

City Council rejects anti-hate crimes bill

The Jacksonville City Council voted down a proposed bill that would increase fines and penalties for city ordinance violations if deemed to be hate speech.

READ MORE ON PAGE 8

Special school section:

Election results, master facility plan updates, attendance campaign and marketing efforts.

READ MORE ON PAGES 10-12

Town hall meeting Sept. 19 on Ortega Carriage House PUD



READ MORE ON PAGE 2

Wishmakers Ball celebrates 30 years of granting wishes



Cheryl Kelly and Nish Stump

READ MORE ON PAGE 24

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PAGE 13

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'On Allison's Wings'



Photo: Seth Williams

The Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville dedicated a new public sculpture at Stockton Park Aug. 19. Designed by local artist David Main, "On Allison's Wings" honors the memory and legacy of Allison Haramis, who died at 15 in an automobile accident.

By Jennifer Logue

The Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville joined with community leaders and residents Aug. 19 to dedicate a new public sculpture honoring the memory of Allison Haramis.

Located in Stockton Park, "On Allison's Wings" celebrates the life and legacy of 15-year-old Haramis, who died in 2009 in an automobile accident. To honor her memory, the Allison Brundick Haramis Foundation – also known as "Angels for Allison" –

provides financial assistance to cover funeral costs for families grieving the loss of a child.

"Art has a way to create a space and to create a community and to paint a landscape where we can all come together and have hard conversations – where we can heal," Cultural Council Executive Director Diana Donovan said. "Art becomes the ointment that helps us come closer together – and that helps us understand what it means to celebrate a legacy, as opposed to just mourning and grieving it."

READ MORE ON PAGE 33

School board considers revised facility plan

Latest plan keeps Fishweir, Stockton schools open, but more revisions are expected

By Michele Leivas

Fishweir and John Stockton elementary schools would remain open under a revised Master Facility Plan (MFP) proposal, but further revisions to the Duval County Public Schools plan are expected.

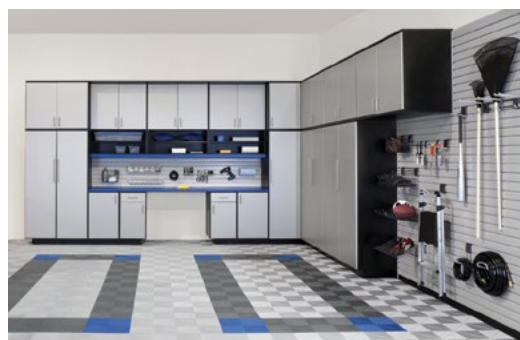
Presented at an Aug. 15 school board workshop, the revised MFP removed several neighborhood schools from the list of potential closures while adding three new ones to the chopping

block. In addition to Fishweir and Stockton, West Riverside, Atlantic Beach, Seabreeze, Holiday Hills, Thomas Jefferson and San Mateo schools would remain open in the revised plan. Ed White High School, Ramona Boulevard and Whitehouse Elementary were added to the closure list, which still includes Ortega Elementary.

The revised list of potential school closures resulted in significant changes to the feeder patterns of some schools while

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You Asked FOR IT

You ask. We get answers. This column is dedicated to finding answers to our reader's most pressing questions. If there's a neighborhood-related question that you'd like help getting the answer to, submit it to our research team at editor@residentnews.net.

JEA clarifies backflow preventer exemption policy

By Michele Leivas

The Resident recently heard from a reader with a question regarding an article in the May edition on the periodic testing of backflow preventers required by JEA.

"Your May 2024 article by Laura Phelps (An Ounce of Prevention...) inspired me to contact JEA for an exemption," Patricia Kendrick wrote. "Our office is a small converted home from the early 1900s, which is a business for one attorney and one CPA."

Kendrick said she was informed by JEA that she does not qualify for an exemption because a backflow preventer has already been installed at her property. The Resident reached out to JEA for further clarification.

According to JEA, exemptions are only granted with regard to the installation of backflow preventers. Once

a preventer has been installed at a property, it must be maintained and tested and cannot be removed.

A recently updated JEA Cross Connection Control Commercial Backflow Exemption application lists seven criteria that must be met for an exemption to be granted.

One of the seven exemption criteria requires the property in question to have had water service started prior to 1991. As stated in the May article, the exemption application does inform applicants that exemptions must be renewed "at the end of its term (one to four years)" through the application process.

Customers can contact the JEA Cross Connection Control Team at (904) 665-4410 or backflow@jea.com for more information.

Town hall on Ortega Carriage House PUD Sept. 19

A town hall meeting will be held this month to discuss a Planned Unit Development (PUD) rezoning application to demolish an Ortega Boulevard building and construct 18 commercial office units.

To be held at 6 p.m. Thursday, Sept. 19 in St. Mark's Church's Leatherbury Hall at 4129 Oxford Ave., the meeting will feature information on the PUD application and a presentation by the developer followed by a community discussion period.

Submitted by Gayle Bulls Dixon – owner of the existing building – the PUD application would allow construction of "The Ortega Carriage House" – a 19,000 square-foot building across two parcels located at 4230 and 4128 Ortega Blvd. Visit www.residentnews.net to read The Resident's previous coverage of this project.

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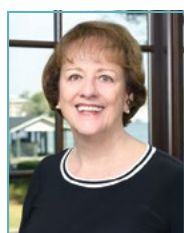
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Park + King merchants, city pool resources to increase overnight patrols



City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso updates residents on efforts to address crime and blight in the Park and King area.



JSO District 5 Commander and Assistant Chief Harry Massey discusses the new overnight weekend patrols with attendees at a recent Park and King community meeting.

By **Jennifer Logue**

More JSO officers will patrol Riverside's Park and King area overnight on Friday and Saturday evenings, thanks to a partnership between the city and area merchants.

Announced at a July 29 community meeting held at Riverside Church at Park and King and organized by the Park + King Area Association, the extra law enforcement detail will have two officers assigned to patrol the area from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Funds to pay for the extra law enforcement presence were donated by local merchants, the Park + King Area Association and Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP), with the City of Jacksonville expected to contribute up to \$10,000.

City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso said the increased patrols follow numerous complaints from local businesses and residents regarding late-night noise, crime and violence in the area. Noting that his council district has many of Jacksonville's oldest neighborhoods, Peluso said that commercial areas with bars and restaurants tend to generate more problems for nearby neighbors.

"We're trying to make sure these commercial nodes are getting the attention they deserve, especially late at night," Peluso said, praising the local merchants and organizations that contributed to fund the extra law enforcement presence.

"This is the first time they all came together," Peluso said, "so we wanted them to know the city is looking out for them as well."

At the community meeting, residents and merchants shared stories of having their businesses – and their sleep – disrupted by loud music, shootings and crime. JSO Assistant Chief Harry Massey told attendees that it is hoped the extra patrols will provide a visible deterrent for such activity.

"The idea is that if the officers hang around long enough, the crowds just dissipate, go home and don't cause any trouble," Massey said.

Night and day

Several attendees, however, said the problems plaguing the area don't just occur on weekends or at night. Resident Eric Davidson, a father of two small children, expressed concern about vacant storefronts, derelict buildings and taking daytime walks with his kids because of individuals who appear to be on drugs or dealing with mental health issues.

Ladybug Landscaping CEO Dennis Barnum agreed. A

neighborhood resident, Barnum said his business has him in the area every day, and he not only sees the same individuals causing issues but also has witnessed them harassing local merchants.

"We are actual residents, we deal with this all the time," Barnum told Massey. "And when we call the police, it shouldn't take four or five hours for someone to show up. Let's be a little more proactive."

Massey said JSO has officers who are specially trained to respond to reports of such individuals, as well as mental health counselors who will accompany officers responding to calls. Peluso noted that Mayor Deegan has submitted a \$13 million proposal in response to state action that requires counties to have a secure area where homeless individuals can be transported to receive shelter and support services. That plan is required to be in operation by January 2025, he said.

"I've seen videos, I've heard firsthand accounts...I get it," Peluso said. "But we're seeing more progress than not."

Avondale resident Rick Pariani agreed and praised JSO, and Massey in particular, for taking swift action to curb similar problems in the 5 Points neighborhood.

"That is the gateway to our historic neighborhood, and I just want to express my gratitude for your very effective efforts," Pariani said. "You showed that a neighborhood can still have a very hip and original vibe, but it doesn't to be lawless."

In addition to late-night crime, meeting attendees discussed other issues they'd like to see addressed, including blighted buildings and trash-strewn streets. Both Peluso and RAP Executive Director Shannon Blankinship detailed efforts to replace public trashcans with larger models that prevent sidewalk spillage and other neighborhood beautification efforts. Jim Love of the Park + King Area Association, meanwhile, encouraged attendees to become involved in the organization and to share their concerns and suggestions for neighborhood improvement.

Davidson, who is a member of RAP's zoning committee, said that an attractive, well-maintained business area impacts the quality of life for residents.

"It's a whole ecosystem," he said. "If building owners would fill vacant storefronts, it would help immeasurably. They are stewards of the community."

"This area could be amazing," he said, "and it seems like now we've got the right players in place."

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With several weeks still to go, we remain committed to negotiating in good faith. We value our relationship with Florida Blue and hope that they will share our vision and commitment to the health and well-being of our community. Our 14,000+ caregivers

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DIA hits pause on riverfront tower plan



A rendering depicts the 53-story Ergisi Tower, which Cross Regions Group would like to build on Jacksonville's Northbank.

By **Michele Leivas**

The Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) has temporarily tapped the breaks on moving forward with any formal negotiations regarding a plan for a new skyscraper on the downtown riverfront.

Cross Regions Group wants to build what would be known as Ergisi Tower on the site of a former Jacksonville Landing parking lot. At 720 feet tall, the high-rise mixed-used development would be the

tallest building between Atlanta and Miami and would feature 320 condos and 35,000 square feet of restaurant and retail space.

At an Aug. 26 Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) board workshop, however, board members expressed hesitation at beginning the formal negotiated disposition process with Cross Regions, in part because the parcel in question has numerous subsurface variables, including a regular sanitary sewer line that would have to be relocated.

Sheldon Gibbs, the city's chief of engineering and construction management, recommended further subsurface investigations on the site. The sewage line in question conveys 4.5 million gallons of wastewater daily through downtown and as such, is a "critical line" in the JEA system, explained JEA Director of Administrative Services Jordan Pope. Relocating that sewage line, Pope said, would not be easy.

"We think the work is complicated, complex, probably not impossible," Pope said. "But a lot of that will depend on how much money somebody wants to spend."

At the conclusion of the Aug. 26 workshop, the DIA board opted to hold off on entering into any formal negotiations with Cross Regions, with Board Chair Patrick Krechowski voicing the board's hesitation to move forward.

"I do think what I'm hearing is that negotiated disposition is not preferred, but an RFP is not something we can put together right now," Krechowski said. "There's just too many holes in the information bucket."

The board tasked DIA CEO Lori Boyer with summarizing a term sheet Cross Regions submitted last month and doing further research on costs and timelines for subsurface investigations and title work before next month's Retail Enhancement and Property Disposition committee meeting.

Landmark or park?

For Cross Regions Group President and CEO David Ergisi, the tower embodies an opportunity to spur new Downtown growth and development.

"This is a project that's going to improve the skyline of Jacksonville," Ergisi said. "It's going to attract the caliber of families and folks that we want to move into downtown and it's going to spur the development path for other developments like this to follow and get Jacksonville to the next level."

But not all residents and community activists feel the prime riverfront parcel is the appropriate place for a building that tall.

"This is just another example of Jacksonville having its aesthetic principles backward," said Dr. Wayne Wood, historian and author of *Jacksonville's Architectural Heritage*. "High-rise buildings have no trouble seeing the river if they're set back blocks from the river, so that's where they should be, and let the riverfront be unimpeded."

Natalie Rosenberg, chair of the Riverfront Parks Now Steering Committee, agreed.

"Riverfront Parks Now has long advocated that any large buildings should be sufficiently set back from the river to allow for a green resilient buffer and a wide riverwalk with double rows of trees and multiple paths," Rosenberg said. "It seems that towers of this scale are best placed across the street from the river, or better yet, farther inland where there are ample infill opportunities that would still provide lovely views of the river."

But Ergisi said the building's angled shape and slender design wouldn't remove too much visibility from buildings behind it and said a project of this caliber on the riverfront is necessary to drive future development.

"If you don't have a project like this to attract interest and motivation for other developers to come in," he said, "you're never going to have the buildings in the back to worry about the view."

While the meeting may not have gone the way Cross Regions had hoped, Ergisi said he remains committed to Downtown.

"We had hoped to enter a negotiated disposition with the city at this point, but we respect the decision of the DIA and look forward to further discussion," he said. "We care deeply about Jacksonville and remain committed to future growth in Downtown."

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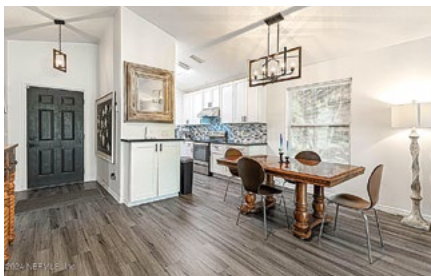
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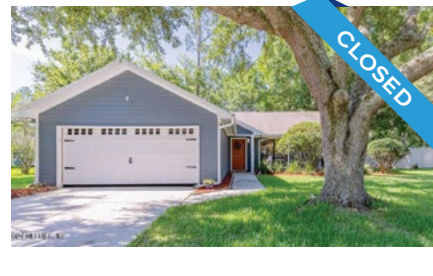
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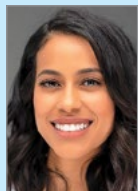
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City Council rejects anti-hate crimes bill



District 7 Councilmember and bill sponsor Jimmy Peluso urges the city council to pass Bill 2024-0334 at the Aug. 13 city council meeting.



At-Large Group 1 Councilmember Terrence Freeman discusses the importance and power of resolutions at the Aug. 13 city council meeting.

By Michele Leivas

The Jacksonville City Council rejected a bill that would have increased fines and penalties for city ordinance violations if they were deemed to be related to hate crimes.

Bill #0334 was defeated on a 12-7 vote at the Aug. 13 city council meeting, with councilmembers Michael Boylan, Matt Carlucci, Tyrona Clark-Murray, Ju-Coby Pittman, Reggie Gaffney, Jr., Rahman Johnson and Jimmy Peluso voting in favor.

Since its introduction in the spring, the bill had sparked conversations regarding what constitutes a hate crime – and who would make that determination – as well as concerns regarding potential limits on constitutionally protected free speech. Among the bill’s amendments were those designed to clarify that the increased fines and penalties would pertain to infractions that promoted “animosity, hostility or malice” to the point of endangering a person or their property.

At the Aug. 13 meeting, citizens on both sides of the issue spoke passionately about the proposed bill. Resident Hudson Horne commented that the bill didn’t need amendments but to be dropped altogether.

“We actually do have ordinances on our books already that criminalize speech that’s genuinely threatening and harassing towards people, so a bill like this isn’t even necessary,” Horne said. “I wish we could just outlaw hate speech, that would be great. The problem is that people

throw around (that term) baselessly and condemn ideas and people that they disagree with.”

Ray Walker disagreed, saying the level of violence in some parts of Jacksonville warranted the stiffer penalties, which could act as a deterrent.

“ We actually do have ordinances on our books already that criminalize speech that’s genuinely threatening and harassing towards people, so a bill like this isn’t even necessary. ”

– Hudson Horne Resident

“Some of y’all don’t live anywhere near that violence, you don’t even go there,” Walker told the city council. “That’s why you’re against (the bill).”

Peluso, one of the bill’s co-sponsors, said he was disappointed by the bill’s defeat, but “not horribly surprised.”

“Of course, no one’s saying that this is a hateful city, by any means,” Peluso said after the vote. “What we are saying is, let’s ensure that we have some real teeth and a unified voice saying we do not want any senseless, hateful actions in our city, and I’m disappointed we didn’t see that tonight.”

Johnson, another co-sponsor, said that while there are currently no plans to reintroduce the bill, he would consider it.

“I do think it’s a bill that was vetted pretty thoroughly and all of the committees worked diligently to include amendments to make the bill palatable and certainly gave it a lot more teeth ...” he said. “So, I do believe that if it were reintroduced, that I would support it.”

Johnson had introduced a successful amendment to name the bill after Johnnie Mae Chappell, the victim of a racially motivated shooting in Jacksonville in 1964. While the bill failed, Johnson said he was gratified by the awareness it had brought to Chappell, whose story he said had been lost to history.

“I think we often focus too much on what didn’t happen,” Johnson said. “I’m disappointed that my colleagues didn’t see fit to let people in so many underserved communities know that they’re seen, they’re heard and they matter, but what we did have was a conversation that opened minds.”

That conversation has led to pending legislation for the installation of a historical marker at the spot where Chappell was murdered. Councilmember Nick Howland said he is currently working with the Office of General Counsel on the legislation for that historical marker.

“I hope that this community conversation fostered something strong, important and beneficial for our community,” Howland said, “that we can learn from and continue to progress.”

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Ricardo, Pearson, Bolduc win seats on Duval County School Board Blount, Rogers to square off for District 5 seat in November

Tony Ricardo and Melody Bolduc will join Cindy Pearson on the Duval County School Board in November, with the three candidates emerging victorious in an Aug. 20 primary election that saw fewer than 20 percent of registered voters go to the polls.

District 5 candidates Reggie Blount and Hank Rogers will face off in the November general election, after emerging as the two top vote-getters in a three-way race against Nahshon Nicks.

Race results

In a race between two former DCPS teachers, District 1

candidate Ricardo received 9,070 votes (53.1%) to Nadine Ebri's 7,945 (46.69%). Ricardo had made student safety and parental rights in education the focus of his campaign.

District 7 winner Bolduc – a former teacher endorsed by Gov. Ron DeSantis – also stressed parental rights as well as fiscal responsibility during her campaign. She received 11,841 votes (56.05%) to challenger Sarah Mannion's 9,286 (43.95%).

Current District 3 School Board Member Cindy Pearson retained her seat, receiving 8,533 votes (51.33%) to challenger Rebecca Nathanson's 8,091 (48.67%). Pearson campaigned on a record she said included helping to secure \$2 billion in

funding to strengthen school safety and increasing teacher pay.

In the District 5 race, Blount garnered 6,102 votes (40.47%) to Rogers' 6,034 (40.02%). Nicks received 2,943 (19.52%). Blount – a veteran and FSCJ lead assessment coordinator – also stressed the importance of parental rights during his campaign. Rogers, the chief operating officer for the I'm A Star Foundation, has stressed student safety and mental health as well as student achievement as among his top priorities.

The District 5 seat will be decided in the Nov. 5 general election, for which early voting begins Oct. 21 and concludes Nov. 3.

DCPS launches campaign to boost attendance Duval County leads state in habitually truant students



Mayor Donna Deegan announces the Show Up to Shine campaign standing before (left to right) Read USA CEO Rob Kelly, District 1 Executive Council Assistant Joe Johnson, Judge Michael Kalil, DCPS Superintendent Dr. Charles Bernier and DCPS Chairman Darryl Willie.

By Michele Leivas

The City of Jacksonville and Duval County Public Schools (DCPS) have launched a campaign to boost student attendance rates.

Noting that Duval County leads the state in the percentage of habitually truant

students, new Superintendent Dr. Charles Bernier said the Show Up to Shine initiative aims to address that “attendance crisis.”

“Missing a day of school puts you behind,” Bernier said at a press conference announcing the initiative held at Arlington Elementary School. “If your child can get to school, please be responsible and get them to us. We can love them, we can feed them, we can teach them.”

With this new campaign, Bernier spoke about moving away from the idea of perfect attendance toward a goal of good and improved attendance. Part of the problem, he added, revolves around transportation. The district needs at least 60 school bus drivers to service all the routes in the county. Bernier issued a challenge to the community to help find those necessary drivers. A hotline will collect names and contact information for people interested in filling those vacancies, he added.

“We need the community to step up,” Bernier said.

Mayor Donna Deegan said the Show Up to Shine campaign will offer activities and incentives to help address and improve student attendance

“We want every student to understand that their education matters, and that their presence is valued, that they are a vital part of our community’s success,” she said.

The campaign will also partner with community nonprofits like United Way of Northeast Florida and participating neighborhood businesses, which will offer promotions for the caregivers who are responsible for getting students to their schools.

“We need to improve the number of days that our children come to school,” Bernier said. “The more they come, the more they can learn; the more they can learn, the better educated they are; the better educated they are, the better our community is when they graduate.”

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Reading, writing...and marketing School board chair: Changing education landscape requires public schools to adapt, innovate



School Board Chair Darryl Willie discusses the challenges facing the Duval County public schools with attorney and Jacksonville Business Professionals member Chris Hand.

By Jennifer Logue

In an era of school choice and new technologies, public schools are going to have to adapt, innovate and start marketing themselves to keep students enrolled and engaged, the chairman of the Duval County School Board said.

At an Aug. 13 meeting of the Jacksonville Business Professionals, School Board Chair Darryl Willie said Jacksonville’s public school system is facing a pivotal moment in its future.

“Education has changed so much in the last decade – it is so different than when you and I went to school,” Willie said. “It’s just a different situation that our teachers are facing, our students are facing, and I truly believe the large, traditional public education systems have not been able to adjust quickly enough and adapt quickly enough to where we are right now.”

In a discussion moderated by Jacksonville attorney and JBP member Chris Hand, Willie discussed the myriad of opportunities, changes and challenges currently facing the Duval County Public Schools. As DCPS welcomes new Superintendent Dr. Chris Bernier, the school system is

facing declining enrollment, increased construction costs for new schools and the possibility of closing dozens of existing schools to address a \$1.4 billion deficit.

“We truly believe right now we’re on that cusp as a county,” Willie said, “and we need to talk about how we can get there.”

Marketing schools

In discussing the future of the Duval County school system, Willie used words like “marketing” and “customer service” – phrases not commonly associated with public schools.

And that, he said, is part of the problem.

“There weren’t traditionally large marketing departments (in public schools), where they had to focus on recruiting families, because it was the only game in town,” Willie said. “Once you move away from that monopoly, and now you have school choice, you have to adjust.”

Willie discussed the financial impact of school choice on the public school system, noting that a school system structured to educate 150,000 students now has a far

smaller total enrollment – and the loss of associated revenue – but the same infrastructure and personnel costs.

“I love having choice,” he said, “but when it comes down to what choices folks are making, it affects the bottom line.”

In addition to school choice, he noted, many families moved to home schooling or virtual educational options during COVID 19. When the pandemic ended, they didn’t come back. Willie said new superintendent Bernier recognizes the importance of both marketing public schools and customer service.

“We all know if you go somewhere and the customer service is bad, you’re not going to go back,” he said. “Our parents and families are the same way: If they come to a school or interact with us online and they don’t have a positive or easy or accessible experience, then they’re going to go the other way. We have to be better.”

One way that public schools could do that, Willie said, is to embrace new technologies such as artificial intelligence to streamline and simplify the enrollment process and overall student experience.

“Our young families, they do every single thing on their phone,” he observed. “The fact that we hand this packet of papers and say, ‘come in here and fill it out’? I guarantee there are other schooling options that say, ‘don’t worry, just fill it out online.’ That is a barrier we have created for ourselves.”

Willie acknowledged, however, that marketing a public school system as large and diverse as Duval County has its challenges.

“It’s sort of like this franchise model, but all the franchises are vastly different,” he said. “You’ve got a school that does art, you’ve got a school that does tech, you’ve got a school that does a military academy. You have to go into each school and market specifically for that school.”

Among the innovative programs the school system is offering, Willie said, are scores of high school academies, with age-appropriate complementary programming in such areas as web design and computer programming available at the middle school and even elementary levels. To promote workforce development, DCPS has created the “Duval Ready” program that teaches students the communication, time management and teamwork skills needed to succeed in the workplace.

As for the public concern generated by a master facilities plan that recommended the closure of dozens of neighborhood schools, Willie stressed that the final plan slated to be voted on by the school board in October will likely be less drastic yet still require some school closures.

“There’s likely still going to be some heartburn,” he said. “Because we can’t do nothing.”



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School board plan *CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1*

others remained unchanged.

School Board Chair Darryl Willie emphasized to board members that further revisions are anticipated before the board votes on the final Master Facility Plan. The current timeline calls for a revised MFP proposal to be presented to the school board Sept. 17, with a final vote occurring at its Oct. 1 meeting.

“We do have some tough decisions to make,” Willie said following the meeting. “But I believe this board is ready to get into it and really dive into how we create the best environment for students academically but also create the most efficient environment financially for our district.”

“**We do have some tough decisions to make, but I believe this board is ready to dive into how we create the best environment for students academically and financially for our district.**” — Darryl Willie
School Board Chair

Bridging the budget gap

Fiscal responsibility remains a top priority, DCPS officials say. Assistant Superintendent Cory Wright said the new proposed feeder patterns would reduce the \$1.4 billion budget deficit down to roughly \$1 billion. But that’s not enough, new Superintendent Dr. Charles Bernier acknowledged.

“\$400 million is a lot of savings, but we’re still a long way off,” Bernier said.

Willie said he believed the board would be able to whittle down that gap, though he doubted the board would be able to bridge it completely.

“I don’t think we’ll get all the way down to save \$1.4 billion, but also things may change in the next three years, five years, seven years, so you can’t anticipate everything,” he said. “We’re going to do our best to look at right now and forecast as best as possible.”

‘Stunning’ disparity

While signifying tentative victories for some school



DCPS Superintendent Dr. Charles Bernier reviews the revised Master Facility Plan proposal at an Aug. 15 DCPS board workshop.

communities, the new feeder patterns raised equitability concerns for some board members representing other districts. Board Member Dr. Kelly Coker expressed frustration that while an A-rated school at the beach was saved – Atlantic Beach Elementary – Arlington’s A-rated Lake Lucinda Elementary School remains on the closure list. She said a less vocal community response to a particular school closure should not have a negative impact on that school’s future.

“We need to ensure that every school gets represented in a way that makes sense,” Coker said. “If their voices aren’t as loud, the district leadership has to watch and make sure that those things are pointed out, because there’s disparity in this report that’s stunning.”

Stockton parent Lauren Agresti said the work is not over for the advocacy group that has labored to remove Stockton Elementary from the closure list. Agresti said the advocacy group would like to see that school renovations included in an earlier MFP – a new brick-and-mortar wing to replace Stockton’s portable classrooms – are included in any future plans.

“We want to send a message to the community that Stockton is not in a vulnerable position and that we’ll be here for a long time to come,” Agresti said. “So, we need to ensure that, by making sure that the proposed wing that was going to replace the portables comes to fruition.”

Middle school misgivings

While the focus has been primarily on the elementary schools within the school feeder patterns, a conversation has

also emerged on the drop in enrollment the public school district has seen during the transition from elementary to middle school – particularly in Riverside High School’s feeder pattern from the elementary schools to Lake Shore Middle School. Since 2016, that school has earned a C or D rating from the Florida Department of Education.

School Board Vice Chair Charlotte Joyce said a lack of performance and long-standing disciplinary and safety concerns are causing parents to consider alternate choices for middle school when their children graduate from DCPS elementary schools.

“[Parents] are not sending their children to a school where they have to worry about the discipline issues and the safety of their kids,” Joyce said.

Stockton parent Agresti said the conversation surrounding Lake Shore was an accurate reflection of what families like hers are considering as their children approach middle school age.

“It definitely is a major concern for a lot of families in our community,” she said. “We do have a great magnet program...but it is a concern, and it would be a great alternative to have a middle school option closer by that wasn’t on the other side of town.”

School Board Member April Carney requested data on schools that could accommodate a sixth grade in a K-6 model, which she said would help address enrollment numbers for elementary schools and also give rising sixth graders an extra year in an elementary school setting before transferring to a middle school.

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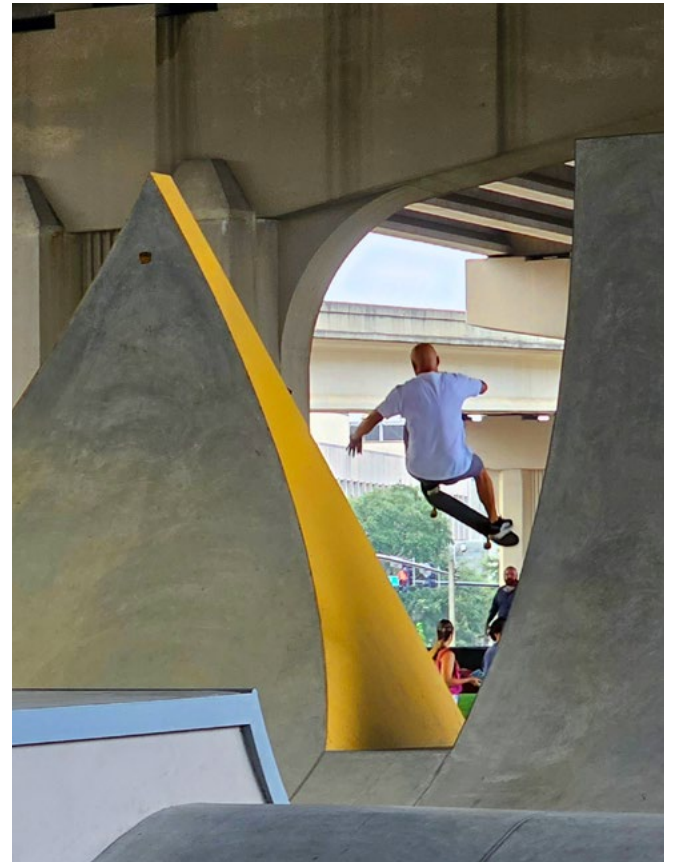
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Rise and grind: Skateboarders celebrate opening of Artist Walk Skate Park



Young skater Cassius impatiently waits for the ribbon cutting ceremony to conclude so he can start exploring the Artist Walk Skate Park.



Skater Travis Ochab catches air off the J-A-X ramps at the Artist Walk Skate Park.

By **Michele Leivas**

Skateboarders, bladers and roller-skaters alike dropped in to celebrate the official opening of Riverside’s Artist Walk Skate Park last month.

Skaters joined Mayor Donna Deegan, District 7 City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso and city officials on stage at the Aug. 8 ribbon cutting before grabbing their boards and enjoying the new park, which spans 1,000 feet and is located beneath the Fuller Warren Bridge between Riverside Avenue and Park Street.

Skateboarder Travis Ochab said Jacksonville was long overdue for a covered skatepark for the community to enjoy.

“It’s about time something covered in Jacksonville has come around,” he said. “Especially something good for the little kids.”

Ochab said he’ll be returning with his son and feels the

park is big enough to give everyone enough space to enjoy it, regardless of their skill level or experience, without worrying about running into each other.

“Definitely good stuff for everybody to skate, no matter how good you are,” he added.

Peluso said the community turnout at the ribbon cutting demonstrated how long the community had been waiting for such an amenity.

“To come out on a Thursday morning for a press conference with the mayor and your city councilman is maybe the least skater culture thing ever,” Peluso said. “I think we’re clearly seeing people are hungry for this.”

Still to come to the area is the remainder of the Artist Walk Park, which will include a plaza space for special programming, areas for food trucks and turf lawn spaces. During her address at the August ceremony, Deegan said the skate park, designed and built by California Skatepark, serves as the “foundation”

for Artist Walk.

“Think of the park’s design as a flowing art piece,” Deegan said.

The Artist Walk Skate Park is beneath the Fuller Warren Shared-Use Path and across the street from the Riverside Arts Market, with the Emerald Trail passing through it and connecting to the Riverwalk, creating a hub of connectivity in the Riverside community.

“This, to me, almost solidifies that all roads lead to Riverside,” Peluso said.

The Artist Walk Skate Park is the newest addition to Jacksonville’s already rich skater community. Kona Skate Park, the oldest skate park in the country, is located in nearby Arlington, although Deegan said the Artist Walk Skate Park holds a special designation of its own.

“The new Artist Walk Skate Park will be the first skate park in the city on the west side of the St. Johns River,” she said.

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Marriott gains conceptual approval for Brooklyn AC Hotel

By Michele Leivas

The Downtown Development Review Board unanimously granted conceptual approval with conditions for a hotel and associated parking deck in Brooklyn on the site of the current Liddy’s Machine Shop.

The project includes a six-story AC Hotel with a two-story parking structure at 800 and 825 Dora St. and would require the demolition of the existing machine shop to make way for the parking structure.

AC Hotel falls under the Marriott International umbrella.

The specified conditions include a request for additional detail surrounding the wall surfaces for the solid portions of Oak and Magnolia street frontages, along with a request for transparency calculations to ensure a “pleasant experience for pedestrians” on the hotel’s ground-floor level along Oak Street.

The project spurred a big-picture look at development in the area, which includes the Block Nine – the mixed-use development by the Trevato Group that was green lighted for conceptual approval last year – and the pedestrian and retail corridors in the area on Oak and Park streets, respectively.

“Our primary concern at this point is making sure that any developers that come in are giving us enough sidewalk width so we have a pedestrian corridor if not a retail corridor,” said DIA Director of Operations Guy Parola.

To that end, the staff report reflected that the developer will complete the sidewalks surrounding both properties, which are currently not up to code.

During public comment, Scenic Jacksonville Executive Director Nancy



A rendering depicts the new AC Hotel proposed for the Brooklyn neighborhood.



A detached two-story garage would sit on another parcel adjacent to the hotel.

Powell called the standalone parking structure a lost opportunity in a neighborhood that continues to see new development.

“We want to see Brooklyn develop into a pedestrian-friendly, distinctive, urban neighborhood,” she said. “...It looks like we have about maybe half of Brooklyn left, there’s a lot of open space, there’s development coming – that’s good news. But Brooklyn should be an urban neighborhood and should be treated as such in the planning and design.”

When board members questioned the reasoning behind the standalone parking

structure for the hotel, architect Chris Allred said site limitations precluded the possibility of creating an attached parking structure with the necessary number of parking spaces.

“The amount of spaces that would be available on this site would not meet the minimum requirements for Marriott for us to provide,” he said.

The proposed hotel would include a ground-floor bar that would be open to hotel guests and the public.

This is not the first project intended for this location. Last year, the DDRB granted

conceptual approval for the Daedalus Wine Bar and Shop at that address. County records show Daedalus Re Jax LLC purchased the parcel for \$440,000 in August 2022. In April 2024, the parcel again traded hands – this time to Jax Lifestyle Hospitality LLC for \$1.9 million.

The proposed hotel would be located down the street from the Residence Inn Jacksonville Downtown on Oak Street.

The AC Hotel brand opened its first Northeast Florida location in March at St. Johns Town Center. The Brooklyn location would be the brand’s 19th in Florida.



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Building permit issued for 5 Points Bartaco



Work is underway at 1534 Oak S. for Bartaco in 5 Points.

By **Michele Leivas**

Work is underway at 1534 Oak S. to bring to life Bartaco, the latest addition to the 5 Points taco scene.

A building permit has been issued for a \$1.03 million update of the former Black Sheep space, which will include demolition, exterior alterations and an interior tenant fit-out of the space for the first floor and rooftop of the building.

The design team includes Trinity Building and Construction Management Corp. and RDstudio, Inc.

With its eclectic, bohemian vibe, 5 Points has an extensive restaurant scene with its fair share of existing taco restaurants. Five Points Merchants Association President Stephen Ezell, however, said he will take occupied storefronts over vacant ones and sees an opportunity for all of 5 Points' taco shops.

"What I think would be really important for the neighborhood would be a taco tour," he said. "If you're going to have a bunch of taco shops, you should probably do a walking taco [tour]."

"It's all about pollinating the area with more people that are interested in spending some money at the local businesses that are currently there," he added.

Bartaco has locations in 14 states, with five locations already in Florida.



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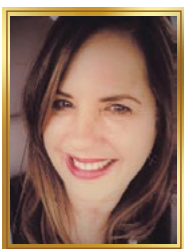
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MOVERS & SHAKERS



John Bachman

John Bachman, Matt Galnor launch consulting firm

Former Action News Jax Anchor **John Bachman** and former JAX Chamber executive **Matt Galnor** have launched Bachman Galnor Communications.

The new firm will provide businesses and organizations with a variety of consulting services, including strategic communications planning, crisis communications, content creation and media training.

Bachman worked in television news for 27 years, including the past 10 as anchor for Action News Jax. "I've been telling stories of the people of Northeast

Florida for 10 years," Bachman said, "and I'm excited to continue to do so, just in a different role."

Galnor began his career in newspapers, including 10 years reporting for the Florida Times-Union before moving into corporate communications.

"We think we bring a unique combination of skills to the market," Galnor said, "and look forward to working with organizations to tell their stories and grow."



Matt Galnor

Jacksonville hospitals recognized by AHA's 'Get with the Guidelines' initiative

Seven Jacksonville hospitals are among the more than 3,000 nationwide to participate in the American Heart Association's "Get With The Guidelines" initiative designed to improve outcomes for people who experience heart disease or stroke.

The Mayo Clinic, Memorial Hospital, UF Health, St. Vincent's Medical Center Southside and Baptist Medical Center's Beaches, Jacksonville and Baptist South locations were among the medical facilities recognized by the AHA for consistently following the most current, research-based guidelines.

"Every 40 seconds, someone in America has a stroke or heart attack," said Caitlin Brunell, executive director for the American Heart Association First Coast. "High-quality care should be accessible to all, and sites awarded through the Get With The Guidelines program help work toward our shared vision of health and hope for everyone, everywhere."

Heart disease and stroke are the number one and number five causes of death in the United States, respectively. For more information on the Get With The Guidelines initiative, visit www.heart.org.

Wanda Willis selected for executive leadership institute



Wanda Willis, vice president of civic leadership for the Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, has been selected to participate in the CFLeads Executive Leadership Institute as part of the 2024-2025 cohort. As a participant, Willis will assess The Community Foundation's community leadership practice and explore her role as a vice president.

CFLeads is a national network of community foundations focused on community leadership. The program promotes skills and strategies considered to be essential to the practice of community leadership.

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RAP's creation of a park stewards program brought about a system for monitoring the neighborhood's 26 parks and a channel for reporting to the city any issues that arise.

"Learn more about the meaningful and lasting impact of Riverside Avondale Preservation over the last 50 years all year long..."



Make a contribution!

Bark on Park celebrates 15 years



When **Jamee Pittman** moved from Miami to Jacksonville in 2007, she had trouble finding a place to groom and board her Yorkshire terriers.

“There was nothing in the area that I trusted to leave my Yorkies,” she recalled.

Two years later, after a lot of research and help from friends, Pittman opened Bark on Park, a dog boutique now celebrating its 15th anniversary at 1021 Park St. in 5 Points. What initially began as a shop with a couple of self-grooming stations has grown into a 6,000-square-foot “urban dog retreat” complete with full grooming, daycare, boarding and training services.

“We have five groomers and two bathers, plus outdoor space,” Pittman said, noting that the boutique features everything from dog food and bakery items to t-shirts and gifts for dog lovers. “And we love every dog like they’re our own.”

Her husband, Matt, agreed.

“We’re just a fun, cool place that is born and bred in Jacksonville,” he said.

To celebrate its 15th anniversary, Bark on Park will offer special giveaways and raffles throughout September. The shop will feature special activities for dogs as well as discounts and new grooming and daycare packages.

Added **Matt Pittman**, “It’s really just our way of saying thank you to the City of Jacksonville for their love and continued support for Bark on Park.”

Sarah DeSantis joins Koru Spring as clinical director



Sarah DeSantis

Sarah DeSantis has joined Koru Spring as clinical director for the eating disorder treatment center.

A New York native, DeSantis holds a bachelor’s degree from Long Island University and a master’s degree from Fordham University. She completed her first internship at a detox center in NYC, then went on to work with adolescents, adults and older adults in a variety of different settings assisting those struggling with eating disorders, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, emotion dysregulation, chronic illnesses, grief, and PTSD.

DeSantis is a new Avondale resident who is expecting her first child this month.

Avondale merchants discuss upcoming events at quarterly meeting



Shania Busch, Bronwyn Benoit and Liz Bobeck with Bryan and Laura Lakey



Historic Avondale Merchants Association Vice President Chris Hardison and President Tasha Brooks with Lisa Ashworth and Missy Peters of Community First Credit Union

Members of the Historic Avondale Merchants Association (HAMA) discussed plans for upcoming events at its Aug. 7 meeting and social held at The Blue Fish restaurant.

In addition to hearing plans for the monthly Amplified Avondale music events, members heard updates on the annual Christmas in Avondale event, which this year will be held Friday, Dec. 6.

HAMA President **Tasha Brooks** stressed, however, that the planned events were fully funded by sponsorships and private fundraising, enabling the merchants’ association to allocate its budget toward neighborhood beautification efforts and promotion of local businesses.

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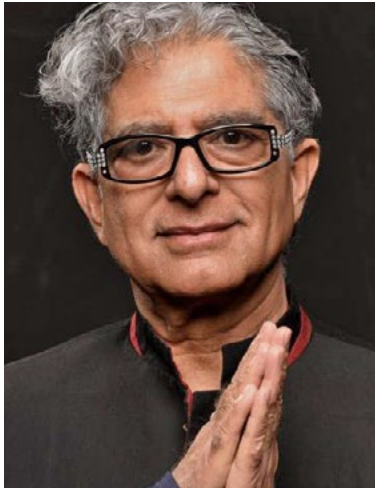


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Florida Forum to present Boris Johnson, Deepak Chopra, Carl Hiaasen



Boris Johnson



Deepak Chopra



Carl Hiaasen

Former British Prime Minister **Boris Johnson**, alternative medicine pioneer **Deepak Chopra** and Florida novelist **Carl Hiaasen** will headline the 2024-2025 Florida Forum speaker series.

Johnson will speak Oct. 29 – two weeks after the release of his memoir, *Unleashed*.

Chopra, a physician and global speaker on transformation, will appear Jan. 15, 2025. His new book, *Digital Dharma*, will be released this month.

Hiaasen's lecture will occur Feb. 12, 2025. He is the author of dozens of novels and nonfiction books, many of which are set in Florida. A 10-part television series based on his book, *Bad Monkey*, premiered on Apple TV in August.

Florida Forum events will take place at the Jacksonville Center for the Performing Arts. Programs

begin at 7 p.m.

Subscriptions for the Florida Forum events start at \$250 each for general seating, \$350 for preferred seating, \$450 for one reserved Bronze-level ticket, \$900 for two reserved Bronze level tickets, \$2,250 for two reserved Silver level tickets and \$4,500 for four reserved Gold level tickets.

The purchase of a Silver or Gold ticket package includes invitations to the private receptions honoring the speakers following the lectures. Patrons under the age of 30 may purchase Young Subscriber tickets for \$150 each. To purchase tickets, visit www.thefloridaforum.com, call 904.202.2886, or email womensboard@bmcjax.com.

Presented by The Women's Board of Wolfson Children's Hospital, the Florida Forum

raises awareness and funds to support the hospital's mission of providing high-quality pediatric healthcare for all children.

The Women's Board is currently raising \$1.5 million for two new Kids Kare Mobile Intensive Care Units (ICUs) and other Wolfson Children's Hospital programs. The Kids Kare Mobile ICUs are part of Wolfson Children's Hospital's Neonatal and Pediatric Critical Care Transport fleet and include necessary life-support equipment for the transportation of critically ill and injured infants and children.

Kids Kare vehicles and helicopters safely transport nearly 3,000 infants and children a year to Wolfson Children's Hospital for emergency neonatal and pediatric critical and trauma care. For more information, visit womensboardwch.com.

Florida Theatre welcomes new board members



Angela Merritt



Ed Lombard

Ed Lombard and **Angela Merritt** have begun three-year terms on the board of directors for the Florida Theatre.

Lombard is a managing partner with Agility Wealth Management and a financial advisor with Raymond James Financial Services. He is a member and past president of the Rotary Club of West Jacksonville and has served the JT Townsend Foundation and Pine Castle. A U.S. Army veteran, Lombard holds a BA in Business and Managerial Economics from Flagler College.

Merritt is a senior account manager with DEX Imaging, helping businesses with document management and office equipment solutions. She has served as chair and vice chair of the First Coast Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and has been active with the Boy Scouts of America North Florida Council. She holds a bachelor's degree in Business Administration, Management and Operations.

"The Florida Theatre Board of Directors is a diverse group of citizen activists from all across the First Coast region who are dedicated to preserving a unique Jacksonville landmark and supporting the organization's efforts to provide our friends and neighbors with live entertainment by the world's best performers," Florida Theatre President Numa Saisselin said. "Ed Lombard and Angela Merritt bring a wealth of talent and their own experiences in business and as Jacksonville residents to this effort, and we welcome them."

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New shop opens in San Marco Good Condition offers organic, handmade skincare



Founder of Good Condition Cherie Baughn

Clean, sustainable skincare has a new home in San Marco. **Cherie Baughn** has opened Good Condition – a studio and retail store featuring organic, handmade products. Located at 1628 San Marco Blvd., the shop features organic solid moisturizers made on site and contained in naturally compostable and recyclable packaging. The store also sells other organic, sustainable products.

“This is an incredible shop, with hand selected brands – often made by hand in small batches – created by founders who truly share in our sustainability goals and our vision for cleaner, better choices,” Baughn said.

In addition to Good Condition products, Baughn said, the store features numerous brands that are exclusive to it in San Marco, including Heretic Parfum, Kure Bazaar Paris nail products, Bathing Culture, Paume, Furtuna Skin, Aleph Beauty and more. Other featured brands include RMS Beauty, Nette NYC candles and Roz hair care.

A refill station, meanwhile, provides refills on Bathing Culture, ReBrand and Under Luna products.

“We love being in San Marco, and we encourage everyone to stop in,” Baughn said. “When you shop with us, you're taking home beautiful premium products that are thoughtfully created, safe for use and safe for the environment. It's an all-around win.”

Wingard names Natalie DeYoung equity partner



Natalie DeYoung

Wingard has named **Natalie DeYoung** as an equity partner of the 5 Points-based marketing and communications agency.

DeYoung currently serves as the company's vice president of public relations and communications, the division she established when she joined the agency in 2013. Under her leadership, the PR/communications division has grown to represent more than 20 percent of Wingard's employees and one-third of its annual revenue.



JAPA members join together for community service and to promote the sorority experience.

JAPA earns national awards

The Jacksonville Alumnae Panhellenic Association (JAPA) recently received four annual awards from the National Panhellenic Conference (NPC).

JAPA received awards recognizing its efforts during the 2023-2024 year for Community Service/Philanthropy, Enhancement of the Alumnae Experience, Promotion of the Sorority Experience and College Panhellenic Connections.

Alumnae panhellenic associations are comprised of alumnae from different NPC member organizations and engage in community activities to promote the sorority experience. The Jacksonville association meets on the second Tuesday of the month from September to April and the first Tuesday of May at the Haskell Building at 111 Riverside Ave.

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FOR SALE | Spacious pool home in Old Ortega.

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Experience the style and charm of old Ortega with this large double lot pool home. Just steps away from dining and entertainment, The Florida Yacht Club, and Timuquana Country Club, you won't be far from the action. The kitchen and primary bedroom suite has been tastefully renovated and a new roof installed in 2023. The downstairs has an abundance of space which makes it an easy gathering place and great for hosting.

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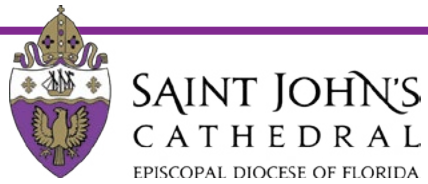
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UNF to host Oct. 12 film premiere of 'Beyond Triathlon'

Documentary spotlights women athlete/leaders Dottie Dorion, Donna Deegan, Nancy Hogshead



Philanthropist and triathlete Dorothy Dorion

A new documentary that spotlights local women leaders who fought for their place in the world of competitive sports will hold its premiere next month at the University of North Florida.

Slated to debut Oct. 12 at UNF's Lazzara Performing Arts Center, *Beyond Triathlon* focuses on local philanthropist Dorothy S. "Dottie" Dorion and features Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan and local Olympic Gold Medalist Nancy Hogshead, highlighting the resilience and determination of women athletes who paved the way for future generations.

"The stories told in *Beyond Triathlon* are a testament to the strength, courage and perseverance of women who have refused to accept limitations," Dorion said. "This film is a tribute to all women who have fought for their rightful place in the world of sports and beyond."

UNF was selected as the site for the documentary's premiere through Dorion's long history of philanthropy to the university. In addition to donating scholarships, Dorion provided the critical funding to build the 27,000-square-foot Dorion Fitness Center located in the Student Wellness Complex. In addition, 100 percent of the proceeds from the Oct. 12 documentary premiere and post-screening reception, sponsored by Bacardi, will benefit UNF women's athletic scholarships.

"UNF is honored to host the debut event for this film with its inspiring narrative," President Dr. Moez Limayem said. "We extend our heartfelt gratitude to legacy donor Dottie Dorion, whose generosity knows no bounds."

Blazing trails

Inspired by the book of the same name,

Beyond Triathlon offers a thought-provoking examination of the challenges, triumphs and significant milestones experienced by women in master sports. Dorion, who serves as a central figure in the film, has been a trailblazer and advocate for women in sports for decades. She was instrumental in establishing triathlon as a mainstream sport and worked tirelessly to ensure its inclusion in major athletic events.

Joining Dorion in *Beyond Triathlon* is Jacksonville Mayor Donna Deegan. A renowned advocate for health and wellness, Deegan was a longtime news anchor for First Coast News before founding The Donna Foundation and the annual DONNA Marathon which supports those affected by breast cancer.

Jacksonville attorney Nancy Hogshead, meanwhile, received three gold medals and a silver medal at the 1984 Los Angeles Summer Olympics. After retiring from competitive swimming, she pursued a successful career in law and is a prominent advocate for Title IX, the federal law that prohibits gender discrimination in education, including sports.

Giving voice to the *Beyond Triathlon* film is Sika Henry, the first African American woman to earn her pro card in triathlon, a significant milestone in the sport. Her journey to becoming a professional triathlete is marked by perseverance, determination and a commitment to breaking barriers in a sport where diversity is often lacking.

Tickets for the *Beyond Triathlon* debut screening and reception may be purchased online at beyondtriathlon.com.

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Jacksonville honors Purple Heart recipients



Jacksonville Sheriff T.K. Waters and State Rep. Kiyan Michael greet Purple Heart recipients Anthony D'Aleo and Tommy Tittle before the ceremony begins.



The Naval Hospital Jacksonville Color Guard prepares to present the colors.

By **Michele Leivas**

Jacksonville honored its Purple Heart recipients and Gold Star families at an Aug. 7 Purple Heart Day ceremony held at the Jacksonville Veterans Memorial Wall.

“The heroes we are recognizing and remembering this evening are those who put their duty above all else,” Mayor Donna Deegan said during her address. “They sacrificed everything, putting themselves in harm’s way to protect and serve our great nation.”

Command Sergeant Major (Ret.) William Smith led a moment of remembrance for World War II Veteran Frank Pupura, who passed away earlier this year.

“A roll call was conducted,” said Smith, a Vietnam veteran and member of both the Order of the Purple Heart Chapter 524 and the Army Ranger Hall of Fame. “It is my sad duty to report our oldest and most active member, World War

II Veteran Frank Purpura, is absent. He is now reporting to a much higher power.”

Following the ceremony, the Naval Hospital Jacksonville Color Guard led attendees on a quarter-mile walk along the city’s Purple Heart Trail, where city officials unveiled new Purple Heart markers commemorating Jacksonville’s designation as a Purple Heart City.

Aug. 7 has been recognized as Purple Heart Day since 2012, when the Florida legislature designated it as such to honor the recipients of the military’s oldest award. Its predecessor, the Badge of Military Merit, was established by President George Washington in 1782. It became known as the Purple Heart Medal in 1932 thanks to Army General Douglas MacArthur.

The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor estimates there have been 1.8 million Purple Heart recipients.

Junior League kicks off 101st year of service



Anamaria Contreras and Tori Foster



Junior League Executive Vice President Aneesah Fadil and President Kimberly Barrett

By **Jennifer Logue**

The Junior League of Jacksonville kicked off its 101st year of community service and women’s leadership training Aug. 15 with a reception and program at the organization’s Riverside House headquarters.

Members enjoyed refreshments and a presentation by the organization’s leaders in preparation for another year of service and fellowship.

“This year is about honoring our past with an eye on our future,” President Kimberly Barrett said.

Currently, Barrett said, the Junior League has 120 active members plus an additional 30 new members. But the ranks of its alumni “sustainers” include an additional 300 women who have participated in the group’s service projects and leadership training.

“Our members really gain the resources to become pivotal leaders in the community,” Barrett said, noting that over the past century, Junior League members played a role in starting other local institutions including MOSH, the historical society and Jacksonville Speech and Hearing.

“We maintain strong relationships with these legacy partners,” Barrett said. “We’re very proud to have such strong roots in Jacksonville.”

Among the Junior League’s current community service activities is its Fresh Minds program, whereby members prepare meal kits using fresh, nutritious ingredients for distribution to families through Sulzbacher Village and Sanctuary on 8th.

“Over the past four years,” Barrett said, “we’ve prepared over 25,000 meal kits.”



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GORGEOUS AVONDALE POOL ESTATE



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Backing the blue Signal 34 Foundation hosts Supporter Appreciation Night



Co-Founder Kevin Munger with Bill and Wendy Lebarran and Crystal and Jeff Ward, American Legion Post 137 commander

The Signal 34 Foundation held its inaugural Supporter Appreciation Night last month to thank those who have sustained its efforts to provide financial assistance to families of police officers injured or killed in the line of duty.

Held Aug. 1 at Avondale’s All Spiced Up, the event also featured the launch of All Spiced Up’s Signal 34 Spice Blend, proceeds from the sale of which will benefit the foundation. Tom Harris of American Legion Post 283, meanwhile, presented a \$1,000 donation to the organization.

“Our squadron is very involved in supporting community efforts, particularly organizations like Signal 34 for our first responders and their cause,” Harris said.

Signal 34 Foundation Co-Founder Ashley Sowers said Post 283 and Post 137 have been especially staunch supporters of the foundation, which was founded by Sowers and Co-Founder Kevin Munger after three of their friends and fellow officers were shot in the line of duty and faced a long road to recovery.

Opening of new kitchen a highlight of Rethreaded’s 13th birthday celebration



Marcy Taylor and Director of Development Lisa Kiral cut the ribbon to officially open The Betty Amster Hope Kitchen, donated by Todd and Marcy Taylor in honor of her mother.

The opening of a new kitchen facility was one of the highlights of nonprofit Rethreaded’s 13th birthday party.

Held July 27, the event featured the theme of “Home Sweet Home,” celebrating the countless women who have found a home through the organization’s efforts to empower survivors of human trafficking.

The evening began with a ribbon-cutting ceremony and tour of the new kitchen, which will be used for job training and known as the Betty Amster Hope Kitchen in honor of donor Marcy Taylor’s mother. The opening also celebrated the organization’s partnership with Anita Comisky, the artisan behind Amelia Toffee. By acquiring Amelia Toffee in 2021, Rethreaded added toffee-making expertise to its mission.

“The joy our guests experienced in the toffee kitchen during the grand opening was a great representation of the joy we experience in the kitchen every day,” Director of Development Lisa Kiral said. “Rethreaded toffee kitchen will set the stage for changing lives for many years.”

Guests at the birthday party enjoyed an array of activities, including shopping and watching a live leather painting demonstration. The event also featured a \$30,000 matching challenge provided by Riverside Homes, which will support 874 hours of employment and holistic services for survivors at Rethreaded.

Kristin Keen, founder and CEO of Rethreaded, expressed gratitude to all who contributed to the event’s success.

“Because of the generosity of the Jacksonville community, we were able to provide over 4,000 hours of employment and wrap-around services for survivors of human trafficking,” Keen said. “I am so proud of our community.”

Great Cities Symposium to be held Oct. 10 Proceeds benefit Scenic Jacksonville’s beautification efforts

The 5th Annual Great Cities Symposium will be held from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 10 at the Garden Club of Jacksonville.

Sponsored by Scenic Jacksonville, the annual civic leadership event will feature as its guest speaker Carol Coletta, president and CEO of the Memphis River Parks Partnership. In that role, Coletta spearheaded the recently unveiled Tom

Lee Park, a 31-acre riverfront park that is considered a model for inclusive, environmentally restorative urban parks. She previously led initiatives at The Kresge Foundation, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and ArtPlace.

The Great Cities Symposium is the primary fundraiser for Scenic Jacksonville, with proceeds supporting the organization’s work advocating for beautification of

Jacksonville’s natural and built environment. The event will begin with a cocktail reception featuring hors d’oeuvres and beverages, followed by remarks from Coletta and dessert and cocktails.

The Garden Club of Jacksonville is located at 1005 Riverside Avenue. Tickets for the symposium are \$120 per person and are available for purchase at www.scenicjax.org.

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Wishmakers Ball celebrates 30 years of wishes



Steffanny Acevedo and Thornton Keel Terry and Preston Ward of Dillard's Trinace and David Grant

Make-A-Wish of Central and North Florida celebrated 30 years of granting wishes last week at the Wishmakers Ball Jacksonville.

Held at the Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa, the annual gala featured a cocktail reception and silent auction, followed by dinner and a live auction. Proceeds from the event support granting wishes to children with critical illnesses.

"This event is a huge effort, but it's so important," Director of Wish Granting Heather Rufer said. "It gives the children hope."

The Central and North Florida Make-A-Wish chapter started in 1994, when it granted a young girl's wish to meet Dolly Parton. Since then, the chapter has granted more than 7,400 wishes – everything from trips to Disney World or New York City to experiences such as being a fighter pilot or a famous actress.

Angelwood 'Soaring Possibilities'



Event Co-Chair Erica Flamm (center) with John and Whitney Spinks George Sabbag and event Honorary Chair Dan Wahby

"Soaring Possibilities" was the theme of the 2024 Angelwood Golf Resort & Spa.

This year's gala featured a more informal resort/beach theme. Attendees perused the hundreds of silent auction items and an is accomplishments of the organization, which assists families in c

In addition to providing behavioral analysis services, Angelw neighborhoods that provide 24-hour awake supervision. Angelw transportation and social outings for group home residents. The school-aged children with intellectual or development disability



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Annual Celebration, held Aug. 17 at the Sawgrass Marriott
 e, with guests clad in colorful sundresses and sport shirts.
 island-themed buffet and a presentation highlighting the
 caring for their loved ones with special needs.
 wood operates group homes in residential Jacksonville
 wood staff coordinate medical and dental appointments,
 organization also operates a summer day camp in Mandarin for
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Brette Petway, Ellen Glasser and Monica Gilt Jennifer Ged, Bre Gipson, WCJ Board President Laura VanZee and Madonna Gipson WCJ Board Member Alma Ballard and Marcus Ballard

Women's Center of Jacksonville celebrates 'Women, Words & Wisdom'



Unsung Hero honoree April Devine, Jackie Roberts and Jennifer Stanton Unsung Hero honoree Stephanie Lynn and Kristina Heath Kevin Shields, Mary Book, Unsung Hero honoree Amie Shields and Ronda Carney

"Women, Words, & Wisdom" was the theme of the Women's Center of Jacksonville's recent speaker event. Held at The Schultz Center on Aug. 26 – Equality Day, which commemorates the adoption of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote – the event featured a reception and speaker presentation by Dr. Ellen Glasser. The former mayor of Atlantic Beach – and one of the first women FBI agents – Glasser spoke on "Finding Your Voice in Challenging Times." The evening also recognized the organization's Unsung Heroes who work to improve the lives of women in the community. The 2024 honorees include: April Devine of Florida Blue; Michelle Lewis, Jacksonville Transit Authority; Stephanie Lynn, Jacksonville Jaguars and Bold Events; Tiffany Rodriguez, artist and elementary school art teacher; and Amie Shields, founder of The Charis House center for eating disorders. Proceeds from the event benefited the Women's Center's programs and services for survivors of sexual assault – including its Sexual Assault Forensic Exam (SAFE) program as well as counseling, legal advocacy and support.



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Giving to Charity Generously and Saving Money on Your Taxes? – (But You Have to Do It the Right Way)

In today's world, the spirit of giving is more important than ever. With numerous charitable organizations striving to make a difference, your contributions can have a significant impact. Moreover, giving to charity not only helps those in need but can also provide you with substantial tax benefits. However, to maximize these benefits, it's crucial to approach charitable giving strategically and correctly.

The Importance of Charitable Giving

Charitable donations play a vital role in supporting various causes, from providing disaster relief and medical aid to funding educational programs and religious teaching. By giving generously, you contribute to the betterment of society and help create a positive change in the world. Additionally, charitable giving can foster a sense of community and personal fulfillment, knowing that your contributions are making a difference.

Tax Benefits of Charitable Donations

State and Federal Governments incentivize personal charitable gifts by

offering tax deductions, however most families do not know how to collect these incentives. When you donate to a qualified charitable organization using our methods, you can deduct the amount of your donation from your taxable income, reducing your overall tax liability. This can be particularly beneficial if you are strategic, as it can lead to substantial savings.

How to Give Strategically

To ensure that your charitable donations are both impactful and tax-efficient, follow these guidelines:

1. Consider Non-Cash Donations:

Donating appreciated assets, such as stocks or real estate, can provide additional tax benefits. By donating these assets directly to a charity, you can avoid capital gains taxes and still deduct the fair market value of the donation. Donating appreciated securities, such as stocks, mutual funds or real estate, can be more tax-efficient than giving cash.

2. **Use Donor-Advised Funds:** A donor-advised fund (DAF) allows you to make a charitable contribution, receive an immediate

tax deduction, and then recommend grants from the fund over time. This can be a strategic way to manage your charitable giving and maximize tax benefits.

3. Bunching Deductions

Across Years: If your charitable contributions are not large enough to itemize every year, consider bunching your donations into one year. This means making larger donations in one year to exceed the standard deduction threshold, allowing you to itemize and maximize your tax benefits.

4. Using FIFO to Track Your Cost Basis:

When tracking your cost basis, the Highest In, First Out (HIFO) method can maximize your tax benefits. This method allows you to sell the shares with the highest cost basis first, minimizing your taxable gains. Then when you donate to charity, select your 'lowest cost % basis' shares to give to charity. The charity will sell these low basis shares and as a charity be exempt from capital gains taxes.

5. Consult Walsh Investment Consulting before Selling Your Business or Investment Real Estate:

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Louis V. Walsh, IV, Jaqueline Woodson, Andrea Diaz-Rosario, Adri Senecal, Matthew Monroe

business or its appreciated assets, you can potentially save a substantial amount on taxes.

6. **Consult a Tax Professional:** Tax laws can be complex, and it's essential to understand how they apply to your specific situation. Consulting with a tax professional can help you navigate the rules and ensure that you are maximizing your tax benefits.

Conclusion

Remember, the key is to give thoughtfully and strategically, ensuring that your generosity benefits both the causes you care about and your financial well-being. Give Walsh Investment Consulting a call to discuss, as we will make this strategic process easy and automatic for your family.

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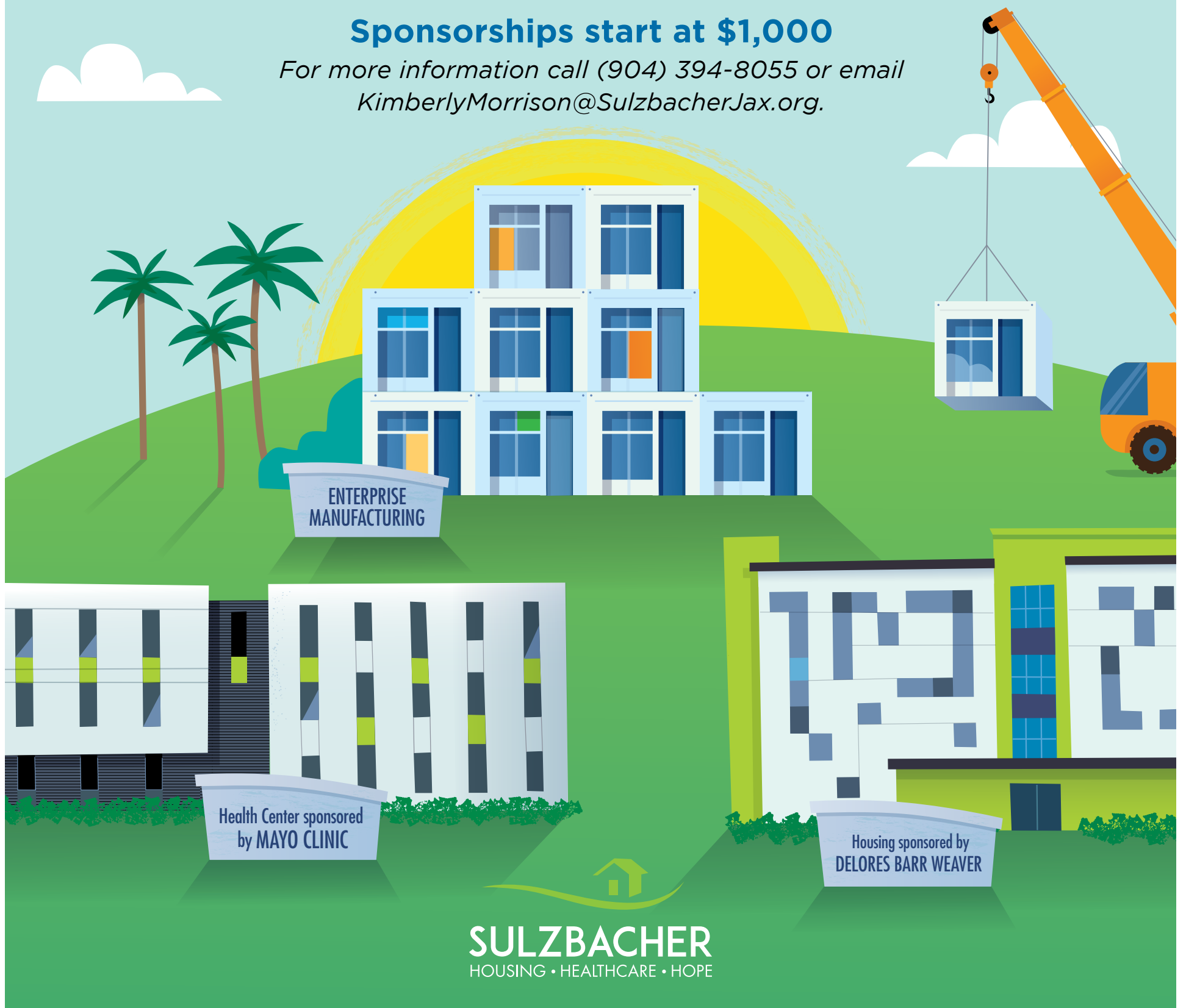
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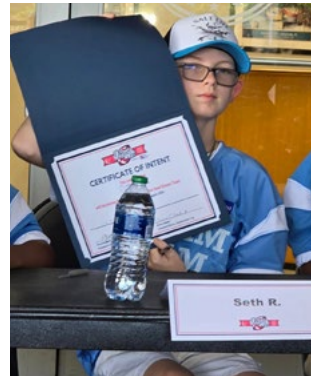
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RESIDENTS Junior

TaxSlayer Gator Bowl signs 12 kids to ‘Dream Team’



The Harris Family: mom Melanie, Dream Team member Kennedy, Houston and dad Cale
By Jennifer Logue



Dream Team member Seth Rowe displays his Signing Day certificate.



Gator Bowl Sports CEO Greg McGarity welcomes guests to the Dream Team Signing Day.

Twelve young people dealing with life-threatening illnesses participated in the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl “Dream Team Signing Day” at EverBank Stadium Aug. 1.

Through a partnership between Gator Bowl Charities and the nonprofit Dreams Come True, the Dream Team will participate in six months of special events and activities, culminating in January at the 2025 Gator Bowl.

Greg McGarity, president and CEO of Gator Bowl Sports, welcomed guests to the signing event, where the 12 team members signed their certificates to participate in the Dream Team events.

Member of this year’s Dream Team include Te’Von Berry, 16; Jared Cook, 15; Kennedy Harris, 8; Jase Holden, 11; Kasey Ladd, 8; Leonard “Trey” Love, 17; Luke Masiak, 9; Kylee Mathis, 15; Brynley Richardson, 3; Seth Rowe, 13; Marshawn Wilson, 10; and Leonard “Leo” Wortham, 11.

Ashley Smith of Dreams Come True noted that Dream Team members have been treated at local hospitals for conditions ranging from spina bifida and Williams Syndrome to acute lymphoblastic leukemia and range in age from 17 down to the youngest-ever Dream Team member, 3-year-old Brynley.

“Brynley loves football,” Smith said while holding the toddler. “What do the Jaguars say, Brynley?”

“Duuuuuvaalll,” she replied.

Prior to signing their certificates, Dream Team members learned of the numerous activities in which they’ll participate between now and the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl. In addition to attending monthly membership socials, team members and their families will travel to Gainesville for a “scouting trip” to watch a University of Florida football game. They will also attend the Gator Bowl’s official holiday party, attend football games and receive official Gator Bowl green jackets.

The experience will culminate Jan. 2, 2025, at the TaxSlayer Gator Bowl, where the Dream Team will get to meet players, coaches and be recognized on the field.

“I’ve had the opportunity to meet previous Dream Teams,” Justin Contreras of presenting sponsor First Citizens Bank told the Dream Team. “And I can honestly say, you’re going to have the time of your lives.”

Bringing light

For the families of the Dream Team, the experience brings some much-needed joy to the children’s lives.

“I think it’s so incredible for organizations to take what is a really dark time and bring a little light to it,” said Melanie Harris, mother of Dream Team member Kennedy Harris. “It gives the kids a chance to be with other kids their age who are

like them and know what they’re going through.”

Kennedy was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia in September 2023, just days before her 8th birthday after her mother had noticed some unusual bruising. The effect on the family’s life was immediate.

“Before that, cancer was always just a sad St. Jude’s commercial – you always think it’s not going to happen to you,” Harris said. “No parent can imagine the nightmare.”

The family also didn’t realize how lengthy the treatment would be.

“She began this journey in first grade and will finish it in fourth,” Harris said. “That’s her childhood. We’re just so grateful for this (Dream Team) opportunity, because she has missed out on so much.”

Stacey Rowe, mother of Dream Team member Seth Rowe, agreed.

“I think it’s awesome for him to get some recognition after all he’s been through,” she said.

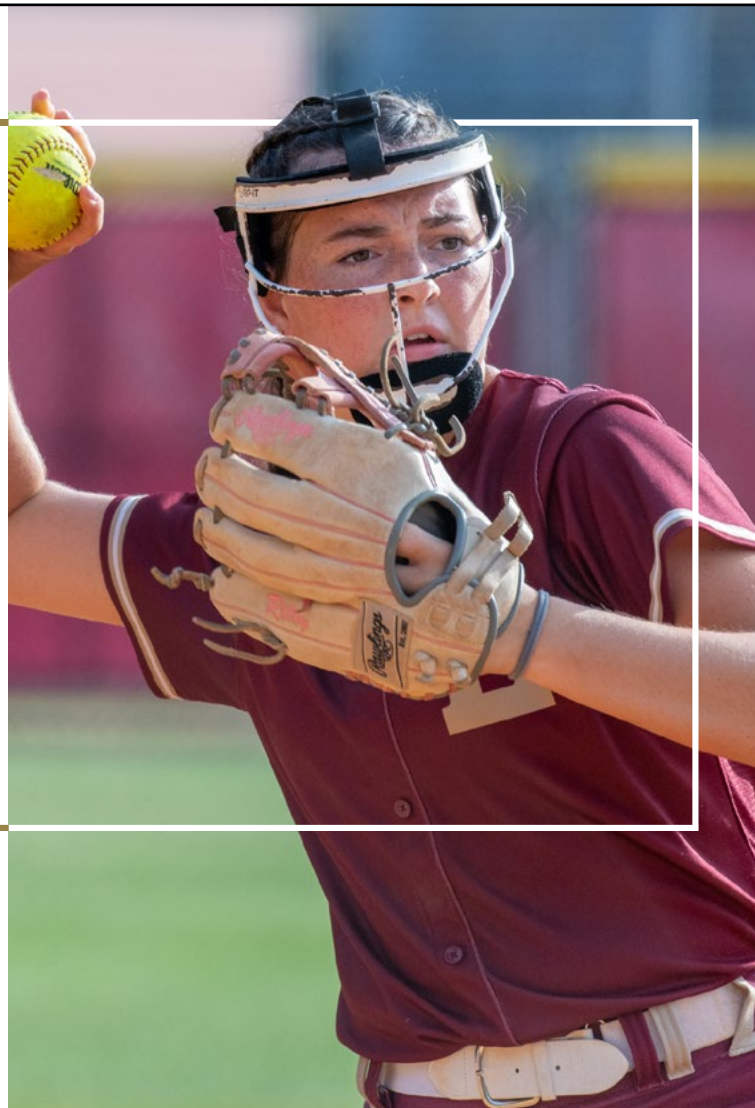
Seth, 13, has battled brain tumors twice. He was selected for the Dream Team after Dreams Come True granted his dream of taking a Disney cruise to the Bahamas. Thanks to being selected for the Dream Team, he has a new reason to look forward to the future.

Said Seth: “I’m excited for the adventures!”

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Sterling, Eli, Leo and Tavian show off their school supply haul at Pack the Sack II with their mom, Kaitlyn Peters.



Kimberly Anderson poses with her grandchildren Boston, Ireland and London at the Pack the Sack II event.

Families pack convention center for Pack the Sack II

Students receive new backpacks, school supplies

By Michele Leivas

Thousands of families flocked to the Prime Osborn Convention Center Aug. 3 to receive free backpacks and school supplies at the Pack the Sack II event.

Marla Montgomery brought four of her nine great-grandchildren to the event, their new backpacks filled with boxes of pencils, crayons and other supplies they'll need for the new school year.

"For so many of us, it's hard to go buy stuff, so this is essential, I really love it," she said. "It's worth standing in line for two hours."

City Councilmember Terrance Freeman hosted the event in partnership with Walmart and ALPHA Starz, Inc. In addition to distributing 10,000 free backpacks and school supplies, this year's event also offered free services including eye exams and haircuts.

Freeman said the event has grown significantly since he first started hosting smaller iterations of it on a neighborhood level. This year's event aimed to double the 5,300

backpacks that were distributed last year, and Freeman said the turnout underscores the need for such an event as families prepare their children for a new school year every fall.

Freeman also considers the impact the event will have not just on families' wallets and budgets, but on the students when they arrive in their classrooms.

"It makes me start thinking about mental health," Freeman said. "These students, they're self-aware and now all of a sudden, they look right, they look left, and they have the same supplies that their peers have. What does that do for their confidence? What does that do for their self-esteem, which we hope that excitement, energy carries over into their academics."

Cassandra Farve said Pack the Sack offers some much-needed financial relief for families.

"It's just amazing that they're able to do that and help everybody – especially people who are struggling," she said.



Great-grandmother Marla Montgomery joins four of her great-grandchildren Jah'marion, Jah'liyah, Malyna and Jah'nyi.

Bolles Lower School robotics team shines

A robotics team from the Bolles Lower School Whitehurst Campus participated in the inaugural FIRST LEGO League (FLL) Florida Sunshine Invitational in Daytona Beach.

Held June 19-22 at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, the competition attracted teams from 35 countries, including Saudi Arabia, Norway, Croatia, the Czech Republic, South Korea and Japan. Led by coach Beth Zerkowski, Bolles' team, The Moof Monsters, paired up with UWR Starlink from Dubai to clinch third overall in the Alliance Games.

"The team also received excellent feedback from judges on their Innovation Project that proposed building augmented reality glasses that translate to ASL in real time so deaf patrons can use them to see shows," Zerkowski said. "The Moof Monsters walked away with so many incredible ideas for next year after getting to meet some of the best teams in the world!"



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Mayo internship ‘sparks’ student’s interest in science



Abram Caccam

A Wolfson School for Advanced Studies student had an opportunity to intern at the Mayo Clinic this summer through its Science Program for the Advancement of Research Knowledge (SPARK) mentorship program.

Abram Caccam, a senior in the Wolfson IB program, worked under Dr. Eduardo Chini in his Cancer Biology Research lab. The intensive hands-on laboratory experience enabled Caccam to study how the transmembrane glycoprotein CD 38 levels in lymphomas and leukemias affect chemotherapy treatment response.

In addition to performing laboratory techniques such as flow cytometry and cell viability assays, he was able to conduct the entire scientific process, from formulating a hypothesis and conducting experiments to analyzing the results.

Caccam is the president of his school's Health Occupations Students of America (HOSA) Club and the first Wolfson student ever to be accepted into the SPARK program, which provides students with exposure to the real world of scientific inquiry.

Survey: Teens want financial literacy courses

Sixty-eight percent of teens would “likely” take a financial literacy class if it were offered to them – yet only 31% of respondents say they have access to such a course, according to a new survey.

Conducted by Junior Achievement (JA) and research firm Big Village, the survey of more than 1,000 teens comes at a time when research by the International Federation of Accountants shows a lack of financial literacy costs U.S. adults nearly a half billion dollars a year.

“When you ask adults what they wish they learned in school but didn’t, it usually involves topics like understanding how money works,” said Shannon Italia, president of JA of North Florida. “These findings show that most teens today would like access to this kind of information, but many may not be getting it.”

Other findings from the survey include:

- 60% of teens would “likely” take courses in work and career readiness and entrepreneurship if offered at school.
- 41% of teens would “likely” take courses on paying for college if offered.
- A year ago, 44% of teens said they would likely use AI to do their schoolwork but this year only 30% say they have actually used it for that purpose.
- 54% of teens think using AI to do schoolwork instead of doing it themselves is “cheating,” down from 60% a year ago.

Junior Achievement offers learning experiences to students in grades K through 12, plus to young adults 18+, that focus on financial literacy, work and career readiness, and entrepreneurship. JA programs are available at low or no cost to schools and reach more than 4.4 million students in the United States each year.

Wolfson patients enjoy ‘Christmas in July’



Santa presents a toy to a patient at Wolfson Children’s Hospital donated during the “Christmas in July” drive.

Christmas came early for children who are patients at Wolfson Children’s Hospital, as Santa Claus made a mid-summer stop to deliver some of the more than 1,300 toys donated during the annual “Christmas in July” toy drive.

In addition to toys, donors gave more than \$13,000 in financial gifts that will be used to purchase toys for Wolfson Children’s patients.

“We are so grateful for the continued generosity and stewardship of our Northeast Florida community, from individuals who donated online or dropped off toys, to organizations and businesses like Subaru of Jacksonville that sponsored the drive,” hospital President Allegra C. Jaros said. “The toy and monetary donations from Christmas in July allow our Family Support Services

team to bring joy to all our patients and to support them throughout their healing journey.”

Subaru of Jacksonville collected toys at their showroom on St. Johns Bluff Road throughout the month and delivered those with Santa on July 31. In addition to thousands of dollars’ worth of toys from the community, staff and ownership, the dealership contributed \$25,000 to support the Child Life department.

“The toys we collect in our showroom are much more than just items—they are symbols of smiles and comfort for the wonderful patients at Wolfson Children’s Hospital,” said Phil Porter, Jr. of Subaru of Jacksonville. “We cherish the opportunity to play a small role in the joy these gifts bring to the children, no matter the season.”

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Bolles students travel to 3 continents



Dozens of Bolles upper school students packed their bags for enriching, culturally immersive trips this summer, with students traveling to South America, Asia and Europe.

World Languages Department Chair Adriana Stam and upper school Spanish teacher Carrie Ezzell led a group of 10 students to South America to explore the natural beauty of Peru from June 2-11. The students hiked Machu Picchu, stopped by an alpaca farm and visited the Maras salt mines to learn about this natural resource and the science behind the production of salt.

In partnership with the Mandarin Learning Centre at Chung Yuan Christian University (CYCU), Bolles upper school Chinese teacher Cheng-Mei Rothschild and upper

school social studies teacher Tyler Jump took 15 students on an immersive trip to Taiwan June 9-23 for a two-week, custom-designed Chinese camp operated by experienced Mandarin teachers. The curriculum included different levels of Chinese classes, various cultural courses, extracurricular activities, interactions with Taiwanese students and local tours.

French and Arabic teacher Sara Phillips-Bourass and college counselor Danielle Leach, meanwhile, escorted nine students in the French/Latin Exchange Program to France. The group, which traveled from May 28 to June 7, spent the first part of the trip in Clermont-Ferrand, where they stayed with host families, attended classes at the

Fénelon School and explored the French culture, language and countryside. The second half of the trip gave students the opportunity to discover Paris, from taking a river cruise on the Seine and marveling at the Eiffel Tower to visiting the famous Catacombs.

Senior Bode Klassen also embarked on a journey to Japan on June 2 to spend time with students at The Keio School in Tokyo. Klassen took classes at Keio, went on a bunker tour and Tokyo Bay cruise tour, attended sporting events, participated in special chemistry experiments and more.

Bolles has enjoyed a longstanding exchange relationship with Keio, which sent a group of its students to stay with Bolles host families earlier this year.



St. Paul's starts new school year with blessing of the backpacks

Students, parents, staff and faculty gathered in St. Paul's Catholic Church last month to celebrate the blessing of the backpacks and mark the beginning of the new school year.

Father Leonard led the ceremony, addressing the crowd of students with warmth.

"These backpacks will contain work to be done – work that's been returned, books to inspire, notebooks, pencils, pens, canvases, crayons, rulers, scissors, glue sticks and all other items used for school," he said.

Following Father Leonard's words, students had holy water sprinkled on their backpacks, with a special prayer offered for the student's success, safety and growth throughout this school year.

"The blessing of the backpacks is a beautiful tradition at St. Paul's," Principal Kim Repper said. "It is a heartwarming moment where we are all united together, praying for the success of one another in the new school year."



Launching into the Future.

At The Bolles School, the future is an early focus so students can develop the life skills of compassion, courage and integrity as a foundation of their character. Combined with a world-class education, students build relationships, experience different cultures and make friends for life.

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Explore what Bolles has to offer by visiting www.Bolles.org or calling us at (904) 256-5030.

Future Focus

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Pre-K through Grade 12
Day & Boarding School



Cultural Council officials and community leaders join with Drew Haramis and sculptor David Main to dedicate "On Allison's Wings" at Stockton Park.

'On Allison's Wings' CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Donovan thanked numerous partners and community leaders who championed the creation of the sculpture and shepherded it through the approval process, including former City Council Member Randy DeFoor, who knew Haramis.

"I think this piece of art reflects Allison's spirit – her love of dance, her love of life itself," DeFoor said. "Allison was a force, she really was, and though her life was taken away too early, her spirit lives on with the Angels for Allison foundation."

"This statue speaks to those who come to this gorgeous setting, seeking peace," she continued. "It will be a beacon for grace and for hope."

Local sculptor David Main said creating the sculpture was a labor of love.

"We were told she was a dancer and she was very energetic and youthful, and so we tried to convey that in the sculpture," he said. "I'm happy to be a part of the community and able to make such beautiful things like this."

Allison's mother, Drew Haramis, expressed her gratitude to the community for the kindness her family has been shown in the 15 years since her daughter's death.

"It's hard to believe we've been without Allison for as many years as she lived on this Earth," she said. "No family expects to experience a tragedy like ours and through the kindness of the community we believe that we were able to create the mission of Angels for Allison to continue our daughter's shining light and help others in need."

A teacher at the Episcopal School of Jacksonville's St. Mark's Campus, Haramis noted that she can see the "On Allison's Wings" sculpture from the window of her third-grade classroom across the street.

"I feel so blessed to be reminded of Allison's legacy every day," she said. "I hope others will find peace and inspiration in its beauty."

DeFoor agreed.

"Generations to come will pass this statue and learn how special Allison Haramis was," she said, "and how she touched many lives in her very short period on this Earth."



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Little Theatre, big impact



Christine Booras, Eric Rakov and Douglas Johnson



Annelies Dykgraaf

By **Peggy Harrell Jennings**

Jacksonville’s Little Theatre has grown up!

Now known as Theatre Jacksonville, the nonprofit’s motto, “Little Theatre, Big Voice,” has proven true over the years. From its 1919 founding to its home for the past 86 years in the heart of San Marco in a building on the National Register of Historic Places, the theatre has devoted 105 years to “enriching lives and broadening cultural understanding through community participation in theatre arts.”

Volunteers are key to the longstanding success, including opportunities for painting sets, working on costumes, props or ushering at events. The oldest continually running community theater in Florida offers creative workshops for kids, teens and adults and a spectacular lineup of shows for the 105th season. Visit www.theatrejax.com. Art, music, and drama all in one package. Keep it up, Theatre Jax: You are aging well!



Douglas Johnson – Best in Show

Centennial celebration

The opening celebration for MOCA Jacksonville’s 100th birthday exhibit, “A Century of Contemporary,” is Sept. 5 at 8 p.m. Sign up at mocajacksonville.unf.edu.

The show will run through Jan. 12, 2025. But **Elysa Adams**’s “Voices of Moncrief” exhibit closes Sept. 8, so beat it down to MOCA. You do not want to miss this show or **Emil Alzamora**’s “Starship Abundance” art and sculptures, which are currently on display. Take a trip through time and new vistas and never leave the comfort of the gallery!

Jacksonville’s Downtown Library is a happening place, especially on Saturday mornings. Drop in and create your own comics or take a guided tour of the current and permanent exhibits. The library was hopping with visitors during ARTWALK at the reception for “Pack Your Bags” exhibit by TAC and JAG members. Each artist’s work is labeled with a passport: The library has travelogues and books associated with exciting destinations on display, and the food served at the reception reflected various locales and sites from around the world. Kudos to **Douglas Johnson** for Best in

Show and Juror’s Choice winners **Christine Booras, Eric Rakov and Lori Ann Sweet**.

Enjoy the artistic journey then travel upstairs for **Annelies Dykgraaf**’s “Ink Discovery” exhibit until Sept. 14. Continue the artistic path to TAC Gallery on Adams Street for “Parks and Recreation,” another wonderful exhibit highlighting many of the area’s interesting destinations. **Randy Pitts** took Best in Show, with **Jessie Cook** and **Jamie Childers** receiving Juror’s Choice awards.

And even more accolades are in order! Drum roll, please, for Best in Show **Abby Howard Murphy** and Juror’s Choices for **Jon Jennings** and **Stephanie Welchans** at the “Waterworks” exhibit at North Point Dental.



Randy Pitts, Best in Show (TAC Gallery)

Art in the Park is a new alliance with TAC Gallery and the City of Jacksonville to offer art classes for all ages in various parks every Saturday until the end of the year. Artist **Marsha Hatcher** led the August workshops and September classes will be held at Friendship Fountain. Check out offerings/register: jacksonville.gov/departments/park-and-recreation Sign up for fun!

So much happening in so many places with such accomplished people. Be sure to check out the Cultural Council of Greater Jacksonville – www.culturalcouncil.org. Applications are being accepted for grants for artists. Sixty grants will be awarded – it could be you!

Applications open for Art Ventures grants

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida is accepting applications for \$10,000 Art Ventures grants. Applications are due online by 5 p.m. Sept. 23.

The purpose of the Art Ventures grants is to strengthen small- and mid-sized arts organizations through capacity building and program development. Organizations will have the option of seeking funding for already identified needs or assistance with perceived needs during an 18-month grant period.

This funding opportunity is available exclusively for organizations; Art Ventures grants for individual artists will be available in 2025 through a separate application process.

In addition, the Delores Barr Weaver Black Arts Organization Fund has expanded its funding to Black-led and Black-focused nonprofits through additional grants for up to five Black-led arts organizations.

“The Community Foundation has supported arts organizations for nearly 35 years thanks to donors who have established funds dedicated to the arts,” said Amy Crane, vice president of programs. “This year, we’re pleased to expand this support thanks to the generosity of Delores Barr Weaver.”

Visit jaxcf.org/grants/small-arts-organizations to view the application or for more information.

THE BEAT GOES ON!

Through Sept. 14

Kathleen Vought – Featured Artist
Flip Flop Shop - 5 Points

Sept. 6 and 7

Jacksonville Symphony Free Concerts
Jacoby Symphony Hall
jaxsymphony.org

Saturday, Sept. 7

Marcus Williams – Featured Artist
Corner Gallery | 40 E. Adams St. | 5 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 7

River Blossom Jamboree
Cummer Museum of Art and Gardens
cummermuseum.org/event/the-river-blossom

Sunday, Sept. 22

Sigrun Buckley – Featured Artist
Ponte Vedra Beach Library
Reception: 3 to 4:30 p.m.

Sept. 19-21

QuiltFest 2024

Prime Osborn Center
Quiltfest.com

Saturday, Sept. 21,

Interactive Exhibit - See art and do art
Good Sandwich Shop
8th Street in Springfield | 11 a.m.

Saturday Sept. 21

Jax Photo Festival
Lift Evr’y Voice and Sing Park | 2 – 8 p.m.
malcjax.com/jax-photo-fest

Through October

Helen Moody- Featured Artist
Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church

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



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Joanelle Mulrain and Dame Julie Kenny



Front row from left: Sarah McLeod and Dame Julie Kenny
Back row: Margaret Foerster, Joanelle Mulrain and Mags Black-Scott



Dame Julie Kenny, Ward Lariscy and Sarah McLeod

By **Peggy Harrell Jennings**

The British are coming! But no need to sound the alarm. The recent gathering for tea (iced) and talk were peaceful, charming, educational and informative.

Hosted by **Ward Lariscy** of San Marco and **Margaret Foerster** of Ortega, the gathering featured **Dame Julie Kenny** and Wentworth Woodhouse Preservation Trust CEO **Sarah McLeod**, who presented a vision of building connections between the United Kingdom and the United States to one of the most spectacular and historically significant country houses in the world: Wentworth Woodhouse. The 365-room Georgian-Baroque mansion has family connections to Benjamin Franklin and the American colonists and the eighth Earl Fitzwilliam as

well as President John F. Kennedy.

Movies and television shows filmed at Wentworth Woodhouse include *Downton Abbey*, *Victoria*, *Darkest Hour* and *Gentleman Jack*, among others. The home is open to the public for various tours; visitors will find wildflowers, ancient trees and flowers throughout the 50 acres of gardens. The Camellia House has some of the oldest cultivars in the western world. Of course, one could enjoy a special occasion or celebration with an afternoon tea in the Long Gallery while overlooking the beautiful gardens.

Avondale resident **Joanelle Mulrain** was introduced to the venture by her friends **Margaret (Mags) Black-Scott** and her husband **David**. A native of Rotherham, where the

palatial estate is located, Black-Scott had nevertheless never been inside until it was opened to the public in 2017 after years of neglect. The Scotts invited Mulrain to join them at the Black Diamonds Annual Fundraising Gala, where she met and became involved in promoting the estate and is now the U.S. representative of Wentworth Woodhouse.

After a visit to the University of North Florida Botanical Garden, Kenny and McCleod concluded their visit by attending a reception hosted by the Scotts at their Marsh Landing home. The next part of their trip takes them to America's grandest estate, Biltmore in North Carolina. Perhaps the ladies will arrive just in time for tea. Find out more: wentworthwoodhouse.org.uk.

RAP to host inaugural Music Tour

Riverside Avondale Preservation will celebrate the area's musical history this fall with its inaugural Music Tour.

To be held from 1 to 6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 12, the event draws inspiration from the popular annual Home Tour, with mini-concerts occurring at multiple locations, including a

main stage at Willowbranch Park featuring headliner The Curt Towne Band.

Performances will be spread out across eight stages, complemented by exhibits and memorabilia highlighting local musicians and their contributions to the community.

Tickets are \$20 and are on sale now. The Music Tour is limited to 1,000 tickets. For more information, visit riversideavondale.org.

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In praise of first responders

I am grateful for the first responders who keep our Resident neighborhoods safe and sound.

The other day, I visited the Jacksonville Sheriff's Office's Crime Mapping website to see what kind of nefarious activity had been happening in our neck of the woods lately. It's a very cool resource if you're into that kind of thing and are a true crime aficionado like I've somehow become in my early 50s.

What you will probably see is there are all sorts of multicolor dots representing different crimes peppering most all other areas of town – except ours. At least on the day I checked the crime map, there was literally nothing happening in 32207 and 32217 along San Jose Boulevard and the St. Johns River and very little excitement in 32205 and 32210.

We have our police, fire and rescue squads to thank for this wonderful blessing of sparse dots on the crime map.

In our neighborhoods, the Jacksonville Fire & Rescue stations are: Fire Station #21 Lakewood/San Jose on Powers Avenue; Fire Station #13 San Marco on Atlantic Boulevard; Fire Station #12 St. Nicholas; Fire Station #5 on Forest Street; Fire Station #8 on Stockton Street; Fire Station #10 Riverside on McDuff Avenue South; Fire Station #14 Avondale on Herschel Street; and Fire Station #23 on Ortega Boulevard. The Jacksonville Sheriff's Office, of course, keeps its headquarters in downtown Jacksonville on Bay Street.

During my 25 years in the neighborhood, I have personally interacted with very few local first responders. But when I did, it was always positive, helpful and memorable. Here are a few moments I remember and appreciate.

My first run-in followed a holiday visit to Mississippi to see my father. While there, we took a little side trip over to Tunica, where I gambled my coin purse away on the slot machines and won a whopping and shocking \$1,200 buckeroos in cold, hard cash. It was dirty money, it seems. Because when we returned from the trip and I left my bulging pocketbook in the unlocked car by accident, some lowlife pilfered my car in the dark of that night and made off with the money that was obviously not intended to be mine. Because – I am an upright citizen who shouldn't have been dabbling in such games of chance.

I received a call from a man at a construction site nearby saying he'd found my blessed pouchette, which was, of course, sans the \$1,200 and a ne'er used Starbucks card that was filled to the rim with good credit – because I'm not a Starbucks person and had let all that currency sit there unused and loaded, available for burglary.

I screamed some choice potty words in front of the kids before calling the JSO to report the crime – the thievery of my dirty money. Anyway, the police officers were very nice and didn't roll their eyes

too overtly when I told them the purse had been left in the car, which was unlocked. They even took some fingerprints. Though the bag bandits were never caught, the responding officers made me feel heard and now I never leave my car unlocked. Lesson learned. Plus, I shelved my gambling desires because, like Kenny Rogers said, you've got to "know when to walk away and know when to run."

Not too long after that, I had to call the police because I just knew my 8-year-old daughter and her friend had been kidnapped or run away from home. It all happened very quickly one afternoon. I called the girls repeatedly. No answer. You could hear a pin drop in the house, so I felt certain they weren't inside. I looked around outside, on the street, at the park – no sign of them. My breathing quickened. Panic set in. In a much louder and higher tone, I began bawling their names and stumbling around the street like some looney tunes, not really sure what to do next.

I guess at that time we had a paid security officer patrolling Granada Park and he was the one who called the police. After describing what the girls were wearing to the security guard, I ran through the house again only to find my daughter and her friend emerging from under the bed. I was overcome with rage and relief. The responding officer was informed of the outcome and life in the neighborhood went back to boring old normal. I think I sat on the front steps staring into the great unknown and perspiring for about two hours after that nightmare – thankful for the conclusion and grateful to have had such responsive police assistance.

The next opportunity I had to interface with the police was when someone in the neighborhood thought my scrawny, straight-arrow, 10-year-old son and his Lilliputian younger sister had stolen two, three-foot concrete statues off their front porch. This was the first – and last – time

the local police ever questioned one of us in our home about involvement in a crime. As expected, the officer was very respectful and kind and with one look at our then smallish son, he observed the ridiculousness of it all. I bet police officers on our neighborhood beat get their fair share of waste-of-time-and-resources calls. But I'm still grateful they come – even when it's my ridiculousness.

The last police exchange of memory was during my early morning running days, when some weirdo thought it'd be fun to stalk Lindsey, my BFF, and me along old San Jose Boulevard. I can't remember how all that exactly played out, but the police ended up tracking the guy down and giving him some "go on, get outta here" and we never heard from or saw that weirdo again.

Luckily, we have not received fire truck or ambulance rescue crews at the house during our 25 years here, but they've been called to a family member's house from time to time when the "I've fallen" necklace malfunctions. I am grateful they are so close and can get there quickly, even when it's a false alarm. But I also think what a pain it must be to answer the call for all these home security, fire warnings and personal aid devices on the fritz. Then I'm even more thankful that these wonderful humans take care of business like they do, even when it's a waste-of-time call or false alarm or some kid hiding under the bed from their frantic parent.

From the stories my husband and others tell me, his youthful existence in Ortega may or may not have included some first-responder action, but those are his yarns to spin (thankfully!), not mine. I am grateful for our dedicated first responders, who keep our neighborhoods safe and out of trouble. Safety is important to our well-being, our relationships and our property values. Thanks to our community helpers, our neighborhoods are long on these qualities!




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PRODUCED BY THE WOMEN'S BOARD TO BENEFIT WOLFSON CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

Discover OLLI Osher Lifelong Learning Institute to host open house Sept. 10

By Susan Brandenburg



OLLI offers a variety of educational programs for people “ages 50 and better.”



OLLI members visit Fort Caroline.

The Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) – a program for “curious knowledge seekers” aged 50 and over – will host a free “Discover OLLI” open house from 10 a.m. to noon Tuesday, Sept. 10 at the University of North Florida’s Adam W. Herbert University Center.

Attendees will have an opportunity to watch a video on the program, try a sample mini-class and talk to instructors and students.

What is OLLI?

Designed for adults who wish to continue learning, share their knowledge and experiences and who enjoy making friends and socializing, the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute was the concept of philanthropist Bernard Osher, a man with an unwavering belief in the value of the “age 50 and better” community. The Bernard Osher Foundation currently funds 124 such programs across the United States – from Florida and Maine to Alaska and Hawaii.

Jacksonville’s OLLI, founded as a learning in retirement program in 2006, is located at the University of North Florida (UNF). A volunteer organization with more than 180 instructors and a current enrollment of 1,000 adult learners, OLLI offers a myriad of classes from A (ancestry, arts) to Z (zoology) – covering languages, history, current events, world affairs, science and technology, health and wellness, knitting, bridge, ukelele and guitar and others.

In addition to on-campus classes at the Herbert Center, OLLI offers Zoom classes and hybrid on-campus/Zoom classes, all of



OLLI participants enjoy an outing on a schooner.

which occur between 9:30 a.m. and 3 p.m. Instructors come from all backgrounds and volunteer their time and talent to share their knowledge and experience.

Two much-loved offerings at OLLI are ED-ventures and the Explore More courses. ED-ventures take OLLI members to places they might not otherwise get to see, including behind-the-scenes tours of Jacksonville International Airport, THE PLAYERS Championship, the Bacardi bottling plant and many others over the years. Recently, ED-venturers spent three days in St. Petersburg, where they toured several museums, took an eco-tour of Tampa Bay and dined at numerous restaurants.

Explore More courses combine classroom time with outside experiences: Recent offerings include “Amazing Monarch Butterflies,” “Jacksonville’s Dynamic Future Downtown” and “Wetland Preserve: Conservation-Compatible Forestry You Should Know.”

Attendance at the Discover OLLI open house is free, but registration is required. To register, call 904-620-4200.



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ANIMAL HOUSE

Hey, Jude: Wolfson's four-legged staffer celebrates 3rd birthday

By Julie Kerns Garmendia

Jude, the most serenely calm dog one could meet, is Wolfson Children's Hospital's first facility service dog. He just celebrated his third birthday and first year on staff.

The cream-colored golden retriever/Labrador mix enjoyed his "paw-ty" with pediatric patients, their families, and staff, all invited to "sit and stay" for the unique festivities. Jude showed his approval with a nonstop happy tail and lots of gentle interaction.

Jude received gifts from patients at his birthday party, including a special Woofgang Bakery doggie cupcake. Also on hand were coloring pages of Jude provided courtesy of Art with a Heart in Healthcare, a nonprofit group dedicated to bringing artists into the hospital to work on creative activities with patients, promoting whole-body healing and well-being.

Wolfie's Woofpack

Wolfson's new facility service dog program is called "Wolfie's Woofpack." It is part of the renowned pediatric hospital's array of patient resources, which now includes Jude's animal-assisted therapies aided by his handler/caretaker, Child Life Specialist Kara Williams. A facility service dog must complete a two-year specialized training program to work in hospitals. Medical or human services professionals learn animal-assisted therapies and are matched with a facility service dog.

Williams, 27, is often asked to explain the differences between Jude and a volunteer-owned pet dog who visits patients.

"The volunteer-run Wolfson's Children's Hospital Auxiliary's Pet Therapy Program has been a wonderful comfort to our patients since 1995," she said. "The pet therapy teams bring registered and certified pet dogs able to provide a home-like visit filled with love and affection but scheduled less frequently. Jude, however, works a full-time schedule Monday through Friday and knows more than 40 commands."

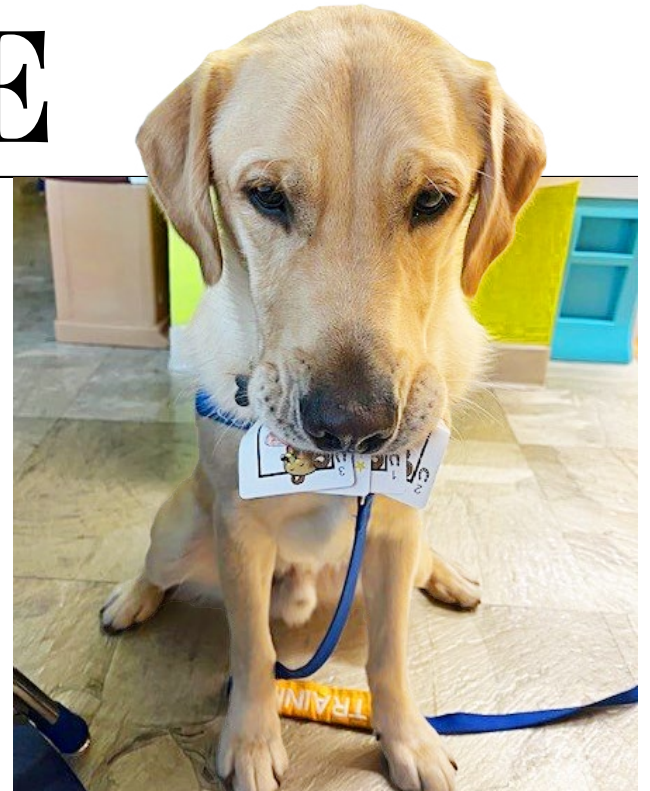
Williams' role as a trained child life specialist helps children understand what is happening in the hospital, which eases their fears through education, support and play.

Jude was expertly trained by Canine Companions, a national nonprofit that trains service dogs like Jude for healthcare facilities, criminal justice and educational settings. They also train service dogs to assist children, adults and veterans with disabilities.

Clients receive rigorously screened, trained dogs and follow-up services for free. Selected dogs train for two years and then work an average of eight years before retiring to spend their golden years as pets. Donations to help provide more trained dogs for those on the waiting list can be made through their website (see the Resources section below for details).

During his two-year training, Jude completed extensive medical and temperamental screenings and was required to pass several skills exams. He was matched with Williams during a two-week "team training" session in Canine Companions' Orlando headquarters, where despite working with several dogs during the process, Williams knew Jude was perfect.

"When you go through the matching process, the Canine



Jude playing cards

Companions trainers tell you that you won't pick the dog; the dog will pick you," Williams said. "I worked with roughly six dogs, but it was quickly clear that Jude was the one, based upon our connection when working through cues together. These dogs play such a vital role in the healing process and make a significant impact on patients. Facility dogs can turn a sometimes scary place into a safe place."

Dogs like Jude can help frightened children or those with autism and other challenges accept necessary treatment or procedures. For instance, Jude is trained to take medicine from a syringe placed into his mouth during a medical play session to ease patients' fear of syringes or medication.

The Children's Hospital Association has recognized the value of facility service dogs, and the therapies they provide. Lying across the patient's lap, for example, can alleviate anxiety or gain patient cooperation for treatment. Dogs can also serve as an alternative focus for patients undergoing painful procedures like IV placement or chest tube removal.

Jude's encouraging support for children who have undergone surgery and are scared to move is also vital, because he can help them overcome fears and want to move.



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Jude with a patient (sitting on couch)

According to UCLA Health research, the presence of an animal can trigger the body to release hormones like serotonin, prolactin and oxytocin, which can reduce stress, anxiety and fear and promote relaxation. Other studies from the National Institutes for Health reported measurable positive changes in patient vital signs, such as blood pressure and heart rate, including better nutritional intake.

For patients coping with more severe limitations, Jude's comforting presence or the feeling of petting his fur and his quiet, affectionate attention bring hope and positivity during difficult circumstances. Family members confirm those findings. They say that when Jude appears, he effortlessly and instantly changes the atmosphere, cheering and delighting patients.

Williams has trained Jude to engage with patients in other companionable ways to boost their mood and self-esteem. He loves to "high five" with his nose and give paw/handshakes or "play ball" by rolling it back and forth or tossing it with his nose. Jude can gently nudge patients to pet or walk him. He can lie down in a red wagon and be pulled, and he is learning to tug and pull it himself. These playful activities encourage patients' upper body or large muscle movement; strengthen overall coordination, balance, and motor function; and stimulate feelings of well-being.

Jude plays cards or other games, does puzzles by retrieving puzzle pieces on command, and even "paints" for or with patients. Bonus benefits include the pure enjoyment of walking or petting a dog, temporary freedom



Jude with a patient and his family (patient in the bed)

from a hospital bed, and the gaining of self-confidence and feelings of accomplishment through normal play and physical activity.

"When Jude gets his vest on and goes to work, it's amazing to see the difference he makes in patients' lives," Williams said. "He is so spunky and intelligent that they light up when he enters the room. His patient interactions give them the love and specialized individual support they need. He helps me to assist patients while he does all the work."

After Jude visits patients, Williams provides a variety of mementos to commemorate their time together. With her assistance, Jude "writes" thank you notes to patients, sending special encouragement through a message of love and gratitude. Williams gives patients stuffed "Jude" toy dogs and baseball cards featuring Jude's photo on one side and his personal information on the other: Favorite things are tennis or other balls, belly rubs, toys that squeak and beach trips.

Readers with a domestic pet or wildlife story are welcome to email Julie@residentnews.net.

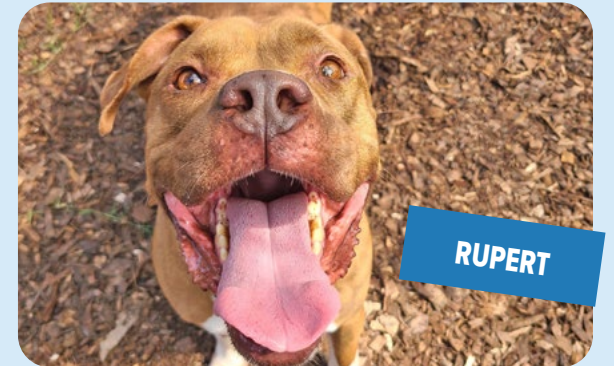
Resources

- Follow Jude on Instagram @heyjudevii.
- Canine Companions www.canine.org

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RUPERT

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Dappled Dumbo: ID#A1447262. This 10-month-old, 47-pound neutered, mixed-breed puppy is heartworm negative. "Dapples" is eager to learn, knows "sit" and walks well on leash. He is silly, goofy and enjoys playgroup with other dogs.

Rupert: ID#A1363494. Handsome Rupert is a 4-year-old neutered mixed-breed long-timer who arrived as a stray at Animal Care and Protective Services in Fall 2022. He is heartworm-negative, weighs 94 pounds and is very smart as well as house- and crate-trained. He also loves children, knows basic commands and shakes "paws."

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LOCAL FOLKS

Cliff Leonard Avondale sculptor honors the fallen



Sculptor Cliff Leonard specializes in busts of Marines and Navy corpsmen killed in action.

By Jennifer Jensen

More than 20 years ago, something caught Cliff Leonard's eye, and he decided to try a new hobby.

The object was a life-size sculpture of a carousel horse created by an Orange Park woman.

"I thought, I'd love to do that," Leonard said.

He visited the artist and saw that she also had sculpted a rocking horse. He asked her if she could teach him how to sculpt. She obliged and the first thing he created was a rocking horse, which still sits in his home in Avondale today.

When Leonard first started learning to sculpt, he created whimsical, woodland-type creatures. After a few years of sculpting, he decided he wanted to portray real

people. But sculpting portraits was a bit more challenging than fictional characters, so Leonard took classes and workshops whenever he could to learn more.

"I got to the point where I wanted it to be a little bit better, so I can have it look more like a person," he said. "I learned that having a good teacher is important as well as practice, practice, practice."

His joy of sculpting portraits and his time in the Marine Corps led him to his current passion: sculpting Marines and Navy corpsmen who were killed in action. Leonard served in Vietnam, where he lost many friends, and now sees all Marines as his "little brothers." As he's gotten older, he said it might be more like "little grandsons."

His time in the Marine Corps and passion for sculpting all came together about 17 years ago when he created his first bust sculpture of a Marine killed in action. He presented it to the Marine's grandparents.

"I saw how much the grandparents appreciated it. It meant a lot to me," Leonard said. "But I have to admit it, it wasn't very good."

His art has grown a lot since that time, thanks to the help of other seasoned and talented artists.

After that first bust, he decided to create one for all the Jacksonville Marines and Navy corpsmen who were killed in action. During that time, he also became a member of the Semper Fidelis Society, which was helpful in his search for these Marines.

"In one of my past lives, I was a private investigator, so I have good skills of tracking down people," he said. But even with his skills, there were several he couldn't find or didn't want to be found.

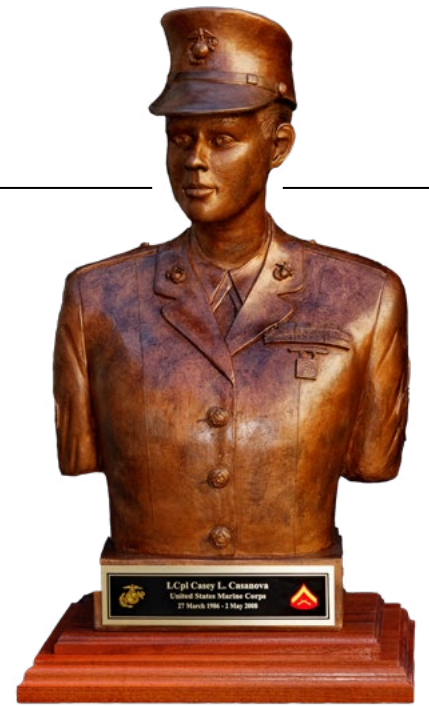
Once he finds the names, he contacts the parents or loved ones to see if they would even like to have a sculpture created of the deceased. He makes them free of charge and donates them to the family.

"I also have to convince them I'm not a shyster, that I'm not trying to get something from them," Leonard said. And he also understands those who may not want the gift he's offering. For some people, it could bring up old wounds and experiences they don't care to revisit.

He created about five or six sculptures of Jacksonville natives who were killed in action. Then he decided to be even more ambitious and find fallen Marines and Navy corpsmen from Georgia and Florida. He found nearly 100 Marines who were killed in action.

Working from his art studio in his garage, it takes him about 2.5 months to create a bust. In the end, he ended up creating about 50 busts of Marines who were killed. Along the way, he also sculpted some of his friends from Vietnam and a few Medal of Honor recipients.

To create the bust, he enlists the family to submit photos – specifically, a Marine's boot camp photo and a profile shot. The boot camp photos show a young, serious Marine,



A bust of fallen Marine Casey Casanova

which is what he tries to recreate with his sculptures.

It can be difficult to capture someone's likeness, especially if the person looks somewhat different in each photo. His overall goal is to create an accurate likeness rather than a caricature.

When a sculpture becomes challenging, he isn't afraid to bring in an expert to help him get it right. He also calls in his wife, daughter and two grandsons to share their opinions.

"He'll say, 'Oh, his nose is too big,'" he said. "And the next day, I'm like, 'He was right.' Kids are honest. They'll give it to you straight."

The entire process has been a moving experience for Leonard, his family and friends. It can be difficult and extremely emotional sometimes when dropping off the busts to a Marine's family.

"I really enjoy people getting to know these guys," he said. "They all have their stories and something to say."

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THE WAY WE WERE

Happy 102nd Birthday, Mary Love Strum



Gray and Mary Love Strum



The Strum Family



Gray and Mary Love Strum on their wedding day



Carolyn Houston, Mary Love Strum and Mary Love McArthur

By **Peggy Harrell Jennings**

Happy Birthday Mary Love McCall Strum! When this amazing woman was born on September 11, 1922, in Quitman, Georgia, who could have known the influence and joy she would bring into the world? Her contributions have been many and the list of organizations and volunteer hours for worthwhile groups in Jacksonville is extensive. And we are not just talking past tense.

A dedicated “influencer” before that term existed – just say “Mary Love” and people know of whom you speak – for the Jacksonville Symphony, the Cummer Museum, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, the River Club, Colonial Dames, the Jacksonville Historical Society and D.A.R. to name a few, Strum’s influence over the years is legendary. This social butterfly not only attends galas, opening events, parties and her grandchildren’s sports functions but also plays bridge twice a week.

“It’s a party if Mom is there,” daughter Carolyn Houston said.

Mary Love arrives in her Lincoln Continental with a license tag bearing her initials and an American flag waving on the front – her sparkly cane glittering, her hair perfectly coiffed and her nails manicured.

“My nails are the prettiest part of me now,” she joked. “I don’t mind being over 100, but I don’t like looking like it.”

This wit and humor add to her charm. Her daughters agree that she embraces the best of everything and has lots of love to give and “people just love her back.”

Raised by her grandparents after her mother died, Mary Love honors her grandmother by being called “Granny” by her grand- and great-grandchildren.

After graduating from Rockmart High School in Georgia, where she was a

cheerleader, Mary Love worked at several naval bases. Then fate intervened and she came to the Jacksonville Naval Air Station, where she was secretary for two and a half years to Charles Gray Strum, then lieutenant commander of the base.

A graduate of the Naval Academy who had been at Pearl Harbor, Gray was, according to Mary Love, “good looking, in the Navy, quite a gentleman – and a few other things that I can’t say,” she joked.

“I was going with two young men at the time,” she added, “and I asked the Lord to put the right one in my path and He did.”

Married at NAS chapel in 1951, the young couple lived on Mallory Street in Riverside before moving to Ortega Forrest when it was being built in the 1950s. Gray had grown up in Avondale, attended The Bolles School and his dad was a federal judge, so he had a long history with Jacksonville. After daughters Mary Love (now McArthur) and Carolyn (Houston) were born, the family moved around the world. From the Philippines, where Gray was the commanding officer of the base at Sangley Point, to Morocco where he was senior naval defense attaché, a portion of the children’s lives was spent in Tangiers, Casablanca, Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Pensacola, Florida.

They also traveled to London, France and to India to see the Taj Mahal. All this traveling sounds thrilling, but Mary Love joked, “If you’ve seen one castle you’ve seen them all. I would rather sit outside in a café and drink coffee. I get seasick and I’m scared of airplanes.”

She is quick to add, however, that she loved being a Navy wife. During their time in Morocco (after she had attended attaché school and spent nine months learning

French – the diplomatic language), her duties included entertaining twice a month and attending other diplomatic functions five to seven days a week. She entertained many dignitaries, including heiress Barbara Hutton and Jacksonville notables Raymond and Minerva Mason.

“Being a Navy wife was my job and my husband appreciated everything I did,” she said. “I have no regrets, and I love the way my life has gone except for Gray passing on in 2009.”

A self-proclaimed “chicken” who doesn’t like confrontation, Mary Love is outspoken about her beliefs, and her daughters say she was a very strict parent. So strict that daughter Mary Love still has not gotten over not being allowed to attend the Beatles concert when they came to Jacksonville in 1964 because she had to attend a birthday party at the Green Derby instead.

As a mother, Mary Love’s favorite sentence was “Wouldn’t you like to ...?” (whatever she asked) and the girls knew that it was not a suggestion but a directive!

She also has no patience for whiny people. “If you are whiny,” she said, “then no one wants to be around you!”

Mary Love has so many entertaining stories, and her wit and prodigious memory shine like her smile through each one. While riding in a chauffeured car in the Philippines, for example, Mary Love recalls being mobbed by onlookers seeking a closer look.

“I just waved like Queen Elizabeth!” she said.

A longtime member of St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, with whom she shares her birth year, Mary Love reads the newspaper and her Bible every day. Her favorite verse is John 3:16.



Mary Love Strum

This joy-filled mother of two, grandmother of seven and great-granny of 20 is expecting two more great-grandchildren in November. An appropriate Bible verse for this amazing lady is Proverbs 17:22: “A merry heart doeth good, like a medicine.”

And being around Mary Love Strum is just the tonic the world needs.

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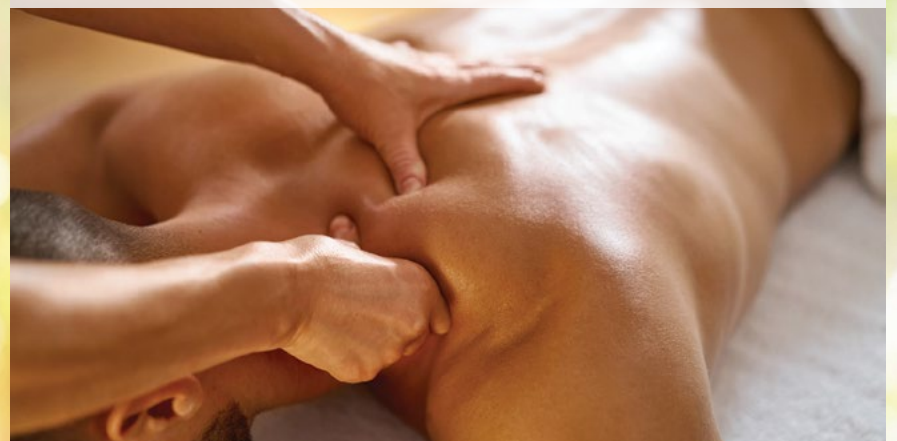


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Chances are, you'll find it at Lily's.

Located at 2922 Corinthian Ave. in Ortega Village, Lily's Chic Vintage to Present is the vision of Lily Welty, who has drawn on her interior design background to curate a distinctive shop for discerning buyers.

"This is not a consignment shop," Welty stressed. "It's more a place to find one-of-a-kind items."

An Ortega resident, Welty opened the shop in November 2023.

"I had always wanted to have a store," she said. "I enjoy buying and selling, and I had a

lot of friends with high-end merchandise they wanted to sell."

With close to 5,000 square feet of space, Lily's features both new and vintage items – from Vietri dinnerware and home décor and Mark Roberts holiday collectibles to jewelry and art by local artists.

Shoppers will find everything from designer glassware and table linens to antique furniture, pottery and high-end shoes and purses. Names like Gucci, Fendi and Marc Jacobs share space with decorative art and housewares. And all the merchandise, Welty said, is "priced to sell."

"You really have to come in and see it," she said. "It's worth the visit."

2922 Corinthian Ave | Hours Wed-Sat 10-6

Store: 904-240-1981 | Cell: 404-234-2604

Email: lilyschicortegavillage@gmail.com | Web: Lilyschic.com



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Dr. Erin T. Wolff
MD

Dr. Wolff is certified by the American Board of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, and has a subspecialty in Sports Medicine. He lectures frequently and his research has been published in the book "Evidence-Based Management of Low Back Pain" and various medical journals.

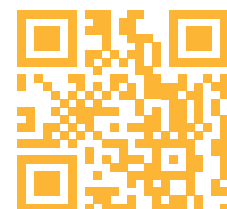
Dr. Wolff is a graduate of Wayne State University School of Medicine. He completed his Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation Residency at Carolinas Medical Center and his Sports & Spine Fellowship at Atlantic Health System/Mountainside Hospital New Jersey Sports Medicine Institute.



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Forever in Our Hearts



Kristen "Scooter" Cavins

December 28, 1966 - August 7, 2024



Kristen "Scooter" Cavins, a beloved wife, mother, daughter and sister, passed away on Aug. 7, 2024. Born on Dec. 28, 1966, Scooter was a shining light in the lives of all who knew her, known for her warmth, kindness and unwavering devotion to her family and faith.

A graduate of Michigan State University with honors, Scooter dedicated her life to both her professional and personal passions. For more than 25 years, she successfully owned and operated Jacksonville's Mossfire Grill, where she became a staple in the community, known not only as a gracious host but also for her exceptional baking skills that brought joy to many.

Scooter's untimely passing prompted an outpouring of online tributes and memories from friends, colleagues and others who were fortunate to have known her.

"She really was the best boss ever!" shared former Mossfire employee Liesl Gavronsky. "She was a great leader who led by example...she truly cared about her employees."

Former Stein Mart CEO and frequent Mossfire patron Hunt Hawkins recalled that when Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast, Scooter baked dozens of cookies for him to deliver to Stein Mart employees in impacted areas "all from the goodness of her heart. She wouldn't accept a dime for them."

Stephen Lobrano wrote, "Ms. Cavins was a bright light in the world. She was in all ways beautiful, kind, caring and loving. The world was a better place because of Ms. Cavins' life and a sadder place without her presence."

Scooter was a devoted Catholic and a member of St. Matthew's Catholic Church. Her faith was a cornerstone of her life, guiding her every step with compassion and selflessness. She was a doting mother to her two sons, Sean and Dylan, and a loving wife to her husband, Drew. Scooter was also a cherished daughter to her mother, Kate, and a beloved sister to her brothers, Brian and Tommy. Her father, Thomas, preceded her in death.

Scooter's hobbies reflected her nurturing nature. She found joy in cooking, baking and caring for others. Her giving personality and caretaker spirit left a lasting impact on everyone who had the privilege of knowing her. Scooter's beauty radiated from the inside out, and she will be remembered for her gentle soul and unwavering love for her family and friends.

Kristen "Scooter" Cavins will be deeply missed by all who knew her, but her legacy of love, kindness and faith will live on in the hearts of those she touched.



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In Loving Memory



David A. Stein

December 10, 1938 - July 27, 2024



Noted local philanthropist David A. Stein, 85, passed away July 27, 2024, in his native Jacksonville, where he spent his entire life.

He left an indelible impression on countless individuals, organizations and his community.

The youngest of three boys, David was born on Dec. 10, 1938, in Jacksonville to Ben and Ruth Stein. As a teen, he worked in his father's Burger King restaurant on Beach Boulevard and graduated from Landon High School. He attended the University of Florida but returned to Jacksonville before graduation to join the family business.

David quickly mastered the Burger King operation. Eventually, he was named chairman and CEO of Southern Industrial Corporation, the original franchisor of all Jacksonville-area Burger King restaurants, and he founded and served as chairman of King Provision Corporation, serving Burger King restaurants throughout the Southeastern United States. He later co-founded T.L. Cannon Companies, which operates Applebee Restaurants in New York and Connecticut, becoming its chairman.

But David was not content to be a highly successful businessperson. He took to heart the Jewish values he learned from his father and strove to emulate his examples of community leadership, giving back and making a difference in the community. He was particularly proud of his role in the creation of the Jewish Community Alliance, The Greenwood School and the Stein Scholars as well as the continuation of his family's support of River Garden.

David was blessed to have the love and support of his wonderful wife, Linda Berry Stein, who was always by his side through all his endeavors, providing unwavering love and encouragement. She was a true partner and shared David's dedication to community and philanthropy. He and Linda were passionate supporters of education, with a special talent of sponsoring and mentoring students at both the University of North Florida and Jacksonville University. To underscore their desire to build future leaders, David and Linda created the Stein Fellowship at the United Way of Northeast Florida.

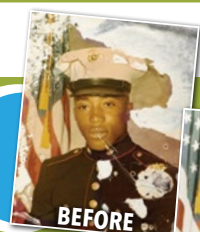
His gift to LJD Jewish Family and Community Services resulted in the Allison Stein Robbins building, named for his late daughter, which houses the Max Block Food Pantry. Other beneficiaries of his generosity include Congregation Ahavath Chesed, the Jewish Federation and Foundation of Northeast Florida and the Jewish National Fund. Important institutions that enhance the quality of life in Jacksonville also received support, including the Jacksonville Humane Society, Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens, Mayo Clinic, the (then) Florida Community College at Jacksonville, the Quality Education for All Fund at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida, The ARC Jacksonville supporting the ARC Village, the North Florida School for Special Education, Hope Haven, KIPP, Guardian Catholic Schools, Leadership Jacksonville, Cathedral Arts Project and the Jacksonville Symphony.

For his efforts, David received many honors, including the highest awards given by One Jax, Leadership Jacksonville, First Coast Business Hall of Fame and the Jewish National Fund. In 2021, he and Linda received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Association for Fundraising Professionals/North Florida Chapter.

David was preceded in death by his parents, Ben and Ruth Stein; brothers, Albert Stein and Martin E. Stein, Sr.; and daughter, Allison Robbins. He is survived by his beloved wife of 35 years, Linda Berry Stein; daughter, Tracey Stein Westbrook; grandsons, David Robbins (Vanessa) and Cole Stein Westbrook; and great-granddaughter Katie Robbins. He is also survived by sisters-in-law Joan Newton and Marilyn Stein; brother-in-law Kenneth Berry (Lynn); sister-in-law Catherine Berry; and several nieces and nephews.

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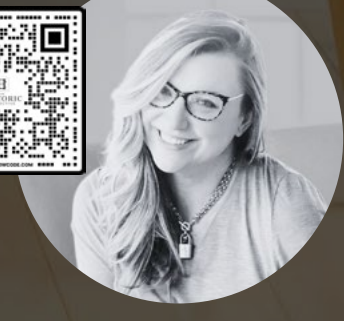
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