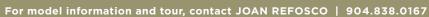




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#### about this magazine

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Hugh Osteen, Florida Market Manager

Susan Griffin, Publisher

Jon Blauvelt, Editor

Paris Moulden, Publication Designer/Staff Writer

Amber Lake, Staff Writer

Daniela Toporek, Staff Writer/Production Coordinator

Ed Johnson, Senior Account Executive

Kristin Flanagan, Account Executive

April Snyder, Sales Assistant

Bob Bueno, Circulation Manager

#### FIRST COAST REGISTER

1102 A1A N., Unit 108, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32082 • 904.285.8831

#### on the cover —

The cover of this First Coast Register features a photo of a new model home at EvenTide in Ponte Vedra Beach. Flip to page 14 for more information on the Tidewater showcase home. Photography by Kim Lindsey Photography.



# **UPCOMING EVENTS** ON THE FIRST COAST

#### **56TH ANNUAL ISLE OF EIGHT FLAGS** SHRIMP FESTIVAL

May 3-5, Fernandina Beach

Fernandina Beach is the birthplace of the modern shrimping industry, and its historic downtown

pulls out all the stops at this celebration every May, which has been a part of Island life for over 50 years. One of the premier festivals in the Southeast, the Festival brings together the love of shrimp and the best of arts and entertainment, all set in the Historic District of Fernandina Beach. Enjoy the fine arts and crafts, antiques, regional and local music, shrimp caught and served locally, sea-

food dishes, The Pirate's parade, fireworks and family fun. Visit www.shrimpfestival.co/ for more information. - Photo courtesy of Isle of Eight Flags Shrimp Festival

#### 20TH ANNUAL RIDING INTO HISTORY **MOTORCYCLE SHOW**

May 10-11, World Golf Village in St. Augustine

Riding into History™ (RIH) is a world-class vintage motorcycle Concours d'Elegance. This competition attracts over 300 antique and vintage motor-

> cycles each year. Collectors from all over America bring their motorcycles to the show, and they are displayed around the lake that forms the centerpiece of the World Golf Village. There are numerous exhibitors at the Concours. as well as representatives from several motorcycle clubs. RIH is a 501(c)3 organization that has contributed \$500,000 to charities. The choice of chari-

ty this year is K9s for Warriors. There is no paid staff, and all duties are performed by volunteers. Visit ridingintohistory.org/ for more information.

- Photo courtesy of Riding Into History

#### JACKSONVILLE JAZZ FESTIVAL

May 23-26, Downtown Jacksonville

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iazz greats and modern favorites at the 2019 Jacksonville Jazz Festival on Memorial Day weekend. Join the City of Jacksonville and experience two stages of live jazz, local food, drinks, shopping and entertainment. Since first taking place in 1981, the Jazz Fest has become one of the largest jazz festivals in the country, offering a fun and vibrant street

festival atmosphere, and in 2019 you can experience it throughout 10 blocks of downtown — all for free. The 2019 lineup includes Gladys Knight, Brian Culbertson, Monty Alexander, Ledisi, Alfredo Rodriguez Trio and others. Visit jacksonvillejazzfest.com/ for more information.

- Photo courtesy of City of Jacksonville



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Tony Vecchio is the executive director of the Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens and a resident of San Marco.

#### Can you please briefly tell us about your background?

I'm a zoo guy through and through. My career spans 42 years in six different zoos, in education, zookeeping, security and facilities. I've been a zoo director the last 30 years. I started as a teenager at the zoo in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, working in food service. I received a Bachelor of Science in Environmental Resource Management/Wildlife Conservation from Penn State University. After college, I spent time at the Riverbanks Zoo in Columbia, South Carolina. There, I also received a Master of Science in Biology (primate behavior) from the University of South Carolina. Next, I went to Zoo Atlanta in Atlanta, Georgia. Subsequently, I went to the Roger Williams Park Zoo in Providence, Rhode Island. I then moved to Portland, Oregon, to become the executive director of the Oregon Zoo. I began my tenure at the Jacksonville Zoo in 2009.

#### When you reflect on your 10 years at the Jacksonville Zoo, what are you most proud of?

We've opened several incredible exhibits. One of them won a national award for being such an outstanding zoo exhibit. I really think, in my heart of hearts, the things I'm proudest of are things general zoo visitors don't see. We've greatly expanded our education programming. We see 100,000 school kids per year through various programs. We've created a program for underserved teenagers from some of the most challenging neighborhoods in Jacksonville. That program won a national education award, and two of the students have won awards





from the North American Association of Environmental Educators. They have a prestigious award called "30 under 30" for young, rising superstars in the field of environmental education. Two of these teens have won that award two years in a row, which is really impressive. In addition, we now have a conservation department, after not having one 10 years ago. Our conservation staff is engaged in programs here in our own community but also all over the world, including Africa, South America and Asia. Finally, we're one of the few zoos in the country that has a paid animal wellness department. We have staff whose only job is to make life better for the animals in the zoo.

#### Which exhibit won the national award?

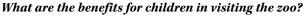
That's the Land of the Tiger. It won an award from the Association of Zoos & Aquariums. In addition to tigers, it has two species of critically endangered pigs, the really entertaining Asian small-clawed otters — the smallest otter species in the world — as well as two species of hornbills, a very large, interesting and Asian bird. The exhibit is typical in that it's big, beautiful and naturalistic, which is what most zoos are going to these days. But it also is really innovative in that it has a trail system, so that the tigers can leave their exhibits and wander around the trail system. In some points, they're face-to-face with the visitors. Some points, they're walking over the visitors' heads. At one point, the visitors are in a building looking into a couple different exhibits, and a tiger can come walking into the rafters of the building.



# Is there anything new that the community would be interested in knowing about?

Our newest exhibit is so new, it hasn't had time to win an award. Anyone who hasn't been to the zoo lately is going to be thrilled to see the new African Forest exhibit. I can say again no zoo has done anything like this before. We stole the trail system idea from the Land of the Tiger and incorporated it into our great apes area. Except in this case, not only do the animals leave their exhibits to be in the trail system, the trail system leads to a

giant, 53-foot-tall artificial tree that we built, called a Kapok Tree, that has a giant net over it. The animals can go from their exhibit through the trail into this Kapok Tree. There, people can get a very close look at them. There are lots of exciting enrichment opportunities for the animals to get engaged in in the tree. It's like nothing anyone has ever seen. The reviews from the visitors are just off the charts.



It's real. You can read about animals in books or see them on TV. But there's something that is just magical about being face-to-face with an animal and being able to look it in the eyes and have it look back at you. In this new African Forest exhibit, there's one of the viewing areas where the bonobos meet the toddlers. So, there's just a pane of glass between the two species, and to see the interest that the kids have in the animals and that the animals have in the kids is really heartwarming to watch. It's more than just learning, it's



experiencing nature and animals. And that's a great way for kids to spend their time.

### What are some of the challenges you face today?

Money is the biggest challenge. We are a not-for-profit, so we have to go out and either earn or raise every dollar we spend. We want to attract the best and the brightest people, but it's hard to do that when you have to pay salaries in the nonprofit sector. The second thing is relevance. It's so important to get kids outside and experience

the natural world. But I'm not sure when people think of the zoo, they think of us that way. They don't think of us as being an important educational institution. I know we are, and I know some people recognize that, but not everybody in the community does. So, we have to raise awareness in our community of how important the zoo is in the areas of education and conservation, animal welfare and as an economic driver in our community.

#### What do you enjoy most about living on the First Coast?

Jacksonville is a real surprise to me. I came here because of the zoo. I interviewed and saw what a great zoo it was, going in the right direction. But I just felt like coming from Portland, Oregon, to Jacksonville, Florida, I would be taking a step back in the world of arts of culture. That has been the biggest surprise to me. The arts and culture community in this town is thriving, and it is exciting. It's amazingly under the radar. There's so much going on in the area of arts and culture that I just love being here and being part of it.

# **BRYAN** CRANSTON

reflects on 'Breaking Bad,' 'Seinfeld,' other star-studded stories in

# Horida Forum address





Bryan Cranston (center) gathers with Pat Geraghty, CEO of GuideWell Mutual Holding Corporation from Florida Blue, and Tim Cost, president of Jacksonville University, at his Florida Forum address Jan. 28.

LEFT: Cranston visits Seth Rowe at Wolfson Children's Hospital before his Florida Forum address. Photos by AMY PLOSS-SAMSON/ FIGURE 8 STUDIO

When Bryan Cranston was an aspiring actor, his initial goal was just to make a living. After winning multiple Emmy Awards, a Golden Globe, a Tony Award and countless other recognitions, it's safe to say the actor best known for playing Walter White on AMC's "Breaking Bad," has accomplished his goal, and then some.

by JON BLAUVELT

Cranston, who also starred in "The Upside," FOX's "Malcolm in the Middle" and Broadway and HBO's "All the Way," reflected on his career at his Florida Forum address benefiting Wolfson Children's Hospital on Jan. 28.

The actor was the second of three speakers to visit Jacksonville for the 2018-2019 series produced by the Women's Board of the hospital, following journalist

Lara Logan and preceding football coach Tony Dungy. Jacksonville University President Tim Cost moderated Cranston's address.

The "Breaking Bad" star attributed his inclusion in such a speaker series to the success of the hit drama. In the show, Cranston plays a high school chemistry teacher with inoperable lung cancer who turns to making and selling methamphetamine to protect his family's future.

"That is the first line of my obituary, and I welcome that," Cranston said at the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts. "It changed my life. It changed my career. It opened up opportunities for me."





Cranston also spoke extensively about his sometimes-forgotten role in NBC hit sitcom "Seinfeld," in which he played a more minor role as Dr. Tim Whatley, Jerry's dentist and Elaine's boyfriend. Working with Jerry Seinfeld, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, Larry David, Michael Richards and Jason Alexander "was like going to comedy boot camp," Cranston said.

The actor shared the backstory behind one particularly memorable scene in which he takes a hit of laughing gas before giving it to Jerry for a dental procedure. Cranston revealed that his hit was not part of the script, but was instead suggested by an electrician doing work on the set. The upshot, Cranston said, is that one never knows where a great idea may originate.

Cranston additionally discussed how he pre-

pares for his characters. He specifically shared about the hours upon hours he spent in Lyndon B. Johnson's library to prepare for his role as the president in "All the Way."

Ultimately, Cranston said hard work like this, combined with a series of lucky breaks, is what catapulted his career, and the careers of most of his peers in the acting profession.

"The important part is, along the way, when someone says alright come in and show me what you can do, if you're not prepared, then it wasn't lucky," Cranston said. "That gets back to the work ethic. You have to be ready. You have to know your stuff. And when you see an opportunity, go for that."



**ABOVE:** Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Tony Dungy delivers his Florida Forum address March 27 at the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts. The discussion was moderated by Mac McGehee.

**RIGHT:** Dungy visits with a family at Wolfson Children's Hospital. Photos by AMY PLOSS-SAMSON/ FIGURE 8 STUDIO



# TONY **DUNGY**

shares hope, football lore with Jacksonville in

# orida Forum address

by JON BLAUVELT

Tony Dungy would be shocked if the Jacksonville Jaguars are not Super Bowl contenders with new quarterback Nick Foles at the helm.

That's what the Pro Football Hall of Fame coach told First Coast residents on March 27 when he delivered his Florida Forum address benefiting Wolfson Children's Hospital. The former coach of the Indianapolis Colts and Tampa Bay Buccaneers was the final speaker to visit Jacksonville for the 2018-2019 series produced by the Women's Board of the hospital, following journalist Lara Logan and actor Bryan Cranston. Longtime Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) trustee and Jacksonville businessman Mac McGehee moderated the evening.

Dungy, who now serves as an analyst on NBC's "Football Night in America," discussed spending time with Nick Foles the

week of Super Bowl LII in 2018 when he was the quarterback of the Eagles, who ultimately defeated the New England Patriots. Dungy said Jacksonville, who signed Foles as a free agent in March, will be "blessed" having the Super Bowl LII MVP in town.

"He is a high-quality person, a high-class person," Dungy said at the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts. "He's someone who makes everybody around him feel good, makes everybody feel better. There wasn't a person on that Eagles team who didn't love Nick Foles. I think he's going to do that very same thing (here)."





Also peaking the interest and ultimate surprise of Jaguars fans in attendance, McGehee noted that Dungy set an NFL record for consecutive playoff appearances by a head coach in 2008 after securing his 10th straight playoff appearance with a win against Jacksonville. Dungy, however, playfully called the achievement an "I told you so moment," because he revealed that former Jaguars owner Wayne Weaver had interviewed him for the head coaching position in the 1990s, but opted for Tom Coughlin instead.

"I love Coach Coughlin," said Dungy, who was the first African-American coach to win a Super Bowl in 2007. "He got the franchise off to a great start. But there was always something kind of inside me, (saying) I need to show the Jaguars that they made a mistake."

Among several other topics in his address, Dungy spoke about the mentors in his life, including fellow Pro Football Hall of Fame coach Chuck Noll, who Dungy played for and coached under with the Pittsburgh Steelers. On a similar note, Dungy discussed his Super Bowl victory as a player on the Steelers in 1979 and what it was like to play with the Hall of Famers on those legendary Pittsburgh teams. He additionally talked about the lessons he's learned in life and how he's tried to instill those into his players in his 31 years of coaching.



### **Tim Tebow Foundation** holds annual gala as celebrities show support for children in need

#### by PARIS MOULDEN

Florida Gators legend Tim Tebow brought out the stars — including his new fiancée — for the ninth annual Tim Tebow Foundation Celebrity Gala and Golf Classic, which raises awareness and funds for children in need across the world.

Sports stars, television personalities and musicians walked the red carpet on Friday, March 29, at the TPC Sawgrass Clubhouse in Ponte Vedra Beach to show support for Tebow and the work of his foundation.

"They're here because they believe in the mission," Tebow said. "It's just so inspiring."

### Janet E. Johnson, P.A.



#### Criminal Defense Attorney

Tanet Johnson is committed to aggressively defending people accused in all criminal matters in state and federal court. In practice since 1994, she is a member of the Florida Bar, The Federal Bar, Colorado Bar, as well as the Florida Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers. She has been on the faculty of FACDL "Blood, Breath & Tears" annual DUI seminar. Ms. Johnson has been awarded the AV preeminent rating™ from Martindale-Hubble® and was named a fellow to the prestigious Litigation Counsel of America™, as well as one of the ten best criminal defense attorneys nationally for client satisfaction by the American Institute of Criminal Law Attorneys. She also appears as a legal commentator on CNN and HLN.

#### Areas of criminal law that are handled by Janet Johnson:

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The former Nease quarterback, who is currently playing for the New York Mets' Triple-A team, said many of the celebrities have been attending the event for years, and it's become like a family. Tebow is also growing his family, getting engaged to Miss Universe 2017 Demi-Leigh Nel-Peters in January, and said he was excited to share his charity endeavors with the South African beauty queen.

Among some of the celebrities in attendance for the gala were former Florida Gators and Ohio State coach Urban Meyer, former Florida Gators quarterback Danny Wuerrfel, NFL star running back Adrian Peterson, former Boston Red Sox

and New York Yankees star and two-time World Series champion Johnny Damon, Sister Hazel guitarist/singer Drew Copeland, former NFL star linebacker Shawne Merriman, former NFL offensive tackle Anthony Munoz, country singer Hannah Ellis and NFL Hall of Famers Marcus Allen and Terrell Owens.

The Tim Tebow Foundation was created in 2010 "with a mission to bring faith, hope and love to those needing a brighter day in their darkest hour of need."

"(The goal) is to be able to change as many lives as possible," Tebow said. "I also believe this is just the beginning. I want to be able to do this for the rest of my life."

One hundred percent of the proceeds raised at the annual gala and subsequent golf tournament go to the Tebow Foundation's mission to help children around the world.

NFL legend Marcus Allen became involved with the foundation seven years ago, and said while the annual ceremony is always emotional, it's also uplifting to see what Tebow has accomplished through the foundation's efforts.

"He's the genuine article," Allen said. For more on the Tim Tebow Foundation, visit www.timtebowfoundation.org.

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More than 200 guests recently enjoyed an exclusive VIP preview celebrating a new model home at EvenTide in Ponte Vedra Beach.

In addition to hors d'oeuvres, libations and an exhibition of original artwork by local artist Joan Carver, guests at the March 21 event were among the first to tour the Tidewater showcase home by Arthur Rutenberg Homes by Mark Refosco. The event was hosted by GreenPointe Communities, the developer of EvenTide.

"We appreciate everyone who attended our VIP celebration and shared their enthusiasm for EvenTide's magnificent new model home," said Mike Taylor, North Florida regional president at GreenPointe Communities. "As the Tidewater demonstrates, EvenTide offers a rare opportunity to build an expertly crafted and innovatively designed new custom home just steps from the ocean in Ponte Vedra Beach."

Designed exclusively for EvenTide, the Tidewater displays a West Indies-style exterior and a beachy, coastal color palette of white, silver blues and driftwood tones. The 5,270-square-foot home presents stylishly appointed interiors, impressive outdoor living spaces, luxury finishes and state-of-the-art features.

"The Tidewater exudes a fresh sophistication that is elegant and comfortably inviting," said Angie Thomas, interior designer with Arthur Rutenberg Homes, Inc. "I accomplished this by using modern lines, textures, mixes of metals and contemporary accents. The combination of the brick fireplace, the waterfall dining table and driftwood accents are among the details that together give this home a harmonious ambiance."











Dan Croft, director of account service for ruckus. advertising + public relations, and Gaynelle James





**CLOCKWORK MARKETING** 

Joan and Mark Refosco attend the VIP preview for the new Tidewater model





The foyer of the Tidewater flows into a living and entertaining area that opens to a lanai leading to a pool deck and patio area overlooking the lake. A wall of stackable sliding glass doors slip away to seamlessly blend the home's indoor and outdoor living spaces.

Complementing the great room is an adjoining island kitchen and casual dining area, with the large center island offering plenty of seating. The master suite opens to the pool deck, and the master bath features a freestanding tub. A guest suite, which could be used for a home office, playroom or craft room, is positioned on the opposite side of the home.

Upstairs, there are three additional bedrooms and a bonus room that also blurs the lines between inside and out. Its stackable sliding glass doors open to a covered balcony overlooking the lake.

Located in a coastal area along Ponte Vedra Boulevard, with the Atlantic Ocean to the east and the Guana River to the west, EvenTide is an intimate enclave planned for 23 luxury homes that embrace Ponte Vedra Beach-style living. The community's estatesized home sites range in size from approximately one-third acre to

more than one acre. Home and lot packages are priced from \$1.5 million. Even Tide homebuyers have the opportunity to build a home with lake or preserve views that comes with its own private, gated access to the beach.

Home builders Arthur Rutenberg Homes by Mark Refosco, Glenn Layton Homes and Heritage Homes will create and construct the home designs to meet the needs of every lifestyle. Buyers may choose to work with one of EvenTide's preferred builders or are welcome to engage with their own builder to bring their home vision to reality.

EvenTide residents enjoy access to the St. Johns County School District, and the community is zoned for A-rated public schools. EvenTide is within minutes of elite clubs, golf courses, specialty boutiques and dining destinations with easy access to Jacksonville, St. Augustine and major employment centers.

The Tidewater model is open daily and by appointment. For more information about EvenTide and a personal tour, call (904) 962-7477 or visit www.EvenTideLiving.com.

# HOME DECOR TO TRY

For decor lovers looking for tips on decorating in 2019, the First Coast Register consulted the expert opinions of a few local businesses on what's in this year.

#### THE BARN **DOOR CRAZE**



According to Kevin McCormack of Sunburst Shutters & Window Fashions, barn doors are not only like artwork on the wall, but also a functional solution to many common problems homeowners face. From rustic styling to ultra-modern, and everything in between, a barn door in your home will certainly be a talking point among family and guests.



Sheila Willard of Opulence of Southern Pines says a single bed can include a multitude of touchable textures, such as percales, linen, knits, wovens and sateens. To get the ultimate, maximalist, textural approach, Willard suggests mixing fabrics such as linen, Egyptian cotton, velvet, bamboo, wood fiber and blended silks. Then, pull your bed together with a mix of similar hues or mixes of color in different patterns. The trick, Willard says, is to find the level of texture that makes the room feel cozy, comfortable and relaxed, not messy or overwhelming.



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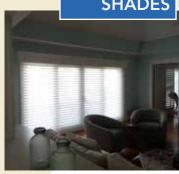




#### NEW AND IMPROVED CLOSET/ LAUNDRY ROOM DESIGN

Tim Blin of Tailored Living featuring Premier Garage says high gloss or super matte doors and drawer fronts are the latest and greatest. According to Blin, matte black is the "it" color, especially when paired with matte gold accessories. Glass doors with clear or satin glass and LED lighting are also here to stay.

#### SAVANNAH SHADES



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protection, completely
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automation are also
available features.

# \*\*\*

#### **RUSTIC BEACHY**

Rustic beachy is how Pam Keegan of Village Arts Framing & Gallery describes the latest trend in home décor. Gone (for the most part) are the need for elegant, gold, gilded frames, says Keegan. Instead, she says custom framing has become more casual, with added emphasis on light-colored framing and matting.

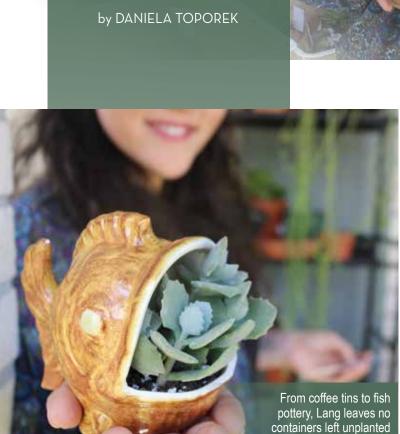
COLLABORATION
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The team at Scan Design says a continual trend in contemporary furniture is the collaboration of high design and sophisticated technology. The Alice sectional, for example, has a motorized seat and headrest with separate controls. It also has a handy USB charging port for your electronic devices.



From passion to career, Succulent Strong takes on new roots





It's a rare gift to find a passion and be able to make a living out of it, but florist and succulent connoisseur Miranda Lang paved her way with the creation of her business, Succulent Strong.

Based in Atlantic Beach, Succulent Strong is Lang's succulent and floral brand, as well as an online avenue to all things succulent. The official website shows vibrant and floral displays of Lang's work, markets she will be attending and contact information for future projects.

But before Succulent Strong became official, it was just a small Instagram account Lang created after Christmas 2016 to show off her new, succulent hobby.

"I was doing DIY Christmas gifts," she says. "You know when you're like, 'I'm going to make everyone Christmas gifts and save SO much money,' but then you end up spending way more. That happened to me. I spent like \$300 on plant stuff and made all my family and friends a succulent for Christmas."

After, she was left with leaves and extra plants, and it became a passion project. Lang then joined alongside a friend for her first market, Vagabond Flea by Murray Hill Theater.

"The few people that knew about them would be like, 'Oh, I love succulents!' And would show me pictures of theirs at home," Lang says. "It was really fun to just be able to talk about my plants with people. That first market, I think I sold like seven plants. Sure, a few of them were to my friends, but still, I was like, 'Oh my God, this is amazing."





Helping achieve a fun, thrifty look while considering the environment, Lang uses upcycled containers for her plants, varying from "quirky, vintage mugs," according to her official website, to Maxwell House coffee tins for sustainability.

"There are so many cool housewares or vintage containers lying around in thrift stores or garage sales," Lang says. "I love that I get to recycle them and give them a new purpose. I also drill drainage holes in all of my planters, which I think makes it a lot easier to keep them alive. It also helps keep the prices down because pottery, rightfully, is so expensive."

So not only are Lang's creations eco-friendly, but inexpensive as well. And each one is as original as the next.

But Lang doesn't limit herself to her own planters. In fact, she's limitless when it comes to her work and is eager to work with clients to create their desired arrangement.

"A lot of people have pottery that they love and have had for a while, but don't know what to do with it," Lang says. "So, they bring it to me, and I can make a really pretty succulent arrangement. Or for example, you can tell me you want a white, square container and I can go find it and fill it up for you. Just give me your budget."

Another example of Lang taking Succulent Strong to the next level is her upcoming floral arrangements and wedding designs. She says she's fallen for flowers and has been working with Marble & Pine, a florist in St. Augustine, on some wedding projects.

Overall, Lang describes her floral designs as fun and bohemian with either modern or vintage details, depending on the occasion. "While I like a little structure, wild and loose bloom bouquets are my favorites to make," Lang mentions on her website. "Colorful florals give me heart eyes, but I can also get down with classic and neutral color palettes. I love to combine succulents with florals to create something really special. There's just something incredible about the color and texture that succulents bring to a floral bouquet."

While scrolling through her gallery, one can see the array of plants and florals she's worked with, a rainbow coalition of color, texture and design.

Her favorite? The haworthia, a small succulent that closely resembles a miniature aloe plant.

"There's one that people call, 'The Zebra Plant,' and it's green with white stripes on it," Lang says, explaining the different kinds of haworthias. There are a lot, by the way.

"They're kind of funky-looking and are a little more hardy than the softer variety of succulents," Lang continues. "I recommend them for beginners because I think they're a little bit tougher."

Although there are some "tougher" succulents that require less maintenance, the overall care for any succulent is quite minimal, Lang says.

"I think all succulents are easy to maintain, especially if you have them in the right environment," Lang says. "You just have to make sure that that the container is well-drained.

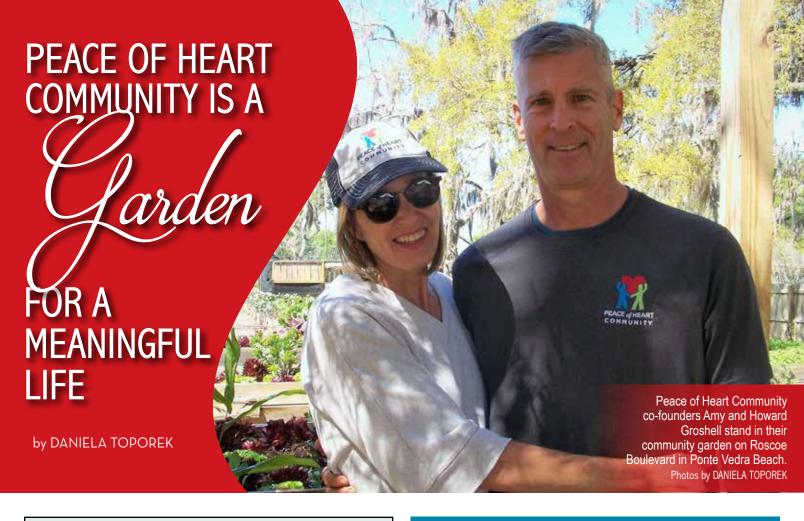
"People always ask me, 'Succulents don't like water, right?' That's not necessarily true," Lang continues. "They just don't like to sit in it all the time, but they grow faster, are healthier and happier if you water them regularly just like any other plant. They hold water so that they can go long periods of time without it. That's what makes a succulent a succulent; it's that they can hold water in their leaves."

Knowledgeable, dedicated and passionate, Miranda Lang has truly found her calling and it shows — and all thanks to the internet.

"The internet is your tool, guys. You can teach yourself anything," Lang advocates. "I think the fact that I kind of made my job is my favorite part. I wanted it and I made it happen. Working for myself every day, getting to make my own schedule, it's just really amazing. I've definitely worked harder than I ever have in my life, but it's all good. It's all worth it."

For more information on Succulent Strong and Miranda Lang, visit www.SucculentStrong.com or follow her Instagram @ SucculentStrong.













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It's another productive Saturday morning at the Peace of Heart Community garden, hidden within the wooded area of Roscoe Boulevard in Ponte Vedra Beach. Volunteers are tending to the produce beds and helping guests, while the Peace of Heart Community founders' 22-year-old daughter, Gentry Groshell, decides what she wants to eat.

"I'm thinking about taking you somewhere for lunch," Gentry's mother and Peace of Heart co-founder, Amy Groshell, says to her. "Maybe pizza or hamburgers? You want to figure out where you'd like to go?"

Gentry, hungry and excited, hurries back inside to think of her answer.

Gentry Groshell has autism. She lives with her parents, Amy and Howard Groshell. When she's not at home, she's hanging out at the Peace of Heart group home.

"Right now, we only have two residents, but eventually we'll have six and the girls will be interacting," Amy Groshell says. "It's just a really great way to engage our girls into the community. Eventually, we want to be out in the community more, but this is like a stepping stone."

Amy and Howard plan to do that with the maintenance of the Peace of Heart Community garden.

"Our hope is that as the community gets involved in this, they'll build strong relationships with the girls living in the home and individuals with autism within the community, Howard says. "A meaningful life.' That's kind of our tagline. Meaning can come through working in the garden and having a skill, but it's really about the relationships that are built."



The Peace of Heart Community garden is currently a community-supported agriculture (CSA) model where people purchase "raised beds" for an annual fee and then come out every Saturday to harvest.

Volunteers from the community contribute to the program by helping with the harvesting and interacting with guests and the girls from the home.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 22 ■



"It's really great that people want to be involved," Howard says. "Kids come out here looking for community hours. It's really exciting to see. The proceeds go back to supporting the garden. We're going to be moving into a vocational program in the future. Hopefully, that'll be where other schools, groups or anybody with autism can come out and participate."

The garden is in plain sight when driving on Roscoe Boulevard. Rows and rows of rustic, wooden beds lie in the sunshine, while a small tented greenhouse rests to the side. Teens are seen racking up their service hours and hosing down plants, while other volunteers from the community prepare the fresh produce for guests to take home. Some of these volunteers are also people living with autism, learning new skills or just enjoying a day in the garden.

"My dream is to expand to where every weekend, volunteers come in while different schools or groups with individuals with autism come here and learn about gardening and possibly even make a living at it someday," Howard says. "We believe that it's



about creating meaningful relationships with individuals with autism. That's our main goal and that's how the garden came about."

The Groshells opened the garden about

three years ago, and it's gone above and beyond their expectations. They sold 50 beds in early 2019 and will double that next year, along with adding online pledging and pre-ordering to their website.



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The Groshells firmly believe in reverse inclusion, or allowing and accepting the community to come to them, through the group home and garden. This seems to be a pioneer idea in terms of group homes for people with autism and other disabilities, according to the Groshells.

"A lot of the group homes right now are very institutionalized and there is no interaction with the community. It's actually prohibited in some places," Howard says. "Philosophically, we believe that it's not just about helping somebody with a disability by giving them things. It's about creating meaningful relationships."

Amy says Peace of Heart involves a "mutual exchange."

"We don't look at it like, 'Oh, poor Gentry, let me help you. You can't do this,' and then I feel better about myself because I'm helping a disabled person," Amy says. "Here, it's like, 'No, I recognize that in helping you, that I get back.' There are things that Gentry's going to teach me about myself that I need to work on. So, we see it as more interpersonal."

Probably the most unique aspect of Peace of Heart is the home's use of facilitated communication. The girls can communicate through iPads, giving all of them a voice for the first time in their lives. Howard says the house manager, Morgan Tyner, is a certified instructor in facilitated communication training, and everyone in the house has been trained.

When asked what Tyner thought the girls' favorite part of the community was, she narrowed it down to two possibilities.

"I see that there's a huge connection with nature," she answers. "Whether it's the animals, walks by the fire or being outside in the garden, I think the nature aspect is huge. I also





really think it's the peace of belonging to, which is not necessarily a physical space, but just the idea that there's belonging."

Back at the garden, Gentry walks back outside and grabs some fresh greens to munch on before going out to eat.

"She loves healthy food, too so that's another driving force to the garden," Amy says. "It brings the community in, it gives the girls something to do, it provides for the house and it's healthy. There are so many things that it does."

Gentry balls her hand in a fist, lifts it up and starts swaying it side to side as if she had her hands on a steering wheel.

"You're not driving anywhere," Amy says jokingly and warmly. "Good luck with that, girl."

Then, Gentry makes a decision, answering her mother's previous question. Hamburgers it is.





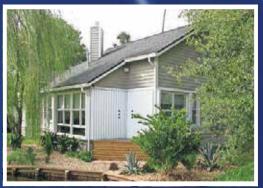
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Hundreds of cars of all different shapes and sizes and makes and models graced the grounds of the Golf Club at Amelia Island March 7-10 for the 24th annual Amelia Island Concours d'Elegance.

Parading and admiring the cars were sophisticated men and women from around the world, with many donning their finest suits and dresses to add to the elegant ambiance of the event.

"This is out of everybody else's league," said Keith Romann, a car enthusiast attending the Amelia from Ocala, Florida. "This is a league of their own."

Judges at the event crowned the 1938 Mercedes-Benz 540K Autobahn-Kurier and 1957 Ferrari 335 S as the 2019 Best in Show. The Amelia also hosted 2019 honoree "Mr. Le Mans" Jacky Ickx, a six-time Le Mans winner, 1979 Can-Am Champion, a Formula 1 victor and a Daytona, Sebring and Paris-Dakar winner.

New for this year's event, the Amelia included "Cars of the Rock Stars," a class specially curated by John Oates of Hall & Oates. Pairing specific vehicles with guitars, the class consisted of Oates' personal collection and featured additional vehicles owned or closely associated with well-known musicians. In addition, Oates sang a rendition of the national anthem.

"I think this year is even better than the last," said Oates, who attended the Amelia for the second consecutive year. "Bill Warner's so passionate and all the people who work here are so friendly. They welcomed me with open arms, and I really feel at home. I just enjoy the experience."

New classes also included a fleet of limousines titled "Heads of State." This fleet was made up of cars of kings and queens, presidents, popes and even a dictator. Additional highlights included a class of Ferrari 250 GT "SWB," Jaguar XK 120, a celebration of Indy Innovations and a Custom Coachwork Volkswagen class to acknowledge the 70th anniversary of the VW Bug's arrival in America.

"It's great fun but mostly because I get to see all my friends and some wonderful cars," said Dan Suskin of Atlanta, who displayed his 1910 Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost at the event. "The people who run Amelia run it very, very well."

John Oates of Hall & Oates stands with his 1960 Porsche 356 Emory Special Cabriolet at the Amelia. The event's "Cars of the Rock Stars" class featured a collection of his vehicles and guitars, as well as additional vehicles owned or closely associated with well-known rock stars





# TOM COUGHLIN JAY FUND ANNUAL WINE TASTING GALA

showcases local restaurants and community's generosity

by AMBER LAKE

At the annual Tom Coughlin Jay Fund Wine Tasting Gala, guests can taste a wide collection of wines, sample food from some of North Florida's top restaurants, mingle with fellow community members, and of course, get a selfie with Tom Coughlin himself, the inaugural head coach of the Jacksonville Jaguars.

It's no wonder the event is one of the most anticipated occasions of the year. Held at the Wells Fargo Center, the Gala also manages to be a great way to entice community members to lend a hand in raising money for those in need. At the 2019 Wine Tasting Gala held March 8, the event managed to raise a whopping \$287,0000 for Jacksonville families struggling with childhood cancer.

Created in 1996 by Tom Coughlin, the Jay Fund was inspired by Jay McGillis, a young man Coughlin coached at Boston College who had been diagnosed with leukemia. Coughlin saw firsthand the hardships McGillis and his family endured and vowed to find a way to help other families who were also experiencing the fight with cancer. Four years after McGillis died from his illness, Coughlin started the foundation and has managed to give support to over 5,000 families and donate over \$10 million in grants. The Tom Coughlin Jay Fund Wine Tasting Gala is one of the Fund's essential sources of proceeds.

With over 900 guests showing up at the March 8 gala, the fundraiser has become a regular staple of North Florida's calendar of events. Some of the restaurants included in this year's fundraiser were III Forks Steakhouse, bb's, Biscottis, Bellwether, Black Sheep and the Cowford Chophouse, among others.











# Momen With Heart







The 2019 Women with Heart luncheon proved two things about Northeast Florida: The region's women have heart, and its people love them for it.

Held Feb. 6 at the Florida Blue Conference Center in Jacksonville, the sold-out event honored 12 women for their passion and dedication to the community. The luncheon also served as a fundraiser for the Jacksonville-based nonprofit, Volunteers in Medicine.

Founded in 2002, Volunteers in Medicine's Jacksonville clinic provides working, low-income and uninsured individuals with free outpatient primary and specialty medical services. The clinic is staffed by active and retired physicians, nurse practitioners, registered nurses and specialists, who volunteer their time to provide much-needed medical care to those unable to afford the resource.

The 11 Women with Heart recognized at the luncheon included: Martha Baker, Vickie Cavey, Inger Geraghty, Virginia Hall, Rev. Dr. Helen Jackson, Helga Langthon, Eleanor Lynch, Velma Monteiro-Tribble, Dr. Pam Rama, Ellen Wiss and Sol Wynter. Sherry Magill also received the Dorion-Burt "Heart of Gold" award at the luncheon.

The women were selected as honorees by the nonprofit's board of directors, key community partners, stakeholders and past Women with Heart honorees.

"I feel humbled," said Inger Geraghty, a board member for American Heart Association and See the Girl. "It's definably an honor to be selected. I can't imagine given how blessed my life is, not giving back to others. (People) need to make sure to find ways to get involved with the community. We all have a place in this community to help others." The event was emceed by WJXT4 news anchor Mary Baer and featured a video that highlighted each honoree, providing insight to their formative experiences and mentors. More than anything, the interviews showed the diversity of the women. Stories ranged from Helga



Photos by AMBER LAKE

Langthon's childhood in her native Columbian hometown to Martha Baker's memories of cutting school to help collect donations for the Veteran of Foreign Wars, one that her World War II-veteran father told her he supported.

"I feel I'm non-deserving of this because I am a behind-thescenes person." said Velma Monterio-Tribble, the director of grants and programs at the Florida Blue Foundation. "I don't mind doing all these things, but I certainly don't do it to get an award for it. I feel it's the right thing to do — pay it forward."

The Women with Heart Luncheon kicks off a year-long signature awareness and fundraising campaign for Volunteers in Medicine. Each honoree has committed to a month of advocacy and service to the clinic. During their month of service, Women with Heart honorees will wear the new 2019 "Heart of Jacksonville" — a \$15,000 diamond necklace custom designed by Allen's Jewelers. The necklace will serve as a conversation starter to further increase awareness of the mission of Volunteers in Medicine.



Whether it be to help the working parent stay sane or to educate and entertain the curious child, there's a summer camp or activity on the First Coast for almost every family. From fishing to golf and cooking to creating, these camps and activities from local businesses and organizations are sure to help your kids have a fun and productive summer.

#### Episcopal School of Jacksonville Fishing Camp

While baseball may be America's pastime, fishing might as well be Florida's. This camp will focus on basic fishing training along the salt-water fishery surrounding Jacksonville. In this one-week camp from June 24 through June 27, students will be trained on how to read the fishing spot, casting with accuracy, rig tying and selecting the right rig for the conditions, preparation, bait selection and identifying and properly handling fish. The camp will add bait to the waters at several locations, depending on water conditions and daily weather. This fishing experience is from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. for children from fourth to eighth grade. The cost is \$190 for the week. For more information, visit www.esj.org/summer/.

#### Golf Experiences

Parents can take their children to learn the fundamentals of golf at the famous World Golf Village, itself, in St. Augustine, hosted by the PGA Golf Academy. Choose from half-day, full-day or extended "elite" camps to learn about putting fundamentals, short game, full swing and more with top PGA instructors. The camp focuses on the four "Cornerstones of Improvement," which include mental conditioning, fitness, club fitting and full swing, short game and on-course instruction. Golf Experiences will also help develop important fitness and life skills that children will use as they continue to advance through school and beyond. According to the Golf Experiences official website, the main goal of the PGA TOUR Golf Academy is to "provide a positive and fun learning environment where students are able to flourish under the direction of experienced, motivated and highly skilled instructors — all while having a great time!" Camps are open to boys and girls ranging in age from 7 through 18. Camps are divided into weekly sessions with dates and pricing depending on the age group. For more information, visit www.golfexperiences.com.

#### Jacksonville Giants Basketball Camp

If March Madness wasn't enough basketball for the kids, check out the Jacksonville Giants basketball camp for children ages 6 through 15. The Jacksonville Giants are a five-time ABA National Champion team that holds the current ABA record for most points scored in a single basketball game with 222 points. The camp will be held at Arlington Middle School in Jacksonville and will have two sessions, one from June 3 to June 7 and the other from Aug. 5 through Aug. 9. Camps will run from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and with early drop-off and late pick-up available. Campers will learn basketball fundamentals while they enjoy three-on-three tournaments, daily free-throw contests, buzzer-beater shots and more, all in an air-conditioned gym and with chances to win awards and certificates. The cost is \$175 per session. For more information, visit www.jacksonvillegiants.com/giants/camp.

#### Jax Cooking Studio

For aspiring little chefs, Jax Cooking Studio will offer weekly half-day classes with a new cooking theme each week. From June through August, kids can learn basic cooking skills while working in a team-oriented environment. They'll also learn about kitchen hygiene and safety, food science and nutrition and the importance of sustainability and repurposing ingredients for new meals. At the end of each day, kids will be able to eat their own creations. Each Friday, children will cook their favorite recipe of the week or create their own dish from the knowledge acquired from that week. After this camp, the kids could even cook a family dinner at home! For more information about Jax Cooking Studio's weekly camps, visit www.jaxcookingstudio.com.

More Kids Summer Fun Guide listings, Page 30



## KIds summer fun Guide Cont...

#### Sunshine Play + Learn

A new children's center and indoor playground for kids in St. Augustine, Sunshine Play + Learn offers fun playing areas and classes throughout the year. From "FUNtastic Fitness" to "Theater for Tots," Sunshine Play & Learn has a variety of classes to help open children's minds and imaginations. Although Sunshine Play + Learn is not a daycare center, parents have the opportunity to bond with their children through playtime and other fun activities provided by the center. Individual classes for children or child-parent classes are offered, along with support groups that help parents get to know one another in the community and make new friends through parenthood. Hosted by a professional lactation consultant, mothers can meet other moms, share stories and experiences and establish a network of support in a positive, welcoming environment at Sunshine's Blissful Babies Lactation support group for moms and mommies-to-be. Sunshine Play + Learn focuses on children from 0 to 6 years old, but is open to accommodate older children, depending on each case. Daily, monthly and yearly membership passes are available, along with a "5 Play Pass" that contains five passes to use within six months of purchase. Sibling discounts are available, and infants are always free with a paying sibling. For more information, visit www.sunshineplaylearn.com.

#### St. Mark's Episcopal Camp Create

For ages 2 through sixth grade, Camp CREATE offers an educational program throughout the summer that follows a "similar rhythm" as the St. Mark's Episcopal School year. Weekly sessions are offered, each with a different theme and curriculum and with a two-week minimum registration. For the younger kids, parents can choose from themes

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such as "pet week," "Camp CREATE's Got Talent," or even "America the Beautiful" for the week of July Fourth. For older students, the camp curriculum offers educational and productive themes that keep the child's future in mind, such as learning about budgeting, international relations and other cultures, marketing and even chess. Parents can choose between a half-day, afternoon or early evening pick-up hours, with kindergarten being required to stay until 3:15 p.m. since it's a full-day program. Campers should bring a labeled set of water-play clothes, swimwear, a towel and a weather-appropriate change of clothes. If staying past noon, children should also bring a packed lunch. For pricing, hours of operation and more information, visit www.stmarksdayschool.org/programs/summer-camp.

#### Huntington Learning Center

According to its official website, Huntington Learning Centers specialize in a "unique and individualized approach to education." Huntington helps schools with providing the best education possible for each child. These learning centers provide one-on-one tutoring for specific subjects, such as reading, writing, algebra, chemistry, physics and even studying skills on its own. Huntington also offers test preparation as students advance and prepare for the SAT, ACT, Advanced Placement exams and more. Tutoring schedules and needs are dependent on each individual evaluation given prior to tutoring sessions. The tutors at Huntington have four-year college degrees and either a state or Huntington certification for education. Are you worried about locations and transportation? Huntington Learning Centers have multiple locations around Jacksonville, including St. Johns. For more information, visit www.huntingtonhelps.com.



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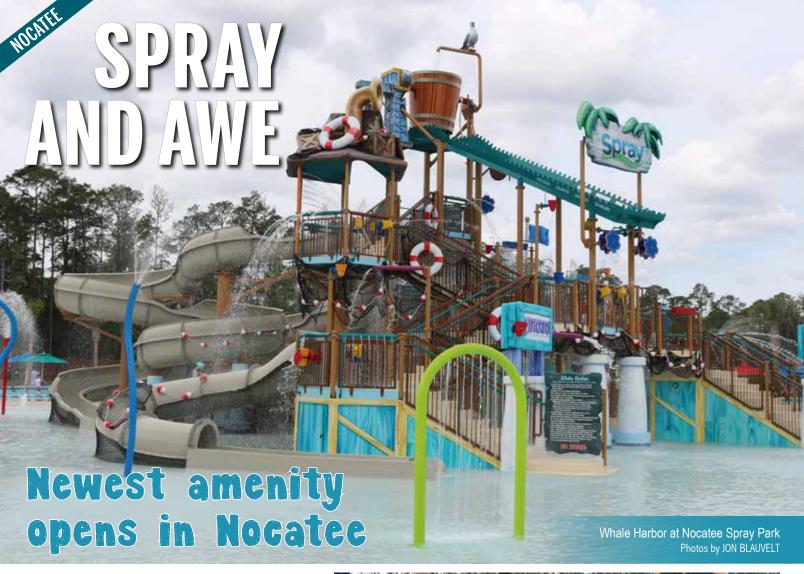
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for complete camp information and to register. We'll see you this summer!

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by JON BLAUVELT

Nocatee's newest "wow amenity" for residents and their guests has arrived.

Opening in March, the Spray Water Park features more than 100,000 square feet encompassing a 42-foot water slide tower and interactive spray features. With a capacity of 2,000 people, the new venue includes a four-story water slide tower, a resort-style beach environment with beach volleyball, a smaller spray park for younger children, a playground and a restaurant and bar.

The water slide tower known as Whale Harbor is the centerpiece of Nocatee Spray Water Park. The structure has five slides, including two that shoot people into the dark, and 75 different water features, including fountains, geysers, waterfall activities and more. Every few minutes, a bucket of water that can hold 10 grown men flips over, dumping gallons of water upon those people nearby the structure. In addition, a red tower creates a 35-foot dome of water every two minutes for park attendees to enjoy.

The main pool area has 17,000 square feet of surface area, which is bigger than the Lagoon Pool at the Splash Park, as well as 750 chairs in the area.













The slides and play structure were designed by a company called ProSlide Technology, which also designed Volcano Bay at Universal Orlando Resort.

"It's like having an Adventure Landing right here in Nocatee, where we don't have to go any place," Nocatee resident Thalia Lambert says. "We've got both the Spray Park and Splash Park, so we can go from one toward the other as a resident."

In between the Spray Park and Splash Park is an event field called Nocatee Station, which will be the new home for community events and concerts, including the monthly Nocatee Farmers Market, the Roscolusa country music festival, drive-in movie nights, concerts and more.

To learn more about Nocatee Spray Water Park, stop by the Nocatee Welcome Center, call (904) 924-6863 or visit www.nocatee.com.



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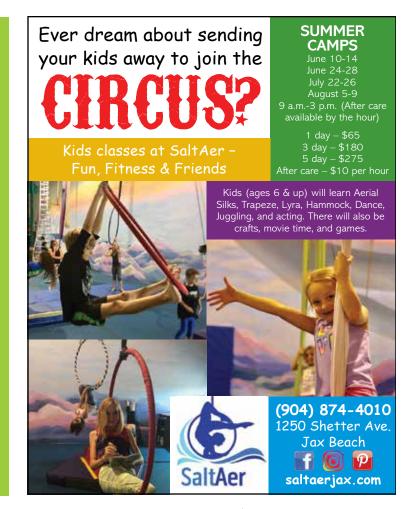
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#### by AMBER LAKE

Imagine walking along the St. Johns River at the Southbank of Downtown Jacksonville. The water is clean, and pedestrians walk, jog and skate by. Restaurants are buzzing for lunch, and the entrance of Jacksonville's Museum of Science & History beckons families and passersby with a seamless transition between the river, Friendship Fountain and the front door.

The museum is brightly lit, open-concept and reflects the native ecosystems that surround it. Welcome to MOSH 2.0, where Jacksonville's history meets its future. While the future might not hold flying cars, the projected museum does paint an innovative and forward-facing picture of science as a public gathering space within the city.

The estimated \$80 million renovation is expected to conclude in 2023. The upgrade is no small project, with a total square footage increase from 77,000 to 120,000. The plan also involves the reorientation of the entryway toward the St. Johns River and the enhancement of the Museum's range and capacities to allow for all new exhibits, installations, programming and immersive experiences that feature new technologies. If that wasn't enough, the design also introduces an outdoor café, rooftop event space and modern, "maker" spaces. All-in-all, it's a significant facelift for the organization, which was originally a children's museum located in a Victorian mansion in Riverside. In 1967, that location featured live baby opossums as part of their "hands-on living collection."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36 ■





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Opossums are a far cry from the innovative and technically advanced installations of the 2023 MOSH, which will boast a "Faces of Jax"-curved LED panel sculpture that scans and displays guests' faces to highlight a cultural ecosystem of residents

The aspect of "hands-on" learning has remained a big part of the museum's mission, however, growing exponentially over the past few years. Maria Hane, president of the Museum, says a large reason for the renovation is that MOSH has simply outgrown itself. The current campus is 50 years old.

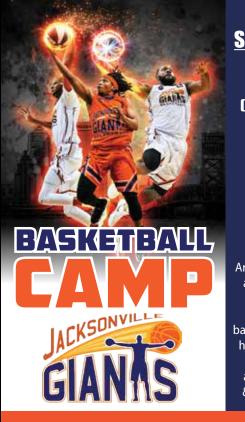
"We're constantly at capacity," Hane says. "We're seeing (the number of people served) climb and climb and even this year it looks like we're going to be serving more students than we have at any time in the past."

MOSH has worked closely with schools since its inception, carrying out its mission to inspire early STEM learning initiatives and foster hands-on learning from the ground up. Hane says the museum's focus on "experiential learning as opposed to a formal delivery," makes it instrumental in crafting a love of science from an early age. To continue to provide this asset, the museum needs to stay up to date with an evolving understanding of not only science, but even history as well.









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Hane says they are looking at creating a "choose your own narrative" history exhibition to "turn inside out" perspectives on what history is and means.

"When you think of building a museum that speaks to humanities and culture, what do you think of that?" Hane says. "That experience becomes very personal when you don't see yourself in it. ... When we are talking about the diversity of cultures and communities in Jacksonville, (we want to) use a much broader set of lens for inter-

preting history. It's this idea that gives us a sort of a concept of using windows into the past to see windows into the future. (These windows will be) sort of digital kiosks that you can again kind of choose the narrative for your visit. So, you could see the history or the culture of the Timucuan or it could be a lens through civil rights history. Every time you come in you could choose a different narrative in a different path to explore."

Another aspect of MOSH 2.0's design is the transition of the front entrance toward the St. Johns River. The repositioning of the door isn't only more scenic, but representative of the museum's realignment with Jacksonville's natural ecosystem as a funda-



mental aspect of its character.

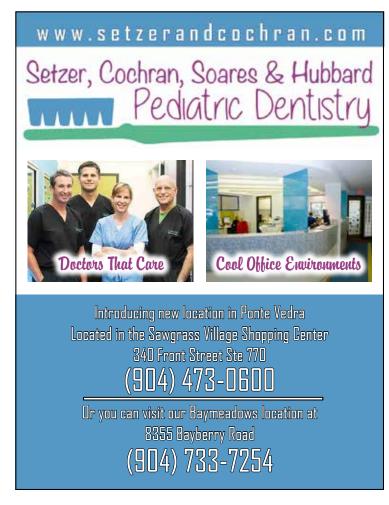
"We know now that between 12,000-14,000 years ago, the first cultures settled on St. Johns River," Hane says. "There is a history of trade along the river. There is a history of different cultures and different communities and the evolution of those communities into the city that we call Jacksonville now. The river really it tells a story of history and innovation and transportation and tells a story about economic develop-

The entrance, overlooking the St. Johns, will also host a new experiential learning walk-through aquifer exhibit and a water quality bio-lab for visitors to understand water sampling and analysis, bioplastics and oil cleanup.

Hanes sees the future of MOSH as reaching out toward the surrounding community, every part of it, and welcoming them within. Hanes pointed at the museum's slogan, "Curiosity Welcome," and noted it has more meaning now than ever.

"(History) left a lot of people on the side of the road," Hanes says. "We talked about 'Curiosity Welcome.' That's for everybody, for all people to feel welcomed."





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Caitie Delaney, Will Robertson, Zach Ashourian, McKee Riley, Luke O'Steen, Hunter Geddes and Craig Walker Jr. (president). Photo provided by RIVER CITY UNITED FOUNDATION

by JENNIFER MELVILLE

"Whether it's through monetary support or raising awareness, we would like to unite different foundations in Jacksonville."

The start of an annual

philanthropic tradition

Guests mingled and danced to music by The Royals, enjoyed refreshments, networked and participated in a silent auction. Walker honored the family of Allison Haramis, the 15-year-old local girl killed in an auto accident in 2009. Angels for Allison supports families who have suffered the loss of a child. Since its founding, the nonprofit

organization has assisted over 400 families.

Allison's mother, Drew Haramis, was in attendance.

"They've kept her memory alive in such a beautiful way," Haramis said. "It was one of my greatest fears she would be forgotten and I'm just so honored and flattered."

Liz Nottingham, executive director of Angels for Allison, echoed those sentiments about the River City United Foundation

"What this group has done is fantastic for our organization," Nottingham said. "I think that's what keeps her legacy alive. To have her peer group come together and honor her like this ... it's a celebration of life."

tems in the silent auction Walker also honored the McKenzie Noelle Wilson Foundation. McKenzie was a local girl who passed away from a rare, sudden illness in 2010. The foundation created in her honor strives to help young people realize

their full potential through academic resource centers, camps and more. Her family members were also in attendance at The River City Ball.

For more on the River City United Foundation, visit rivercityunitedfoundation.org.

The River City United Foundation hosted its first River City Ball on Feb. 23 at the River Club in downtown Jacksonville.

With 400 people attending the sold-out event, the two-story penthouse River Club was abuzz with conversation, laughter and music. Glittering butterfly décor and a phenomenal angel wing photo op celebrated this year's theme: Spread Your Wings. Proceeds from the event totaling over \$80,000 benefited Angels for Allison and the McKenzie Noelle Wilson Foundation.

"We started planning this event six months ago and the fact that we sold out is huge," said Barbara Sears, River City United Foundation board member. "This is a movement. As we grow it, we're going to grow the city. Everyone here just loves Jacksonville so much."

Craig C. Walker Jr., president of the River City United Foundation, told the Register that the mission of the organization is simple.

"It's to give the young adults of Jacksonville an easy outlet to give back and help local charities around town," Walker said. "I moved back here in April and there wasn't anything directly geared toward the young community. I wanted to start a black tie event that would get the younger generation giving back and having fun parties to get dressed up and go to.

"I hope The River City Ball is the premier, young-professional black tie event, and I hope our organization can help all different charities in Jacksonville," Walker continued.



Mackenzie and OB Bera Photos by JENNIFER MELVILLE



by AMBER LAKE

# **COCKTAIL PARTY**

Arts both old and new were celebrated at the second annual Vintage for the Arts cocktail party on March 30. Hosted by the Vintage Arts boutique in Mandarin, the event aimed to raise funds for the Mandarin Arts Festival, now in its 51st year.

Guests were invited to participate in a silent auction that featured local businesses and artists including Wood You Furniture, Stonewood Grill & Tavern, art by Julie Fetzer and a photoshoot with photographer Teresa Sacks. The event ultimately raised \$3,500 for the festival, which will be held Easter weekend on April 20-21.

"There are lots of artists and a lot of people that want to participate in the Mandarin Art Festival," said Holly Donohoe, owner of the Vintage Arts boutique. "(It is) the preeminent art event in the community. We want to draw attention to the fact that the (arts) need to be celebrated not only at the festival, but in a bigger picture as well."

Donohoe, along with her husband, Jan Lindahl, are not only owners of the creatively curated boutique, but are artists themselves. Donohoe with paint and canvas and Lindahl with industrial salvage. Lindahl's work can be found doting the interior of the store, which is brimming with an assortment of curious antique novelties coupled with modern accessories.



"My husband and I have put together a really curated collection of purposefully selected items," Donohoe said. "Each piece speaks to an aesthetic or feeling that we are trying to create. We select from vintage items that need restoration or they are just beautiful works of art in and of themselves."

Musician Sean Hendrix

music for the event.

Photos by AMBER LAKE

donated his time to provide

In addition to the silent auction, the event included live music, beer, wine and small plates. Both the food and drinks were donated in support of the Mandarin Arts Festival by Champion Brands, Whole Foods, Native Sun and Earth Fare. Although many businesses participated in elevating the event, most guests saw the party as an opportunity to support the festival and meet other residents interested in arts.

"When the arts are really rooted in a community, such as they are with the Mandarin Arts Festival, they really speak about the story of the community and the resilience of the people that live in that community," Donohoe said. "(The arts) are really a lightning rod for bringing people together."



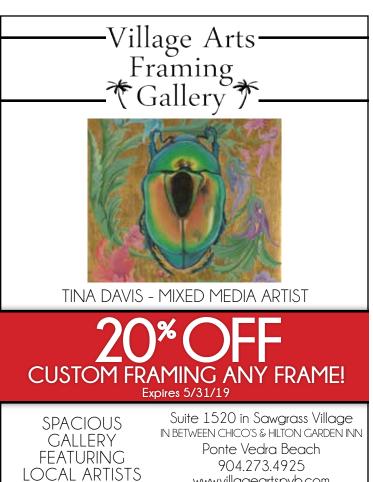
The Jacksonville Symphony hosted its annual gala March 2 at the Jacoby Symphony Hall at the Times-Union Center for the Performing Arts.

The event featured a red-carpet reception, concert, VIP dinner with Music Director Courtney Lewis and worldrenowned cellist Alisa Weilerstein, and a silent disco to end the evening. The gala also included a live and silent auction.

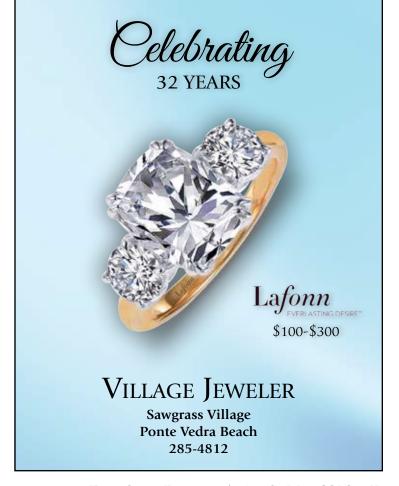
The concert opened with Schumann's Fourth Symphony and closed with Weilerstein performing one of the most famous cello concertos of all time, Antonín Dvořák's Cello Concerto in B minor.

Throughout her career, Weilerstein has appeared with all the foremost orchestras of the United States and Europe, collaborating with conductors including Marin Alsop, Sir Andrew Davis and Gustavo Dudamel. She has recorded multiple works, including Dvořák's Cello Concerto with the Czech Philharmonic, which went on to top the U.S. classical chart. She has premiered multiple works, including Pascal Dusapin's "Outscape," Matthias Pintscher's Cello Concerto and two works by Grammy Award-nominee Joseph Hallman.

For more information on the Jacksonville Symphony, visit www.jaxsymphony.org.



www.villageartspvb.com



# Rochelle's

# HOSTS HUDPH HONB EAENL

Rochelle's in St. Augustine held a Happy Hour event on March 28 that allowed customers to take advantage of flash sales, while also sipping on adult beverages such as white cosmos, wine and champagne.

At the event, the boutique introduced Virgins, Saints & Angels, which they describe as handcrafted luxury jewelry "infused with romance and magic." The business also showed the UNOde50 Spring/ Summer 2019 collection.

Located at 104 Anastasia Blvd., Rochelle's was established in 1984 by Tom and Karen Rochelle, who, according to their website, "fiercely edit the boutique's designer collections with a style not driven by trends but by an educated eye for what is beautiful, fashionable and modern."

Visit rochellesclothing.com for more information.













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# ST. AUGUSTINE Community hours TURNS 70

A milestone recently arrived in the performing arts in St. Augustine, with the St. Augustine Community Chorus celebrating its 70th year/season.

To recognize the achievement, the organization hosted a gala benefit March 8 at Riverview Club in St. Augustine Shores, claiming ownership as the oldest performing arts organization in the historic city. The Chorus hosted the gala in partnership with the St. Augustine Orchestra.

The Bursting with Blooms theme was evident from the one-of-a-kind centerpieces created by the Garden Club of St. Augustine, to the floral-themed clothes guests wore, ranging from ties, dresses, shirts and blossoms in hair. Guests listened to the Once Upon A String Quartet, as well as danced to the Chris Thomas Band and enjoyed a dinner and silent auction.

"We are delighted to be at this great age as an organization and continuing to provide relevant, joyful musical entertainment for this city that so embraces music in all forms," said Lynn Abjornson, president of the St. Augustine Community Chorus. "We love that there are so many talented musicians turning 70 this year including Bruce Springsteen, Bonnie Raitt, Billy Joel and Lionel Richie — great music is enduring, and singing is a lifelong pleasure."

The Community Chorus additionally hosted two concerts on March 16 and 17 at Lewis Auditorium in St. Augustine to celebrate the milestone. The St. Augustine Orchestra performed in the unique shared program.

For more information, visit www.staugustinecommunitychorus.org.



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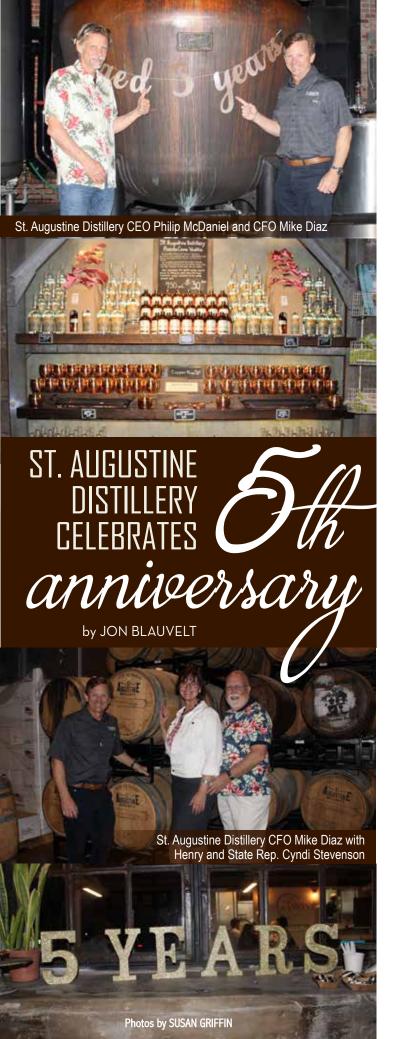
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When St. Augustine Distillery CEO Philip McDaniel reflects on the five-year anniversary of his burgeoning First Coast business, the first emotion that comes to mind is joy.

That's because, after operating at a loss for the first two years in preparation for the release of its bourbon, the distillery is not only in the black, but a staple of the local community, and a hit in the national craft distillery industry.

"It was just such euphoria that this dream was realized," McDaniel recalls feeling at the distillery's anniversary celebration on March 30.

The First Coast business was ranked in 2018 the No. 1 whiskey tour in North America by the Drammie Awards, marking the first time the award ever left Kentucky and the likes of Maker's Mark, Buffalo Trace and other famed brands in the state.

USA Today named the distillery's gin the best craft gin distillery in America in both 2015 and 2016. Not to mention, the business' bourbons have all medaled in the San Francisco International Spirits Competition, and the port-finished bourbon won platinum best category in 2017 in the SIP Awards.

These accolades didn't come without the business' fair share of blood, sweat and tears, however, which leads McDaniel to his next emotion: appreciation.

"It takes a lot of different people to start a company and build a brand," he says.

The distillery opened in 2014 due in large part to the courage of its investors and owners who were willing to take a risk, says McDaniel. All were aware of the fiscal reality of the first two years of business, as the distillery waited for its most profitable and highest dollar product, bourbon, to hit the shelves.

In the meantime, the distillery churned out vodka and gin in year one and then rum in year two, which all arrived with positive reviews. At the two-and-a-half-year mark, the distillery released its first bourbon. Soon after, the local spirits expanded out of the building and onto the shelves of ABC Fine Wine & Spirits, Publix and other retailers. Along the way, McDaniel says his team weaved together the story of St. Augustine Distillery.

"I'm incredibly grateful to our staff and the people who have worked so hard and carried on our message of saying, 'Hey we care deeply about this business, about this beautiful home that is ours and the contributions we've made to the community as a result," he says.

McDaniel is also appreciative of the business' customers, who range from everyday visitors of the distillery, to institutions such as Ponte Vedra Inn & Club and Sawgrass Marriott Golf Resort & Spa and retail partners who have supported the business by carrying its product.

That appreciation leads to the last emotion for McDaniel: satisfaction. The distillery's CEO feels confident that the First Coast business is the premier whiskey and craft distillery in Florida, and his goal for the future is to continue in that pursuit of local excellence.

McDaniel says the company wants to continue growing its footprint in Florida and is not particularly focused on growing nationally. The reason? McDaniel says St. Augustine Distillery doesn't have the capacity or desire to be a "far and wide brand."

McDaniel's hope for the future is also for some of the laws that govern craft spirits production to be loosened so the distillery can ship products to guests. His ultimately goal is for St. Augustine Distillery to become like some of the high-end, sought-after California wineries that have wine clubs with subscribers who receive quarterly releases of the wines.

For more information, visit staugustinedistillery.com.







Brazil is a colorful and vibrant country, filled with music, dancing, soccer, of course, and food - so much food. With America being the meat-loving melting pot that it is, constantly craving tacos from Mexico or hibachi from Japan, it's odd that Brazilian cuisine never got its 15 minutes of fame, until recently.

Texas de Brazil is a Brazilian steakhouse or "churrascaria," as they say in Portuguese. Churrascarias are the steakhouses of all steakhouses, ranging in varieties of different meat cuts and flavors. But Texas de Brazil, like most traditional churrascarias, is more than just a steakhouse, it's an experience.

In Brazil, South American cowboys, known as "gauchos," greet the tables in traditional gaucho attire and serve them a variety of meats, straight from the kebabs they were cooked on. Texas de Brazil, which opened a location at the St. Johns Town Center in 2018, is no different.

Another tradition is the use of the red and green coin. Think of it as the "red light, green light" of all-you-can-eat quality meat. Turn the coin green-side-up, and gauchos will stop at the table and offer the prepared cuts. Need a break between flavors? Just flip the coin to red and they'll skip the table until they see green again.

Raul Deseda, general manager of the Town Center location, says, overall, the restaurant has all traditional cuts of the Brazilian cuisine, along with traditional foods such as pão de queijo, a Brazilian cheese bread; feijoada, a traditional stew with black beans; and the famous







farofa, a condiment made from yuca flour served alongside the beans.

Although Texas de Brazil focuses on authentic Brazilian meat cuts, that doesn't mean they don't take care of their non-meat lovers as well. There's a little bit of everything for everyone.

"We have a lot of options for vegetarians," Deseda explains. "At the salad bar, they can build their own salad with everything we

have. We also have potatoes au gratin, which is amazing, to die for.

"For pescatarians, we have from lobster bisque, which is amazing, to our 'coco de pesce,' our coconut fish," Deseda adds. "For our quarterly feature right now, we have shrimp."

If the endless meat and salad bar aren't enough, try the passion fruit mousse for dessert. Deseda vouches for it. "It's really, really good," he says.

Texas de Brazil strives to make the churrascaria experience as authentic and traditional as possible for both Brazilians and cuisine tourists alike, regardless of where they're from.

"We have a Brazilian community here in Jacksonville, so they love it here," floor manager Paulo Borges says. "But we are not just here for Brazilian people, we're here for anybody and any kind of people. It's a piece of Brazil here in America, you know?"

"That's what we want, that you have great service and that you have no complaints," Deseda adds. "That makes an amazing experience and perfect meal."

Texas de Brazil is located at 4634 Town Center Parkway in Jacksonville.

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