San Jose Blvd., Jacksonville.



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