

Launching Another Year of Service



Sharon Morgan with guest speaker Mary Daniel and Deborah DeFoor

The Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary stepped into another year of service at their annual kickoff meeting last month with special guest speaker Mary Daniel and information about the 2026 Celebrity Chefs Tasting Luncheon and Silent Auction.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 22](#)

Serving with Heart



Students at St. Paul's Catholic School demonstrate their hearts for service by collecting cans to stock an area food pantry.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 38](#)

Former MOSH Site Cleared for Demolition

Citing roof damage and extensive deferred maintenance, the Downtown Investment Authority Board approved the \$835,000 demolition of the former Museum of Science and History building on the Southbank. Once demolished, the site will serve as temporary overflow parking while plans move forward for future riverfront redevelopment.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 13](#)

Judge Grants Class Action Status in Odor Lawsuit

A Duval County judge has granted class action status in a lawsuit alleging industrial odors are affecting property values and quality of life in nearby neighborhoods. The ruling marks a key procedural step as the case moves forward.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 6](#)

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Proud Day for Progress in Murray Hill

Groundbreaking on former Edgewood Bakery puts Community First on the Avenue

Chris Eppes, Lori Smith, Jimmy Lovelace, Tim Simpson, former Edgewood Bakery owners Sandy and Gary Polletta, District 7 City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso and Community First Credit Union President and CEO Sam Inman with Board Chair Lindy Prudencio, Board Member Elvia Williams, Board Member Bettie Adams, Board Member Dr. Brenda Simmons-Hutchins, Board Member Jim Farah, Melissa Thomas and Roger Rassman.

By Michele Leivas

Cold, blustery weather couldn't dampen the high spirits at the Jan. 26 ceremonial groundbreaking for the new Community First Credit Union in Murray Hill.

The incoming credit union branch will reactivate the former Edgewood Bakery building at the corner of Edgewood Avenue South and Post Street, which has been vacant since 2016. Plans

for this revival also include a pocket park where the street-front parking area currently sits, facing Edgewood Avenue South. The pocket park will also feature a food truck from a Murray Hill vendor. However, the announcement for who that might be will likely be made toward the end of the first quarter, according to Community First Credit Union President and CEO Sam Inman.

[READ MORE ON PAGE 10](#)



Claudia Naughton with Beverley Brooke, Deborah Gervin and Beverly Sleeth

Fashion, Style and Storytelling

It was a sunny, cool day in Florida Jan. 26, for author and co-founder of the fashion brand, Francis Valentine - Elyce Arons - it was a welcome place to visit for her latest book signing and fashion-forward event, a far cry from the inches of snow falling back in New York.

For Arons, it was a chance to connect to fans of her latest book, while also taking time to showcase fashion from Dillards and a special collection of garments offered by Francis Valentine.

From the outdoor oasis on Pirate's Cove, to the beautiful interiors at the home of Brooks Holland, the day was ruled by fashion, friendships and the power of female entrepreneurs. Arons signed her latest book, while mingling alongside local ladies intrigued by her journey and personal stories of the industry and her relationship with Kate Spade in her New York Times Bestseller, We Might Just Make it Afterall - My Best Friendship with Kate Spade.

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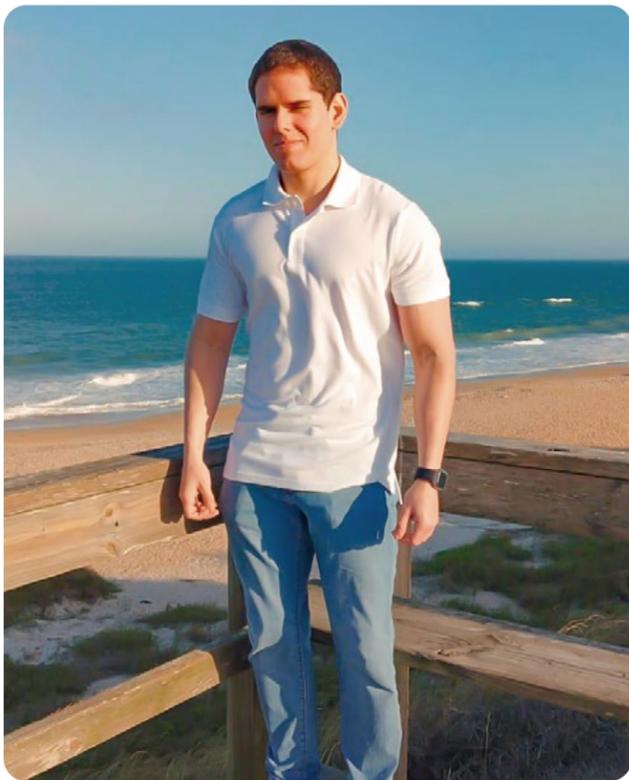
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In Memoriam

Ariel Alberto Montero Valera

Remembered for his strength, kindness and courage

June 5, 2004 – December 25, 2025

Ariel Alberto Montero Valera passed away on December 25, 2025, in Jacksonville, Florida, at the age of 21. He was born in Camagüey, Cuba, where he completed his secondary education, surrounded by the love of his family.

He was a noble, healthy young man, full of life. He loved simple things: playing sports and video games with his friends and cousins, talking with his grandparents, playing chess and going to the gym, trading and fishing, and spending time with his mother.

In the United States, he studied English, had a girlfriend, worked and lived life to the fullest. When he was diagnosed with a Glioblastoma Multiforme Grade 4 – the most aggressive and malignant type of primary brain tumor – he faced his illness with quiet courage. Even amid pain, he maintained a dignity and strength that moved everyone close to him.

His family – especially his mother – was always his center. In her, he found refuge, love, and constant companionship.

He departed after a hard battle. His death was not a defeat; it was an unjust ambush.

“Arielito will live forever in our memories, in every gesture of kindness he planted, in every embrace left pending, and in every prayer raised for his eternal rest,” said his father, Luis Perdomo. “His absence hurts, but his love remains. Forever in our hearts. Forever loved.”

Publishers' Note

Ariel was taken from this world far too soon, passing on Christmas Day, a time that speaks to hope, light, and peace. His father, Luis, is a cherished member of the *Resident News* team, working in distribution and contributing as a journalist. Like many small

businesses, our staff is more than coworkers, we are family. In the newspaper business, long hours and constant deadlines create deep bonds, and over the years, Luis, Ariel, and his mother Gretel became part of our *Resident News* family.

Ariel was known for his kind spirit and his beautiful, unforgettable smile. His passing is deeply felt by all of us, and he will be remembered with love, gratitude, and quiet sorrow. He will be dearly missed.

Seth and Pamela Williams

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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.

The plastic barricades at Riverside's Memorial Park have become a familiar sight following the devastating destruction Hurricane Idalia wrought on the concrete balustrade bordering the park, just two years after the City restored them from damage sustained by Hurricane Irma. A recent car accident caused additional damage to the concrete and plastic barricades at the end of Margaret Street. When can residents expect repairs and restoration to begin?

In a word: Soon.

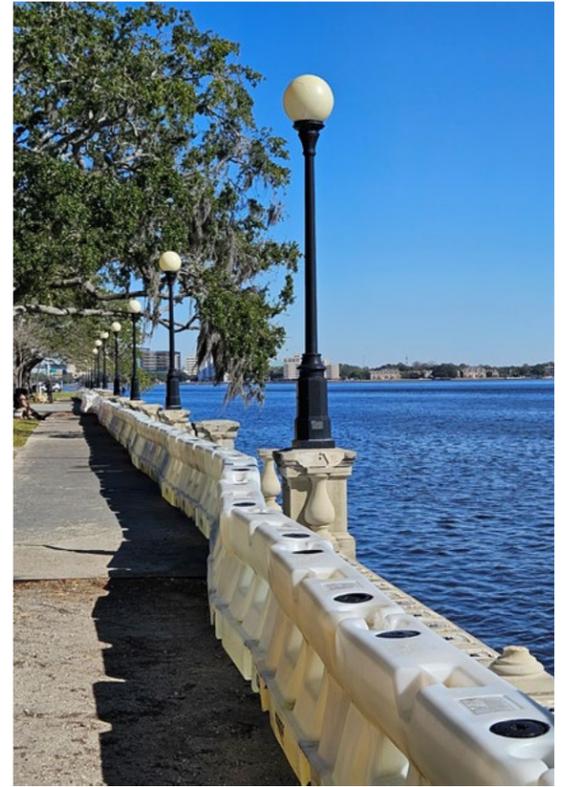
According to Memorial Park Association President Brooks Dame, repairs and restorations are expected to begin this spring.

The City of Jacksonville Public Works Department will oversee this restoration project. Dame said this restoration will be an improved effort after the then-newly-restored balustrade sustained by Hurricane Idalia in 2023.

"What the City found when they went in and investigated was that the bulkhead that they had installed the replacement balustrades on was faulty and needs to be repaired," Dame said. "So essentially, we put a great balustrade on a terrible foundation. So this time, they're going to do it right: They're going to go in, do that foundation work, and then put a balustrade back in so that it has a chance of being that lasting infrastructure that we expect in a park of this magnitude and historical significance."

According to the City of Jacksonville Public Works Department, the construction on the bulkhead and balustrade is expected to last approximately one year, with work on the latter beginning towards the end of that timeline. JB Coxwell is completing this \$8.6 million project.

Memorial Park Association is planning a public meeting this month to answer questions and set expectations for area residents regarding what to expect during the project's construction period. A date for the meeting has not yet been set. Resident News will provide updates as they become available.



Residents can expect restoration to begin this spring for the stone balustrade in Memorial Park.

Resident News Seeks Nominations for Young Independents

Nominate the next ones to watch

As part of our annual July issue, Resident News is once again producing our "Young Independents" feature, which celebrates rising young adults who are building careers, businesses and community impact on their own terms.

We are currently seeking nominations for exceptional young men and women who live or work in the neighborhoods. These individuals may be entrepreneurs, professionals, creatives, nonprofit leaders, volunteers or emerging changemakers who demonstrate independence, ambition and integrity.

We are especially interested in discovering new faces and ensuring this feature reflects the diversity of our community across backgrounds, industries and experiences.

Nominees should generally:

- Be under 35 years of age
- Be making notable progress or impact in their field
- Demonstrate leadership, initiative or community involvement
- Live or work in the neighborhood

If you know someone who would be a great fit, please send their name, a brief description of why you are nominating them and their contact information to editor@residentnews.net.



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Judge Grants Class Action Status in IFF Odor Lawsuit

Procedural ruling advances case filed by affected residents

Duval County Circuit Judge Robert Dees granted class action status in a significant procedural win for the plaintiffs in a lawsuit against International Flavors and Fragrances.

Dees' ruling was filed on Jan. 13. The lawsuit, first filed in January 2022, alleges IFF emits odors that are negatively impacting plaintiffs' property values and quality of life.

"It was a long-awaited ruling," said attorney Laura Sheets, who represents the plaintiffs. "We've been pushing for this for a few years." Sheets is a partner at Detroit-based Liddle Sheets P.C., which, alongside Mitchell Stone P.A., represents the plaintiffs.

IFF shared a statement on the ruling with *Resident News*, which read:

"We are disappointed with the outcome of the decision. The judge's ruling is not on the merits of the case, rather it is a procedural ruling about how the case may move forward. IFF will continue to vigorously defend itself against the plaintiffs' claims, and expects to appeal this order."

The statement continued:

"IFF is committed to operating safely, responsibly and in full compliance with all environmental regulations. As a responsible community partner, we employ best-in-class technologies and processes to prevent odors from leaving our facility, and we work collaboratively with the City of Jacksonville. Data from the City's own odor

study, as well as numerous declarations from residents in Murray Hill, confirms what we've stated repeatedly: that IFF is not the source for the increased odor complaints in Jacksonville."

Sheets said a reversal of the Dees' class certification ruling wouldn't deter the plaintiffs' lawsuit, however.

“No matter what, we’re going forward with this case.”

— Laura Sheets, Partner, Liddle Sheets P.C.

"No matter what, we're going forward with this case," Sheets said. "It was one of the things that I had tried to really impress upon the judge during the class certification hearing. Defendants oftentimes think that if we lose that motion, that we'll pack up and go home because we only have three clients retained, and that is not the case, as we said on the record and publicly during the hearing."

Moving forward, plaintiffs' counsel have 30 days to submit a proposed notice for court approval to provide notice to the class. This notice must also be agreed upon by opposing counsel, explained Sheets.

Letters TO THE EDITOR

Editor's note: Although centered on the Herschel corridor, this letter is published in the San Marco-San Jose edition as similar traffic and safety issues impact multiple area neighborhoods.

As I drive my children to school in the morning, I see my neighbors hold their children's hands on their walk to Fishweir Elementary. I wave at a friend running from Ortega. Commuters gesture others into the roundabout on their way to work. We are all coming from different neighborhoods but we are utilizing the Herschel corridor, which is a gateway from Ortega to Avondale.

For nearly a decade, my husband and I have raised our children in Fairfax Manor. We have been involved in the positive evolution of this neighborhood: We saw

the transformation of the dilapidated Commander apartments into Rivervue, witnessed the dredging of Fishweir Creek from our backyard and have enjoyed many of the new restaurants and businesses on the Herschel corridor.

The recent introduction of the two roundabouts has undeniably increased safety and efficiency, but they are full of weeds and sign poles, and are in desperate need of beautification. Currently, the Herschel corridor lacks continuity and vision; it is an area that serves its purpose for traffic flow but fails the people who



live, work and learn there. While the area has modernized, it has not yet achieved the standard of beauty and cohesion that this gateway from Ortega through Fairfax to Riverside Avondale deserves.

The good news is that a Roundabout Task Force, consisting of representatives from the adjacent neighborhoods of Fairfax Manor, Ortega, Lakeside Park and Avondale, has been formed and is hosted by the nonprofit Riverside Avondale Preservation (RAP).

I am volunteering on this task force and our vision is to unify the two roundabouts connecting the corridor with public art, trees and landscaping and overall cleanup and beautification.

We believe that this corridor should be filled with color and creativity, not neglect. We hope to find ways to reduce visual clutter while also maintaining safety. By unifying this space with trees, art and a higher standard of care, we can create a visual entrance to our community that we can all be proud of.

The project is not without obstacles, and this is why your voice is so important. Unlike many city roundabout projects, this corridor requires both City of Jacksonville and FDOT approvals. But first, it needs planning, funding and community support. We are looking for neighbors and businesses to join us – both from an advocacy and financial standpoint – to ensure this project reflects our collective pride.

The task force is planning to host an upcoming community meeting to present our initial findings and get input from the community. We are at the early stages where input is most beneficial. The community meeting date and time information and updates will be posted at riversideavondale.org/. This initiative requires collaboration and partnership. Working together, we can get this done.

Warm regards,
Stephanie Freeman
Roundabout Task Force Member



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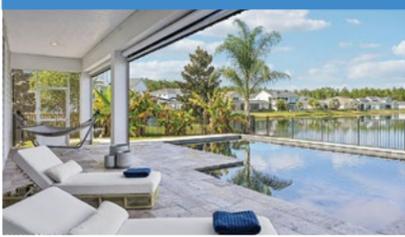


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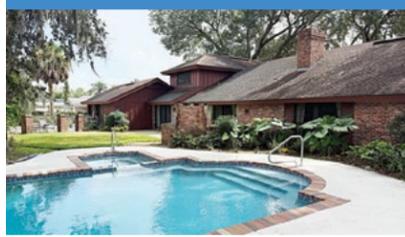
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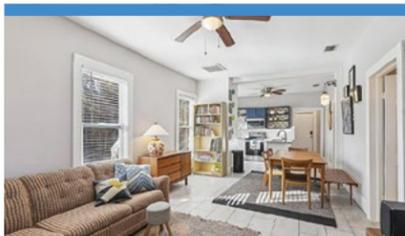
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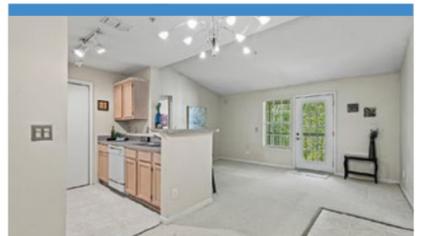
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Ben and Jerry's Planned for Five Points Amid Neighborhood Debate



Justin and Daiana Renaldo are bringing a Ben and Jerry's ice cream franchise to Five Points.

By Jennifer Jensen

A new ice cream shop is planning to bring new flavors to Five Points.

A Ben and Jerry's franchise, the first in Duval County, is expected to open this spring at 1027 Park Street in the former Jane Doe Boutique space, which closed in April.

The site is currently awaiting a permit from the city to begin its buildout of 844 square feet at the location, according to owners Justin and Daiana Renaldo, who are relatively new to Jacksonville but fell in love with Five Points.

"When we were looking for locations, we were looking for walkability, we were looking for locals, we were looking for just something that would fit the Ben and Jerry's brand in terms of what Ben and Jerry stands for," Daiana said. "So, this area just made sense to us."

She added that Five Points fit perfectly with their desire to find an area that is accepting and open to all types of people.

The fact that Five Points feels primed for growth was a bonus, she added.

"We're newcomers here, and we want to make sure that we fit the community," Daiana said. "What everyone's been trying to preserve in that area is really important to us."

The Renaldos acknowledge the fact that they won't be the only ice cream shop in the area: Waffle Cone is just a few doors down, and Screaming Cat Ice Cream and Coffee is at the corner of Park and King streets. Expanding the radius encompasses Malachi's Ice Cream Bar across the street from Memorial Park and Mayday Ice Cream in Brooklyn.

"We're definitely excited to be part of the Jacksonville community, especially in the Five Point area, and I just want people to understand that we're locally owned and we're not here to kick anybody out," Justin said. "We're actually here to give back and have some fun and serve some ice cream."

Daiana added, "It's okay to have healthy competition. We're not here to tell anyone not to go to Waffle Cone. If that's where you've been going and you've got history,

"We're locally owned, we're not here to kick anybody out – we're here to give back, have some fun, and serve some ice cream."

– Justin Renaldo, Co-Owner

absolutely keep going."

Following the announcement of the incoming Ben and Jerry's, many in the community have expressed their concern or disapproval of the new business moving into the area.

"I love Ben and Jerry, however, there's plenty of small local ice cream businesses already in walking distance of each other," said Amy Davis, an area resident and small business owner. "Riverside/Five Points needs to focus more on diversity when

considering the next business to be opened. Why do we need 10 Mexican and Asian spots, nine pizza shops, and now another ice cream shop to compete with the other four or five in the area?"

After hearing the uproar from residents, Cassidy Darmata, who owns Waffle Cone with her husband, Seth, posted a statement to the ice cream shop's social media last December. The statement read, in part:

"Our goal has always been for the vacant spots in 5 [sic] Points to be filled – for it to thrive, whether that meant other dessert places or not... We're not asking for a boycott, and we're not asking for any negativity; we're asking for the opposite. Just keep coming, keep supporting. This holiday season, put your money back into your community and invest it into what you want to see more of."

"We just want to see the neighborhood do well, and it's unfortunate that it's an ice cream shop for us," Seth Darmata added. "But as a neighborhood, we just want to see these stores be filled because everybody does better when there are more people

could change the area's landscape and make it look like "Anywheresville"; however, she encouraged people to continue supporting locally owned small businesses.

"There are so many wonderfully vibrant and invested merchants, people and property owners in Five Points, I believe that together we will not only maintain the integrity of Five Points, we will excel in creating a destination that attracts people from all over the city and beyond. Five Points is just plain fun, and funky," Riley said.



Seth and Cassidy Darmata are the owners of Waffle Cone, just a few doors down from the incoming Ben and Jerry's.

The Renaldos understand the concern but also wanted to remind people that, while they have the name of a large corporation for their franchise, they are locally owned and operated, and no one is backing them financially.

"We're going to be in the communities and we're going to be a part of the cleanup," Daiana said. "We're going to be a part of the local schools. Whatever it takes to earn the respect of the locals there because we're locals, too. We're just selling Ben and Jerry's ice cream."

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- 11 a.m. – Easter Service – Church
- 5 p.m. – The River Service

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Harvest Hymns: The Passion
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Choral Concert: The Crucifixion by John Stainer
March 23 at 7 p.m.

The St. Mark's Choir leads this moving oratorio in celebration of Lent and the Passion of our Lord.



Jacksonville Gospel Chorale
April 20 at 6:30 p.m.

The Jacksonville Gospel Chorale, led by Cedric Williams, will perform various thrilling choral works.



Ascension Day Choral Evensong
May 14 at 6 p.m.

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Targeting Tumors Without Surgery

New technology recently unveiled at Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside is changing the way tumors are removed with non-invasive, ultrasound therapy.

Histotripsy uses The Edison System to deliver high-amplitude, short pulses, creating a "bubble cloud" of gas naturally present in the targeted tissue, which liquefies and destroys liver tumors. Procedures using histotripsy are done without incisions or needles, with the treating physician monitoring the "bubble cloud" continuously as it targets and destroys the tumor.

"[Histotripsy] is FDA-approved for liver tumors and shows promise for stimulating the immune system against cancer," wrote Ascension St. Vincent's External Communications Specialist Patrick Griffin in an e-mail.

St. Vincent's Riverside is the only hospital in Northeast Florida offering this procedure.

"Our goal as oncologists is to provide the best method of treatment available that will remove the cancer that is plaguing a patient's body," said Dr. Martin Martino, medical director of Gynecologic Oncology and Advanced Women's Health at St. Vincent's Riverside. "The ability to destroy tumors through a non-invasive procedure will greatly enhance our arsenal to provide the high-quality care that patients deserve when trusting us with their health."



The Histotripsy Team at Ascension St. Vincent's Riverside.

Community First Credit Union CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

In his address to the crowd gathered for the groundbreaking, Inman said preserving the building's history and fostering community interaction are priorities for this Community First branch location.

"We have so much to offer this community in this space," Inman said. "We're planning ongoing artist activities inside the branch, including a time capsule to celebrate and preserve the incredible history of this bakery. We're also exploring seasonal pocket park events, farmers' markets, music days and art-themed celebrations as well. The possibilities are truly endless."

District 7 City Councilmember Jimmy Peluso shared remarks on what this addition means for the Murray Hill community.

"The retail banking world is changing a lot, and for [Community First Credit Union] to invest in this space and to do it in such a way that you're holding hands with the community, that's what we should be looking for, and we're incredibly excited to have you here in Murray Hill."

Also in attendance were Gary Polletta and his wife, Sandy, who owned and

operated Edgewood Bakery for 23 years. The Polletta family was the third family to own Edgewood Bakery. Addressing the crowd, Poletta jokingly offered his assistance to Community First, given his past professional experience:

"We used to roll in the dough," he said, to a round of laughter. "If you ever need help with handling the dough, you let us know."

Following the ceremony, on a more serious note, Polletta said he believes the addition of Community First, with the added community elements, will reactivate this dormant space, and he appreciates the credit union's approach to joining the community.

"I think their approach to remembering the bakery, which was such a focal point of the community at that time, is very smart on their part," Polletta said. "They're not coming in as a stranger to take over the place. They're going to remember the roots [and] they're going to push that point."

Inman said Community First hopes to see this branch open by the end of the year.



Gary and Sandy Polletta speak at the Jan. 26 groundbreaking for the incoming Murray Hill branch of Community First Credit Union. The Polletta family was the third family to own Edgewood Bakery, which they operated for 23 years.

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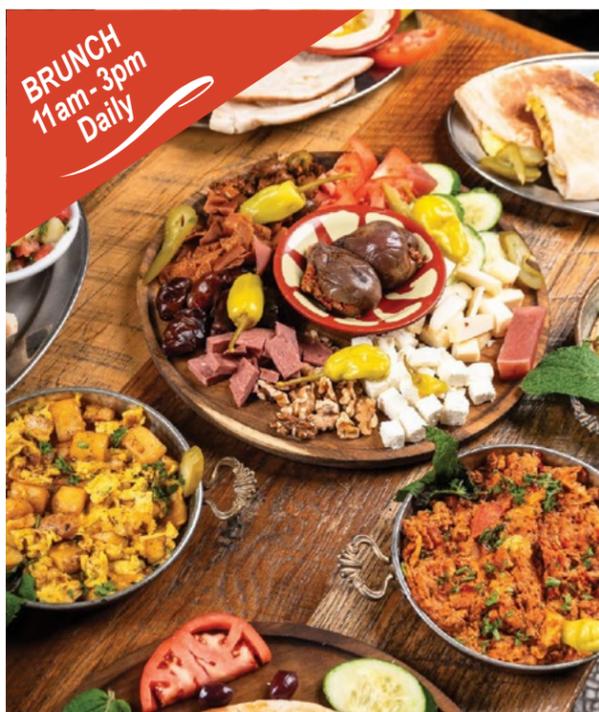
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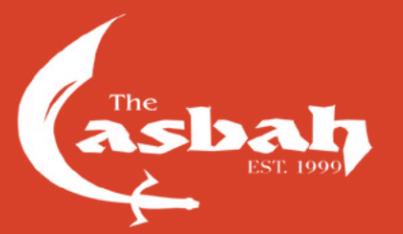
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Southbank Riverwalk Extension Moves Forward in Permitting Process



An orange dotted line depicts the planned extension to the Southbank Riverwalk from the Baptist Health campus to the Fuller Warren Shared-Use Path.

VISIT WWW.RESIDENTNEWS.NET FOR A DETAILED MAP OF THE PLANNED EXTENSION.

By Michele Leivas

Plans for an extension to the Southbank Riverwalk are underway as the City of Jacksonville progresses through the formal permitting process with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

City of Jacksonville Chief of Natural and Marine Resources Jill Enz presented plans for the extension at the Jan. 8 Downtown Development Review Board meeting.

Enz said that while design elements will match the existing Riverwalk, there will be some deviations.

“We have had a lot of lessons learned from the existing Riverwalk, so it’s going to be a much wider Riverwalk,” Enz said.

Connecting the Baptist Health campus

to the existing Riverwalk, this extension will be 17 feet wide and 1,200 feet long, ultimately linking up with the Fuller Warren Shared-Use Path where it descends on the San Marco side of the river.

According to the DDRB presentation, prepared by Haskell, “this riverwalk segment supports urban mobility, encourages economic activity, fixes the missing link in the Southbank Riverwalk system and fosters community engagement by activating underutilized riverfront space and promoting active transportation.”

This project is already fully funded through the City of Jacksonville’s Capital Improvement Plan, with \$7.1

million allocated for the extension and enhancement.

DDRB Chair Linzee Ott expressed support and excitement for this extension, which comes on the heels of another Riverwalk extension recently completed at the RiversEdge development.

“Connection is key,” Ott said. “...I’m really excited to see this connection. I think that will serve patients and visitors of the hospital extremely well.”

Baptist Health Jacksonville shared the following statement about the project:

“We support the City of Jacksonville’s plan to extend the Riverwalk path behind the campus of Baptist Medical Center Jacksonville and Wolfson Children’s Hospital. The initiative reflects our shared desire to encourage healthier lifestyles, and we believe the new pathway will have a positive impact on our patients, team members and community. We are working with the City to finalize the document that will enable the start of construction, and we are looking forward to seeing the project take shape.”

“Connection is key. I’m really excited to see this connection. I think that will serve patients and visitors of the hospital extremely well.”

– Linzee Ott
Chair, Downtown
Development Review Board

During public comment, Scenic Jacksonville Executive Director Nancy Powell praised the Parks Department for listening to community feedback on aspects of the Riverwalk extension, particularly shade and width, but expressed concerns about connectivity between certain riverfront landmarks.

“From a pedestrian standpoint, it’s a mess,” Powell said. “I really think that this part – those connectivity things – should be a project so that the Riverwalk can be connected and so people know how you get from here to there.”

“I don’t think people are going to go to this little segment,” Powell continued. “Maybe they will to see the sunset – that will be a nice place to see the sunset – but it doesn’t really go anywhere.”

Enz told DDRB members that once FDOT permitting is complete, the project will go into bid. Once construction begins, an estimated 18-month timeline is expected.

“We’ve had a lot of lessons learned from the existing Riverwalk, so it’s going to be a much wider Riverwalk.”

– Jill Enz
Chief of Natural and Marine
Resources, City of Jacksonville

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City Council Approves Sale of Historic Armory Building



An exterior rendering of the renovated armory building.



Several food and drink vendors will be part of the revamped armory.

By **Fabrizio Gowdy**

Reva Development Corporation, a Fort Lauderdale-based nonprofit, is planning to bring new life to Jacksonville’s Armory building.

The Jacksonville City Council voted unanimously to sell the historic building to the nonprofit at its Jan. 13 council meeting for \$3.04 million.

Reva is acquiring the property at 851 N. Market St. with plans to invest \$30 million in rehabbing the building, transforming it into a multi-use space with 20 restaurants, 25 art studios, 100 offices, a microbrewery and a performance stage. According to

music,” said Patterson.

According to Patterson, Reva has until now worked in the affordable housing space and focused on South Florida. This acquisition represents the organization’s first foray into North Florida and a project of this caliber. However, Patterson is confident Reva is up to the task, which will include removing asbestos from the building.

“We’ve got the benefit of a strong local contractor who’s actually gone through the property as well, all with the idea that we’re trying to determine if there are any

when it housed the Parks and Recreation Department and the Mayor’s Teen Volunteer program.

“This project represents opportunity,” said Johnson. “Opportunity to reactivate a long-dormant asset.”

County Cowboys. These groups became more government-sanctioned at the turn of the century, and the Gothic revival-style Jacksonville Armory was built in 1916 to house them.

“The brickwork in this building is fantastic – the arch over the main door is some of the finest brickwork of that era, and the whole façade is a very cohesive symmetrical composition,” noted Wood.

In 1936, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt gave a speech at the Armory. In later years, the building’s sizable auditorium served as a music hall, hosting performances by Duke Ellington, Ray Charles, Janis Joplin, and The Allman Brothers Band’s debut concert.

Perhaps most notable was Marian Anderson’s 1952 performance at the Armory. Anderson was a world-renowned opera singer. Anderson refused to sing in front of a segregated crowd, forcing the venue to integrate for the night. It was one of the few integrated shows to take place during the Jim Crow era.

The Jacksonville Parks and Recreation Department occupied the Armory from the 1970s through 2010, but the building has now been vacant for more than 15 years.

Jacksonville History Center CEO Dr. Alan Bliss said renovating the Armory will highlight the way adaptive reuse of historically significant buildings contributes to Jacksonville’s identity and future economic development.

“This ambitious project will help accelerate the renaissance of Downtown Jacksonville and the Springfield community,” said Bliss.



The Jacksonville Armory

History

According to historian and author Dr. Wayne Wood, Jacksonville has a history of private military organizations dating back to the 1830s. These groups included the Jacksonville Light Infantry, the St. Johns Grays, Jacksonville Rifles, and Duval

“ This ambitious project will help accelerate the renaissance of Downtown Jacksonville and the Springfield community. ”

— Dr. Alan Bliss
CEO, Jacksonville
History Center

Reva, the project will generate more than 200 jobs.

According to Don Patterson, managing member for Armory Redevelopment Associates LLC, a Reva subsidiary, art will be a significant focus of the revamped space. The first floor will feature a listening room, which Patterson described as an intimate performance venue to host 50 to 80 patrons. Meanwhile, the second floor will center around the existing performance hall and its large stage.

“We intend to reactivate that for larger events, whether it’s performance art or

surprises. And to this point, we think we’ve identified everything,” said Patterson.

Although the Armory experienced more than a foot of flooding during Hurricane Irma in 2017, Patterson also noted that he was not concerned about flooding, calling Irma an “unusual event.”

The bill regarding the sale of the Armory was initially introduced to the City Council last November by District 14 Councilman Rahman Johnson. In a statement, Johnson called the Armory a “crown jewel”. He reflected on his time spent in the building as a youth volunteer,

Gateway Jax Advances Pearl Square with Fifth Groundbreaking



The long-dormant parking structure will transform into a mixed-use development featuring ground-floor retail and dining with upper-level parking.



Gateway Jax continues its progress on the transformational Pearl Square development, breaking ground on 721 North Pearl Street.

The groundbreaking took place on Jan. 21; this is the fifth groundbreaking for the Pearl Square neighborhood.

Formerly known as the N5 block of Pearl Square, the site will transform a dormant parking garage into what

Gateway Jax is calling a “catalytic” component of Pearl Square. It will feature 16,000 square feet of ground-floor restaurant and retail spaces while the upper floors will retain 693 parking spaces. These parking levels will receive lighting upgrades and an exterior elevator.

“Reviving the shopping experience in Downtown Jacksonville is a key part of the Pearl Square neighborhood,” said

Gateway Jax CEO Bryan Moll. “This project, a true public-private partnership, would not have been possible without the support of the City of Jacksonville and its residents. Redeveloping this iconic garage will create true value for the City, with a positive return on investment through additional property and sales taxes, and bring a vibrant, mixed-use community to life in the heart of

Downtown Jacksonville: one that balances the pedestrian experience with one-stop parking convenience.”

Boldline Design, ETM, Atlantic Engineering, Shaffer Engineering LLC and Gregory Engineering are part of the design and construction team for 721 North Pearl Street. The redevelopment is expected to come online in early 2027.

MOSH Building Set for Demolition After DIA Board Approval

Demolition estimated at \$835,000



The MOSH building, a familiar site on the Southbank riverfront, is slated for demolition following DIA Board approval.

Five months after the Museum of Science and History (MOSH) closed its doors for the last time at its Southbank location, the Downtown Investment Authority (DIA) Board approved the demolition of its former building.

At the Jan. 21 board meeting, DIA Director of Operations Guy Parola shared an update with board members regarding the declined status of the vacated building following a recent tour of the building.

“What we didn’t find was a building that’s ready to be turned over to another user,” Parola said. “What we did find were roof leaks and deferred maintenance and things that, frankly, go with an older building.”

Parola cited a structural report that described the building’s roof in “poor condition” in several different sections and, ultimately, stated demolition was the appropriate path forward.

“Since this is a redevelopment parcel, it doesn’t really seem like a great idea to put a band-aid on a building, just like you wouldn’t feed a dying animal,” Parola said.

When asked by DIA Board Vice Chair Sondra Fetner who was responsible for the building’s maintenance, Parola replied, “MOSH.”

Parola informed board members that demolition is estimated to cost \$835,000,

“ We’ve got the river – there should be as much riverfront dining as we can have without compromising our riverfront parks. ”

– Matt Carlucci
At-Large Group 4 City Councilmember

though DIA has allocated \$875,000 to cover any additional and/or unexpected expenditures. Once the building is demolished, the parcel will serve as temporary overflow parking until the parcel is ready for redevelopment, and a notice of disposition can be issued.

Approval for the demolition did not have to go before the Jacksonville City Council, according to At-Large Group 4 City Councilmember Matt Carlucci. Carlucci said the new development would likely be a commercial mixed-use with, he hopes, dining.

“We’ve got the river – there should be as much riverfront dining as we can have without compromising our riverfront parks,” Carlucci said.

District 5 City Councilmember Joe Carlucci echoed those sentiments, writing in a text message, “The deferred maintenance and repairs were past the point of restoration. I believe we can have a viable option there that makes the riverfront space even better.”

As one building prepares to come down, updates were made on the future home of MOSH on the Northbank as the DIA Board and City Council both approved performance schedule changes for the incoming building. According to the new schedule, the construction commencement date is pushed back to Sept. 1 of this year with a new substantial completion date of Jan. 30, 2029. The legislation, approved by the council at its Jan. 27 meeting, also allows for the DIA Board to grant a six-month extension on these deadlines without council approval.

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Richard Sisisky

Sisisky to Chair The Community Foundation Board of Trustees

Richard Sisisky has succeeded Michael DuBow as the new chairman of the board of trustees of The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida.

Sisisky has served on the board of The Community Foundation since 2017, during which time he also chaired the program related investments committee.

Sisisky is the president and owner of the Shircliff and Sisisky Company and has been an active member of Jacksonville's civic community for more than 30 years, serving in leadership positions on numerous boards including those of Stein Mart, Inc., Baptist Health System Jacksonville, The Bolles School, WJCT, United Way of

Northeast Florida, Jewish Federation of Jacksonville and the Jewish Foundation of Jacksonville.

In 1999, Sisisky was a Humanitarian Award recipient at the National Conference for Community and Justice. Later, in 2015, he was celebrated as the Florida Hospital Association Trustee of the Year.

The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida Board also includes Carol J. Alexander, Martha Frye Baker, Dr. Solomon G. Brotman, Judge Brian J. Davis, George M. Egan, Michael Meyers, Velma Monteiro-Tribble, John Peyton, Lauren Rueger, Buddy Schulz, Amy Wacaster and Halsey Wise.

Sisisky will serve a two-year term in this leadership position.

Acosta Group's Brian Wynne to Chair 2026 First Coast Heart Ball



Photo: Acosta Group

Brian Wynne, president and chief executive officer of Acosta Group, has been named chair of the 2026 First Coast Heart Ball.

The American Heart Association has announced **Brian Wynne**, president and CEO of Acosta Group, as the 2026 First Coast Heart Ball chair.

In this capacity, Wynne will spearhead efforts during the Heart Ball campaign to engage and involve community leaders, companies and individuals in discovery, advocacy, access and knowledge – the four chambers of AHA's work.

"Over the past five years, Acosta Group has undergone a major transformation, and we're now reengaging more intentionally with the Jacksonville community," said Wynne. "Joining forces with an organization that has championed heart health for over a century is a responsibility I embrace with

intention. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to build on the legacy of those who came before me and stand alongside those committed to advancing this lifesaving mission."

AHA, First Coast Executive Director Caitlin Brunell expressed her excitement for Wynne's appointment as the 2026 chair.

"We are humbled to have Brian's leadership at the forefront of this campaign," said AHA, First Coast Executive Director Caitlin Brunell. "His compassion, energy and dedication toward our mission and community are palpable. We look forward to honoring and celebrating his impactful chairmanship at this year's event."

The Heart Ball campaign will culminate in the First Coast Heart Ball, scheduled for early March.

Powell Announces Retirement from Scenic Jacksonville

After leading Scenic Jacksonville, Inc. as its executive director for more than six years, **Nancy Powell** will retire from the position this April.

Board President Bill Hoff made the announcement last month, adding that a search for Powell's successor has begun and that the organization is preparing for a seamless transition to its next executive director.

"Nancy has been an amazing advocate for improving Jacksonville," Hoff said. "Her strategic, yet passionate approach to the issues that matter has propelled both Scenic Jacksonville and our city forward."

With Powell as its leader, Scenic Jacksonville expanded its annual Great Cities Symposium into a marquee event, drawing prominent city and civic leaders and stakeholders to hear insight and experiences from compelling speakers from several of Jacksonville's peer cities.

In early 2020, Powell led efforts to form the Riverfront Parks Now coalition and chaired the RPN steering committee for the first four years, during which time the coalition grew to 14 nonprofit organizations.

Powell shared that plans for her retirement have been in the works within the organization since last summer.

"It's been my honor to work with so many talented people – Scenic Jacksonville's Board of Directors, city, civic and community leaders, and our dedicated Riverfront Parks Now coalition nonprofit organizations and members," Powell said. "We've accomplished a lot. At the same time, I'm ready to pass the baton and look forward to seeing Scenic Jacksonville continue and grow its impact."



Nancy Powell

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Dr. Logan Marks

West Dentistry Welcomes Marks to Riverside Practice

Dr. Logan Marks has joined the team at West Dentistry.

Marks is a graduate from the University of Florida College of Dentistry and officially joined West Dentistry as of Jan. 29. This addition to the Riverside practice's team of elite professionals will allow Dr. Jacqueline West, practice owner, to transition her focus more to cosmetic dentistry while also allowing her to prioritize her own health and wellbeing by reducing her chair time.

"My hope and prayer is that this shift will reduce my physical neck and back strain and allow me to practice into my 60s," West wrote in a letter announcing this addition to her team that she shared with her patients.

West added that her practice is coming off a successful year for cosmetic dentistry, and Marks' presence will allow her to pursue her passion.

"I've just had this pulling on me, and I just really love [cosmetic dentistry]," West said. "It's where my passion and love are."

Marks joins West Dentistry with a strong reputation and recommendation as an excellent clinician and will begin with a limited schedule, initially working alongside West to treat patients in a transitional period before West turns her focus to cosmetic dentistry.

At the root of it all, though, is the West Dentistry commitment to superior patient care. West is excited about what this new addition to her team means for her practice and her future.

"I'm 25 years in now, so I'm looking at it as the final 10- to 15-year adventure, so that's exciting," West said.

CBV Cares Fund Awards \$1,000 to Area Nonprofits



Erin King, Seth Kimball, Nancy Cusimano, Robert Van Cleve, and Pete Haven with Tripp Newsom, Carl Ramsuhag, Glenn Guiler, Ed Akers and Mona Gardella with the \$500 check for WJCT Public Media.



Mona Gardella, Seth Kimball, Robert Van Cleve and Erin King with Nancy Cusimano, Tripp Newsom, Carl Ramsuhag, Ed Akers and Glenn Guiler present the \$500 for JASMYN.

Coldwell Banker Vanguard Avondale agents raised a cumulative \$1,000 for the CBV Cares Fund, which in turn went to support to area nonprofits to further their missions.

Agents donated a portion of their commissions to facilitate two \$500 donations to WJCT Public Media and JASMYN.

The CBV Cares Fund sponsors nonprofits within the community. In the past, this has included The Twilight Foundation, Riverside Avondale Preservation and Friends of Boone Park, among others.

Brunell to Lead Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation



Caitlin Brunell

As of Jan. 1, **Caitlin Brunell** is the philanthropic arm of Ascension St. Vincent's healthcare system as president of Ascension St. Vincent's Foundation.

Brunell joins the nonprofit organization from the American Heart Association in Jacksonville, where she served as development vice president and, ultimately, executive director. In 2006, Brunell also founded Caitlin's Closet, a nonprofit that provides young women with donated clothes to outfit them for academic ceremonies, sports banquets, proms and dances.

"Caitlin's proven track record in nonprofit leadership and her deep commitment to serving others align perfectly with Ascension's mission to help those most in need," said Scott Kathmandu, president and CEO of Ascension St. Vincent's in Riverside. "Her experience building meaningful partnerships will strengthen our Foundation's ability to support our community."

WWII Veteran Honored on 106th Birthday



Hazel Womble celebrates her 106th birthday at The Windsor at Ortega on Dec. 24.

Staff at The Windsor at Ortega and Women Veterans Ignited made sure World War II Veteran **Hazel Womble's** 106th birthday was celebrated in style on Christmas Eve.

Residents, staff and some off-site visitors helped celebrate this milestone birthday with cake, lemonade and tea, while some brought flowers, balloons and cards for the guest of honor. During the celebrations, Florida Department of Veterans' Affairs Women's Veterans Coordinator Vanessa Thomas awarded Womble the FDVA Medal of Service. At noon, a line of cars participated in a surprise birthday drive-by, where 15 to 20 people drove by the assisted living facility to share their love.

"Your heart would just melt," said Sharleen Deary of Women Veterans Ignited. "She's just the sweetest thing ever... She couldn't believe that all these people showed up for her. We had people come from Tallahassee and Tampa, just to come out and celebrate her."

Born in Perry, Florida, Womble completed nursing school at St. Luke's Hospital in Jacksonville in October 1942. She enlisted in the Navy Reserves in 1944 and served at the Naval Dispensary at the Naval Operating Base in Bermuda in November 1945. After being relieved of active duty in August 1946, she continued as a reservist until March 1953, when she was medically discharged.

Womble is the recipient of the World War II Victory Ribbon and the American Theater Ribbon.

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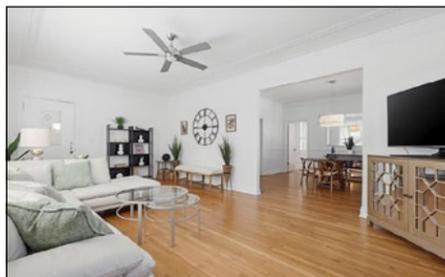
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2 Bed / 2 Full Bath / 1,385 SF



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3 Bed / 2 Full Bath / 1,472 SF



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3947 Boone Park Ave | \$350,000
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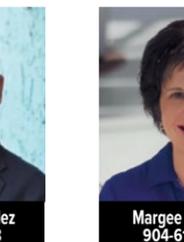
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Three Tapped to Join Ronald McDonald House Jacksonville Board of Directors



Drew Schrimsher

Jennifer Mayo

Karen Mayfield

Three new leaders – **Karen Mayfield, Jennifer Mayo and Drew Schrimsher** – have joined the Ronald McDonald House Jacksonville Board of Directors.

As managing director and senior wealth advisor of Truist Financial, Mayfield brings more than 30 years of experience in financial services and a longstanding commitment to organizations that uplift women, children and local communities. Mayo is a former cardiovascular intensive care nurse and longtime community volunteer. She has years of active engagement with several nonprofits in Northeast Florida, with a focus on health and human services; Schrimsher is president and publisher of the *Jacksonville Business Journal* and a veteran media executive with more than 10 years of leadership in several American City Business Journals markets.

“We are thrilled to welcome Karen, Jennifer and Drew to our Board of Directors,” said Joey Leik, CEO of Ronald McDonald House Jacksonville. “Their leadership, compassion and shared commitment to families will strengthen our mission and help us continue providing a home filled with comfort and community for those who need it most.”

Pajcic and Pajcic Earns Top Pro Bono Honor



Michael Pajcic, Raymond Reid and Steve Pajcic with Curry Pajcic, Curt Pajcic and Bob Link

The Law Firm of Pajcic and Pajcic was honored with the 2026 Law Firm Commendation for its pro bono services and contributions.

Chief Justice Carlos G. Muñiz awarded this prestigious award to the law firm at the annual Pro Bono Awards ceremony on Thursday, Jan. 22.

Through its annual Pajcic Yard Golf Tournament, the law firm has raised more than \$1 million for Jacksonville Area Legal Aid, and its attorneys regularly provide pro bono representation to clients. The firm also offers financial support for pro bono providers.

The Florida Bar noted, “The culture of pro bono service at the highest level permeates the entire Pajcic and Pajcic team, where every member consistently demonstrates a commitment to service through individual pro bono, financial and volunteer contributions.”

Baptist Health Jacksonville Commits \$1.6 Million to Expand Community Health Access

Baptist Health Jacksonville has announced it will invest more than \$1.6 million in strategic initiatives over five years as part of its long-standing commitment to expanding health care access across the community.

To that end, the Baptist Health Community Health Clinic Fund has been established at The Community Foundation for Northeast Florida. Eligible recipients of these funds could include federally qualified health centers and free and charitable health clinics based in Baker, Clay, Duval, Nassau and St. Johns counties that are members of the Florida

Association of Free and Charitable Clinics.

“Baptist Health’s mission has always been about more than providing excellent care in our hospitals and clinics – it’s about showing up for our neighbors wherever needs exist,” said Baptist Health President and CEO Michael Mayo, DHA, FACHE. “By investing in and collaborating with free and charitable health clinics, we are meeting people where they are, removing barriers to care and helping families stay healthy proactively.”

According to “Community Health Needs Assessment,”

a recent report by area nonprofits, more than 140,000 people ages 18 to 64 – and more than 26,000 children – in Northeast Florida find themselves without health insurance, which Baptist Health Vice President of Katie Ensign said is a primary barrier to health care access.

“Charitable health clinics, such as those that will benefit from this fund, help to reduce that barrier to care,” said Ensign. “We are proud to collaborate with these clinics to improve access to health and well-being for all who live in our region.”

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Annie Tuttle

Tuttle Named VP of Community Impact, Philanthropy at Alivia, Inc.

Alivia Care, Inc., the parent organization of Community Hospice & Palliative Care, has named **Annie Tuttle** Vice President of Community Impact and Philanthropy. In this role, Tuttle will lead philanthropic strategy, donor engagement and community partnerships that support Community Hospice and Palliative Care’s mission-driven health services. She will work closely with The Foundation of Community Hospice and Palliative Care Board of Trustees to expand and diversify funding for programs, several of which are unfunded or partially funded.

A North Florida resident for more than 35 years, Tuttle brings experience in education, entrepreneurship and community advocacy, along with a strong record of nonprofit and volunteer leadership. Her involvement with organizations such as Community Hospice and Palliative Care, The Donna Foundation, Wolfson Children’s Hospital and The Kate Amato Foundation reflects her commitment to community impact.

Tuttle is now focused on strengthening philanthropic support to ensure long-term access, innovation, and sustainability for patients and families across the region.

Coldwell Banker Vanguard Realty Taps Israel as Avondale Sales Manager



David Israel

David Israel is the new sales manager of the Coldwell Banker Vanguard Realty Avondale office.

Israel, a Jacksonville native, will leverage his strong understanding of the local community and deep roots in Northeast Florida to support continued growth across the region, empower his agents, and strengthen office culture.

Israel has been with the company since 2019. Over the years, he has consistently contributed to the company’s growth and culture. He advanced to assistant manager at the Coldwell Banker Vanguard Town Center office in September 2022.

Before launching his career in real estate, Israel worked in finance for nearly a decade and continues to work in local radio promotions today.

Bold Birds Spreads its Wings with Second Location



Hughes Brown poses before the signature Bold Birds mural in the new Lakewood location on San Jose Boulevard.

Bold Birds Nashville Hot Chicken has opened its second location bringing its signature chicken to a new neighborhood.

Bold Birds is family-owned and -operated by the Brown family: Nashville native Hughes Brown moved to Jacksonville with his wife, who had grown up on Jacksonville’s Westside, in 2019, and they opened their flagship Bold Birds location in Murray Hill in May 2020. More than five years later, on Dec. 15, they opened their second location in Lakewood.

“We’ve had a number of opportunities come across as we opened in Murray Hill back in 2020, and either the timing wasn’t right for us previously, or we just didn’t feel like the spaces we looked at at the time maybe weren’t the right fit,” Brown said. “We found this one, and we’re thrilled.”

The Lakewood restaurant is located in the small shopping center at the corner of San Jose Boulevard and University Boulevard West, occupying the former Tijuana Flats space. Where their Murray Hill restaurant’s rush time is predominantly during the lunch hours, Lakewood’s is more during dinnertime, which he attributes to the residential neighborhoods in the surrounding areas.

Regardless of which location Bold Birds’ customers visit, they can expect the same classic Nashville hot chicken with “spice levels ranging from Classic (no spice) to Hotter Than a Mother Clucker.”

“It’s the original, authentic style [of hot chicken],” Brown said.

Bold Birds Nashville Hot Chicken Lakewood is located at 5635 San Jose Boulevard. It’s open seven days a week, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. except for certain holidays.

A Winning Round for Child Safety



The 2025 Dream Finders Homes Champions for Child Safety Pro Am Golf Tournament raised \$533,000 to support the Monique Burr Foundation for Children. From left, MG Orender, Jim Furyk, Edward Burr, and Mark McCumber.

The 2025 Dream Finders Homes Champions for Child Safety Pro Am Golf Tournament raised \$533,000 for the Monique Burr Foundation for Children.

The annual tournament took place at The Palencia Club in St. Augustine, bringing together corporate teams and individuals to play alongside professional golfers. Proceeds will benefit MBF Prevention Education programs.

Since its inception in 1994, the golf tournament has raised more than \$6.7 million for the organization. AT&T, Jax Utilities Management, Lennar and MJC Land Development presented this year’s tournament.

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Florida Bar Honors Underkofler with President's Pro Bono Service Award

The Florida Bar has recognized **Alexandra Underkofler** for her passion and commitment to providing pro bono services for low-income and disadvantaged clients.

Underkofler, of the fourth judicial circuit, was one of 21 attorneys to receive the Florida Bar President's Pro Bono Service Awards on Jan. 22 at the Supreme Court of Florida. Underkofler is an associate attorney with Delegal, Poindexter and Underkofler.

Florida Bar President Rosalyn Sia Baker-Barnes presented these annual awards, which are given alongside the Tobias Simon Pro Bono Services and other awards given by the Florida Supreme Court chief justice.

According to The Florida Bar's recent reporting period – July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025 – Florida attorneys provided \$9.6 million to legal aid organizations and more than 1.6 million hours of pro bono services.



Alexandra Underkofler



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Baptist Health Strengthens Leadership with Four New Board Appointments

Four new members have joined the board of directors of three area Baptist Health hospitals.

John Avendano, PhD, has joined the Baptist Medical Center, Jacksonville BOD. Avendano is the president and CEO of Florida State College at Jacksonville. He holds a master's degree in adult continuing education from Northern Illinois University and a doctorate in educational administration and foundations from Illinois State University. Avendano is an active member of JAXUSA, the Rotary Club of Jacksonville and the Jacksonville Civic Council. He also sits on the board of Goodwill Industries of North Florida.

In Nassau County, **Erma Brutscher**, CPAM, and **Michael Brooks** have both joined the board of directors of Baptist Medical Center Nassau. With more than 40 years of experience in finance and revenue cycle, Brutscher is a retired health care consultant and practice administrator, previously serving in leadership positions with Central Maine Medical Center and Johns Hopkins Health System. Recognized as a Top 40 over 40 professional in Nassau County, Brooks is a senior vice president, Florida market leader and chief market officer for First Port City Bank.

Timothy J. Anderson, JD, joins the board of directors of Baptist Medical Center Beaches. He is the managing partner of Anderson Financial Partners, Inc. in Ponte Vedra Beach. He serves as a guest lecturer at the University of Florida College of Law and is the board chair of Pine Castle.

Each of these newly appointed board members will serve three-year terms.



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Local Agents Make Big Move, Further Luxury Branding on International Scale

Singleton and Hopkins transition to Christie's International Real Estate First Coast

Jon Singleton and Susan Hopkins built their reputations the old-fashioned way. They stayed. They produced. They earned trust, year after year, in a business where many agents never reach steady transactional volume.

Now the Singleton-Hopkins Team is bringing that staying power to Christie's International Real Estate First Coast, a move they call a natural next step for growth, service and global reach.

"We were really looking for a natural way to expand," Hopkins said. "Not just local branding, but national branding, global branding. Christie's is coming into Jacksonville in growth mode, and the ties to the auction house are unique."

"Luxury is not about a price point, it's about a level of service."

— Susan Hopkins
Co-Founder, The Singleton-Hopkins Team

The team spent years at a long-standing local brokerage, where Singleton developed a reputation as a consistent top producer and Hopkins built a loyal following. They formed a team fourteen years ago and became the top-ranked team companywide, a distinction they say reflects day-to-day production.

They are known for dominance in Jacksonville's historic neighborhoods, with more than 500 homes sold in those areas, along with hundreds more at the beaches and throughout St. Johns County. Together, they have closed more than 1,000 transactions.

They say the transition is not about leaving local

relationships behind. It is about reinforcing those ties while adding tools and a network that help them compete at the highest end of the market.

"Luxury is not about a price point, it's about a level of service," Hopkins said.

Singleton said the brand and infrastructure were decisive.

"We were looking for positive energy and a brokerage focused on agent success," he said. "We wanted an elevated brand, marketing and technology, and we found that at Christie's."

Their broker, Corey Hasting, said the fit was immediate and started with character.

"We recruit culture first, and Jon and Susan fit our culture perfectly," Hasting said. "I knew within 10 minutes of meeting them that they were an appropriate fit for what we are doing."

Hasting also pointed to production. "The production speaks for itself," he said. "Anytime you can bring in the No. 1 small team at one of our biggest competitors, it is a great thing."

With Christie's, Hasting said, the team gains an international network tied to the auction house and a technology stack designed to streamline the business of high-producing agents.

"My sales pitch was, look what you accomplished without everything," Hasting said. "There is not a single way you cannot accomplish more with everything we have to offer."

Hasting described his role as removing friction, not reteaching fundamentals. "How can I streamline your business through tools and systems," he said.



Jon Singleton and Susan Hopkins

Singleton and Hopkins said the practical benefits include stronger digital campaigns and a global referral pipeline that can match local listings with buyers around the world.

"If we have people looking in Lisbon or Dubai or Singapore, we can reach them," Singleton said. "It is easy to tap into the global network."

They emphasized that the new chapter still includes the full range of clients who have trusted them for years. "We've got great folks with \$300,000 houses and we can still help them," Singleton said. "We can now serve them even better."

They also see the move as a step toward the luxury segment, backed by worldwide exposure, as Jacksonville draws increased attention from out-of-market buyers.

With a local track record established, the Singleton-Hopkins Team says the goal is straightforward: keep delivering trusted service, now supported by a global platform and modern systems.

Christie's International Real Estate First Coast has offices in San Marco, Atlantic Beach, Amelia Island, Ponte Vedra Beach and St. Johns.

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Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary Opens 2026 with General Meeting



Paulette Lumley with Courtney Fox Elise Leasure with Susan Nolan, Diane Bailey and Sheila Jackson

The Salvation Army Women's Auxiliary launched its 2026 year of service with its annual kickoff breakfast Jan. 26 at Epping Forest Yacht and Country Club. Hosted by longtime member Marilyn Carpenter, the gathering brought members and guests together to set the tone for the year ahead. The meeting opened with a devotional prayer from Susan Halil, followed by remarks from President Debbie Veale and a welcome to guests by Second Vice President Diane Bailey. This year's guest speaker was Mary Daniel, founder of Caregivers for Compromise. The Auxiliary closed the morning by reminding members and supporters that its annual Silent Auction and Tasting Luncheon is scheduled for April 9, 2026, at the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center.



Pattie Lamell with Michele Kehnert and Debbie Veale Linda Tuschiski with Marilyn Carpenter and Jessica Means Rosemary Thigpen with NeeCee Lee



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Ari Jolly with Mike Hightower

Jon and Amanda Cagan



Scott and Katherine Wohlers with Jen Vihrachoff and Chris Brown

g Up the ion of Leaders

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Cathy Crabtree with Jenny Terronez, Gayle Runion, LeAnn Crabtree and Annette Hemingway

Entrepreneur and fashion executive Elyce Arons visited Jacksonville for a book signing and reception Jan. 26, sharing her journey as best friend of the late Kate Spade and her co-founding of the Frances Valentine brand of clothing. The event was held at the riverfront home of Brooks Holland, drawing a fashion-forward crowd for an afternoon of conversation, networking and celebration. Arons spoke about building an iconic brand and her experiences in the fashion industry and her deep relationship with Kate Spade, prior to signing copies of her book for attendees. The host committee included Beverley Brooke, LeAnne Crabtree, Liza Barnett Emmet, Mollie Peterson, Brooks Holland, Molly Renaud and Leigh Rosenbloom.



Guest Speaker and Author Elyce Arons with Brooks Holland



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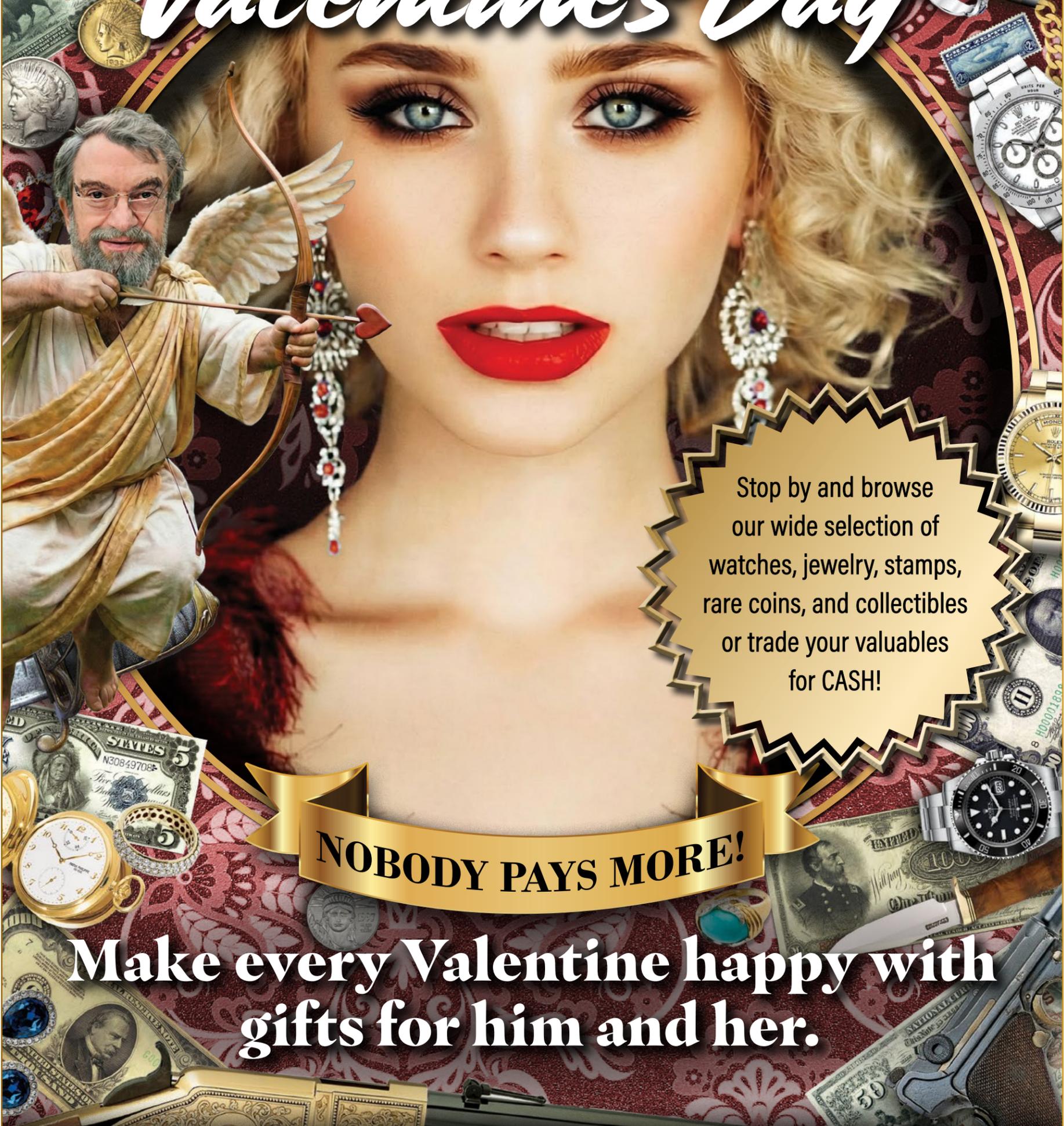


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From Ambulances to Operating Rooms

Baptist Health recreates real care for training



The Baptist Health training and simulation team of Michelle Rambach, Chellie Bartilucci, Micki Hamilton, Diane Weegmann, Baptist Hospital President and CEO Michael Mayo, Caroline Trullo and Amy Shaheen



Dr. Michael A. Mayo stands before the fully functional ambulance at the new Baptist Health Center for Professional Excellence.

A new learning center for Baptist Health is using state-of-the-art technology in a simulation lab to enhance, elevate, and accelerate team member development. The Baptist Center for Professional Experience opened last month: a 42,000-plus-square-foot facility that centralizes all of Baptist’s training programs into a single location in San Marco Plaza East. The facility features a conference center and classrooms, but its crowning jewel is the cutting-edge simulation lab that allows team members to run through any number of medical scenarios in recreated spaces that replicate real clinical environments, among which are nurses’ stations, NICU rooms, operating rooms and more. The rear of the facility features a full-size, functional ambulance, donated by Clay County Rescue. According to Amy Shaheen, medical simulation manager at Baptist Health, the new 13,000-square-foot simulation lab is roughly five times the size of Baptist’s previous space. It was designed, Shaheen explained, to exactly replicate the real-time workflow process for team members.

environment where team members can learn. “We want you to feel comfortable making a mistake, talking about it and then learning from it – or the group learning from it,” Shaheen said. “That can be hard to do if we’re in a wide open space.” The simulation lab is also outfitted with state-of-the-art high-fidelity “manikins.” These are anatomically correct models that can accurately simulate every human physiological response. Technicians operate the manikins in a connected control room; depending on the scenario, they could alter heart and breathing rates, simulate lung or heart sounds, and even simulate a seizure. Dr. Michael Mayo, DHA, FACHE, former president and CEO of Baptist Health, said the Baptist Center for Professional Excellence will serve as a significant recruitment tool for the health care system and, to his knowledge, surpasses other health systems’ training facilities. “I don’t think I know of a health system that has anything to this extent,” Mayo said. “Most everyone has something...but this is just, you know, on steroids.” Mayo added that the center gives endless opportunities to medical professionals. “If you have an educational passion or a health passion, the sky’s the limit,” Mayo said. “That’s what’s going to be the beautiful thing about this.”



Amy Sheehan, Baptist Health medical simulation manager, with “Sim Man 3G,” one of the training facility’s anatomically accurate “manikins” that can simulate any human physiological response.

“There’s no pretending in our sim lab,” Shaheen said. “I’m not going to pretend to pull prescriptions or pretend to start an IV. We’re actually doing it...because adult learners learn by doing, through action. That’s what builds muscle memory, helps it stick. So tomorrow, when they’re caring for one of our loved ones, they know exactly what to do because they’ve done it.” Another unique characteristic of the simulation rooms is that they are closed spaces versus larger, open rooms. Shaheen said these closed spaces create a psychologically safe

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Falling in Love with Art



Alexander Diaz

University of North Florida Photography Professor Alexander Diaz seeks beauty and serenity in natural springs. His exhibit at Southlight Gallery – “Beneath the Surface” – is mesmerizing, inviting the viewer into “Florida’s hidden tranquility.”

The process is not particularly tranquil as Diaz dives deep into the springs, his camera encased in an underwater housing. He explained that in one shot he was hanging onto a submerged tree limb in 20 feet of water while shooting upwards.

At Touché Gallery, Kristin Cronin’s spectacular paintings of trees are awe-inspiring and transcend the confines of the canvas. For the “Up Above My Head” exhibit at TAC Gallery, artists had various interpretations, but Annelies Dykgraaf took Best in Show, while Cookie Davis



Kristin Cronin and Julie Feldman

and Roger Bailey both earned Juror’s Pick awards.

Stephanie Welchans’ recent exhibit at the Jacksonville Public Library downtown – “Art and Whimsy” – was a fun and colorful collection of flowers, birds, landscapes and fanciful critters that brings joy to the spirit.



Stephaine Welchans

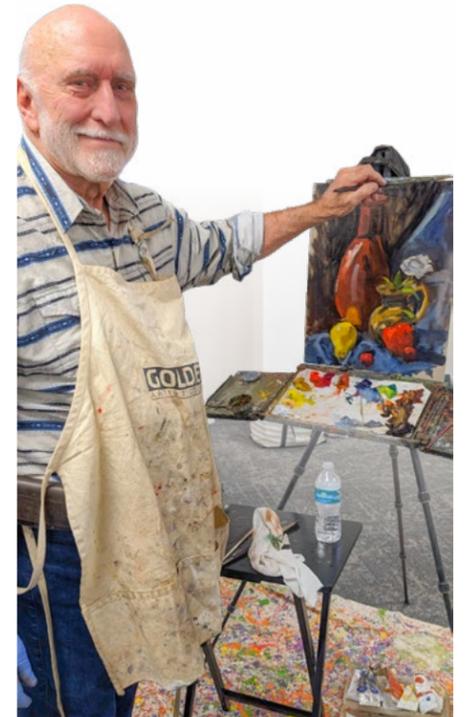
“Art helps me focus and enlarges my world,” said Welchans. “It has put me on the path with many who have similar interests.”

Other artists and contemporaries shared why they love what they do.

Glenn Ivie finds distraction and a calming spirit as he is “in the moment” painting. Aaron Jackson said art allows him to bridge the gap between his conscious and subconscious mind. Larry Wilson finds escape from the world in his art studio.

“Stress and mental chatter immediately fade away, and it becomes just me and the clay or the paint,” Wilson added.

Cookie Davis explained, “Art is a constant in the lives of artists, most of whom have been creating since childhood.”



Paul Ladnier

Dave Engdahl summed it up when he stated, “Art is creating something that didn’t previously exist and expands your thinking in all aspects of life.”

John Muir – naturalist, conservationist, author and “Father of the National Parks” – once remarked, “In February, let nature be your guide and find solace in its beauty and rhythm.”

The First Coast Plein Air Painters take this to heart as they venture into the great outdoors to capture the light and natural beauty of the world.

From Ortega’s Stinson Park to Washington Oaks State Park, the group revels in the challenge of painting in nature.

“Art is meditative,” said artist Jeanette Dennis. “You try to capture the spirit of a subject.”



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Erin Cowart and Barbara Colachielli

At Babs' Lab at the Cork Arts District North, the spoken word becomes art as evidenced by the exceptional storytelling of Erin Cowart, who won first place at January's Story Slam, themed "The Messy Middle."



Michael Cottrell and Wendy Sullivan

Paul Ladnier's presentation and demonstration of his painting technique to members of the Art Guild of Orange Park was fun and inspiring – even his palettes are works of art: Check out the exhibit of his palettes at the Cummer Museum of Art and



Pablo Rivera and Allison Watson

Gardens. Jacksonville Artist Guild members were awed by FSCJ Professor Michael Cottrell's amazing three-dimensional works including ceramics, large-scale sculptures and digital fabrication.

Artists love art – and artists. Everyone who knows Pablo Rivera knows of his accomplishments and successes as a painter, sculptor and instructor. To celebrate Rivera, who will turn 90 in March, Kevin Arthur invited fellow artists to Cork for an evening of "Painting Pablo." More than 40 artists turned out for the three-hour opportunity to paint, draw and sketch as Rivera modeled. What an outpouring of love for art and the artist.

John Bunker said, "I endeavor to create works that express the joy of living and allow others to enjoy what I create. Art manifests itself in the extension of self – allowing one's spirit and presence to live on past one's time on earth."

Whether visual expression, dance, theater or music – why do people create art? Because they have to.

THE BEAT GOES ON!

Feb. 3
ArtWalk
Downtown Jacksonville | 5 to 9 p.m.

Feb. 7
Camellia Festival
Ortega Church | 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Feb. 7
Auditions for "Wizard of Wonderland"
Theatre Jacksonville, 1 to 3 p.m.

Feb. 9
Jacksonville Artists Guild Reception
and Awards for "Remember When"
Church of the Good Shepherd
Betsy Lovett Hall | 5 to 6 p.m.

Feb. 10
Jeff Whipple Exhibit and Reception
FSCJ Kent Campus

Feb. 11
Reception for Dawn Montgomery's exhibit
"Consider the Wildflowers"
Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church
6 to 7 p.m.

Feb. 13
Babs' Lab Story Slam "Red"
Cork Arts District North | 8 p.m.

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BETWEEN THE LINES
BY MICHELE LEIVAS

CURRENTLY READING:

"The Once and Future Queen"
by Paula Lafferty

CURRENTLY LISTENING TO:

"The Book that Wouldn't Burn"
Mark Lawrence



The group poses in front of The Literary Lounge following the Jan. 10 audiobook walk in Murray Hill.

I Read with My Ears, and I'm Not Sorry

I love audiobooks. I listen to them every chance I get: in my car, while I'm walking my dog, Addy. I appreciate background music, particularly while I'm working or writing, but for the most part, if there's an opportunity to occupy my mind – say, for example, during tedious tasks of folding and putting away laundry or other household chores – I'm going to occupy it with a good audiobook versus a good soundtrack.

And while I know there are some who debate whether or not *listening* to a book is the same as *reading* a book, I will say this: I am experiencing the story nonetheless and, well, audiobooks bring me joy, ease my anxiety and allow me to consume more books than I would ordinarily have time to get to during my very packed days (and if you saw my TBR list, you'd know I have a lot of books I want to get to).

Not only that, but audiobook narrators allow readers to experience books differently, bringing characters

to life with unique voices, accents, and even more personality that I can imbue in them in my head. That being said, an audiobook narrator can also make or break a book. Some of my favorite narrators are Saskia Maarleveld (particularly for novels by Kate Quinn), Imogen Church (Ruth Ware novels) and Elizabeth Evans (Sarah J. Maas).

"Reading is reading is reading, no matter what," said Mariah Jones, owner of The Literary Lounge, an independent bookstore in Murray Hill. "I love audiobooks. I think if I didn't have them, I wouldn't be able to consume as many books that I do a year, because I'm just a very busy person."

I had the opportunity to share my love of audiobooks with a group during an Audiobook Walk through Murray Hill, hosted by The Literary Lounge last month. The walk took place on Saturday, Jan. 10, and lasted roughly 40 minutes, covering just under two miles through the neighborhood. Jones said she launched these monthly audiobook walks last fall but typically held them on a weekday evening after work; following the time change, the event was moved to Saturday mornings. Last month's event was the biggest turnout yet, Jones said.

As we walked, I began a new audiobook, "An Ancient Witch's Guide to Modern Dating" by Cecilia Edwards, that I stumbled across quite by accident on my Libby app because every other book I searched from my TBR list was on hold. I must have placed five or six holds that day, all of which I'm sure will come in at the same time two months from now, and I'll go from having no books to listen to, to too many to handle. The struggle is real for an audiobook listener, am I right? It was the perfect morning for a walk, and it was lovely to be surrounded by so many fellow booklovers who enjoyed

being in each other's company while listening to a good book.

Jones echoed that sentiment.

"I just am really thankful that people come to these events and then they'll walk away with something," Jones said. "Usually, we do lots of crafting events and things like that, but ultimately, they're walking away with community."



Audiobook listeners walk just under two miles on Jan. 10 in what The Literary Lounge Owner Mariah Jones said was the largest turnout yet for the audiobook walks.

Thanks to audiobooks, I have already been able to experience two incredible novels in the first half of January ("This Will Be Fun" by E.B. Asher and the book by Edwards mentioned above): Both highly entertaining and both stellar audiobook picks. Ten out of 10 would recommend. Asher's audiobook even has a cast of narrators for its multi-POV plot.

Michele Leivas listens to audiobooks at a minimum of 1.5x speed but gradually works up to 2x speed every chance she gets. She loves it whenever an audiobook features a cast of narrators that do different voices for each character and whenever a narrator absolutely nails a British, Irish, or Scottish accent for a character.



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One Hundred Years, Countless Memories



William Dobbins with his son, Water



Sheryl Pulley with granddaughter Artemisia



Mr. Rando with his granddaughter

Boone Park has served as a gathering place for Avondale neighbors, friends and families, and on Saturday, Jan. 24, the community came out to celebrate the centennial of their beloved park.

“It’s a delight to see people out here enjoying the park,” said Pamela Telis, founder of Friends of Boone Park South, the group that hosted the day’s festivities. “It’s fun to have a place where you’re bringing people together.”

Friends of Boone Park South is a volunteer-run group that oversees the preservation and maintenance of the park, which, at 26 acres, is the largest park in Riverside Avondale. It was

dedicated in January 1926. Most of the land comprising Boone Park was donated by William Elijah Boone combined with additional acreage acquired by the City to create the public park the community enjoys today.

“It’s so remarkable, isn’t it, that this park still gives so much joy to so many people,” Telis said. “Whenever I talk to people and tell that I founded and I lead Friends of Boone Park South, they always say, ‘I love that park.’”

The centennial festivities included a scavenger hunt, guided nature tours, kids’ arts and crafts, games and special treats.



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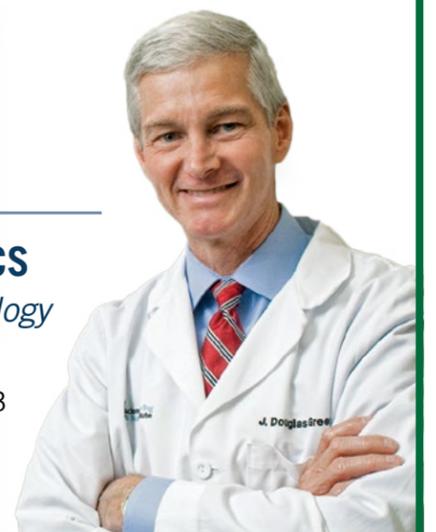
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Jacksonville Boat Show Draws Strong Crowd



Brian DeJesus with his daughter Sami enjoying a day of browsing boat models

Scott Smith and Brian Serger of Whalen Bay Marine out of St. Augustine, FL



Joan Adams with Rebecca Ferguson enjoyed the day walking the exhibit halls

Floyd Bristol and Angela Forbes were on hand representing the JAX Fire Dragons, a racing team participating in the region's Dragon Boat class of rowing sports.

The 78th Annual Jacksonville Boat Show presented by the North Florida Marine Association brought three days of boating excitement to the Prime F. Osborn III Convention Center as it kicked off Friday, Jan. 23, and wrapped up Sunday, Jan. 25 at 4 p.m.

Attendees explored the latest watercraft from more than twenty-five dealers on a packed show floor featuring fishing boats, cruisers, pontoons and personal watercraft, alongside more than sixty-five exhibitors showcasing marine accessories and gear. The weekend also offered family-friendly activities and educational presentations, including seminars on inshore fishing techniques and a free Kids Fishing Clinic that drew young anglers eager to learn and cast from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Saturday.

Organizers said this year's show continued its long tradition of promoting the marine

lifestyle and supporting local businesses, drawing boating enthusiasts and families from across Northeast Florida. "We're incredibly grateful for the enthusiastic crowd and are thrilled to have connected so many boaters with exciting new boats and accessories," said Erin Johnson, Administrative Director of the North Florida Marine Association. "We're already looking forward to next year's event!"

In addition to hands-on exhibits and product displays, the event underscored the region's growing boating community, offering once-a-year deals on boats and accessories while encouraging safe, informed participation on the water. With strong attendance throughout the weekend, the Jacksonville Boat Show once again served as a major showcase for industry trends and regional marine commerce. Visit Boatjax.com to learn more.

Commodore's League Launches Year Aboard Royal Princess



The Jacksonville Commodore's League began its new year in familiar territory, on the St. Johns River and inside a good story. The longtime club of mariners and river advocates held its first luncheon meeting of the year Jan. 14, aboard the newly launched Royal Princess.

Co-owners Lezlee and Rob Bellanich welcomed guests to the informal gathering, Lezlee shared a tune, singing a jingle titled 'Relax in Jax', followed by her husband Rob who shared the family's journey of bringing the ship to Jacksonville and preparing it for service.

Members listened with interest as Rob Bellanich spoke about moving their yacht charter business from New York to Jacksonville following his successful liver transplant at the Mayo Clinic in 2020 and the work it took to ready the 125-foot, tri-level luxury yacht for downtown cruises. The family-run operation, Jax Yacht Charter, now offers public and private cruises for 180 to 200 guests, with climate-controlled decks and a rooftop lounge.

The Commodore's League cruised between the Fuller Warren and Matthews bridges before returning to dock near the Chart House along the Southbank Riverwalk, as they learned of the Bellanich family plans to grow the business while showcasing the same river the club has championed for fifty years.

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THANK YOU NOTES FROM MY EMPTY NEST PERCH

31

By Susanna Barton

During this month of Valentine's and love and all things hawt and spicy, I'd like to show appreciation for our beautiful, aging bodies and the sense of legacy and purpose they can instill in each of us – if we can just “Be Mine” them instead of fixing, plumping, starving or surgically removing them. All the bodies who live in our *Resident* Community tell unique stories – ones that can be celebrated through the right perspective.

She warned me about staying in the sun, that I'd turn into a “leather bag” like she did. Her arms were thin and crepey, demurely bedazzled at the wrists, and they were such a comfort to me. She had big knotty knuckles. I remember staring at them while we were watching “Dallas” on the couch or when we were sitting by the pool or at the beach. Those arms were beautiful to me.

My mom had a tiny little frame and

my mom thought it would be cute to give me a Dorothy Hamil haircut. It wouldn't have been so bad, but this haircut came on the heels of a balance beam falling on my nose during a P.E. obstacle course, thus rendering my facial expressions slightly distorted and not very Dorothy Hamil-like – and I had braces and a double-strapper headgear. Ben looks much more handsome now than I did at that age, but it is pretty amazing to see the resemblance.

Barton, who raised his family in Avondale and Ortega two generations ago. And he's always had the coloring and spice of his mother, Agnes, and her father, George Ellis. With so many wonderful ingredients, what's not to like? What an honor to embody the physical traits of such lovely people.

All of this awareness has gotten me super jazzed about what else is going to happen in my aging body journey. What other memories will be stirred? What other feelings of love and family will be reignited? Who else will I see in myself? And how can I pass this sense of beauty and awe down to the next generation of children who watch, develop confidence and discover the same legacy through their own aging bodies? This skin – sag and all – is cause for celebration and Valentine adoration. I am most honored to Be Mine this month and hope you will discover the same love letter in your beautiful, aging self.

“ With so many wonderful ingredients, what's not to like? What an honor to embody the physical traits of such lovely people. ”

I recently spent a long stretch at Crescent Beach in an old one-piece, just kicking back in a beach chair and taking it all in. I love a good beach day: It's immersive, makes every sense wake up and absorb the awe and beauty, and of course, the sun – which isn't supposed to be good for us, but my motto is anything that makes me feel this good and alive could not be something to avoid altogether. So, I embrace my inner Magda and just bask in it.

This summer I really noticed how my body has changed and how I have been bequeathed many of the physical traits I noticed when my mom and grandmother wore bathing suits so long ago. This is exciting to me! What used to be lean muscular tissue on my thighs is now a curtain of crepey, spongy, speckled skin visoring my knees and threatening a landslide onto the once-sporty calves and ankles below. And (yes, I know, because of my sun-loving) most of my skin is spotty, uneven and tough-looking – especially on my arms and hands. This is even more exciting because those are some of the physical features I remember most about my mom and grandmother.

My grandmother had darkish, wrinkly skin that was all kinds of spotted up.

big hips and thighs – a trait known as the Biedenharn hips. She sure got some of those hips, she'd lament jokingly. When it was pool time, mom always wore a bathing suit with a skirt. In all the times I'd swim between her legs or watch her move during an after-dinner walk, I always thought how truly lovely she was. Never did I think, “Ew” or “Yuck” or “I wish she'd do something about those Biedenharn hips; I wish she would dye her silver hair so she didn't look so old. I wish my grandmother would get rid of that baggy skin or tighten things up around her mouth.” My thought was usually just, “I love her very, very much.”

It has occurred to me what a gift this is, to start seeing in and on myself the great beauty and realness I admired in Mom and Bobbie. It's as if they're becoming re-alived in the flesh – like, literally! – and I have the incredible fortune to welcome them back. To me, all this sagging and spotty-skin stuff and rippling and greying is their great re-entry into my life. It is an honor!

When you have kids, it works the other way, too. As our children have gotten older, I see reflections of myself. Many a childhood friend has told me our son, Ben, looks a lot like I did in the sixth grade, when

If you could distinguish humor, I see my appreciation of wit in our daughter Marley, as we now laugh at the same things and trade the same kind of

“ This summer I really noticed how my body has changed and how I have been bequeathed many of the physical traits I noticed when my mom and grandmother wore bathing suits so long ago. ”

ridiculous TikTok videos – mainly cat clips and practical jokes and ridiculous things I don't even fully understand. And I'm 100% certain our love of the ha-has came directly from my great grandmother Mama Pennye who was always up for a laugh and some cheese balls and orange soda. This stuff is in our blood; we cannot deny it.

My husband David looks increasingly similar to his grandfather, Quinn R.

Susanna Barton always hoped her hair would prematurely turn snowy silver like her mom's distinctive strands, but that hasn't happened yet. A Granada resident, Barton currently manages an online community called Grand Plans, which encourages healthy conversations about aging and preparing for it on www.mygrandplans.com.

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Lauren at The Greenhouse Bar

By Fabrizio Gowdy

A lifelong Riverside-Avondale resident who has grown up with the neighborhood, Lauren Henry embodies the optimistic energy that seems to be reverberating throughout Jacksonville’s historic districts these days.

“Growing up in the neighborhood and seeing it evolve over the last almost 40 years has been inspiring to see,” said Henry.

As a kid, Henry split her time between her mother in Riverside and her father in Ponte Vedra. She attended Landrum Middle School and Nease High School, where she played volleyball.

She eventually earned a volleyball scholarship to Winthrop University in South Carolina. After a year, however, she felt burnout beckoning and home calling and opted to transfer schools to complete her education at FSCJ and UNE, where she majored in communications and minored in photography; after graduating, she worked in marketing and social media.

While she only played collegiate volleyball for a short time, her love for the sport – and for teaching others – did not diminish. For the past three years, she’s coached the traveling club volleyball team at the YMCA, working with various age groups from eight to 16.

“It’s a way to step back into it,” said Henry.

In addition to volunteering at the Y, she also volunteers her time on Riverside Avondale Preservation’s parks committee. In that role, Henry works with the liaisons



Lauren behind the bar at her mobile bartending company – a precursor to The Greenhouse Bar.

for various green spaces to address each park’s needs. Her favorite local parks?

“Willowbranch has a huge place in my heart, but I think my favorite park in our neighborhood is Fishweir. I lived on that park for a couple years, and it’s just a hidden gem,” said Henry.

In the short amount of time she’s served on the parks committee, Henry says she has found value in building relationships, starting conversations and helping create goals for the committee.

“My biggest win has been taking the time to understand what’s happening within neighborhood parks – not just at a surface level, but by listening, asking questions and learning where things have worked and where they’ve fallen short in the past,” said Henry.

She is especially excited about the upcoming improvements to local parks, including a new playground at Fishweir Park, the labyrinth at Peace Memorial Park, and the Willowbranch Creek stabilization.



Lauren Henry enjoys spending time with her children in the city’s green spaces.

“We haven’t seen this type of movement ever, in my opinion,” said Henry.

Now three years into running The Greenhouse Bar in Brooklyn, she also cherishes the opportunity to participate in the neighborhood as a small business owner. The plant and coffee shop was born out of the pandemic-era plant boom and Henry’s passion for interior design, which she credits as coming from her mother.

“She’s inspired me within our own homes growing up along with her style and confidence,” said Henry. “Her background has always been in furniture and design, so it was natural that I grew to love it.”

As for her use of plants to decorate interiors, Henry sees it as a big ‘80s trend that has circled back since the pandemic.

“I was just lucky to fall in love with using plants in my own home as interior design pieces prior,” explained Henry.

Henry worked in bars and restaurants since she was 18 and got deeply involved in making sangria after her kids were born. She even created a mobile bartending company based on the dozens of recipes she had created – a brick-and-mortar business was a natural next step.

When not working or volunteering, Henry stays busy with her two kids, both of whom have attended Fishweir Elementary. Her 12-year-old daughter is in band and takes lessons at Clark’s Music Center in Fairfax while her 10-year-old son is heavily involved in NOL Baseball, which he has played for eight years now.

Together, they enjoy family vacations, including a ski trip once a year, most recently to Breckenridge, Colorado. But according to Henry, some of their best moments happen right here in the neighborhood.

“We have the best parks in the city, so grab a picnic blanket, go out to a park and have a day,” said Henry.

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NFSSE's PATH certified equine specialist Angelica Rodriguez with Squeak, handler Catherine Erickson with Skeeter, and Pip with NFSSE's Barn Operations/Recreation Manager and trainer Cara Bauman

Small Horses, Big Impact

By Julie Kerns Garmendia

A new equine therapy partnership between Nemours Children's Health and the North Florida School of Special Education (NFSSE) is bringing new, reciprocal opportunities for children and teens at both organizations.

Specially trained, miniature horses from NFSSE will regularly visit Nemours Children's Health youth to provide them with equine-assisted therapy and activities.

NFSSE students will be able to access services at Nemours as well, said Jennifer Pfeiffer, APRN, ESMHL. Pfeiffer is Nemours Children's Health director and senior equine specialist in mental health and learning for the Assisted Dog & Pony Therapy Program (ADAPT). She is also a pediatric clinical nurse specialist in diabetes education and transition self-management for teens.

The ADAPT program at Nemours uses animal-assisted treatment to support children with chronic medical conditions like cancer or diabetes, integrating miniature horses into structured clinical sessions. The new partnership with NFSSE ensures consistent access to trained therapy horses and handlers, enhancing therapeutic continuity and safety.

The ADAPT team at Nemours includes licensed mental health professionals, medical care providers, psychologists and social work medical providers. All team members have extensive animal-assisted therapy training, and many have graduate degrees in animal-assisted counseling or PATH (Professional Association for Therapeutic Horsemanship International) certification. PATH certifies and accredits equine centers, instructors and specialists in accordance with nationally recognized professional standards.

Pfeiffer said that while considering ways to improve the consistency and cost-effectiveness of Nemours' equine therapy program, she decided to contact someone at NFSSE to discuss their program. The school offers its equine therapy sessions at an on-site barn, thanks to the generosity of philanthropist Delores Barr Weaver. The Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center is named in honor of her support for the school's mission, its faculty and its students.

"I was fortunate to talk to Faye Clever, NFSSE barn manager, about their program, but they only had one miniature horse," she said. "I offered to find more miniature therapy horses with just the perfect, calm temperament that were already trained or could be trained and certified... if there was a way that we could partner to offer equine therapy services at both of our locations."

The result of that search was two miniature horses that were graciously donated by one of the first Nemours ADAPT graduates, and a third horse that could be leased long-term. Executives from both organizations met and agreed on this mutually beneficial partnership to share the horses and offer equine therapy for children and teens at both Nemours and NFSSE.

The three participating miniature horses – Pip, Squeak, and Skeeter – were all initially evaluated for program participation by Nemours equine specialists. They have acclimated to their new home stable at NFSSE, completed their standardized training requirements and Pet Partners registration, and are now successfully working as part of an equine therapy team, Pfeiffer said.

To be registered with Pet Partners, therapy horses must pass a veterinary health screening and demonstrate proficient obedience. Together, the horse and trainer team must pass a skills and aptitude test and an in-person evaluation of both the handler's and the horse's ability to work calmly, safely, and effectively together in a community setting. Pet Partners is a national nonprofit organization recognized as the leader in animal-assisted interventions. It trains and registers teams of therapy animals and handlers to provide comfort and support in settings such as hospitals, schools and workplaces.

Before the new partnership, Nemours had contracted to use two miniature therapy horses, Gypsy and Taco, who had to be transported from their St. Augustine stable. This round-trip journey was much longer for the horses and more costly than the seven-mile trip between Nemours and NFSSE. It took an hour for handlers to prepare the horses for travel, load them into a horse trailer, and complete the journey before they could even begin any

Animal HOUSE | 33

scheduled therapy sessions.

Gypsy and Taco were such favorites that they were treated to a full-blown retirement party at Nemours. While they may have left the Nemours program, these patient and student favorites are still active in St. Augustine's HAALT Therapeutic Center Program (Hands On Animal-Assisted Learning Therapy). HAALT offers equine-assisted therapy as part of its mental health counseling services for children, teens and adults, and is a PATH member center.

Pfeiffer said that the horses help chronically ill children with worries or anxieties about medical treatment, chemotherapy hair loss, or pain from mild to severe conditions. She described it as a labor of love, noting that handlers and trainers can empower a child by allowing them to lead a horse or brush its mane. These actions – passive or more active – can all build confidence, a sense of accomplishment and sense of wellbeing when patients face uncertainty or must be

pediatric health systems, with two free-standing hospitals and a network of more than 70 primary and specialty care practices. Nemours seeks to transform children's health through a holistic model that delivers innovative, safe and high-quality care while addressing whole-child health. It provides hospital- and clinic-based specialty primary care, prevention and health information services, as well as research and medical education programs, to improve the lives of children and their families. The Nemours Foundation was established in 1936 by the late philanthropist Alfred I. duPont through his will, and it continues to oversee and fund Nemours Children's Health.

As part of its community educational outreach, Nemours produces the award-winning podcast "Well Beyond Medicine," which discusses pediatric medicine. It also maintains the world's most visited website, NemoursKidsHealth.org, which provides physician-reviewed information on the health, behavior and development of children from birth to adulthood.



East Arlington Rotary Club President Jim Smith and Jennifer Pfeiffer, Nemours Director of Assisted Dog and Pony Therapy (ADAPT), present the new horse trailer donated by the Rotary Club.

away from home.

"A therapy horse can create a peaceful bubble around that child, teen or young adult, making learning or conversation more possible and less stressful," Pfeiffer said. "Activities with the horse help therapists and counselors gently demonstrate new ways to empower a patient when they might feel helpless, whether it is confronting illness, learning how to self-manage diabetes care, or transitioning out of the hospital back to school or to college, jobs or living independently. We see magical moments happen all the time."

Pfeiffer said the program is growing fast, with a waiting list already booked through May 2026. Both Nemours and NFSSE welcome donations to support the therapy horse program expenses, and invite readers to visit their websites for ways to donate or volunteer.

Nemours Children's Health is one of the nation's largest nonprofit, multistate

NFSSE, a nonprofit educational organization, was founded with the mission of fostering each student's unique abilities and revealing their highest potential within an engaged community. It serves students with intellectual and developmental differences from ages six to 22 and also offers a postgraduate program for young adults ages 22 to 40. NFSSE is fully accredited by the Florida Council of Independent Schools.

Nemours Children's Health and NFSSE gratefully thank the Rotary Club of East Arlington and its leadership and members for the generous donation of a new horse trailer to safely and comfortably transport the miniature therapy horses from the Delores Barr Weaver Therapeutic Equestrian Center at NFSSE to the Nemours campus. The donation of the new trailer was a critical need that made the new equine therapy partnership possible and aptly demonstrates the Rotary Club motto: "Unite for Good."

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By Lauren K. Weedon



Giving Back, Side by Side

Valentine's Day is often associated with flowers, cards and sweet gestures, but at its heart, the holiday is about love in action. This February, *Resident News* is celebrating the deeper spirit of the season by spotlighting four local families who are sharing their love not only with one another but also with the community around them. Through volunteering, philanthropy and hands-on service, these parents are teaching their children that some of the most meaningful moments come from giving back together – and that love, when multiplied through service, has the power to strengthen families and transform lives.

The Hills: Theresa, Shay and Emma

With a heart of compassion, Theresa Hill of St. Nicholas said she finds great reward in volunteering. She's been involved in the Jacksonville community for decades, beginning with the Rotaract Club of Florida's First Coast and the Junior League of Jacksonville as a young professional.

Now a wife to Shay and mom to Emma, Theresa has transformed giving back into a family affair.

"We are very blessed in so many ways," said Theresa. "We are called to be bigger. We are called to help others."

Theresa served on the board of the Downtown Ecumenical Services Council (DESC) for 10 years, and her whole family continues to support the organization. Theresa appreciated that DESC is faith-based and was founded as a partnership with many downtown churches of all denominations coming together to serve the less fortunate. She and Shay help with fundraising for the nonprofit's annual event, while the whole family has also collected toiletries and clothing to donate to DESC. When Emma was in elementary school, she created flyers for a peanut butter and jelly sandwich drive and had a tremendous response.

Recently, Theresa and Emma joined the National Charity League Jacksonville Chapter, which is a volunteer organization of moms and daughters (seventh through 12th grade) promoting leadership and giving back. The group was established in Jacksonville three years ago and officially became a chapter of the national organization last year. Some of the nonprofits they have supported are Family Housing, Dreams Come True, Wolfson Children's Hospital and Angels for Allison.

"It's a great way to meet other like-minded people and get involved with many organizations," said Theresa. "Plus, the girls

learn leadership skills such as board service and how to create a meeting agenda."

Meanwhile, Shay is an active volunteer through his workplace as a JEA Ambassador.

"Through the Power Pals program, we go into elementary schools and teach students about home safety and electricity," he said.

JEA also encourages its employees to volunteer together as a team.

"Our team has completed river cleanups, sorted and distributed food with Feeding Northeast Florida and sorted clothing at the Hubbard House thrift store," said Shay. "It's both team building and community building."

Through their collective service, the Hill family demonstrates the power of giving back together – at home, at work and throughout the community.



United by love, faith and the arts, the Bravo family gives back together on stage and beyond.

The Bravos: Lucy, Phil, Elizabeth, Marlyn, Abigail and Voss

For more than 30 years, Jacksonville's "Community Nutcracker" has been a cherished holiday tradition where ballet artistry meets a deep commitment to service.

A moving highlight each year is the onstage recognition of a Dreamer from Dreams Come True, celebrating hope and joy for children facing life-threatening illnesses. Beyond the performances, "The Community Nutcracker" reinvests proceeds into the community and awards scholarships to senior dancers.

The entire Bravo family of Ortega

Committed to unity and kindness, the Brown family shares their time, talent and heart to celebrate diversity and teach empathy through action.

danced together in the 2023 production to give back to the community and support one another. Daughter Elizabeth shared, "I like it better when we audition as a family because I think it makes it less stressful."

As a couple, Lucy and Phil support and volunteer with Engaged Encounter, a marriage preparation program sponsored by the Engaged Encounter Community and the Office of Family Life. Offered as a weekend retreat, it gives couples a distraction-free setting to reflect deeply on their relationship and future together, including communication, values, goals, family life, and faith. While Catholic in origin, the program is open to couples of any faith who are seriously considering marriage recognized by the Catholic Church. Lucy and Phil share stories from their own marriage to help others.

The Browns: Nicole, Andy, Emmett and Grayson

When Nicole and Andy Brown moved to Jacksonville nine years ago, one of the first things they did was get involved with the Jewish Community Alliance.

"We were looking for a sense of community and the JCA is a true melting pot," said Nicole.

Over the years, it has become a place near and dear to the entire family: Nicole is currently the board chair, and her sons, Emmett and Grayson, attend JCA's aftercare program.

"Our boys have been at the JCA since prenatal yoga," laughed Nicole. "Then they attended the pre-school from one year through kindergarten, they play sports and attend summer camp."

Exposing Grayson and Emmett to the needs of others has given them hearts to help the less fortunate.

"I'm so proud that their teachers have recognized them for their empathy and kindness toward the other students," said Nicole. "They are in tune with others' emotional needs."

Nicole is a therapist at The LJD Jewish Family and Community Services (JFCS), where her boys also get involved in the food pantry and clothing closet through collecting coats and jackets, as well as canned goods. Andy is a doctor with Borland Groover and is passionate about urging people to be screened for colon cancer early. He sponsors events at the JCA and JFCS to give back and spread awareness.

The San Marco family is particularly involved in Together Against Hate: Promoting Unity in Our Community, which is a partnership between the JCA and the YMCA.

The third Annual Racing Against Hate 5K Run/Walk is on Sunday, Feb. 22, at the Winston Family YMCA.

"We give our time, treasure and talent," said Nicole. "The way we think is, 'Why not help others in need?'"

The Turners: Ana, Stephen, Olivia, Joey,

Rooted in compassion, the Hill family values service through hands-on community involvement.

Cecilia, Madeline and Dorothy

Ana and Stephen Turner first became friends in high school while volunteering together at Camp I Am Special, a summer camp program for children and adults with intellectual and developmental differences.

Stephen and his three sisters were all volunteers, and his mother was the volunteer nurse. Ana appreciated his close-knit family and heart for service, and they began dating in college. Now married with five kids, their two oldest children have followed in their parents' footsteps as camp "buddies" at Camp I Am Special, which is now a program of Catholic Charities Jacksonville.

Stephen is a stay-at-home dad and serves



Inspired by a lifelong call to service, the Turner family lives their faith by serving those most in need.

on the Board of L'Arche Jacksonville. This community has created an environment where people with intellectual and physical disabilities can share their gifts and make a positive impact on the world. He is also a catechist, teaching the principles of the Christian faith, and serves on the parish council at St. Paul's Catholic Church Riverside. Stephen serves as the volunteer director for the Secretariat with the Diocese of St. Augustine Cursillo Movement. He and Ana both volunteer for weekend retreats and monthly fellowship opportunities to live out their faith and bring others closer to God.

Ana is a psychiatrist with the University of Florida and the behavioral health director at Sulzbacher Center.

"I'm a street psychiatrist, so I go out and meet patients where they are, homeless, under a bridge, in the woods," she said. "I go to them to remove the barrier of access, co-pays and appointments."

The Turner children are also involved with Sulzbacher through organizing clothing drives and assembling hygiene kits.

"Our family philanthropy is a natural response to the gifts we've been given," said Stephen. "Since our relationship and marriage were established through service, we want to give back."

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UNSUNG HEROES

A tribute to the volunteers who transform our community

35



LAURIE STASI

By Jennifer Jensen

In the nine years Laurie Stasi has volunteered at City Rescue Mission, she has worn many hats and served many roles beyond serving meals or working in the thrift store.

She has led women's and men's Bible studies, spoken at chapel, taught life skills classes, and directed an Easter performance. She's also designed the gardens and landscapes at the mission's

locations and gotten down in the dirt to plant flowers and bushes. Using her artistic background, she has lent a hand with stage design, graphic design for cards and other items, photography and videography.

"My side of things is kind of more creative," Stasi said. "But there's always a place for creative people like me."

City Rescue Mission is a faith-based, nonprofit organization that provides help

to those experiencing homelessness, hunger, or addiction in Jacksonville and Northeast Florida. For its 80th anniversary, Stasi is working on a performance featuring poetry and written word pieces created by people in City Rescue Mission programs.

The performance will be one of many events held during the mission's anniversary year.

In addition to these creative outlets, Stasi also volunteers during holiday meals when the mission serves food to the unhoused. She greets people, prays with them and gets to know them.

"I think when you volunteer, you get back as much as you give," Stasi

said. "I'll get something out of what they're saying as much as what I'm giving," she said.

Stasi chose to get involved with City Rescue Mission to provide support for people experiencing homelessness or working through one of the organization's programs.

"A lot of them have suffered trauma and neglect early in their life," Stasi said. "And if you go in with a caring heart and show love to them and you aren't judging them, but giving compassion, help and encouragement, it makes a difference in their lives."

Stasi said she has experienced the difference volunteers make firsthand, when people come back years later to thank them for the impact they had, or when families

“When you invest in people with love and with the love of Christ, they are transformed, and I don't think there are many things alive that are that beautiful.”

— Laurie Stasi
Volunteer, City Rescue Mission

said. "It feels good, you feel like you're contributing to someone."

She's also taught the prayer ministers how to pray for people and participate in chapel. She has also taught baptism classes. Stasi says during these moments, she gathers wisdom from those she's helping as well.

of those in the program come back to thank the mission after they welcomed their loved one back into their lives.

"When you invest in people with love and with the love of Christ, they are transformed, and I don't think there are many things alive that are that beautiful," Stasi said.



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FLASHBACK

Our monthly dose of neighborhood nostalgia, uncovering gems from our archives of people, places and memories of our community

Asa Philip Randolph



Photo: The Jacksonville History Center Times-Union Photo Collection

Contributed By
The Jacksonville History Center

Editor's Note: "Flashbacks" is a recurring series of short vignettes contributed by the Jacksonville History Center that opens a window into history: on the people, places and moments that have shaped Jacksonville's rich and complex history. In honor of Black History Month, February's "Flashbacks" submission highlights Asa Philip Randolph, a nationally influential labor leader and civil rights pioneer whose roots trace back to Jacksonville.

In April 1976, the "Jacksonville Journal" ran a story about Civil Rights leader Asa Philip Randolph with the intriguing headline "Valedictorian Found Only Menial Jobs Here." After graduating high school in 1967, Randolph held a variety of jobs including shoveling dirt, pushing



A snapshot of the 1976 article by the "Jacksonville Journal." Credit: The Jacksonville History Center Archives

From humble beginnings, A. Philip Randolph would become known as the "Father of the Civil Rights Movement."

wheelbarrows in a fertilizer yard, driving a delivery wagon, and stacking logs in a lumber yard. Humble beginning for the man who was later honored as the "Father of the Civil Rights Movement." Jacksonville's Florida Avenue was renamed A. Philip Randolph Blvd. in 1995 and is familiar to readers as the street which runs between VyStar Veterans Memorial Arena and VyStar Ballpark.

For more information about the Jacksonville History Center Archive and Collections, visit jaxhistory.org.

CELEBRATING

Black History Month

Community events across Jacksonville

Celebrate Black History Month in Jacksonville with events that highlight Black culture, heritage and contributions. This calendar showcases opportunities to engage with art, history, conversation and community throughout February.

Saturday, Feb. 7

Riverside Arts Market Black History Month Celebration with Melanin Collaborative Group
A community celebration featuring live music, food and more than 50 Black-owned businesses, artists and vendors. | 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. | Riverside Arts Market

Saturday, Feb. 7

Brothers Brunch Foundation Black History Month Men's Wellness Event
A wellness-focused gathering for men centered on mental health, self-care and community connection. | 11 to 3 p.m. at Earth Salt Stone | 3915 Hendricks Ave.

Thursday, Feb. 12

The 126th Anniversary of Lift Every Voice and Sing Symposium
This symposium marks the 126th anniversary of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" and celebrates James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson. The evening includes a panel discussion on "Our Democracy and the Ballot." | Meet and Greet: 5:30 p.m. Symposium: 6:30 to 8 p.m. | Jacksonville Public Library Center, | Hicks Auditorium.

Sunday, Feb. 15

LEVAS World Day of Worship
Join this global tribute to "Lift Every Voice and Sing" with the Friends of Brentwood Library and Rev. Kate Moorehead Carroll. | 10:30 a.m. to Noon. | St. John's Cathedral

Saturday, Feb. 28

Exhibit Come to Life: The Untold Story of Black Mandarin
Mandarin Museum has partnered with FL Blue's ASPIRE Employee Resource Group for the third annual "Exhibit Come to Life: The Untold Story of Black Mandarin." In addition to the exhibit, the day will offer live tours and activities. | 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Mandarin Museum and Walter Jones Historical Park

Saturday, Feb. 28

Black History Parade and Melanin Market
A parade and outdoor market with performances, food vendors, community organizations and local businesses. | 11 to 7 p.m. | 822 A. Philip Randolph Boulevard

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The Way WE WERE | 37

Dr. Richard Lipsey and Cecilia Bryant

By Fabrizio Gowdy

Cecilia Bryant still remembers the first time she met her husband, Dr. Richard Lipsey. Her sister had just opened a shop, and Cecilia's job was to greet customers as they walked through the door.

"This guy walks up, and I greet him and chat with him, and he keeps wanting to chat for a while, and finally I said to him, 'I'm working here,'" Cecilia recalled.

It wasn't the last time she would hear from Richard, however. He would call her a few months later offering tickets to the Florida-Georgia game. She accepted, but only after asking an important question.

abruptly ended Richard's military career.

"The colonel called us in and said, 'Guess what? You're all fired.' I told him he couldn't fire me – I still needed my GI Bill," Richard said. "He said, 'Richard, you've got the GI Bill right now. Go get smart.'"

And so he did. Richard went on to earn a PhD in pesticide toxicology, eventually becoming an expert witness in major environmental cases. His work took him to dozens of countries and earned him more than seven million frequent-flyer miles – many of which he later donated to charity.



Richard and Cecilia in the 1990s



18-year-old Richard in his Air Force uniform, 1956 Biloxi, MS



Cecilia dances with LBJ



Cecilia and Richard receiving the Salvation Army's highest honor in December 2024.

returning to Florida. Eventually, she became president of the Florida Red Cross, gaining a deep understanding of nonprofit work – knowledge that would later shape her and Richard's philanthropic life.

The two didn't meet until 1986, after their parallel paths had wound through government, academia and international travel. Together, they built a life filled with travel – cruising the Nile, visiting the Valley of the Kings, exploring the Dalmatian Coast, and returning to Borneo, where Richard had taught 700 Chinese students as a Peace Corps volunteer in the '60s.

But the heart of their shared life has been service, especially with The Salvation Army of Northeast Florida. Cecilia's father served on the board, and she followed him, eventually bringing Richard into the fold.

"They do so much good," Richard said. "Feeding the hungry, housing people, job training – real change."

For more than 30 years, the couple served on committees, chaired Christmas efforts and supported matching-fund programs that helped raise more than \$2.3 million. Even now, you might still see them ringing the bell at the Roosevelt Publix when a volunteer calls out sick. Recently, the organization surprised the couple by dedicating a terrace in their honor at the its new downtown headquarters.

These days, Richard and Cecilia stay closer to home – attending symphony performances, teaching Sunday school at Ortega Church, reading and playing pickleball. They believe the keys to longevity are not smoking, exercising daily and maintaining a healthy social circle.

"We're not on a fast schedule anymore," Cecilia said. "We're laid back, doing the things that are most important."

"I said, 'Are you divorced?' I'd been turning away men who were in the process of getting a divorce, which they never actually got," Cecilia said. "And he said, 'Yes, since noon,' and I cracked up. He had just come out of the courthouse. So, I thought, 'Gee, anybody that can call me two hours after getting his divorce finalized, must be interested.'"

Nearly 40 years after that phone call and Florida-Georgia game, the two are still married.

Originally from Little Rock, Arkansas, Richard's early adulthood reads like a page from a Cold War thriller. After college, he joined the Air Force and was assigned to the U-2 spy program. His job was to assemble aerial mosaics from reconnaissance photos taken over the Soviet Union.

"From 60,000 feet, I could read the license plates on those Soviet trucks," said Richard.

When Francis Gary Powers' U-2 was shot down in 1960 in a major international incident, the fallout

Meanwhile, Cecilia grew up in Ocala as a fifth-generation Floridian and the daughter of Governor Farris Bryant. She spent her teenage years in the governor's mansion, attending national conferences and meeting the nation's leaders. She still has a photo of herself dancing with former President Lyndon B. Johnson at a Miami governors' conference. She also visited Russia and China at the height of the Cold War, gaining a unique perspective during a time when few Americans traveled behind the Iron Curtain.

After college at Sweet Briar, Cecilia taught French and History in Gainesville before deciding to pursue law at UF. She was one of only five women in her law school class – "breaking the glass ceiling," as Richard put it.

"My mother said, 'let your reach exceed your grasp,' you should always be reaching further than you can actually grasp at that time," said Cecilia.

Her career took her to Washington, where she worked for the Securities and Exchange Commission before

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38 | Junior RESIDENTS



Elizabeth Randolph, Madison Sellers and Leona Movilla-Diago and Ariana Carrasco and Sabrina Carrasco.

Girls Lead the Way at Assumption Catholic School Science Fair

Eighth grade students finished off the year by showcasing their creativity and scientific aptitude during Assumption Catholic School's annual Science Fair.

Held on Dec. 11, the fair granted participants the opportunity to dazzle judges with their thoughtful and curiosity-driven projects. While winter break was just over a week away, young scientists at Assumption identified their problems, posed their hypotheses and conducted experiments to prove or disprove them, creating projects to present everything to the judges.

Ultimately, eighth graders **Leona Movilla-Diago** and **Madison Sellers** took first place for their project, "Soil Sleuths;" **Elizabeth Randolph** was awarded second for her project, "A Sun Safe Shirt;" and **Ariana** and **Sabrina Carrasco** took third place for their project, "Does Water Make a Rocket Fly Farther?"



Chapel Honors Fathers

Fathers and father figures of Pre-K3 through fifth grade students gathered for special chapel services at Episcopal School of Jacksonville's St. Mark's Campus last month.

Held on Jan. 15, the services provided meaningful opportunities for worship, reflection and family connection during the school day. During the services, Reverend Adam Greene, head of school, shared remarks about the influence fathers and father figures have on the children. Students gifted special handmade crafts to their guests of honor in heartfelt expressions of gratitude and appreciation.

John Stockton Elementary School Celebrates New Shade Structure



Tally Roberts, Lauren Agresti and Katie Williams join John Stockton Elementary School Vice Principal Angela and Margaret Hall at the Dec. 19 ribbon cutting.

Students at John Stockton Elementary School kicked off their last day before winter break by celebrating their brand-new shade structure.

The ribbon-cutting ceremony took place on Friday, Dec. 19. Friends of Stockton, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting the school, its staff, and its students, provided the structure, which was the culmination of two years of fundraising. Friends of Stockton President Margaret Hall said the structure cost \$60,000. Seeing it installed at the school and knowing students would be able to use it on hot, sunny days was a rewarding moment for Hall.

"It means a lot because this is something we've wanted for years and years and years," Hall said. "In August and September, it's rough out here. So now they have a space. I know the coach is very excited."

In the days leading up to the ribbon-cutting, the school hosted a naming competition for the new space and allowed the fifth graders to vote for their favorite name. While many students cheered for the runner-up name – "The Six-Seven Hut" – the shade structure has officially been named "Dolphin Cove" in honor of the John Stockton mascot.

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Students collect cans for Catholic Charities' food pantry.

Students at St. Paul's Catholic Church responded to a need in their community by collecting beef-a-roni to help stock the food pantry at Catholic Charities. This food drive is part of the school's monthly service projects that have an immediate impact on neighbors in need while also teaching students about compassion, empathy and a commitment to service.

Debutantes Make Final Bow at Annual Presentation and Christmas Ball



Front row, from left: Mary Elizabeth Coffran, Anne Tucker Sharp, Anne Catherine Grimes and Olivia Kent Lanahan; Middle row, from left: Anne Elizabeth Hellman, Kennedy Lee Green, Kathleen Lovell Burhyte, Shelby Gatlin McCart and Atlantic Elizabeth Diebenow; Back row, from left: Cynthia Anne Wyatt, Christina Grace Huie, Kathryn Louise Adams and Helen Emily Commander.

The 2025 Debutantes made their final bow during the Presentation and Christmas Ball held Dec. 18 at The Florida Yacht Club. The formal event marked the culmination of the debutantes' presentation season and brought families and guests together for the traditional celebration.

The debutantes were presented during the evening program and posed for a formal group portrait following the presentation.

Senior Earns All-State Honor

Jackie Xie, a senior at Episcopal School of Jacksonville, performed at the 2026 Florida Music Education Association's All-State Orchestra at its annual conference in January.

This highly competitive program brings together the top student musicians from across the state to rehearse and perform under the direction of renowned music educators and conductors. To be eligible for consideration for the All-State Orchestra, students must undergo a rigorous application process, preparing and submitting audition recordings in the fall.

"Making the All-State Orchestra is a major honor and reflects exceptional dedication, skill, and musical growth," said Greg Hersey, ESJ Director of Instrumental Music. "This experience not only celebrates musical excellence but also fosters collaboration and inspiration among the most talented young musicians in Florida. Congratulations to Jackie on this remarkable achievement."



Jackie Xie



Jacob Valenzuela and Brady Wagner

Bishop Kenny Seniors Complete Joe Berg Seminars

Bishop Kenny High School seniors **Brady Wagner** and **Jacob Valenzuela** recently completed the Joe Berg Seminars at the University of North Florida. Both students have been Joe Berg scholars since their sophomore year.

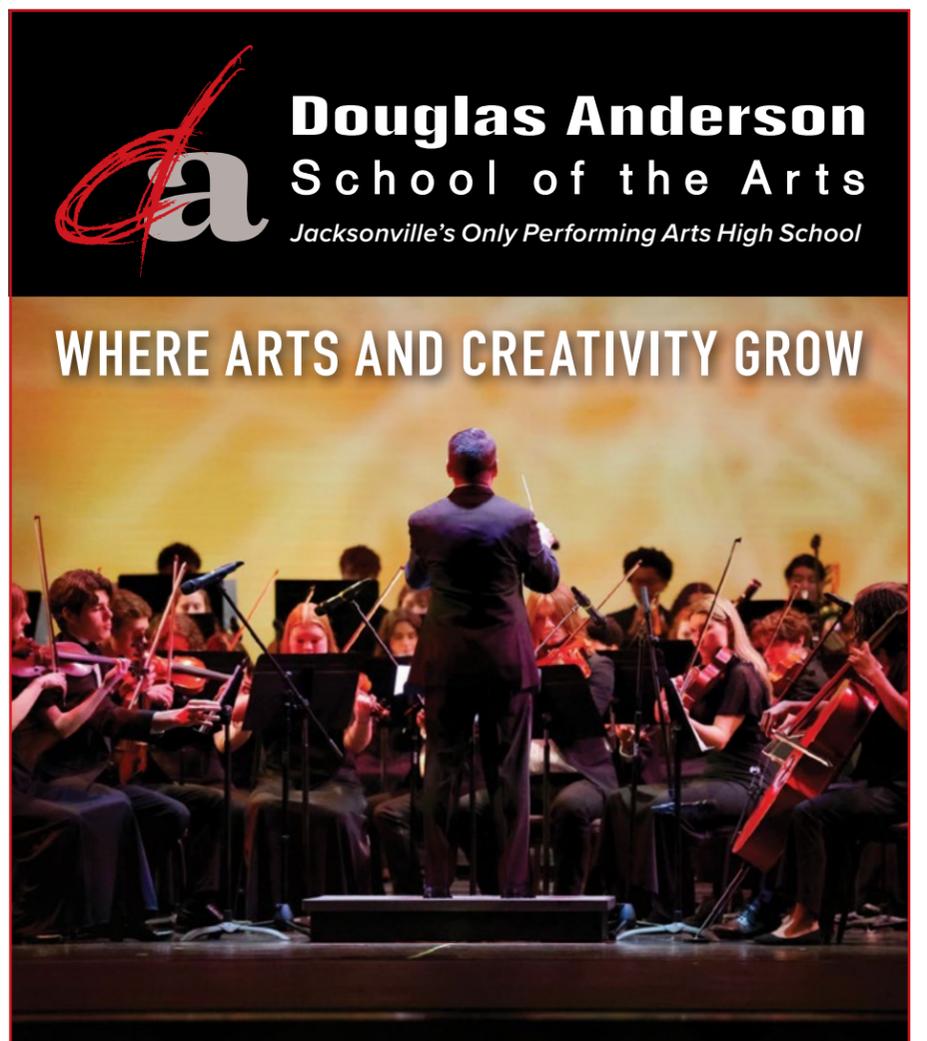
As part of the program, Wagner and Valenzuela attended seminars at UNF several times each month, engaging with leaders, researchers and speakers in the sciences and humanities. The students participated in the Joe Berg Seminars graduation ceremony, marking the completion of the program and a milestone in their academic careers.



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Assumption Catholic Student Advances to Duval County Spelling Bee



Nora Farhat, Rubana Medhanie and Eyuel Gebreyesus

After 16 rounds, seventh grader **Rubana Medhanie** took first place at Assumption Catholic School's spelling bee, held in conjunction with the Scripps National Spelling Bee, in December.

Medhanie is joined by fifth grader **Eyuel Gebreyesus** (second place) and seventh grader **Nora Farhat** (third place) as the top performers amongst the 12 participants at the Dec. 3 competition. With this victory, Medhanie will now advance to the preliminary rounds of the Duval County Spelling Bee.

A Sacred Stage for Jacksonville Children's Chorus Touring Choir



Members of the Jacksonville Children's Chorus Touring Choir pose before the iconic altar in St. Peter's Basilica.

The Jacksonville Children's Chorus Touring Choir rang in the new year with a once-in-a-lifetime experience in Vatican City, performing for Pope Leo XIV.

The performance followed Vespers in the iconic St. Peter's Square, following the Pope's blessing of the nativity scene. The choir also had the opportunity to perform at the Vatican during Mass at St. Peter's Basilica.

These performances were part of the Touring Choir's 2025 Winter Tour, which also included performances in Florence and Assisi, capping off a year of hard work and dedication with memories that will last a lifetime for these young singers.



The First Lego League team The Byte Side at the Northeast Regional Championships in December.

Bricked for Success

First Lego League team The Byte Side has earned the opportunity to represent The Bolles School once again as it advances to the Florida Robot Rally Invitational Tournament.

The team earned this bid after demonstrating exceptional skill, teamwork and spirit at the Northeast Regional Championships, which took place on Dec. 18 to 20.

Gabi Fudge, Bolles Robotics coach, praised the middle schoolers for their commitment to achieving their personal best throughout the season.

"Their strong focus on Core Values guided every step of the journey, from collaboration and gracious professionalism to perseverance and creativity," said Fudge. "The team made remarkable strides in both their Innovation Project and Robot Design Presentations, showing dramatic improvement and confidence. Every member demonstrated impressive growth in engineering, research and innovation skills, reflecting countless hours of effort, curiosity and problem solving."



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Crusader Wrestling Celebrates 50 Year Milestone



Bishop Kenny families and alumni gather to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the school's wrestling program.

Last month marked the 50th anniversary of Bishop Kenny High School's wrestling program, a milestone celebrated with a full day honoring athletic excellence, school pride and a tradition that has become a cornerstone of the school's sports culture. The anniversary brought together generations of wrestlers, coaches and supporters to reflect on five decades of competition and camaraderie.

The celebration began with a reception in the Betty and Jack Demetree Family Athletic Training Center, where alumni toured the school's new wrestling room and state-of-the-art training facilities. Festivities continued at the John A. Baldwin Athletic Center as the Bishop Kenny Crusaders faced Episcopal High School. Following a Crusaders victory, alumni gathered at Mudville Grille to close out the milestone celebration.



Lincoln Hunt and his mother, Melissa, pose beside a rendering of the Hunt Soccer Complex at the Jan. 6 groundbreaking ceremony at the Bolles Upper School San Jose Campus.

Bolles Honors Hunt Family at Soccer Complex Groundbreaking

The Bolles School celebrated the groundbreaking of the Hunt Soccer Complex on Jan. 6, a historic project that will continue to elevate its athletic program and enhance student-athlete experiences for generations to come.

The 4,000-square-foot project was made possible through Melissa Hunt and her son, Lincoln, with the first major gift earmarked specifically for the boys' and girls' soccer program. Once completed, the Hunt Soccer Complex will include a covered area and tunnel leading players onto George H. Hodges Field on the Bolles Upper School San Jose Campus. It will also feature new locker rooms for both soccer teams, restrooms and a dedicated head coach's office.

The Jan. 6 groundbreaking celebration also honored Harvey Hunt, Lincoln's father and Melissa's late husband.

"This is more than a soccer complex – it's a statement about the strength of our community and the vision we share for Bolles athletics," said Bolles President and Head of School Tyler Hodges. "We are deeply grateful to the Hunt family for making this dream a reality."

Additional pivotal contributors for this project include the Block family.

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Frank Stanley Cerveny

Remembered for a life of service marked by humility, courage and enduring faith

June 4, 1933 – January 7, 2026

Rt. Rev. Frank S. Cerveny, sixth Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Florida, passed away on Jan. 7, 2026. He was 92 years old.

Cerveny was born to Frank Charles Cerveny and Julia Victoria Ludwig Cerveny in Ludlow, Mass. His family attended Christ Church Cathedral, where he sang in the choir as a boy. Cerveny married his wife, Emmy Pettway Cerveny, and together they raised three children in the home they created here in Jacksonville along the St. Johns River. They were married for 64 years; Cerveny often said Emmy was the one who taught him to love life.

Frank graduated cum laude from Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut, and though he was accepted to Yale Law School, he chose to attend General Theological Seminary. He graduated with honors and later received five honorary doctorates.

In 1958, Frank began his ordained ministry at the Church of the Resurrection in suburban Miami Shores before moving on to New York City's Trinity Parish in 1960, where he became deeply involved with inner-city work, particularly among the poor of Brooklyn, Chinatown, and Manhattan's Lower East Side. Three years later, he was called to Jackson, Tennessee. While there, he worked tirelessly for the integration of churches and racial



reconciliation at the height of segregation. The Cerveny family moved to Knoxville in 1968, where Frank assisted in forming an ecumenical coalition to foster missional partnerships across the city while ministering at St. John's Church.

In 1972, Frank became Dean of St. John's Cathedral in Jacksonville; in 1974, he was consecrated as Bishop of Florida.

Bishop Cerveny's life reflected the Gospel he preached – marked by vision, unity, and compassion. He strengthened the Diocese of Florida, supported healing and outreach ministries, and walked alongside the marginalized. His steady, faith-filled leadership left an enduring imprint on the Church near and far.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his sisters, June Hammett and Gloria Falcone; and his beloved grandson, Clay Norum Block Cerveny.

He is survived by his wife, Emmy; by their three children, Frank S. Cerveny, Jr. (Gretchen), Emmy Cerveny Gilbert (Barritt), and William "Billy" DeMotive Pettway Cerveny (Charla); and by grandchildren William Barritt Gilbert, Jr. (Sophie), Anne-Elizabeth Patten Gilbert Garza (Luis), Thomas Cerveny Gilbert, Mary Harbin Gilbert, Frank Charles Cerveny, Katherine Grace Cerveny, Emmy Lampley Cerveny, William "Wiley" DeMotive Pettway Cerveny, Jr., Carolina Scout Cerveny.

Thomas Palmer Davis

Remembered for his devotion to family and his commitment to community

September 23, 1956 – December 14, 2025



Thomas Palmer Davis was born to Dr. James McCorkle Davis and Susan Palmer Davis on Sept. 23, 1956. He died suddenly in a boating accident on Dec. 14.

Thomas attended Fishweir Elementary School. In 1974, he graduated from Jacksonville Episcopal High School before attending Virginia Tech, where he earned a bachelor's degree from its School of Forestry. He went on to earn a master's degree in city planning from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and a Master of Business Administration (finance) from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

It was in Chapel Hill that Thomas discovered what would become a lifelong passion for Tar Heel basketball, rivaled only by his love for the Boston Red Sox and the Florida Gators.

Upon returning to Jacksonville, Thomas received his Chartered Financial Analyst (CFA) certification, launching a long career in investment management across several companies, including Independent Life Insurance Company, American Heritage Life Insurance Company, Barnett Banks and JEA, from which he retired in 2022.

Thomas was an active member of the Episcopal Church of the Good Shepherd. He was an active volunteer with several community and nonprofit organizations, including Learn to Read, where he volunteered as a tutor and St. Mark's Episcopal Church, where he served on the vestry.

Thomas loved music, particularly "real" rock and roll, classical symphony and the Beatles. He cherished the time spent with his family at High Hampton in the North Carolina Mountains.

Thomas was known for his funny, dry wit, humility and sweet, gentle nature. He was a loving husband to Julie, his wife of 37 years, and a devoted father to his daughters, Brooke and Susan. His favorite title, though, was "Tom Tom" to his grandsons, Benedetto and Oliver.

Tommy was predeceased by his parents and his nephew, Thomas Palmer Baker. He is survived by his wife, Julia Brooke Davis ("Julie"), his daughters Julia Brooke Davis Lupo (Ben) and Susan Palmer Davis Kisluk (Sylvester), his grandsons Benedetto Thomas Lupo and Oliver Davis Lupo, and his siblings, James McCorkle Davis, III (Mildred), Anne Davis Baker (John), Katherine Davis Marple and Rebecca Davis McKee (Will), and many beloved nieces and nephews and their children.

Linda Gayle Coarsey Ennis

Remembered for her devotion to family and her love for all animals

December 26, 1938 – January 10, 2026



Linda Gayle Coarsey Ennis, lifelong resident of Jacksonville and its Westside, died on Jan. 10, 2026 at the age of 87. She is preceded in death by her parents Elliot Boyd Coarsey Sr. and Lorena Janice Coarsey, brother Elliot Boyd Coarsey Jr., husband of 64 years Emory Clark "Buddy" Ennis, and son-in-law Larry Vernon Sablich. She is survived by her children Emory Clark "Bunky" Ennis, Jr. (Debbie) Cheryl Lynn Sablich, Janice Lorraine Reid, and Melanie Lauren DePasquale (Jay), seven grandchildren, five great-grandchildren, sister Jan Jo King, sister -in-law Marsha Coarsey, a multitude of nieces, nephews, cousins, friends, neighbors and a few cats.

Gayle loved her westside home and family, baking, Atlantic Beach, music, caring for neighbors in need, walking and her pets – of which there were many and varied. She was a sought-after Weight Watchers Leader for many years. Gayle was also a faithful donor to St. Jude's Children's Hospital.

A celebration of life will be held at St. Catherine's Episcopal Church in Jacksonville, Fla. on Saturday March 7th at 11:00 a.m., with a reception at the church immediately following. The address is 4758 Shelby Ave. Jacksonville, FL. 32210. Because of her undeniable love for all animals, in lieu of flowers, donations to the Jacksonville Humane Society jaxhumane.org and Springfield Kitty Cat Shack Rescue sprkittycatshack.org are respectfully requested.

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