



NORTHEAST JOURNAL

Good People ∞ Good Places ∞ Good Things Happening

St. Petersburg, Florida

September/October 2022

Est. September 2004



The St. Pete Bike Co-op is a grassroots operation run on volunteer-power and donations.

The 'Pay What You Can' Bike Co-op

Abby Baker

The first rule of the St. Petersburg Bike Co-op: It's not a bike shop. For a total of six hours a week, the co-op at 559 Mirror Lake Drive North is open for anyone to come in and buy a bike or get a bike repair. The bikes are mostly donated or built from scratch by shop volunteers and mechanics. That factor allows prices to be extremely low. "I didn't enjoy working for profit," says shop coordinator Caelan Jeffery. "Working with expensive bikes and pompous people, it's not for me."

Along with a fluctuating team of about 10 volunteers, mechanic and co-op coordinator Jeffery runs the show in an equal distribution of power that only a co-op can truly attain. Volunteers are paid with free or cheap bike parts, and the "Build a Bike" program that allows dedicated volunteers to build an entire bike from the wheels to the bell — if they choose to have a bell.

Continued on page 12

An Inside Look at Preserving an Iconic Church

Will Michaels

Historic landmarks, especially cherished churches, require TLC, and so it is with First United Methodist located across from Williams Park in downtown St. Petersburg. The church dates its history back to 1889, a year after the city's founding. The first

church building was erected in 1892 and later succeeded by a second building on the corner of 2nd Avenue North and 3rd Street in 1902. The present grand structure dates from 1925-27.

It was a challenge to get the church built. After much of it was constructed in 1925, an outer wall collapsed, virtually requiring

Continued on page 24



First United Methodist Church was constructed in 1925-27. Built in the Gothic Revival style, it is one of the city's outstanding designated local landmarks.

Elliott Wiser Celebrates 25 Years of Bay News 9

Cindy Cockburn

If you bump into Tampa Bay's media guru and Beach Drive resident Elliott Wiser walking around downtown St. Pete on September 24, don't be surprised if you see a big smile on his face. It was on that day in 1997 he launched Bay News 9, the popular 24-hour news channel here in Tampa Bay.

Yes, 25 years ago Wiser had a dream. A vision. And while retired now, it is with a sense of accomplishment and pride that he describes a project that seemed surreal at the time.

"This idea started out as a new concept for a TV station," he explains. "We had 82 employees and [were] seen in only four counties, with 550,000 viewers. We ended up 25 years later with 1.1 million viewers and an expansion throughout Tampa Bay to Manatee, Polk, Pasco, Hernando, and Citrus counties."



Photo courtesy of Elliott Wiser

Wiser in 2007 with Bay News 9 anchor Jen Holloway and Katarina Sandstrom, an anchor from Sweden where Wiser consulted in 1998 to launch their news channel.

Wiser was the creative force behind the channel's popular news and weather programming that includes "Weather on the 9's," and "Klystron 9," offering extensive political coverage, community bureaus, an award-winning website, with constant 24/7 breaking news coverage. He also created Bay News 9 en Espanol, which was the country's first 24-hour Spanish local news channel. Wiser developed Bay News 9's Travel Weather Now, Tampa Bay on Demand, and Info Mas, a regional Spanish language network. In 2008, he launched Florida's first 24-hour local sports channel, Bright House Sports Network. In 2012 that channel won rights to

Continued on page 8

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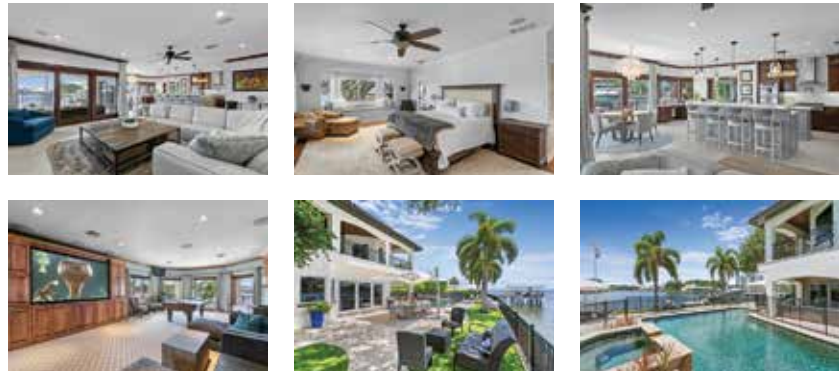
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EDITOR'S NOTE

A Community Treat

My mother liked holidays. And she liked to sew. There were a lot of benefits to this, growing up. We had a fair number of handmade pillows in the house, and I was in college before I knew you could hire someone to hem your pants. (She also did haircuts and killer makeup.) The most obvious benefit, though, is that I usually had some pretty rad Halloween costumes. The first I remember, at three, was a gnome, in a bespoke vest, pointy hat, and a tiny, stubby beard.

The point is, my childhood Halloweens were always fun. And experiencing Halloween in Old Northeast reminds me of those magical times. With its historic old homes and mature trees dripping with Spanish moss, ONE is already a perfect spot for spooky trick-or-treating. Add in a whole community that seems to come alive with childlike glee at the prospect of thousands of little ghouls and ghosts (and princesses and superheroes) begging for candy, and it's the perfect storm. One of the neighborhood's most anticipated events.

In this issue of the *Northeast Journal*, Jon Kile – a veteran of ONE's epic Halloweens – has holiday tips for neighborhood newcomers and visitors. And to continue the ghostly theme, Brandy Stark guides us through the haunted history of one of St. Pete's oldest landmarks, the Vinoy.

Of course, some might disagree, but fall is more than Halloween. In this issue, we've also got features on St. Pete's bike co-op, a peek inside Bird Island, and a spotlight on Bay News 9 founder Elliott Wisner. Plus history, art, a farewell to summer, and more good people doing good things – all part of the *Northeast Journal's* mission.

So, happy fall to all who celebrate! I know I'll be toasting my favorite time of year with a mini Reese's Peanut Butter Cup. Or two.

~ Shelly



Have a story you'd like to share?

Email me anytime at editor@northeastjournal.org.

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The Present of Our Presence: Senior Companions

Samantha Bond Richman

“Remember that the happiest people are not those getting more, but those giving more.”

~ Robin Sharma

Giving is the best present we can give to ourselves. And, though the rewards are great, giving something as precious as time can be challenging. Personal wisdom gained over time, lessons that each of us had to take time to learn, is perhaps our most precious asset. Imagine then, the incredible wealth of knowledge in the possession of our senior citizens.

A recently expanded program supported by Seniors in Service of Tampa Bay, called Senior Companion, aims to make good use of lifetimes of wisdom while easing the loneliness that sometimes comes with it. Program Coordinator Rasheera Rivas explains, “Volunteers aged 18 and up are matched with a senior citizen client. The relationship usually begins by getting to know one another by phone, with the expectation of the volunteer to be available one to two times per week, for a total of about five hours.” Some relationships, says Rivas, are only by phone, but “depending on the volunteer and the client, they may include helping the senior with errands, or just sitting and sharing conversation over a cup of coffee.”

If the senior-volunteer relationship is positive, the directions to the volunteer are simple: “Be understanding, show compassion, care, be patient, and a good listener.” But this is far from a one-way street.

Life teaches us through love, pain, perseverance, and joy. All these lessons and more have been experienced many times



SENIORS in SERVICE
GEARED UP TO SERVE



Photo courtesy of Seniors in Service

Secundino Trinidad with friend and volunteer Juan Garrido. Says Secundino's son, “[Juan] is patient and kind, just an awesome person, and this is an important service.”

over by the recipient senior citizen client. Sharing stories can benefit both volunteer and client in a positive, supporting show of friendship.

“The program is relatively new in Pinellas, and we have a small office with information available in the Sunshine Center in downtown St. Petersburg,” said Rasheera. “Interested parties can get information and decide if volunteering in the program is right for them.”

Volunteers can engage at their own comfort level and will likely feel appreciated right away. Seniors may have limited mobility to join in community gatherings, or perhaps have smaller social circles. These friendships can be a lifeline and, potentially, can fulfill the loneliness felt by both parties. Friendships flourish in the program.

One gentleman currently paired with a volunteer is Secundino Trinidad. He's forged a new friendship with Juan Garrido, one they both treasure. Secundino's son says, “Seniors in Service is a wonderful organization. They provide companionship services for my dad, and he couldn't be happier. My father's companion checks in with me and my dad over the phone and in person and helps with some errands. He is patient and kind, just an awesome person, and this is an important service for the elderly. My dad considers Juan his friend. Two thumbs up for Seniors in Service.”

At any age it's easy to be overwhelmed with life. But if we slow down, take a breath, and look for ways to give back – of our time and our life's wisdom – we can reduce stress and remember what is most important in life. You're never too old – or too young – to make a new friend, and to make a true difference in someone's life. ●

If you'd like to participate, visit or call the Sunshine Center, 330 5th Street North, 727-893-7101, or find more online at seniorsinservice.org/volunteer/senior-companion.

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MEET THE WRITERS

We would like to sincerely thank and introduce our contributors. The time and talent they dedicate to writing about good people, good places, and good things happening is what makes the *Northeast Journal* the quality publication that our readers have come to expect and love.

Abby Baker is a Tampa-based journalist for local media and a staff writer at the *Gabber Newspaper*. She currently lives in Seminole Heights but writes stories about Gulfport and St. Petersburg communities every week. When she's not on deadline, she likes to paint, travel and spend time with her two very chubby cats.



M. Shackleford Burns is a writer and photographer originally from the northeast of Scotland, now resettled and happy to call the fair city of St. Pete his new home. After a 32-year career as a professional cameraman and filmmaker, he is now pursuing his lifelong dreams of writing, playing music, and eating fresh fruit daily.



Jeannie Carlson is a correspondent for Tampa Bay Newspapers, Inc. as seen in *Tampa Bay Times*, *TBNWeekly.com* and *Beach Beacon*; an adjunct English professor; and a writer at *Examiner.com* ("Swedish Cooking with a Southern Accent"). She has been a resident of and inspired by the ONE since 2000. [JeannieCarlson.com]



Rick Carson has lived in St. Pete since 2001, after a career journey that took him from national politics to the innkeeper of a B&B – from the cesspools of Washington to cleaning guestroom toilets (ask him if there is any difference). [rickcarson1@gmail.com.]



Cindy Cockburn was born in NYC and has lived in St. Pete for 10 years. As owner of C.C. Communications for over 20 years, she worked with a variety of clients, from the mayor of St. Petersburg to the Mahaffey Theater & Vinoy Resort. As a freelance reporter, she has worked for many local and national publications, and is the author of two Frommer's Guides to Florida.



Jonathan Kile moved to St. Pete in 2001. A rare genetic condition forced him to give up a career in sales in favor of a full-time position as father, husband, and writer. He blogs about his family travels and advocates for awareness of vascular Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome at *dontmakemeturnthisvanaround.com*. He's on the board of literary nonprofit Keep St. Pete Lit.



Will Michaels is retired as executive director of the History Museum and has served as president of St. Petersburg Preservation and vice president of the Dr. Carter G. Woodson Museum of African American History. He is the author of *The Making of St. Petersburg*. [wmichaels2@tampabay.rr.com]



Samantha Bond Richman relocated to the Old Northeast in 2014 after living in Tampa for 28 years. She owns Sam Bond Benefit Group, a downtown insurance agency. She and husband Tim enjoy fishing, golf, and supporting family-oriented charitable causes.



Victoria Rogers and her husband Patrick moved back to Florida after 25 years in New England. She worked in outside sales, fundraising, and event-planning while raising her daughter Allison. These days, she describes herself as mostly a "victim of my enthusiasms!" [victoria.spofford.rogers@gmail.com]



Cathy Salustri writes about Florida. The *New York Times* featured her book, *Backroads of Paradise*, a travel narrative retracing the 1939 WPA Florida driving tours. Her next book, tentatively titled *The Florida Spectacular*, is undergoing edits. She and her husband live in Gulfport and own *The Gabber Newspaper*. Find her at *greatfloridaroadtrip.com*.



Brandy Stark is an artist, writer, and educator who lives in Crescent Heights. She is known for her hand-wrapped wire metal sculptures, fascination with local ghost stories, lore, and legends, and her immense love of all things pug. When not working, she spends time with her pug pack, pocket pets, and bearded dragon.



Shelly Wilson is (almost) a Florida native who tries very hard to love her state in the summer. She has been a writer and editor for 20 years, recently at the *Gabber Newspaper*, and now as the new editor of the *Journal*. She loves to read, travel, kayak and share great stories. She lives in St. Pete with her wife and an obstinate dog. [wilson.raechelle@gmail.com]





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Those of us who know of Wisser's extensive background admire his nearly 40 years in the media business. Wisser revolutionized local news and weather coverage, and he could have settled anywhere to enjoy his semi-retirement. So why St. Pete?

"We have lived in DC, outside New York City, Seattle, and Atlanta," says Wisser, "and have found this is the best city we have ever lived in."

Today, he can be found around town with his wife Barbara, walking his 9-year-old golden retriever Lou along the bay, or riding his scooter to the USF-St. Pete campus, where he currently teaches journalism.

As a couple, Elliott and Barbara embraced the waterfront, downtown St. Pete condo life exactly a year ago. "We are blessed with the best view of Tampa Bay," he says, "and enjoy the quality of night life, cultural opportunities from the Florida Orchestra to the Dalí and James museums, to dozens of dining options."

Wisser is also a wine connoisseur and appeared for years on a Bay News 9 segment called *Vino Vino*. "My producers and I quickly found out that St. Petersburg features a number of great wine bars. My two downtown St. Pete favorites are Try Wine and Sauvignon," Wisser notes. "There is nothing better than walking to a wine bar, opening your favorite bottle, and then walking home in a bustling city."

A Prestigious Past

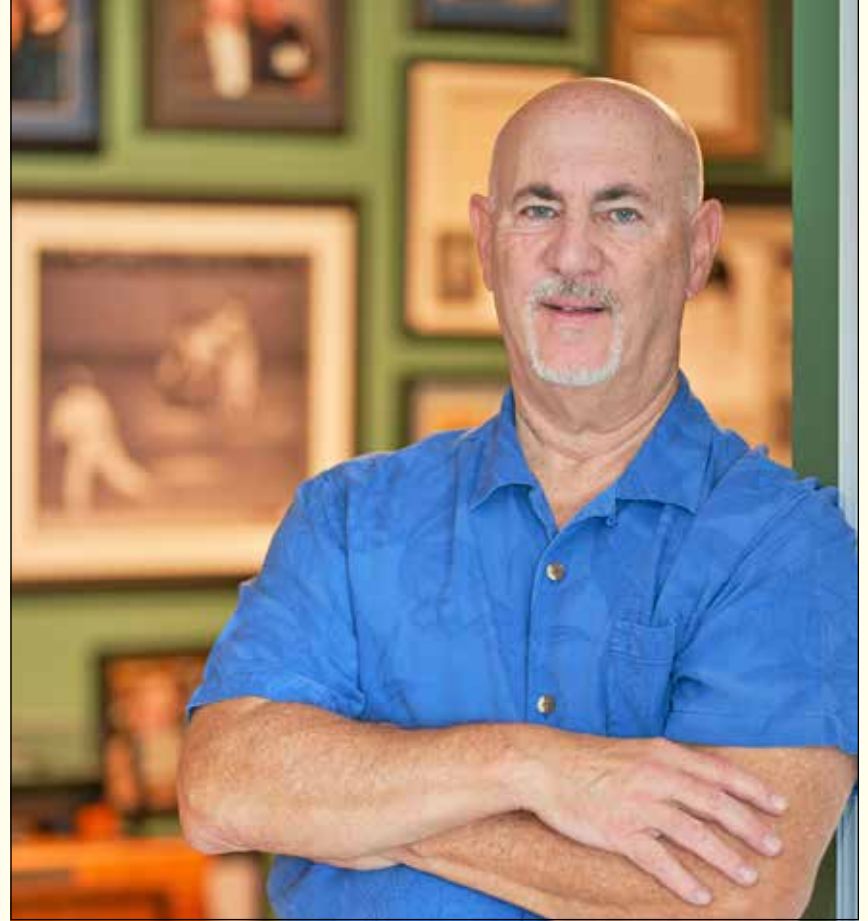
Wisser spent 11 years as vice president and general manager of Bay News 9. He says, "Bay News 9 was profitable by its third year, unheard of in the local 24-hour local news business." Over the years, he won numerous awards, including the prestigious Edward R. Murrow national award for best local website in 2010.

For eight years Elliott served as corporate vice president of news and local programming for Bright House Networks, overseeing 350 employees. Previously, he served as a corporate vice president for Time Warner Cable and was responsible for 12 news channels nationwide. He has consulted for news channels around the world, including projects in China and Sweden. In 2011, *Broadcasting and Cable Magazine* named Elliott the "Next Wave of Leaders" in the media business.

Reporting Roots

While his resume is truly remarkable, it was likely Wisser's early work history that set him up for success. In college, Wisser covered the White House as a young reporter.

"My senior year in college while attending George Washington University was so very unique. I spent three days a week covering the Jimmy Carter White House for the college radio station WRGW and a weekly college TV newscast," Wisser recalls. "Here I was in my 20s, attending daily



Elliott Wisser at home in St. Petersburg

press briefings and presidential press conferences."

The Carter Administration was just Wisser's first taste of presidential access in his career. "President Carter was one of four presidents I have interviewed," he says. "You never forget that. Who did I interview? Nixon, Carter, Ford, and H.W. Bush."

Wisser made his move to Tampa from Seattle where, as news director, he

helped create another 24-hour news channel, Northwest Cable News. Previously, Elliott was news director at WTVR-TV in Richmond, Virginia, and worked as a producer at WSB-TV in Atlanta, as well as a producer/reporter at CNN Headline News. He also spent three years as president and general manager of WTSP in Tampa.

Wisser is still very involved the Tampa Bay community. He is on the board at

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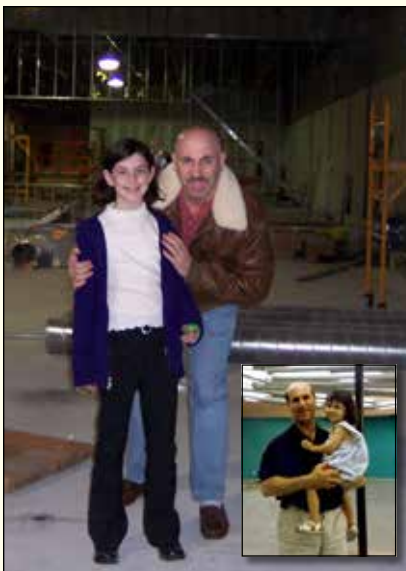
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Bayfront Towers, chairman of the board at Pasadena Hospital, and a member of St. Petersburg's City Beautiful Commission. He is also a former Trustee at the Florida Holocaust Museum, the Dali Museum, and the Tampa Bay Sports Commission, amongst other past local community service.

Elliott and Barbara have been married for 37 years and are the proud parents of 28-year-old Ashley, who works for Paramount Corporation in New York City. For now, the couple seem quite happy to enjoy semi-retirement in the Sunshine City.

"I live along the waterfront, and it is like walking through a museum with great paintings," he says. "Every day there is a spectacular picture of St. Petersburg, especially The Pier. The colors of the day from the 17th floor of my condo showcase the city in a unique way." ●



Wiser with daughter Ashley in December 2004 in the new Bay News 9 under construction in the Carillon. Inset: With Ashley in 1997 at original Bay News 9 station, then under construction.

Photos courtesy of Elliott Wisner



Wiser with race car driver Danica Patrick and sports anchor Rock Riley at Bright House Sports Network.

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Virtually Dalí: Walking Through Art

Abby Baker

There's a certain Dalí piece that exists not only in painting form at St. Pete's Dalí Museum, but as a virtual reality experience in an entirely separate part of the museum. *Archeological Reminiscence of Millet's Angelus* hangs on a white wall in the museum, and also in a whole other dimension.

The *Dreams of Dalí* VR experience comes with the price of admission. While this is a fairly new technology to many, art museums have been using the concept for years to immerse guests in art. In 2018, the Smithsonian Institution added a virtual exhibit – *No Spectators: The Art of Burning Man*. The same year, the Natural History Museum installed an educational VR experience that brought English broadcaster Sir David Attenborough to life.

Years before either of these popular exhibits came to life, the Dalí introduced the technology to St. Pete in 2016. The museum worked with San Francisco creative company Goodby, Silverstein and Partners to bring the surreal painter's art to life.

The chosen painting is a mysterious depiction of two dream-like and towering figures in a forgotten desert somewhere that only Salvador Dalí knows. Or it was.

Guests of the museum walk in and can gear up with a VR headset, listen to an instructional speech on how not to give yourself a migraine, and be transformed inside Dalí's 1935 painting.

Of all the paintings in the museum's extensive collection, why this one?

Says museum marketing representative Beth Bell, "*Archeological Reminiscence of Millet's Angelus* was chosen because the mysterious archaeological ruin seemed an inviting exploration of three-dimensional space and the secrets it held."

Would Dalí Approve?

Tampa educator Catie Chapman visited the Dalí and tried the virtual reality experience in July. "I thought the experience was surprisingly immersive," she said. "Not only inside the actual VR experience, which you had to reserve, but also through the interactive screens placed throughout the museum with short, edited film sequences of Dalí giving various snippets of advice or artistic philosophy."

Though the artist died in Spain in 1989, Dalí's spirit lives as a holographic throughout the museum's gallery. It's likely the artist would be excited by the surreal experience. "Our openness to technology begins with Dalí's example," Bell said. "It was Dalí who made art films in the 20s and 30s, made the first artist video and the first artist holograms."



Photo courtesy of the Dalí Museum

"We've found that for the vast majority of people who experience *Dreams of Dalí* at the museum, this is their first time experiencing virtual reality," said Dalí marketing director Beth Bell.



Virtual reality, a new art frontier



Archeological Reminiscence of Millet's Angelus is the painting that inspired the Dalí Museum's *Dreams of Dalí* virtual reality experience.

In perhaps his most famed approach to this, Dalí created a piece of formerly cutting-edge technology titled *First Cylindric Chromo-Hologram Portrait of Alice Cooper's Brain* from, yes, the actual Alice Cooper's crouching frame. The rock star appears in holographic rainbow, and Cooper even visited the museum in 2014, when he gave a filmed interview.

So, is Dalí okay with his work being converted into pixels? Chapman thinks so. "Sure, Dalí would have approved. Based on the tone of the exhibit and the vignettes throughout the museum, it was reminiscent, to me, of his work with Disney. Surreal almost to the point of caricature," she said.

For now, the *Archeological Reminiscence of Millet's Angelus* is the only painting offered as a virtual exhibition at the downtown museum. But perhaps not for long.

"We would absolutely consider additional Dalí paintings in the future," Bell said, "though there are challenges with exhibition space and the extensive costs to create an additional experience."

Inside the Headset

Like many of the museum's guests, the *Dreams of Dalí* experience was my first dive into the world of virtual reality. It's not as futuristic as you might think, but it's impressive for someone who hasn't played a video game since *The Sims 2* was released. Anywhere you look while wearing the headset, there's Dalí's painting, animated and lurching. While you can't walk freely in the program, movement is simulated with a tiny control, and you can zip all around the two menacing figures and beyond with just a few finger movements.

Dalí famously claimed that the pair of stones in this particular painting aren't meant to be threatening, but an extension of grief – mourning the death of their child in a coffin beneath them. Paired with music and without the ability to look away, I'd say the VR experience painted this in a way I couldn't see before. For a time, being inside the computer mask feels like dream you can't wake up from.

For those who prefer the two-dimensional work of the surrealist painter, the Dalí's always-impressive regular collection is part of admission, but *Dreams of Dalí* provides a whole new look into what the artist's mind may have been like. The experience is free to download at home, but of course, in-home virtual reality set ups aren't as common as tech fans may think. ●

Download details and more are at DreamsofDali.org.

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Anyone is allowed to volunteer, at all levels, including those with minimal mechanical knowledge. “We want people to know about this place because we want the bike community to be accessible to everybody,” Jeffery said. “A lot of people think we’re a bike shop, but we’re not; we’ve got something totally different going on.”

Two-Way Street

Most of the bikes propped outside the small, cement co-op in downtown are on sale for less than \$100. There’s a Relic, a bike worth \$10,000, on sale for \$3,750. A sale like that helps the shop continue running and selling bikes for low prices. But most of the time, Jeffery must assess the customer’s situation and charge them for what he feels works for them. It’s not always an easy conversation.

“They have to be vulnerable with me,” Jeffery said. “Not always, but sometimes they have to tell me what’s going on so I can best help them.” That was the case with co-op customer and current volunteer Oeeulio Robert. He’s lived in north St.

Pete for over 30 years and identifies as homeless.

With an injured foot, life would be even more difficult for Robert if he didn’t have a bike. So, when he found himself in need of some new wheels, the co-op came in clutch. “I didn’t have money, and with my broken foot I couldn’t get around just walking,” Robert said. “It would be awful if I didn’t have one.”

A month ago, Robert walked into the building and explained his situation to Jeffery. Robert left with a new bike and promised to pay what he could when he had it. He ended up staying on as a volunteer to show his gratitude. “He volunteered to pay it back,” Jeffery said.

It’s a common story at the co-op, and not one that goes unnoticed by the people it’s helped. Aside from some of the more urgent situations, such as Robert’s, there are people who come in for a simple repair or to browse inexpensive equipment. “We want people who need help to be able to come here, no matter what their need is,” the shop coordinator added.



At work in the co-op shop. Photo courtesy of the St. Pete Bike Co-op



Some bikes are built from the ground up at the co-op.



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Shop coordinator Caelan Jeffery is the St. Petersburg Bike Co-op's first paid employee.

Room to Breathe

Sitting on prime real estate in downtown, the co-op luckily rents from the adjacent property, the St. Petersburg Shuffleboard Club. The Shuffleboard Club rents from the City of St. Petersburg for a whopping \$1 a month. The Shuffleboard Club then rents to the co-op for \$50 a month. It's cheap rent, but the co-op is always looking for additional funding.

"People don't realize we rely on donations," Jeffery said. Whether that donation be monetary or in the form of bike parts or volunteer hours, the co-op is grateful.

Another form of community aid the organization is tentatively looking out for: a new space. Currently, volunteers work out of a small, non-ventilated building that can become sweltering in the Florida heat. "We're grateful for this space, but it's small and it's hot," Jeffery told the *Northeast Journal*.

Currently, anyone who wishes to enter the shop must wear a mask. Often, the line of people waiting to enter is maskless, and are given masks to enter. Sometimes, people are upset that they must put masks on, Jeffery notes, but the co-op isn't budging in their efforts to be as safe as possible. "I think we're one of the only places around here that still requires masks," Jeffery said. ●

Visit the shop at 559 Mirror Lake Drive North on Mondays or Thursdays, from 6-9:30 p.m.

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Autumn Arts Roundup

The calendar says it's fall, so it must be fall! Check out these mostly air-conditioned art scenes where you can see cool art and support our local creatives. St. Pete has a plethora of places hosting art shows – some in unexpected places. Here is a sampling of some free, upcoming art exhibitions to get your creative juices flowing.

Galleries

Chad Mize Gallery: *The Female Gaze: A Lovingly Haunted Collection of Art by Perry DeVick and Summer Elaine Hue.* 689 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd., Unit C. Opens October 14, 7-10 pm. Visit chadmize.com.



Creepy cool art from Perry deVick and Summer Elaine Hue on display at the Mize

This is a spooky show with a feminist twist featured for the month at the gallery. Surreal images adorn the walls and feature iconic figures that bring about a Halloween theme.

ArtLofts: B. Stark Art, 10 5th Street North, Studio 208. Open and free to the public when

the studios are open, 12-4 pm, Saturdays, Second Saturday Art Walk, and by appointment. Contact brandybstark13@gmail.com.

Brandy Stark won an artist grant from the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance and the City of St. Petersburg's Office of Cultural Affairs. In turn, she has transformed her studio into a *Perfectly Proper Pop-Up Paranormal Museum*. Artwork from local artists feature haunted sites that her team, the SPIRITS of St. Petersburg, have investigated over the past 25 years. In conjunction with the show, she is hosting *Perfectly Pugnacious, Too*, a pug-themed art show featuring the world's most lovable creature, the pug! This show will have a presentation to accompany it on October 15, the National Day of Pugs. Artists will donate a portion of their sales to pug rescue organizations in Florida.

All Things St. Pete: OrnaMENTAL, December 3, 4-9 pm. 4116 8th Avenue South. Contact allthethingsstpete@gmail.com or visit facebook.com/AllTheThingsStPete.

Join All the Things St. Pete (ATSP) in a day of ornaments and other art, celebrating the winter season as well as the one-year anniversary since the studio's official opening. Artists and musicians create works that remove the holiday season from their original contexts, allowing ATSP patrons a chance to connect with the collection in their own way before the inevitable busyness of the season.



Ashley Gregory's art for *Perfectly Pugnacious, Too*, a pug-themed art show

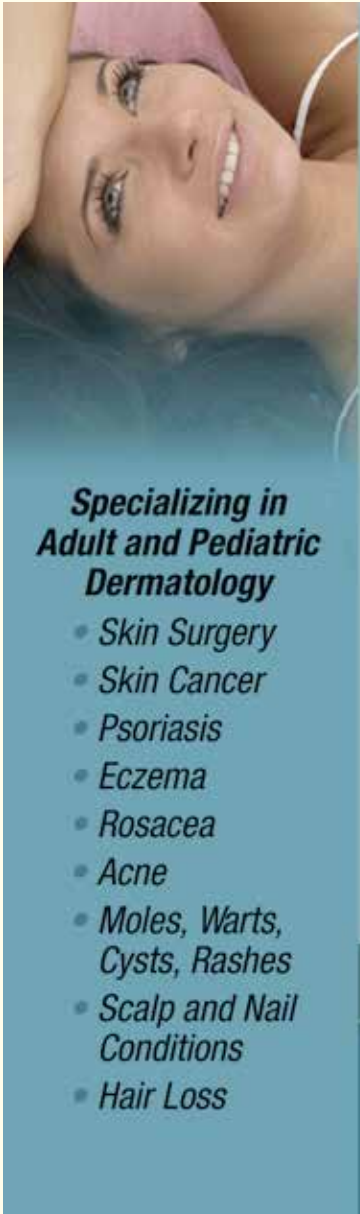
Festivals

Hauntizaar: October 22, 10 am-3 pm. Studio@620, 620 1st Avenue South. 727-895-6620 or thestudioat620.org.

Hauntizaar is happening once again at Studio@620. This free event features Halloween and Day of the Dead arts in a bazaar setting, offering local work to celebrate the holiday. You'll find fine art, jewelry, seasonal decorations, cards, body care products... so much creepy goodness you'll just scream! To get into the spirit of things, shoppers are welcome to dress in costume and participate in the holiday vibe.

Shopapalooza: Vinoy Park, 701 Bayshore Drive NE. November 26 (10 am – 5 pm) and 27 (10 am – 4 pm). Visit shopapaloozafestival.com.

Once again, LocalShops1 is producing one of the largest gatherings of small businesses in the nation. Celebrating its twelfth year, the event hosts 350 local shops, artists, musicians, food vendors and service providers each day. Add to the mix: free entertainment, extensive kids' zone, free raffles, prizes, and more surprises, plus Florida fall weather in Vinoy Park, and it's the perfect event.



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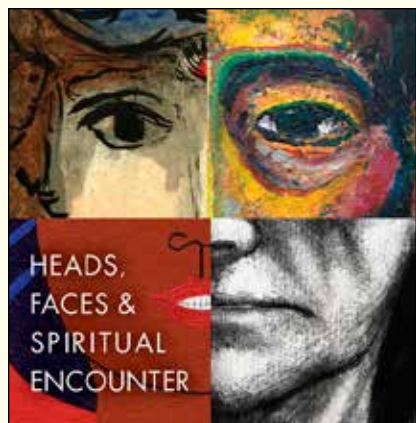
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Unique Venues

St. Thomas' Episcopal Church: *Heads, Faces & Spiritual Encounter*, through September 30. 1200 Snell Isle Blvd. NE. Saturdays, 10 am-2 pm, Sundays, 12-4 pm. Contact 727-896-9641 or graces@stthomasstpete.org.



Heads, Faces & Spiritual Encounter will be at St. Thomas' Episcopal Church through September 30.

From the Edward and Diane Knippers collection, this exhibit offers a thoughtful look at the mystery of the human face. "Beholding a face is always a spiritual encounter," said artist Edward Knippers in the exhibition catalog. Exhibit includes works by Marc Chagall, Henri Matisse, and Pablo Picasso, alongside oil paintings, prints, and sculptures by other artists.

Albert Whitted Airport: 107 8th Ave. SE. Ongoing. Contact Milkshake Studios at milkshakestudio@me.com.

Sheltair Aviation, the fixed-base operator at Albert Whitted Airport, recently installed several pieces of art in their pilot lounge. This area, which serves as a spot of relaxation for corporate and private pilots who frequent the general aviation airport, now has on display aviation-themed artwork by Florida artists Andrea Pawlisz, Roger Ballas, and Olya Chulovskyy. The works feature art that matches the airport: a fighter jet, portraits of Lieutenant Whitted, for whom the airport is named, and the original blimp hanger, among others. All the artwork in the lounge is available for purchase, making them essential pieces for aviation art collectors. Chulovskyy is donating all proceeds of her art sales to Ukraine relief.



Local art on display in the pilot lounge at the Albert Whitted Airport

Art Everywhere

SHINE 2022: Various locations. October 14-23. Visit stpeteartsalliance.org/experience-arts/shine-mural-festival.

Let art SHINE® on the 'Burg! The St. Petersburg Mural Festival returns for its eighth year bringing 17 new murals to the art districts and surrounding neighborhoods of St. Petersburg's downtown. The curated event features some of the most highly respected local, national, and international muralists. The artists are given full creative expression to use the walls as canvas, illuminating the power of art in public spaces.

Second Saturday ArtWalks: September 10, October 8, November 12, and December 10, from 5-9 pm. Free and open to the public, with trolley service. Visit stpeteartsalliance.org/artwalk.

There are many art events from October through December, including the annual holiday shows at the Morean Arts Center and Florida CraftArt, which open in November and last through the holidays. One of the best ways to see and take in everything offered in the way of unique, hand created gifts and art is to participate in the Second Saturday ArtWalk.

Central Arts District, EDGE Business District, Grand Central District, Warehouse Arts District, Uptown Arts District, and downtown Waterfront District come together as one arts destination with many venues hosting the opening night of their latest exhibit. Walk, drive, or ride to the artistic areas that make St. Pete unique! ●

Are you interested in being a part of future art roundups? Please send press releases with a short description of the show, location, contact information, and an example of the art in the show to editor@northeastjournal.org.



Greg Mike mural for SHINE 2021

Photo courtesy of the St. Petersburg Arts Alliance

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Joshua Ginsberg Searches for Local Treasure

Brandy Stark

Joshua Ginsberg is a man of mystery. The author of *Secret Tampa Bay: A Guide to the Weird, Wonderful and Obscure* (2020), *Tampa Bay Scavenger* (2021), and *Oldest Tampa Bay* (2022), his work delves deep in the strange or lesser-known bits of the Bay area.

Ginsberg's writing career was catalyzed by the sudden death of a friend while he was still a resident of Chicago. "Seven years ago, I was stunned when my closest childhood friend, Steven, died," he explains. "I had been talking with him late one night, making plans to see him and his family, and I got a call the next day that he had died. I was really shaken by this – it sort of shocked me out of the trancelike state I'd been going through life in and made me realize how uncertain things are, and that if I wasn't where I wanted to be and doing what I wanted to be doing, it was time to make a change."

Ginsberg and his wife, Jen, knew they didn't want to stay in Chicago, so they began looking for other places to call home and start living the life they wanted.

"We fell in love with the Tampa Bay Area," he says. "As we prepared to move, I decided that I wanted to spend my last months in Chicago trying to learn the city in a way I never had before – really exploring everything I could and coming up with a list of things you can only do or experience in that one place." Some of his research was published in *The City Key*, *Atlas Obscura*, *Travel After Five*, and on his own blog, *Terra Incognita Americanus*.

The experience of taking a deeper dive into the stories of his city would become valuable later, once he, Jen, and their Shih Tzu, Tinker Bell, moved to the area in 2016. Ginsberg's inspiration solidified when a trip to visit family in Philadelphia led to his discovery of a series of novels containing information in a very similar vein.

"I picked up a copy of *Secret Philadelphia: A Guide to the Weird, Wonderful and Obscure* by Reedy Press. When I returned home, I got to thinking that maybe I could write something like that," he says. "I reached out to the publisher after seeing that they didn't have one of their 'Secret' books for the Tampa Bay area, and to my surprise they were interested. Within a couple weeks I was looking at my first publishing contract."

Secret Tampa Bay was published in 2020 and Ginsberg's excitement built over what he had created. "Of course, releasing a local travel guide to many of the area's lesser-known wonders and curiosities just months before a global pandemic probably wasn't the best timing," he says. "I felt that I needed to be more creative for the next one."

Ginsberg combined knowledge gained from his first book with his experience in an



Josh Ginsberg signing one of his books

Photos courtesy of Joshua Ginsberg



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international event called the “Greatest International Scavenger Hunt,” or GISH, for short. A yearly happening created by *Supernatural* actor Misha Collins in 2011, it contains a zany list of scavenger items, creative events, and interactive ideas. GISH is also used as a fundraising event that aids worldwide charities and works to raise global awareness of places and people in need.

“Tampa Bay Scavenger is my second book with Reedy Press and my first time creating what I guess could best be called an activity book. It sort of happened accidentally – I created a small scavenger hunt, just a couple dozen rhyming riddles that would lead people to some of the places in *Secret Tampa Bay*.”

According to Ginsberg, that small scavenger hunt never got off the ground, but his publisher saw the riddles and asked if he could turn them into a book. “It turns out that they were looking to create a new series of scavenger hunt books, so we were clearly thinking along the same lines,” says Ginsberg. “The end result is a book of 361 rhyming riddles that lead people through Pinellas, Hillsborough, Manatee, and Sarasota counties.”

There is also a web portion that participants can use to unlock four puzzle pieces, which, when combined, create a final puzzle. Everyone who completes that will receive something special at the end of their quest. The first player, ZooTech, just completed that achievement in April. And, in homage to the GISH inspiration, Ginsberg continues to donate a portion of each book sold to the organization Random Acts of Kindness, the charitable entity connected to GISH.

When it comes to our corner of St. Petersburg, Ginsberg gives a nod to Sunken Gardens and also explores the Historic Old Northeast and Historic Uptown neighborhoods for some of their secret gems. “I don’t want to give away what they are, but some are places and landmarks that locals will probably be familiar with, and some are much lesser known,” he says. Along with the history of Sunken Gardens, a popular roadside attraction for over 100 years, Ginsberg also sneaks in a bit of information on the locally famous Coffee Pot Rhino. The riddle for the statue reads: *Your typical roadside creature this horned beast is not, find it wearing seasonal garb alongside of Coffee Pot*. “I love that sort of thing,” says Ginsberg, “because it’s one of those quirky little things that people know about at the neighborhood level, but it’s not something that you would find in a typical tour book. It’s part of our local color.”

Apart from local quirks and lore, there is another reason why Ginsberg finds his work so gratifying. “On a personal level, it has allowed me to continue to push my capabilities – game design was an entirely new and unexpected direction for me,” he says. “And I’m not done yet.”

While his latest book comes out this fall, Ginsberg has also been tapped to write the script for a haunted Clearwater ghost tour. “For me,” he adds, “the goal is to give readers a new way of looking at, exploring, and experiencing the area, whether they’re just visiting for a few days or if they’ve lived here their entire lives.” ●

Learn more or join the fun at tampabayscavenger.com.

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Gio Swaby, *My Hands Are Clean 4* (detail), 2017, Thread and fabric sewn on canvas, Collection of Claire Oliver and Ian Rubinstein



NORTHEAST JOURNAL

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Page 17



NEIGHBORHOOD NEWS

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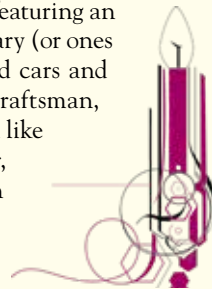
ST. PETE'S JEWEL ON TAMPA BAY

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"Roaring '20s" Candlelight Tour

This year we are putting a special twist on the tour – the Roaring '20s! Help us spread the word and mark your calendars to stroll the neighborhood on December 11 from 3-8pm. We will be featuring an assortment of homes celebrating their 100-year anniversary (or ones approaching), along with 1920s music, period dress, old cars and food trucks. Do you have a home that qualifies – Craftsman, Bungalow, Prairie or Mediterranean? If so and you would like to have your house nominated or become a volunteer, please reach out to us at honna.org. This is our 24th annual event, and we look forward to making it a fun day to kick off the holidays in The Historic Old Northeast!
~ Sharon Kantner



Ghostly Grandpa?

As the historic neighborhood is over 100 years old, there are bound to be some ghosts roaming around. With Halloween just around the corner, thoughts will naturally start turning to the topic of ghostly apparitions and haunted houses. The historic Duncan-Bainum house on 14th Avenue NE may be the home of a ghostly grandpa (read the full story at HONNA.org/news).



Quarterly Neighborhood Meeting

HONNA's third quarter neighborhood-wide meeting will take place on Monday, September 19, beginning at 7pm. All Historic Old NE residents are invited to attend the meeting at Westminster Palms (939 Beach Drive NE). Our featured speaker will be Doris Heitzmann, the Florida-Friendly Landscaping program manager for the Pinellas County Extension. Come and learn more about which native Florida-friendly plants can enhance your property using low-maintenance plants and environmentally sustainable practices, saving you time, energy, and money while protecting our natural environment. As always, we will receive an update from our police department liaison about any recent criminal activity in the neighborhood.
~ John Johnson



Porch Parties

HONNA makes it easy for neighbors to celebrate with one another on the third Friday of most months with the ever-popular Porch Parties. Friends and neighbors gather at a neighbor's home between 7:30-10pm for fun and lively conversation. On Friday, September 16, our host is the gorgeous Bay Street Inn at 635 Bay Street NE, which is BYOB with light refreshments provided.
~ Sharon Kantner

The October Porch Party will be an over-the-top Halloween party on Friday, October 28, at the home of Frank Hay and Steve Deal (116 18th Avenue NE) where festive attire is most welcome and definitely encouraged. For more information, visit HONNA.org/events.



The August Porch Party was extra special – held in A/C comfort inside Sunken Gardens. Some 120 neighbors enjoyed the chance to tour the lush grounds and catch up with friends and make new acquaintances.
~ Sharon Kantner

HONNA Launches New Website

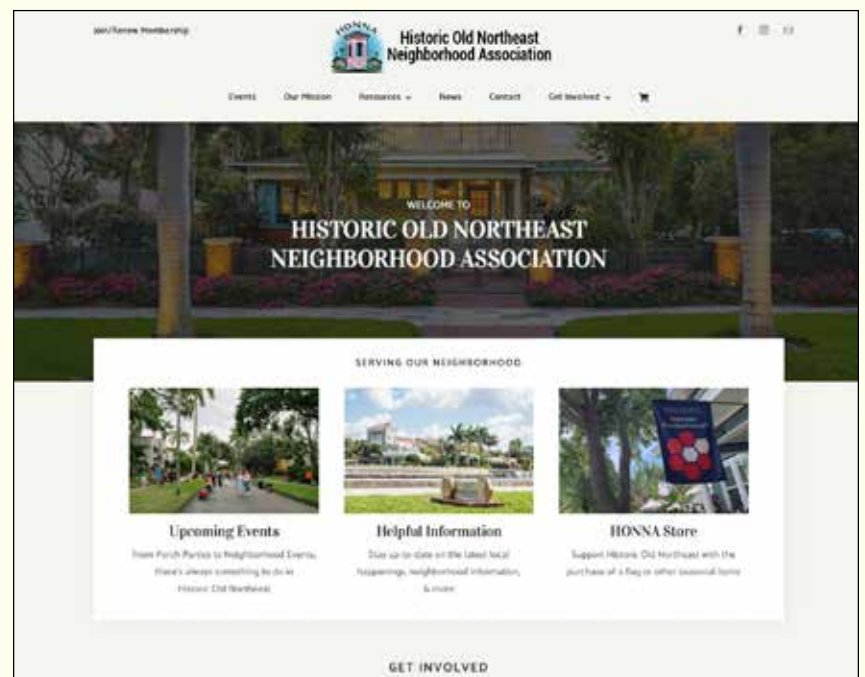
Dozens of annual events, timely neighborhood news updates, features about people and places in the Old Northeast, and valuable neighborhood and City resources are just some of the valuable content that residents of the ONE will find on the new HONNA.org. It's the latest version of HONNA's website that recently launched.

"Like most St. Pete neighborhood associations, we've had a website for several years. But it had become outdated and needed a major facelift," said John Johnson, HONNA president. "So, we worked with local web design firm Shoot to Thrill Media to create an exciting new portal for our Old Northeast residents. Not only does it have an exciting new look, but we've expanded the content and are making the site a primary means of keeping our members informed about important neighborhood news as well as features that highlight people and places with stories to tell."

HONNA sponsors dozens of events every year, from monthly porch parties to bi-annual neighborhood cleanups to

Trunk or Treat

This Halloween tradition will take place on Saturday, October 29 in the Westminster Palms parking lot between 9th and 10th Avenues off Beach Drive NE from 3-5pm. Decorate your car and have treats for the kids. Kids, come in costume, check out the trunks, and play skill games. Volunteers are needed to help make this happen. Please contact Anna at abroshe56@gmail.com for details.
~ Anna Broshears



the very popular Historic Old Northeast Candlelight Tour of Homes. The new site will keep residents informed about the timing, location, and details of each of these. In addition, the site will feature articles about the people and places that make the ONE such a unique part of St. Petersburg.

“We’ve been proud partners with HONNA for several years and we were excited when they approached us about revamping their site,” said Shoot to Thrill Media’s Matt Foreman. “ONE is a large neighborhood with over 2,500 residents, and HONNA.org is an important information source. The new site is intuitive and organized for easy access to important content from renovation tips to neighborhood representatives at City Hall.”

Check out the new site HONNA.org. We welcome feedback and story suggestions.

~Nick Price

be heard separately, but at the same hearing for a Panera Bread with a drive-through feature proposed at 29th Avenue and 4th Street North. If the drive-through is approved, there will not be adequate parking for this site, which is why Belleair wants additional parking at their adjacent property. Again, neighbors and HONNA are opposed to the drive-through for many obvious reasons including car exhaust, safety, stacking of cars, dangerous parking layout, not enough parking and other concerns.

Although a sign at the site states “Coming Soon: Panera Bread featuring a drive-thru,” neither of these projects



has been approved by the Development Review Commission, so no permits for construction can be issued. Both applications will be heard at the October 5 meeting of the commission.

Regarding Westminster Church, as of August 22, no development application has been submitted for this property. HONNA is opposed to the demolition of any portion of this landmarked property, which has contributed so much to the history of our community.

~ Robin Reed

City Landscaping Regulations

St. Pete’s neighborhoods contribute enormously to the popularity and beauty of our city. The Old Northeast is one of the most desirable because of our historic architecture, lush tree canopy, brick streets, granite curbs, and green landscaping. Recently some of our green landscaping has been given over to rocks, shells, and other hardened, impervious surface materials, all of which are not permitted by city code and do not add to our “green” community.

HONNA encourages residents to help us maintain our ‘leafy’ reputation by:

- Using only a layer of sod or ground cover plant material in yards abutting streets or avenues and in the rights-of-way (parkways);
- Remove those materials such as rocks, gravel, and shells that are not permitted by code;
- Request a parkway tree (at no cost to you) next year to keep your home and block shady, cool and ‘leafy.’

~ Robin Reed



Minding the Sidewalks

This neighborhood cleanup event took place on Saturday, August 20, a day neighbors – like Cecelia Messina (above) – were encouraged to devote some time making sure nearby sidewalks are clear of overgrown bushes, tree branches hanging so low you have to duck to get around them, and groundcover that is growing into the sidewalk. While this was meant to be one day for minding sidewalks, it is hoped residents will be aware of unsafe sidewalks throughout the year so we can all enjoy leisurely walks while safely traversing our neighborhood.

~ Doug O’Dowd

Development Updates

Due to the small number of commissioners present for the hearing on the “Special Exception” parking request from Belleair Development for 28th Avenue and 4th Street N, the applicant chose to postpone the case (which is a choice given to all applicants when four votes are needed to pass and only five commissioners are in attendance). The proposal requires the demolition of a property in our National Register Historic District to provide what neighbors and HONNA consider to be excessive parking.

Because of the postponement, another application also by Belleair will



HONNA Flags

HONNA offers a variety of flags that you can purchase to display your love for the ONE. The four choices come in several color combinations: hunter green, burgundy, patriotic and diversity. You can find them at honna.org/shop.



HONNA invites and encourages you to stay connected and on top of programs, events, and other happenings in our neighborhood. It’s a great way to learn more about the neighborhood, become involved, share ideas, learn about events and dates of Porch Parties, and provide feedback. Share/Like us at Facebook.com/honna.org.

Ways To Stay Connected:

- Visit honna.org
- Visit [Facebook.com/honna.org](https://www.facebook.com/honna.org).
- Become a HONNA member. You’ll receive periodic informative email announcements. honna.org/get-involved
- Volunteer for a project, program, or event (the Candlelight Tour of Homes, Trunk or Treat, Porch Parties, Crime Watch). Contact Anna Broshears at abroshe56@gmail.com.
- Follow Historic Old Northeast Forever at historicoldnortheastforever.org. HONF works “to preserve and protect our special neighborhood” (HONF is not affiliated with HONNA). ●

HONNA’S SHINING STARS: BEFORE & AFTER



In an effort to honor Old Northeast homeowners for preserving or updating their home or property and investing the extra dollar to keep the character and history of their homes intact, HONNA has been recognizing them with the Neighborhood STAR Award. Every month, a STAR yard sign will be placed on properties to indicate an award.

Here are the STARS for September (201 11th Avenue N; Michelle Quintana) and October (128 15th Avenue N; Amy and Jonathan Bailey).

Watch for new STARS in the neighborhood monthly, and you’ll be able to find them posted on honna.org, in addition to HONNA’s Facebook page. We invite you to be a part of this effort, so please feel free to nominate a neighbor or a refurbished property you admire in the Old Northeast. Have a home to honor? Send the information to Charleen McGrath at treasurer@honna.org. ●

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Mastering Halloween in Old Northeast

Jon Kile

In this hot housing market, many Zillow listings for the Old Northeast mention the beautiful old trees, the proximity to downtown, the waterfront parks. But there's something important home-sellers often fail to share. Frankly, it should be in the "Disclosures." But if you've moved to Old Northeast recently, perhaps you've heard some version of, "You know about Halloween, right?"

Like it or not, in ONE, Halloween is a part of your life now, and you have three choices: You can embrace it and turn your home into a haunted mansion, a pirate ship, or a spooky orphanage. You can turn the lights off and hide. (We see you in there.) Or you can leave town.

The *Northeast Journal* is here to help those of you who plan to stay and brave this thing that has become the Old Northeast Halloween phenomenon. Here are a few tips for beginners:

1. Buy lots of candy. Then go out and buy more. Then buy more.
2. Protect your yard. When 1,000 kids show up to get candy, physical reminders to remain on the sidewalk will be necessary if you plan to keep that sod green and those sprinkler heads intact.
3. Don't expect people to come up and ring your doorbell. Approach it like the McDonald's drive thru and figure out how to get candy into bags as quickly as possible. (Pro tip: Invite friends over so you can get a bathroom break.)
4. You can't over decorate. In Old Northeast, attics are full of skeletons and guillotines. Christmas is an understated affair, but lucky newcomers might find the previous owner has left them a few scares in the rafters.
5. Seventeenth Avenue is often the heart of the action, with a street closure preventing cars from traveling east of Locust Street. Here, the revelry can spread out without having to worry about traffic.

David and Elizabeth McCaffree were definitely not properly warned when they bought their house on 18th Avenue NE, just a block from those barricades.

"One of the Realtors said something vague about the community being really active at Halloween, but we were unaware of the scale in terms of the displays and the number of people who would come into our neighborhood," David recalls. Their first Halloween happened to be shut down because of the pandemic. But an article in the *Tampa Bay Times* about the subdued holiday featured a 2004 photo of their home and they knew they had to get ready. David, a retired Marine, started drawing up plans. They made it an educational experience for their two girls, 11 and 14.

"We used fractions and ratios to make our theme to scale," Elizabeth said, referring to the enormous octopus attacking their front porch, which was transformed into the Nautilus from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. "I was inspired by references to *20,000 Leagues* in the book *All the Light We Cannot See*." The book-loving family's literary idea took root while David designed each piece to store neatly in their garage.

The display was interactive, Elizabeth explains: "We tell the little kids in superhero costumes that we needed their powers to help fight off the giant sea creature. It was more fun than I expected." Elizabeth said David already has drawings on draft paper for additions for this year's display.

Newcomers might wonder how Old Northeast became the epicenter of ghostly grandeur. One origin story comes from Cynthia Serra on 10th Avenue. Two-and-a-half decades ago, she and a friend started dressing up as the Wicked Witches of Old Northeast, parading around the neighborhood in a convertible, tossing candy. This evolved into a house-decorating contest that today lives on in

NORTHEAST JOURNAL



The legendary cotton candy machine in action

Photo courtesy of Marci Emerson



David and Elizabeth McCaffree's nautical theme with giant sea creature tentacles



Liz and Rob Arrington's alien-in-the-cornfield theme is a perennial hit.



The eerie glow of a flying saucer



Creepiness around every corner in ONE



The Kile family fulfilling their Old Northeast Halloween duty

Historic Old Northeast Neighborhood Association's official annual contest. But even before Cynthia and her crowd spiced things up, the neighborhood had a reputation as the city's Halloween champ. Only here can turning your lawn into a temporary cemetery – complete with life-size skeleton-horse-drawn hearse – gain you the ultimate accolades.

One house that never disappoints belongs to dermatologist Liz Arrington and her husband Rob. Their home on 18th Avenue, between Locust and Cherry, is transformed into a *War of the Worlds* alien invasion. Arrington says, "When we moved here our kids were still little and we didn't want to do something that was too scary. Our house always reminded me of a barn and that inspired the aliens-in-the-corn-field theme. Rob is an electrical engineer and at the time he was a stay-at-home dad." The result is enormous homemade flying saucers that land and take off with the assistance of a pulley and a garage door opener. They get corn stalks from a local farm. "But I think my favorite," says Liz, "is the night before."

Arrington is referring to Halloween eve, when Old Northeast looks more like what you might remember growing up. Neighbors roam the streets to get a glimpse of the most over-the-top creations. This informal tradition was cemented during the pandemic when parents organized safe trick-or-treating for smaller kids, and it continues for children who might be overwhelmed or just too busy during the main event on Halloween night. If there's ever a night to meet your neighbors, this is it.

On Halloween night, tricks are big, but the treats tend to be small. With as many as 2,000 trick-or-treaters, it's a quantity over quality affair in ONE. Mini-Three Musketeers, individual Starbursts, Double Bubble, Dumdums, and Tootsie Rolls are staples. But not everyone is just trying to make their candy last until 9 p.m.

More than a decade ago, one resident set up a cotton candy machine. The line for a wispy swirl of hot pink sugar stretched for a block. Legend has it that when that house was sold, the cotton candy machine stayed with the house – with the stipulation that the new owners carry on the tradition. This requirement purportedly included a lesson in the art of cotton candy making.

Eventually, the machine ended up in the hands of Marci and Joe Emerson. From her new home in Colorado, Marci recalls, "We loved hosting friends who were enlisted to help work the machine, and everyone ended up coated in sugar by the end of the night. We counted upwards of 2,500 cotton candy cones given out!" Under the pressure of making thousands of treats, the machine eventually gave out, sparing the new owners of their home the obligation of attending Circus Candy Culinary School.

Just because Old Northeast gets all the attention on Halloween, doesn't mean other neighborhoods aren't going above and beyond, however. Euclid St. Paul holds The Haunted Hike of St. Pete's "most paranormal neighborhood." And Crescent Heights takes some of the pressure off decorating by encouraging residents to simply hang orange jack-o'-lanterns from their trees. The effect of thousands of pumpkin heads floating on invisible strings is simultaneously beautiful and spooky.

While the morning after invariably involves a bit of cleanup, neighbors usually pitch in to keep candy wrappers from washing down storm drains and the decorations stashed away. And, if you're new to the area, and you spot a skeleton in your attic, don't be afraid. It's probably just a prop – or someone who ran out of candy too early. ●

For more information on Halloween in Old Northeast, check out HONNA.org or find them at facebook.com/honnaorg.

Bird Island The Wilderness in Our Backyard



Cathy Salustri

You know how, in horror movies, right before things get real, someone says, “It’s quiet. Too quiet.”?

That is decidedly *not* the case with Bird Island, sometimes called Coffee Pot Bird Preserve. You can hear – and often smell – the island residents before you see them. A cross-section of birds flap around this tiny Snell Isle island, from black crows to white ibis. Though it’s likely the crows have landed for an opportune snack, white ibis are among many species that nest and roost here. Herons, both blue, green, and triple crowned night herons, peer out from the mangroves. Roseate spoonbills provide occasional pops of color, while squadrons of brown pelicans dominate the island. All the birds seem to have one thing in common this morning – like every morning, every evening, and oftentimes in the middle of the day – they’re all *in their feelings* about one thing or another.

It’s loud, but it’s a wonderful type of loud. Some Florida neighborhoods have the relentless squawk of parrots and conures, while others resonate with sweet, almost melancholy osprey calls. Near Bird Island, the chatter and chaos of this integrated island tell you where you are on your walk, as herons, egret, pelicans, and yes, even crows alight on the mangroves. Some of the leaves, streaked with silver, give insight into which branches the birds favor. Certainly, somewhere in the midst, a decent bit of bird romance takes place, and the resulting hatchlings spend their early life in this tiny melting pot of an island.

Other islands in and near Tampa Bay boast large populations of birds: the Pinellas National Wildlife Refuge, an island within easy paddle from Maximo Park, boasts the largest brown pelican rookery in Florida. Despite a gaping shipping channel running alongside Egmont Key National Wildlife Preserve, more than 35,000 pairs of shorebirds nest here, including royal terns, sandwich terns, skimmers, and laughing gulls.

While those refuges enjoy national protection and more water between them and human developments, Bird Island remains something of an anomaly, a final vestige of what St. Petersburg’s waterfront might have looked like before the dredge-and-fill endeavors that allow the development along the water. The bird diversity of the island is notable.

“I think it’s one of the best places to see birds from the shore,” says Beth Forsys, a professor of biology and environmental studies at Eckerd College who specializes in birds. Forsys lives in Old Northeast and is no stranger to Bird Island. She says it makes an ideal habitat for so many species of birds for one main reason: A lack of mammal predators.

“There are no terrestrial mammals [on the island],” she says. “There are no raccoons or coyotes.” Coyotes, first found in Pinellas County in the 1970s, abound in the area – but they’re not big on swimming. It’s a good thing, too, Forsys says. “One coyote would take out every single nest,” she says. A motivated raccoon could swim there and find a ready buffet, but, she adds, “I can’t see a raccoon being, ‘Yes, I’m going to go there.’”

While some birds won’t hesitate to eat other birds – some jays, for example, are notoriously unsentimental about nest plundering – that’s not a behavior observed from many birds on Bird Island. A great egret, Forsys says, likely won’t eat a roseate spoonbill chick. The crows could but, she says, “They’re probably scavenging.”

The birds that live there tend to nest in trees, Forsys says, and adds that the number of birds – and different species – offer another benefit. “I think the presence of all of them together might be good,” she says, because they have a better warning system, if not a stronger defense, against predators.

Once upon a time, not so long ago, a private company moved to protect the island from another type of predator.

In October 2006, the City of St. Petersburg designated the island a preserve, albeit a privately owned one. A limited liability corporation, Bird Island LLC, bought the island for \$60,000. According to the then-*St. Petersburg Times*, the company – whose principals, P.N. “Bud” Risser III and Jacquelyn Copperwheat are also principals in Heron Holdings, formerly Risser

Oil – snatched the island from the hands of developers who, the *Times* reported in 2007, had plans to build four wooden, solar-powered stilt homes on the island.

Anecdotally, a few locals recall another controversy at the time: Some didn’t appreciate Bird Island’s odor. Hundreds of birds live here; their homes – think of it as a salty, well-landscaped condo complex– include not only kitchens and bedrooms, but bathrooms. It seems, though, the current homeowners adjacent to Bird Island have adapted somewhat to the scent of conservation.

Florida has no shortage – and a long history with – privately owned preserves. In the 1920s, the Roebling family, best known for building the Brooklyn Bridge, created a privately owned park, Highlands Hammock, near Sebring. This later became Florida’s first state park.

Other landowners in Florida also have grabbed land away from developers to keep it private. Near Fisheating Creek, west of Lake Okeechobee, private corporations own several tracts of land designated as conservation easements. Throughout Florida, the developing Florida Wildlife Corridor includes conservation easements on private property as well. While these easements may include farm or rangeland, the landowners have sold the development rights (including the right to increase density) to various conservation groups, including The Nature Conservancy.

Coffee Pot’s Bird Island, though, doesn’t allow people and doesn’t belong to the



The island abounds with bird species. Here, roseate spoonbills nest amongst cattle herons and night egrets.



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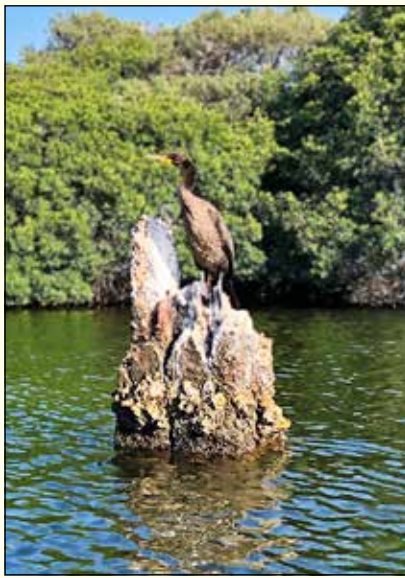
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COMPASS



Brown pelicans dominate Bird Island.



A cormorant guards Bird Island in Coffee Pot Bayou.

Florida Wildlife Corridor. The birds, it seems, don't mind that the land remains in private hands; they have a protected home among the boats, mansions, and seawalls.

St. Petersburg's public waterfront – championed by William Straub, who edited the *St. Petersburg Times* – extends almost unbroken from Lassing Park in Old Southeast to the edges of Coffee Pot Bayou. The linear public space remains a standout in city planning, and any morning or evening, legions of locals and visitors stroll or roll along the waterfront. The birds take it in their stride.

At the northern edge of the public parks, you can catch a glimpse of Bird Island, although to really experience it, you need to walk along Brightwaters Boulevard in Snell Isle, or paddle past it (there is a public boat launch at Coffee Pot Park, and it's a quick trip south, under the Snell Isle Bridge, to the island). Coffee Pot Boulevard provides a slightly more distant view. For boaters who get close, though, remember that it is a preserve: the island and its inhabitants are strictly for eyes and cameras only.

As you walk along the sidewalk encircling the bayou, nature threatens to break through its walled-in existence: red mangroves, trimmed into tidy boxes, send out prop roots over a gate, looking for water along the sidewalk. Shoots of green wind their way through the latticed concrete. Salt crystals glisten on boats. The seawall forms almost a complete circle, civilization all but hemming in the tiny preserve. But just off center of middle, Bird Island reminds us that, in Florida, the wilderness is never very far away. ●

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Sept. 13-17: Shelly Reale, Ceramic Sculpture



Sept. 20-21: Richard Avery, Ceramics on wheel



Sept. 22: Sue Shapiro, Ceramics, handbuilt



Sept. 23: Tyler Jones, Ceramics on wheel



Sept. 24: Kimberli Cummings, Ceramics on wheel



Sept. 27-30: Michael Baker, Glass



Oct. 1: Matthew Szidik, Glass



Oct. 4-8: Laurie Landry, Mosaics



Oct. 11-15: Eric Folsom, Metal

construction to start anew. Upon rebuilding, the church was retrofitted with an interior steel frame. According to newspaper reports at the time, the church was rebuilt significantly, exceeding construction standards and requirements.

The rebuilding resulted in an architectural gem. First Methodist is significant for its artistic use of the Gothic Revival style architecture with an English Gothic influence. It's constructed of red brick in what is called a "stretcher" or "running bond" pattern; cast concrete ornamentation is present on all facades. The roof is a steeply pitched, pseudo-mansard style with slopes sheathed in gray slate shingles. All windows in the sanctuary are made of leaded stained glass manufactured by the George Hardy Payne Studios of Paterson, New Jersey. These windows are in the Tiffany style, which incorporates multiple layers of opalescent colored glass, often faceted, with traditional painted and fired glass. The 10 windows of the east and west walls of the sanctuary on the lower level depict major events in the life and passion of Christ. The large window facing Williams Park is a reproduction of Leonardo da Vinci's *The Last Supper*.

The church's 144-foot-high bell tower originally housed a 10-bell carillon, which was later increased to 15 bells. The first bells were bronze, cast by the Meneely Bell Company of Troy, New York, in 1926, and the largest weighs 2,208 pounds. The church is celebrated as the location for the wedding scene in the 1985 movie *Cocoon*. First Methodist is now one of our city's most treasured historic landmarks. It was officially designated as a National Landmark in 1990 and as a City Landmark in 1993.

Regardless of how well any church is built, maintenance is an ongoing necessity. Periodically special treatment of the building also is needed. The last intensive building maintenance was provided with the help of a state grant approximately 20 years ago. Now it's time for another in-depth refurbishment. That job has fallen to Cassie Gardner, founder and CEO of family owned All Trades Historic Restoration Construction Company. Gardner's company is headquartered in St. Pete, where she is also a resident, and specializes in historical preservation. Her portfolio includes familiar local and regional landmarks such as Bok Tower in Lake Wales, the Terrace Hotel in



Massive scaffolding surrounds First United Methodist Church with preservation work underway.



The original bells were cast by Meneely Bell Company of Troy, New York, in 1926.

Lakeland, Union Trust Bank in St. Pete, Centro Asturiano in Ybor City, Greater Bethel Missionary Baptist Church in Tampa, and the Fanny A. Ponder Meeting House for the Metropolitan Council of Negro Women in St. Pete, among others. This past year All Trades was awarded the Preservation Craftsmanship Award from Preserve the 'Burg for restoration of the Union Trust Building.

Gardner's family has been in the construction business for three generations. Her husband, Randall Gardner, is a stone mason and partner at All Trades. She anticipates her new son, appropriately named Mason, will add a fourth generation. Gardner grew up in the restoration business. Her father, "R. J." Dale Kunkle, began his company, Masonry Maintenance in Ohio, in 1954. When she left his company and moved to St. Pete to start her own business, her father told her that she'd be back. It's been eight years, and instead, he's flown to St. Pete each year to visit and admire her work.

Says Gardner, "The reason I came to St. Petersburg is that I, as a general contractor, saw the need for a female business entrepreneur who has a passion for preserving historical structures in St. Pete. Leaving the cold winters of Ohio behind didn't hurt much either."

Gardner's sister, Melissa West, is also in the preservation construction business. She owns large equipment and crane rental company, Tradesman Crane. Some of her notable projects are the Iwo Jima memorial in Arlington, Virginia, and the Old Jefferson courthouse in St. Louis, Missouri.

"I am blessed to have such an amazing family with a strong historical preservation background. I speak with my sister and father weekly about preservation projects, whether it be past, present, or future," says Gardner. "Mason doesn't have a trowel yet, but he will be getting his tools as soon as he is able to hold them!"

Prior to commencing work at First United Methodist, Gardner undertook an inspection of the entire church building. She determined the large window depicting da Vinci's *Last Supper* to be in remarkably good condition. Some windows, however, are without exterior protective overlays and these will be added as a part of the restoration. The bell tower needs special attention due to spalling concrete and deteriorated rebar.

Photos courtesy of All Trades Historic Restoration

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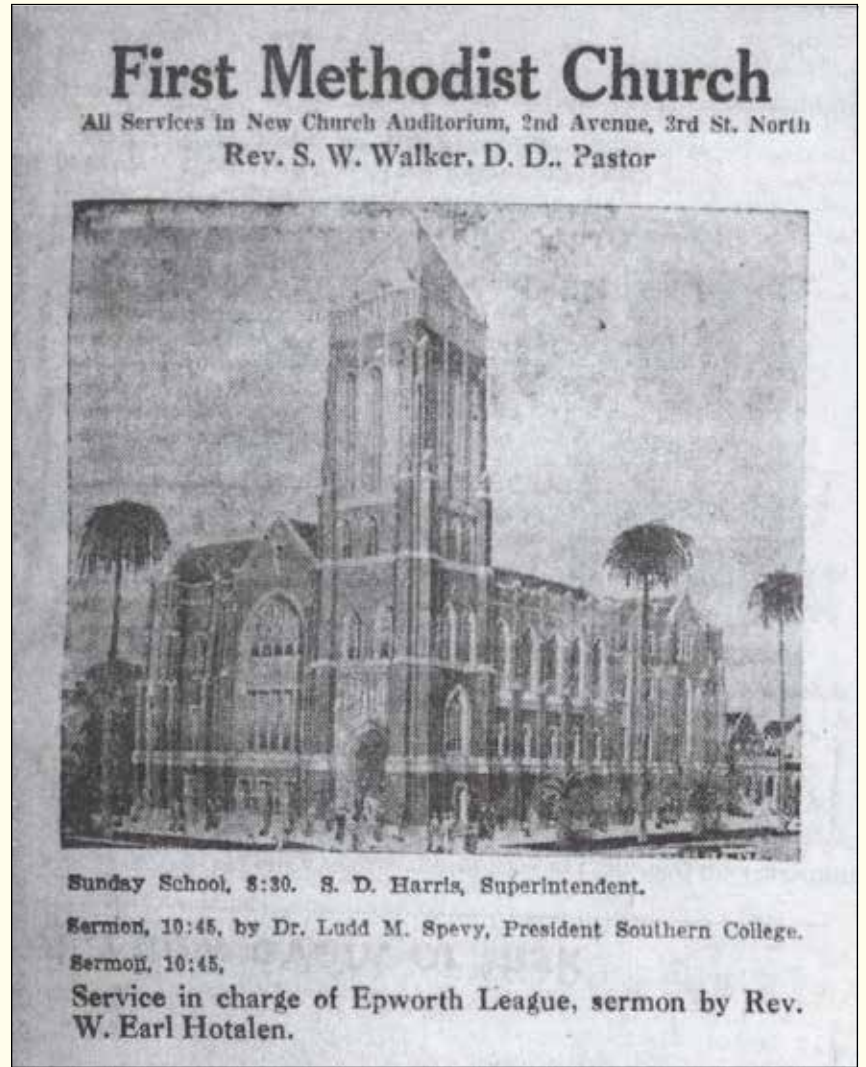
Church concrete ornamentation in need of repair

First Methodist is primarily in need of masonry restoration, specifically “repointing,” a process of replacing deteriorated mortar from the joints of a masonry wall with new mortar. Properly done, repointing restores the visual and physical integrity of the masonry. Improperly done, repointing not only detracts from the appearance, but may also cause physical damage to the bricks. The brick restoration itself involves the “center cut chip method,” where the mortar between the bricks is chipped away and then replaced. The process is meticulous and time-consuming.

A great deal of thought goes into the restoration of brickwork in a landmark. It is not a matter of just buying “off-the-shelf” mortar mix and other needed materials. Samples of the existing mortar were sent to a mortar preservation specialist in Maryland where the old mortar was not only matched for color, but also elasticity, porosity, tensile, and compressive strength. This assures that the new mortar will set in the same way as the masonry being restored, eliminating one of the primary causes of wall failure. Church representatives themselves selected the final color.

Permitting the work was a further challenge. Because the church is a city-designated landmark the workplan for the building required approval from the city’s Urban Planning and Historic Preservation Division. This process was quick. However, rather than ladders, Gardner uses scaffolding to cover exterior walls, which is safer and more efficient. Securing permits for the required massive scaffolding, which partially obstructs the sidewalks, was the greater challenge. The city has both city and state-maintained sidewalks, and First Methodist has both – each with its own permitting process.

All Trades began work on the north and northeast elevation in February using aerial work platforms. Work on the west elevation commenced May 31, after extensive scaffolding was erected there by All Trades scaffold sub, Contractor’s Access. The work on the west elevation was completed on June 30. The massive scaffolding was then dismantled and relocated from the west elevation to the south,



In April 1926, the new First Methodist Church was not quite finished, but services were held in the new church auditorium.

southeast, and bell tower. That scaffolding along with the installation of debris netting was completed on August 2.

Interestingly, All Trades office is located on the church’s property and has been the home of Gardner and her team for seven years. Every day Gardner came to the office, looked up at the magnificent bell tower, and said, “One day, you will be mine.” Through patience, prayers, and perseverance, Gardner and her team’s dreams finally came true.

Life-long church member Bob Ulrich is proud of the church’s stewardship commitment to preserving First United Methodist. “Our city has seen considerable structures of our past fall to the wrecking ball,” he said. “We must closely guard First Methodist and our other city landmarks.”

Will Michaels is the author of *The Making of St. Petersburg* and *The Hidden History of St. Petersburg*. He can be reached at 727-420-9195 or wmichaels2222@gmail.com.



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Historic Inn Takes a Road Trip



Nighttime travelers did a double take at the towering home moving down 4th Street North.



The move took 12 hours and cost The Nolen developers \$500,000.

Photo courtesy of William Herrmann

Abby Baker

St. Petersburg is changing all right. One day, the bright blue, historic Bay Gables home was sitting on 4th Avenue NE; next it was being cautiously transported overnight to its new home at Historic Round Lake, just over half a mile away.

The 120-year-old multistory home was moved entirely, wraparound porch and all, after the property was purchased by high rise condominium company, The Nolen. The developer plans to build a 23-story condo tower there by 2023.

The move began at midnight on July 30 and the big blue house traveled west down 4th Avenue North to get to its new location. Movers and supervisors included a handful of local organizations, namely the St. Pete Police Department and the Department of

Transportation. The process took a whopping 12 hours and \$500,000 from The Nolen to complete.

The developer opted to physically move the house because it was legally bound to do so, considering the property at 123 4th Avenue NE is registered as a historic landmark. Another 100-year-old home, the Morrison Hotel, directly next to the inn, wasn't so lucky. The Nolen demolished the building as it had no legal obligation to move or preserve it.

Manny Leto, executive director of Preserve the 'Burg, says while the move is a success story for the Bay Gables mansion, it goes to show the need for preservation efforts, citing the loss of the former hotel that was close in age, but didn't have the same historical status.

"It's a story of the effectiveness of historical preservation," Leto said. "The developer was in this position... where they had to move the house." Leto said that this type of move is the last option in terms of preservation.

"Physically moving buildings can be a part of historic preservation, but certainly the ideal is for the property to remain in place so that it remains in the context of the structures around it," Leto explained.

Taking the building out of the Mirror Lake area changes its story, he says, and changes the story of the neighborhood of its new location. But new stories are all part of a changing and growing St. Pete.

"The challenge with growing cities is managing growth with history. We don't want to lose the essence of the city, of what makes it different," Leto said. "It's about layering that growth with history."

Round Lake's latest transplant now begins a new chapter in its long history, without suffering any damage during its adventure on wheels. "The home was in good shape," Leto said, "so it made the move in good shape." ●



Photo courtesy of Preserve the 'Burg

This big blue house was built as a private home on 4th Avenue NE in St. Petersburg more than 100 years ago. This July, it was physically moved to another location due to a developer buying the land it sat on and the home's historic status.

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Your Guide to Yard Oddities in Old Northeast

Jon Kile

One the corner of 10th Avenue North and 3rd Street stands a tree with a stocky trunk and limbs like flexed biceps curving up toward the sky. It almost begs to be climbed, but this tree is hardly welcoming. The trunk and branches are protected by rock-hard thorns. And not just a few thorns. The Brazilian floss silk tree wears an armor that keeps even a squirrel from exploring its limbs.

It was planted about 25 years ago by Cynthia Serra and Allison Butler who came to St. Petersburg in 1990. They found the tree when it was little more than a stick at a nursery in Miami. Their bungalow had been owned by a golf pro and the yard was a literal putting green. (The house also boasts another Florida rarity – a basement.) When they decided to xeriscape their yard with Florida-native and Florida-friendly plants, the now-common practice was a curiosity. Indeed, their yard is full of curiosities. They often share seedlings and cuttings with neighbors who envy the dozens upon dozens of blooming plants, trees, and vines.

Their Brazilian silk tree is notable because its late October bloom comes white, as opposed to the more common pink. The white blossoms are made more unique by the fact that the seeds from this silk tree have thus far only produced offspring with pink flowers. (A few of which can be found in neighboring yards.)

This tree is thriving in our climate. The only threat to it came when a cranky resident complained that it blocked their ability to see cross traffic at the stop sign. “A city truck pulled up and a crew jumped out with chainsaws. I stood between them and tree and refused to move,” Serra recalls. Fortunately, it was determined that the tree was nowhere near the line of sight and well within the city code for a tree in the right of way.

In October, on your way to enjoying the neighborhood’s elaborate Halloween decorations, be sure to pass the tree in full bloom. ●

Got an Old Northeast oddity you'd like to share? Email Jon Kile at jkile@gmail.com.



Brazilian floss silk tree in full bloom



The spiky branches are not for climbers



The “silk” inside the tree’s large seeds



Pretty from a distance, treacherous up close

Photo courtesy of Cynthia Serra

“He Gave Me My Life Back”

St. Pete native John R. had been living with low back and leg pain from spinal stenosis. “My legs and back were in extreme pain and my doctors told me the only solution would be surgery.” Then he met St. Petersburg’s Dr. Matthew Mann.

Spinal stenosis, or narrowing, is often the result of osteoarthritis, or ‘wear and tear’ arthritis, that can pinch the nerves as they come out of the spinal cord. John explained that the first few steps every morning were excruciating. It had progressed to the point that his legs would give out occasionally when he got up to walk to the kitchen for his morning coffee. “I can’t live the rest of my life being scared to get out of bed in the morning.”

John was experiencing sciatica pain and leg weakness which are the most common signs in people suffering from spinal stenosis. The symptoms of spinal stenosis often start slowly and worsen over time. John explains that his symptoms of low back and leg pain started 10 to 15 years ago but were mild and easily managed at the time. By the time he decided to get help with his condition John stated, “it feels like someone is stabbing a hot knife into my butt and then my leg just goes weak.”

Unfortunately, John’s story is all too common. In the U.S. alone, over 2.5 million people suffer with spinal stenosis. This condition mostly affects people over 50, but those over 65 years of age tend to have more severe symptoms.

If you are unfortunate enough to be facing the same disheartening prognosis, the following realities may be familiar. You are scared to get out of bed because you know the pain is just a step away. You have difficulty walking, shopping, or doing activities like running or pickleball. You have changed your life to accommodate the pain or the fear of falling from doing too much at once.

Your doctors have told you the only solutions are either medicines that don’t seem to work or a major surgery that cannot guarantee you’ll feel better. It is important to know that you have proven options that can help without the need for harsh drugs or invasive surgeries.

Dr. Mann, the founder of St. Petersburg Acupuncture and Integrative Medicine uses the science of acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine with other integrative techniques that assist in increasing blood flow and reducing inflammation to help alleviate the symptoms associated with spinal stenosis.

“I’m excited to wake up in the morning again. I’m 80 years old and I’m back to riding my bike and playing drums again. I can join my wife now for her nightly neighborhood walks that I had to stop years ago. I didn’t really have much faith in acupuncture being able to help my pain, but I had to try something. I was scared of getting a surgery that didn’t help my friend with the same condition.” John states, **“I regret I didn’t try acupuncture sooner. I lived with the pain for so many years, when in just a couple of months, Dr. Mann had me feeling 20 years younger.”**

John’s back to working on his hot rod, playing drums in a local band, and enjoying nightly walks with his wife. She even personally thanked Dr. Mann for giving her husband his life back.



Dr. Mann, DAOM AP, has been practicing East Asian medicine for over a decade. He focuses on using acupuncture and Chinese herbal medicine while integrating other scientifically proven techniques to offer non-surgical, non-drug options for people with chronic pain and complex chronic conditions. Dr. Mann specializes in chronic cases of pain and internal medicine, especially cases that have been deemed ‘hopeless’ or ‘untreatable’.

If you’ve missed too many pickleball matches or weekend markets because of pain or other chronic conditions, it’s time to call Dr. Mann and the team at St. Petersburg Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine.

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AROUND THE BLOCK



Photo courtesy of the St. Petersburg Debutant Club

Meet St. Petersburg's 2022 Debutants

Eleven young women will be presented at the St. Petersburg Debutant Club ball on December 29 at the St. Petersburg Coliseum, a tradition that dates back to the 1930s. This year's crop consists of students entering their second year of college, with majors in fields as diverse as chemistry and computer engineering to criminal justice and sports management. As part of the program, debutants participate in community service projects; this year, they will volunteer with the St. Petersburg Free Clinic's We Help Fresh Pantry. Back row from left: Logan Wilson, Anslee Long, Jessica Halvorsen, Kathryn Bunner, and Emily Roache. Front row from left: Katelyn Disler, Hope Kennedy, Allison Mortimer, Sidney Jones, Hannah Davis, and Margaret Thompson. ●

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Artificial lake, and real compassion ~ ●

~ Jeannie Carlson

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Spirits of the Vinoy: A Historic Haunt

Brandy Stark

The Vinoy Renaissance St. Petersburg Resort & Golf Club has a long history as one of the grandest hotels in the area. Called “The Pink Lady” by locals, the hotel has watched over our local shorelines, and welcomed residents and visitors alike to admire her beautiful halls. But where there is beauty, there is also lore. It is said that the Vinoy not only hosts tourists but is the alleged home of spiritual inhabitants as well.

The building’s history is legendary. For the origins, we must go back to the 1920s when Aymer Vinoy Laughner hosted a party. Guest Gene Elliott, himself a real estate developer, noted the scrub land across from Aymer’s house could be put to much better use. Never one to waste time, especially while St. Pete was experiencing a building boom, Laughner agreed, and hired Henry Taylor to be the hotel’s architect.

Taylor is well known in this area as the designer of many iconic – and possibly haunted – buildings in the bay area, including Jungle Country Club Hotel (today, Admiral Farragut Academy), the Rolyat Hotel (now Stetson University College of Law), St. Mary’s Church, and even Comfort Station No. 1 (the historic public bathroom near the approach to The Pier). Ten months after Laughner commissioned Taylor – and for the then-astounding cost of \$3.5 million – the Vinoy Park Hotel was completed. It opened in December 1925 to much fanfare.

The Vinoy experienced the ebb and flow of life along with the city. It suffered vacancies during the Great Depression and served as a training base for soldiers during World War II. It reopened after the war, but after several decades, it fell out of favor, and closed in the 1970s. The roof eventually collapsed, letting in rainwater, vagrants, and even claims that alligators had moved into the lower floors.

Though it was listed on the National Registry of Historic Places in 1978, for many years the fate of the iconic building rested on a knife’s edge. That is until its painstaking and historic \$93 million restoration finally saved it from the wrecking ball. It reopened in 1992 with luxurious additions like a spa, and redesigned and updated rooms.

While the hotel has been restored to its “jewel” status, with such a long and rocky history, it’s no wonder numerous ghost stories have emerged from its halls over the years. Multiple instances of supposed spectral sightings include the following:

A woman dressed in white who is seen on the fifth floor. Some believe she is the ghost of the wife of Gene Elliott who died when she fell from the back porch of their house. This happened while the couple was going through a difficult divorce, which included a request for a hefty alimony. The lone witness to the event, a maid named Annie Gadsden, claimed it was murder, but vanished before the trial, allegedly on a one-way trip to Europe. She was never seen again. Some think that the ghost might be that of the missing maid.

Some have claimed to see the ghost of a man dressed in a tuxedo who haunts the hotel elevators. He plays with guests by making the elevator stop, without request from the rider, on the fifth floor. The doors open to an empty hallway.

Not all the spirits are visible. Visitors have claimed to hear beautiful music coming from an empty ballroom, and ghost hunters speculate this could be the spirit of Paul Whiteman who once conducted music there. A few even say that there is a spirit that can be seen from the tower, even when it is locked, and no one should be up there.

And, because Babe Ruth once stayed there, some think that he, too, may have left some spiritual residue at the hotel. Some Major League Baseball players who have stayed in certain rooms reported feeling as if there is someone else with them – especially if they are visiting players from the Red Sox.

The hotel reached the pinnacle of ghostly legend when Jason Hawes, from Ghost Hunters, stayed in room 521 and allegedly found evidence of paranormal activity. The episode is titled *Ghosts of the Sunshine State* and was released as episode 18, season 4.

As a paranormal investigator, I have visited the Vinoy and even stayed in the same room Hawes slept in. I had very little luck meeting the woman in white, the tuxedoed gentleman, or any of the other characters described here. My stay in the



Drawing of the Vinoy Park Hotel at night, circa 1930s

Courtesy of Florida Memory



The Palm Room overlooking the ballroom

haunted room was relatively quiet – no moving objects, noises, or doors opening. However, in parts of the night I did feel as if I wasn’t alone, even though I enjoyed the luxurious, pet-free, king-sized bed, and the freedom of not needing to clean the room myself. Was it a suggestion lodged in the back of my brain? Possibly, but I did end up checking out at 6 am the next morning. I didn’t leave, however, until I took one more walk around the beautiful, and ghost-sighting-free, grounds.

Currently and until December 2022, the Vinoy is undergoing interior and exterior renovations. The front entrance is closed, the front drive, lobby, pool, bar, spa, and some guestrooms are also impacted. I wonder if this recent slate of construction might stir up a slumbering spirit or two.

Whether the hotel is haunted by ghosts, or simply by memories, The Pink Lady – a nickname it shares with its slightly younger coastal sister, the Don CeSar – remains a tribute to the beauty of St. Petersburg. Just as it was built to be a crown jewel for the city, its heritage and history remain a powerful tribute to those who saw the potential of our little ‘Burg, and to those who still do. ●



Revelers in the grand ballroom



The same ballroom, derelict before reconstruction

Black-and-white photos courtesy of Vinoy Renaissance

MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR



Arin Greenwood
22nd Avenue North

How long have you lived in St. Pete and where are you from?

We moved to Gulfport from Washington, D.C. in early 2015. Then we bought a house in Crescent Heights, where we've lived ever since. I'm originally from Rhode Island.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

I'm a little obsessed with manatees; more than "a little" really. During manatee season, I walk along Coffee Pot Bayou almost every day to see them at that spot across the street from the purple tree (you know the place).

Most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation?

I spent 5.5 years living in the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, a US territory in Micronesia and I got to take some incredible trips. A favorite was to the island of Yap, where I slept in a little cabin on the beach and went diving with giant manta rays.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

I tend to have the problem of being more or less equally interested in everything – but also I hate to drive. Where else can I go with good weather, lots of great walks and hikes, and awesome animals?

What famous person would you like to meet and why?

Though not famous, I'd like to meet my grandparents. The only one I ever knew was my mother's mother, who died when I was really young. We called her Nano, and I wish I could spend more time with her.

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby?

I love to walk. It's hereditary. My dad and I did the Sierra Club's One Day Hike, a 50k walk on the C&O Canal in D.C., through to West Virginia. And if that sounds challenging, my brother did the 100k version.

A movie you'd recommend or TV show you're watching?

We just finished season three of *Never Have I Ever*.

If you were a dog, what breed would you be?

Mutt. Probably one with a big head and short little legs.

Tell us about a situation or a person who has inspired you.

I work in animal welfare. It's been a very hard year in sheltering – shelters are fuller than they've been in a couple of years, and pets are getting adopted more slowly. This is on top of serious understaffing. I am not on the front lines; I am a writer. My whole heart is with the people working in shelters, caring for these pets every single day, doing their best for animals and people in their communities even when things are this hard. If you have any room in your home and heart, this is a great time to adopt or foster.

Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

All three of my cats love belly rubs.

Something people might not know about you?

I love John Denver. Also I used to be a lawyer. I am still a member of the New York Bar even though I haven't practiced for 14 years.

What do/did you do for a living?

I am an animal writer. I was HuffPost's first and only animal welfare editor, then I wrote about animals for a bunch of publications. Currently I write and edit for my main client, Human Animal Support Services, a project of American Pets Alive!. I also write fiction and I've had three novels published. A fourth novel, *The Year of Alice*, is out on submission with publishers now.



Shelly Steck Reale
2nd Street South

How long have you lived in St. Pete and where are you from?

We moved to St. Pete five years ago, after 30 years in the Seminole suburbs. I grew up in the Old Northeast, and my heart never left my childhood hometown.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

We're so lucky to live in such a vibrant, quirky, walkable city with so many amazing businesses. But, if I had to choose just one, it'd be Book + Bottle, an independently owned book and wine/coffee bar downtown.

Most interesting, enjoyable or exotic vacation?

Eight years ago, my husband and I traveled to a little village in Italy called Lucca. We fell in love with the area and stayed for weeks. We lived like natives: grocery shopping, cappuccinos in the local cafe, laundry at the laundromat, chess in the park with the town's people, and making friends we keep in touch with to this day.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

1.) Angkor Wat/Angkor Thom, Cambodia. 2.) Pre-Covid, Florida CraftArt hosted Tibetan Monks who traveled the world creating mandalas out of sand (The Sacred Arts Tour). I volunteered to entertain them for a day. They spoke very little English, which turned the day into a fun-filled game of charades to communicate. We grew quite close. They invited us to spend some time with them at their Drepung Gomang Monastery in India. That would have to be a bucket list must-do!

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby?

Sculpting from clay is more than a recreational hobby; it's both my passion and my therapy (and far less expensive than a psychiatrist). I am fortunate to have a studio locally and have created pieces that have garnered some attention for their social justice message.

A movie you'd recommend or TV show you're watching?

I have recently found and am obsessed with the series *Schitt's Creek*. Original. Funny. The perfect escape.

If you were a dog, what breed would you be?

Probably a general, all-around mutt. One that is definitely loyal, but never does what it's told.

Tell us about a situation or a person who has inspired you.

My son has Asperger's Syndrome (a form of autism) and was horribly bullied in grade school. One classmate never let an opportunity pass to humiliate my son. One day, he noticed the ruthless classmate was crying, very distraught in the hallway. Without thought, Austin ran to his side and hugged him, reassuring him that everything was going to be okay. I was stunned at my 8-year-old's open heart. And I learned a deep and profound lesson in compassion, kindness, and forgiveness that I will never forget.

Something people might not know about you?

I'm often told, "Shelly, you are so happy; like a little ray of sunshine." But I suffer from depression and anxiety. Most days are a struggle. There is such a stigma attached to mental challenges that most people keep their struggles hidden and put on a brave face – which, of course, isolates one even more. This is starting to change, though. And the more those who face these challenges speak out, the less of a stigma it becomes.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

I am lucky enough to have found and married perhaps the kindest and most wonderfully brilliant man on the planet, Nick Reale. We have two amazing sons, Nicky and Austin. Finishing off our family is our cat, Boo (short for Bubonic, as in plague).



Lois Slavin
14th Avenue NE

How long have you lived in St. Pete and where are you from?

Since March 2020, when we got stranded here in our winter cottage during Covid and couldn't get back to our home near Boston. We decided to sell our place there and move here full-time. We've never looked back.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

Warren's bench at Elva Rouse Park for sunrise each morning. It's great to hang out with an ever-changing constellation of interesting people and adorable dogs.

Most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation?

It's always my most recent one. Last July, I returned to South Kensington, London, where I lived as a student several years ago. I spent my days at the Victoria & Albert Museum and my nights at the theater. Saw wonderful exhibits ranging from Buddhism to Africa fashion and went to five plays in four days.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

Botswana/Tahiti (already booked) and someday Israel.

What famous person, would you like to meet and why?

I would love to have met now-deceased author Ernest Kurtz, who wrote *The Spirituality of Imperfection: Storytelling and the Search for Meaning*. It illuminates the importance of the stories each of us has to share and the gifts of listening with an open heart.

A movie you'd recommend or TV show you're watching?

The American version of *Love on the Spectrum*, a romantic docuseries about people on the autism spectrum looking for love.

Tell us about a situation or a person who has inspired you.

My mother was my role model for approaching life with love and humor. She was a wise woman, as well as a wise guy! I definitely won the mom lottery!

Current book you've read and would recommend?

This Is Your Mind on Plants by Michael Pollan, as it gives me insight into my husband's work (see below).

Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

In 1973, I co-produced one of the first TV interviews to show the faces of rape victims fully lit. This was very controversial at the time. It was broadcast several times and included in the inaugural *Women Doing Video* exhibit at School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Something people might not know about you?

I lived in Tehran during the summer of 1972, working as a private tutor in English as a Foreign Language.

What do/did you do for a living?

The theme of my career was communicating about new ways of thinking, working, and living. I produced one of the first videos to explore the life of a gay couple raising kids; developing/teaching a course at Harvard using TV shows to help foreign students navigate American culture; teaching media courses at Boston University and Emerson College; and working at MIT for the 20 years. I retired to introduce interdisciplinary curriculum to help engineering and business professionals think and work together more effectively.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

My husband, Mike Palfreyman, is chief of R&D for Cybin, Inc., a company that is "progressing psychedelics into therapeutics" for mental health disorders. Our cockapoos, Shelby and Alexis, spend their time making us laugh while slyly manipulating us for ever-increasing amounts of treats.

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PEOPLE AND PETS



Kathleen and Tom Tobin with Clementine
1st Street North



Jay Feldman, MD, with Moses
on Central Avenue

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Please include your name, address, phone number, and pet's name.



Marielle Asselin with Luna
25th Avenue North



Allison Rogers with her foster dog, Ginny
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Thahn with Katie
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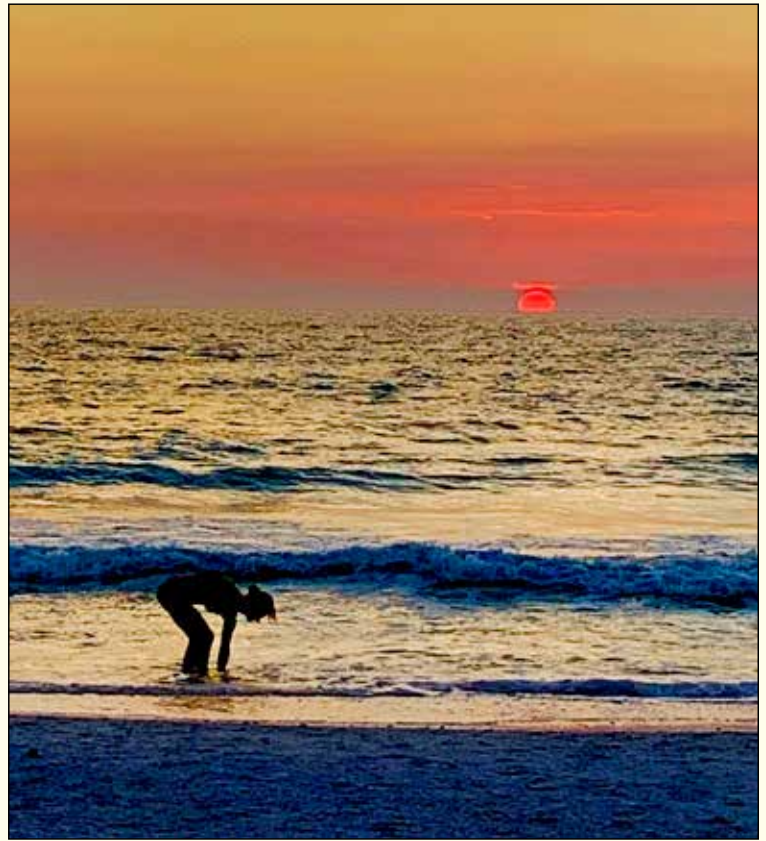
Ode to St. Pete Summer

Though we'll still feel the heat for weeks to come, summer draws to its official close this year on September 22. Take a look back at some of the fun in the sun had by residents in our fair city, from boating to bubbles, and bicycles to beachcombing.

~ Photos by M. Shackelford Burns



Gio of Gio's Typos with a customer at the Rowdies stadium



Endless summer



Jessica, Megan, Kiki, Suze, and Adam enjoy the sunset



Jilly and Justin chill in their hammocks



Taking a rest



Gmonji in a convertible



Spiking at Northshore Park Beach



Colorful ride

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**Represented Buyer*

“Ali is the best! She was so helpful, so responsive, and so genuine in her desire to get us into the home of our dreams!! She was with us every step of the way, and even after closing, is still offering ways that she might be able to help us adjust to a new state, a new neighborhood, and a new home. As a lifelong resident of St. Pete, she is incredibly knowledgeable about the city, the neighborhoods, and the market. She has a real passion for this town. We were relocating from Singapore to St. Pete and she was available at virtually any hour, was always incredibly fast to respond, and took videos of properties that we couldn't see in person. She is always ON! Thank you so much Ali! You've made a very difficult process and transition that much easier for us!”
- Jeff & Kurnia Cavanaugh