



NORTHEAST JOURNAL

Good People ∞ Good Places ∞ Good Things Happening

St. Petersburg, Florida

July/August 2023

Est. September 2004



Young rock hunters Luke and Micah Bakken found their loot in Abercrombie Park this April.

Rocking Around the 'Burg

Abby Baker

You're walking through St. Pete's Crescent Lake Park on a Wednesday afternoon and you see a particularly colorful rock. Unable to resist, you pick it up. This is no ordinary glittery stone. It's painted orange and pink and blue with a goofy cartoon bird winking at you from its smooth surface. Is it game piece? A lost toy? You flip it over and there's a message: Go to St Pete Rocks Facebook page.

Before you can even pocket the stone, you've got your phone out. That's when you learn that

there's a whole community – a seemingly secret world – of “painters, hiders, and posters” of painted rocks sharing their art and telling stories about their finds.

St. Pete resident Kim Laskey started the St Pete Rocks Facebook group in November of 2016, but the phenomenon is not limited to St. Petersburg. There are “rocks” groups in many cities as part of a nationwide movement that naturally pairs artists and treasure seekers of all ages.

Laskey, who works as assistant manager of the Bilmar Beach Resort in Treasure Island, was

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City of the Future

St. Pete Prepares a New Stormwater Master Plan

Will Michaels

We are now well into the 2023 hurricane season, though St. Petersburg thankfully has not seen a direct hit since 1921. Known as the Tarpon Springs Hurricane, the 1921 hurricane was a Category 4 while over the Gulf, with winds declining to a Category 3 by landfall. A six-to-eleven-foot storm surge flooded low-lying areas throughout Pinellas County, including St. Petersburg. Since then, there have been many near misses, two of the most recent being Hurricane Irma in 2017 and Hurricane Ian just last year. Irma, a Category 5 over water, brushed St. Petersburg with a negative surge that emptied the bay. Ian did the same.

St. Pete continues to “get lucky” by avoiding a direct hit, but that's only part of the threat. Not only does our city need to plan for more frequent and stronger storms, but we also need to review how we deal with more intense rainfall and sea-level rise due significantly to global warming. In 2017 Hurricane Harvey dumped more than 40 inches of rain over Houston and eastern Texas, with peak accumulations of nearly 61 inches in

Continued on page 12



Regular street cleaning helps keep debris from clogging the city's stormwater system.

St. Pete's Jewish History

How Jewish Residents Helped Shape the City: Part 2

Monica Kile

In part one, published in the May/June issue of the Northeast Journal, historian Monica Kile introduced many of St. Petersburg's early Jewish families and how they helped to shape the culture and economy of the city. In part two, we take a closer look at their challenges and successes. Read part one at northeastjournal.org.

In the last issue, we met Old Northeast resident Jay Miller, and learned about how his and other Jewish families came to live and build successful businesses alongside each other in St. Petersburg in the first half of the 20th century. But, particularly in the early years, they also faced widespread antisemitism.

Jay's aunt, Marilyn Benjamin, recalls her father telling her about the sign on 4th Street North, leading into the city from the Gandy Bridge in the 1920s that read: “Gentiles Only – No Jews Wanted Here.” It was widely believed that the signs were the work of Jim Coad, the bigoted secretary of St. Petersburg's Chamber of Commerce.

Coad drew national attention to the city with a speech that was quoted in *Time* magazine on August 18, 1924, in which he stated: “St. Petersburg is a city of homes. It has no slums. I believe that the influx of foreigners here, and I class the Jews as foreigners, is detrimental to the city and would tend to produce slums and destroy the neighborly feeling that is now an asset here. ... I know that many Jewish families plan to come here in the fall, and that two Jews will come here to enter the real estate business. I believe the time has come to draw the line against all foreigners and make this a 100% American and Gentile city.”

National reaction to Coad's speech was harsh. A shipment of steel to be used for the city railway system was delayed by a northern

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Leon and Lillie Haliczzer around 1925 in St. Petersburg

Courtesy of the Florida State Archives



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Photo courtesy of Malia Bakken

Courtesy of the St. Petersburg Museum of History

PERIPHERAL NEUROPATHY BREAKTHROUGH

**"My feet feel like they are on fire."
"Each step feels like I'm walking
through wet paint."
"I live in constant fear that I'll fall."
I can't sleep, my hands and feet tingle
all night."**

What do all of these people have in common? They suffer from **peripheral neuropathy**. It's estimated that more than 20 million people in the United States have peripheral neuropathy. Unfortunately, this figure may be significantly higher as the disease is often misdiagnosed because of its wide array of symptoms.

Dr. Kim Windschauer of Acupuncture of West Florida in Clearwater Florida shares this belief. "I've been treating neuropathy in all various forms for many years, and so often my patients come to me because of the symptoms, not because of a diagnosis. They saw one of my ads or read the testimonial of another patient and say to themselves, 'hey I feel the same thing!'"

Kathy of Largo testifies to this. "I remember my husband driving me to my consultation, and I saw a woman running. I was so envious. I just kept thinking 'I would give anything just to walk again'. My primary care doctor told me my troubles with pain and balance were just symptoms of old age and gave me a prescription. I was so depressed."

Fortunately, Kathy would eventually see Dr. Kim's ad, describing similar symptoms, and how she offers a real solution at **Acupuncture of West Florida**. "I just knew I had to see her, It was my last hope."

"Almost all of our patients come to us with a story like Kathy's. They've been everywhere else. They've been told 'it's just a part of growing older'. " Shares Lauren a Patient Care Technician at Acupuncture of West Florida, "It just breaks my heart, but I know how much we can help people like Kathy so I'm always so happy when they walk through our door."

Those diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy often face a very grim reality; Western medicine declares that there is no solution while most alternative therapies carry large price tags and offer little to no resolve. Which is why Dr. Kim

and the staff at Acupuncture of West Florida pride themselves on being "the last resort with the best results."

Peripheral neuropathy is a result of damage to the nerves and this damage is commonly caused by lack of blood flow in the hands and feet. A lack of blood flow results in the lack of nutrients; the nerves then begin to degenerate and die which causes pain ranging from discomfort to debilitating. Because neuropathy is a degenerative condition, once those nerves begin to deteriorate, they will continue to do so until they are completely expired, leaving those suffering with crippling balance issues. "In this case the absence of pain is not necessarily a good thing," shares Dr. Kim. "This usually indicates that your nerves are hanging on by a fragile thread."

So how exactly is Dr. Kim able to reverse the effects of this degenerative disease? "Acupuncture has been used to increase blood flow for thousands of years which helps to get the necessary nutrients to the affected nerves. But the real magic happens when I integrate ATP Resonance BioTherapy . This is technology that was originally developed by NASA to expedite recovery and healing."

"I just can't say enough about Acupuncture of West Florida," Kathy shared through tears of joy. "My husband and I moved here 3 years ago, and he's gone to the beach almost every day. I always stayed home because of the pain and discomfort. Yesterday I walked on the beach with him! And next week we're starting dancing lessons. I am truly living life these days!"

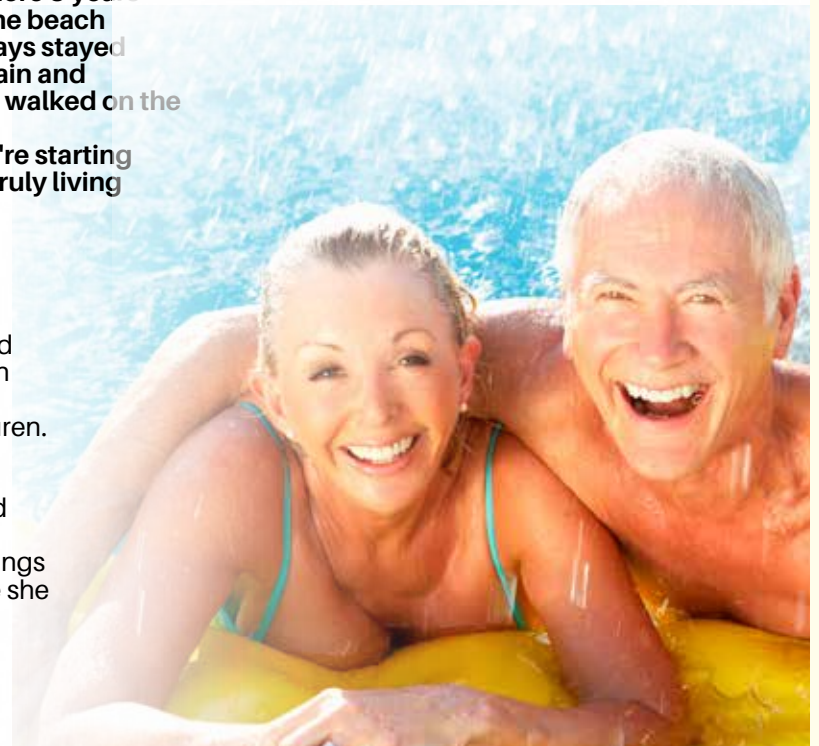
According to Kathy's test result, she has seen a 74% improvement in pain and functionality, which is on par with a majority of our patients,' shares Lauren. "But more important than those test results is the joy she's expressed being here and hearing about all the amazing things she's able to do because she feels great."

By seamlessly blending the ancient science of acupuncture with modern medical solutions, Dr. Kim has achieved a 90% success rate in reversing the effects of neuropathy. She starts each patient with an initial consultation during which a sensory exam is performed. "This not only aids in making a proper diagnosis, but it helps to define just how much nerve damage has occurred" tells the doctor. "This is important because if a patient has suffered more than 95% damage there is little that I can do to help them. I'm familiar with the medical miracle but I know my limitations as a practitioner as well as the limits of my medicine.

When it comes to treating peripheral neuropathy, regardless of its origin, early detection greatly improves your chances of full recovery.

If you or someone you love are suffering with chronic pain that presents as burning, tingling or 'pins and needles' or you've recently been diagnosed with peripheral neuropathy, it's important to know that there are options. There is hope.

Call (727) 490-6060 to schedule an initial consultation or visit **Acuofwestfl.com** to read more incredible success stories.



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EDITOR'S NOTE

No Place Like Home

Everyone I know has been traveling lately. From North Carolina to New York, Costa Rica to Germany, everyone seems to be headed somewhere else. I know four different families who've gone to Alaska in the past month, and it's not just the people who have kids on summer break.

You might say it's because of the weather – although these days I think it's miserably hot everywhere – but the idea of a “summer vacation” seems ingrained no matter how old you are. My dad and his partner typically spend the entire summer traveling.

My wife and I recently got back from a week in the Pacific Northwest. We went to the “Joni Jam” at The Gorge Amphitheater (if you're a fan of Joni Mitchell, you might know this was kind of a big deal). We also spent some fabulous days in Seattle, a place neither of us had been, and explored the lush forests near Mt. Rainier. It was pretty magical.

But you know what? I was so happy to come home. I find that the older I get, the happier homecoming makes me. It's not that I don't enjoy travel. I do! Perhaps even more than when I was younger, but coming home also gets better and better, and I think I know why: I am bound to this place, to its people and history. And those roots get deeper every year.

I also think that's a theme in this issue. From our closer look at St. Pete's first Jewish families, to artist Tom Jones recontextualizing his Native American ancestry, we're looking at how where we are is a big part of who we are. And we're marking that presence by restoring homes, painting murals, hanging banners – even paying closer attention to the rocks under our feet.

For those of us lucky enough to do it, travel can be pure bliss, even vital. Mark Twain famously called it “fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness.” But no matter what we do or where we go, you know there's no place like home.

~ Shelly



My wife and I at Rimrock Lake in Washington

Have a story you'd like to share? Email me anytime at editor@northeastjournal.org.



The view from our apartment in Seattle

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A Tale of Two Wheels

Samantha Bond Richman

My e-bike-e-scooter envy really took hold last fall. It was gradual at first, and started in earnest one day when I was sitting in the passenger seat with my husband at the wheel, waiting in a long line of cars at a red light. A person's shadow passed, momentarily shading my face. I was instantly aware and a little in awe... I thought, "What is that they're riding? Is it safe? It sure looks fast. It's beating the traffic!" Then I said to myself, "I could ride that." So began the journey for me to find an e-vehicle of my own.



Shopping around for just the right used ebike saved money.

With personal safety being paramount, I wondered what I should, and could, ride. I believe that for many people, a one-wheeled contraption is just not a sane option. Three wheels is too many, and four is a skateboard or a go-cart. I fantasized that I could ride an electric skateboard and look like a cool surfer chick. Upon more realistic consideration, I accepted that I'm not even any good at riding a regular skateboard. Two wheels, I decided, was the right number. Then I wondered: scooter or a bike?

My educational process included internet searches, store visits, conversations with friends, and casual observation. Which should I pick? Scooters are always a scooter, but a bike offered the option to pedal for exercise or ride under power. I asked my stylish, artistic local sister her thoughts without telling her it was for me. The meaningful part of her response (because who really listens to their big sister) was, "Bikes look less goofy than scooters." This made my decision easy; it would be a bike for me.

Having narrowed the selection, I then tried to absorb all the features, shapes, and sizes available. Prices ranged from "so cheap" to "oh my!" I went to a local bike store to try out the latest models, and to help make sense of the soup of internet information I was

swimming in. I wanted to see if I could handle the weight of the bike both as a rider, and for potentially transporting it in my car by myself.

At the store, I learned 26-inch wheels were too big for me. I also reinforced the logic that the bigger the bike, the heavier the bike. I also learned that I wanted and needed a step-through body design for safety. After visiting a few stores and kicking a few tires, including some in seedy, second-hand shops, I decided I wanted 20-inch wheels. I would look for wide, nubby tires to give good grip on various surfaces. Preferably it would be something I could lift, possibly with fold-up capability, though I wasn't sure I would get it. After my initial shock at the upside of prices for a new e-bike, I decided on a firm ceiling number for price and vowed not to spend as much as it costs for a car, even a beater. This meant I would likely be buying used.

Timing also came into play during my search. Christmas meant that supply was stretched thin at the retail level, and the season of selling gently used gifts would soon be upon us. Patiently I waited for gift recipients to realize an e-bike was not for them. I checked the usual suspects: Craigslist, Tampa Bay Times classifieds, and Facebook Marketplace. I tried some other websites, like eBay, though I wanted to see, touch, and straddle my bike before I brought it home. Using the search filters, I stalked the listings for just the right search.

It took months, but it finally happened. There was a used e-bike in Tampa I wanted to see. I checked the official brand website and saw the price for new on my intended model; the Marketplace ad represented a good deal. I had never seen or heard of the brand before, so I scrutinized the pictures to the best of my ability. This could be it, and it so happened I was going to be in Tampa in a few days' time. The advertiser turned out to be at a convenient location and, at least didn't seem like an axe murderer in his messages. I brought a friend I could outrun, just in case.

Turns out the seller was a youngish, retired doctor and a very nice guy who was selling the e-bike for an elderly relative. It hardly looked used. (He offered me the use of a helmet for my test ride, as he said tapping the side of his head, "This is what makes life.") I took a test ride up and down the alley behind his house. I could do it, though in the narrow lane, I quickly learned the turning radius of the e-bike was greater than that of my surf cruiser bike at home. In the end, my sleuthing paid off: We struck a deal, and I picked it up the next day.

I couldn't stop thinking about the doctor's way of politely telling me I didn't want a brain injury. A few days later I bought a matching helmet for about \$70 at a sporting goods store. It has many more adjustments than the ones I remember attempting to strap on my kids 20 years ago. It has lots of vents for comfort, and I look cool because it matches my e-bike. Besides, better dorky than dead.

As for my new wheels, the manual online said my model would do 25 mph. I tested it, and it does. It's fast for a bike and feels a bit more like riding a small, quiet motorcycle. I vow to respect others and not ride on the sidewalk because pedestrians have the right of way. I also realize that not every driver is considerate, and I will yield to any other driver about to mow me down. After some riding, I realized the hazard of parked vehicles pulling out from the curb is one of the worst. I also believe there is a special hell for drivers who blow their horn at bicycles or pedestrians.

I can't finish my tale without romance, however. The not-an-axe-murderer-retired-doctor-guy seemed to have a thing for my friend who accompanied me to Tampa. They had both lost a spouse to illness within the last five years. With her permission, I texted him, "Thanks for the bike. You seemed to have a lot in common with my friend...here's her number." They've been dating for a month now – and give me the credit.

Be safe out there! ●



The author recently took her new e-bike on an out-of-state trip.

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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. Join our team by contacting editor@northeastjournal.org.

Abby Baker is a Tampa-based journalist for local media. She currently lives in Seminole Heights, but writes stories about Gulfport and St. Petersburg communities. 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.



Amanda Hagood teaches courses in environmental humanities at Eckerd College. She also contributes to *The Gabber Newspaper*, *Creative Loafing Tampa Bay*, and *Bay Soundings*.



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.



Monica Kile has lived in St. Pete since 2003, when she came for a master's degree in Florida Studies from USF St. Pete. She has served as Executive Director of Preserve the 'Burg, OLLI at Eckerd College, and the Suncoast Tiger Bay Club, and the Special Projects Director at the Florida Humanities Council. Monica guides historic and cultural tours throughout Florida.



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.



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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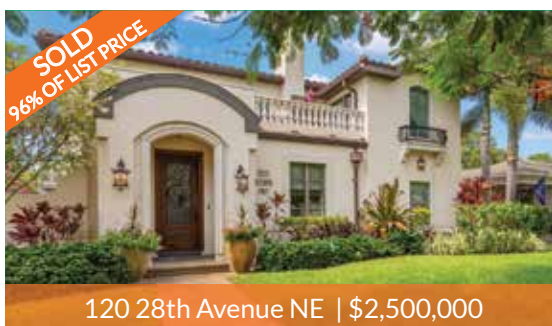
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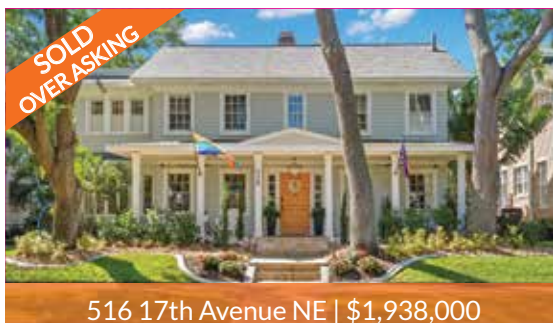
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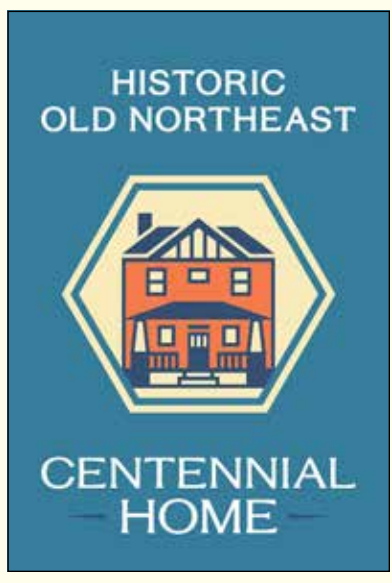
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for Neighborhood's Oldest Homes**

Abby Baker

This summer, you may see a new flag flying in the Old Northeast. In addition to the familiar designs of the neighborhood association's popular honeycomb/hexblock designs, the area's oldest homes now have a flag all their own. When you see the new Centennial Home Banner outside, you know the house is at least 100 years old.

With several hundred century-old homes in the neighborhood, the new flag should add another pop of color amongst the current array of banners – and historical distinction for residents and visitors. At least, that's the goal of the Historic Old Northeast Neighborhood Association (HONNA).



Images courtesy of Lana Suarez

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Lana Suarez is the Old Northeast resident who designed the Centennial Home Banner as part of a recent HONNA contest

managed to find time to create. "I would get in bed and work for a few hours, maybe two or three times a week," Suarez said. "I'm a very picky person. I must have gone through ten versions."

For inspiration, Suarez looked at branding for similar neighborhoods in places like Savannah, Georgia, and took mental inventory from her neighbors' homes while on afternoon walks. "I wanted to really match the vibe of the neighborhood, which is a mix of history and eclecticism. Some of my neighbors have been here a really long time, and we just moved here in 2020," Suarez said. "So, I wanted to bring in the idea of transitioning from old to new."

Suarez's own family home won't fly the flag – yet. Her house has more than a decade to go before it's a century old. Until the Suarez house hits that milestone, however, the artist says she'll be happy knowing other homes in the neighborhood feature her distinctive banner. "I am so excited to spot it in the wild," Suarez said. "I have a huge sense of pride and commitment tied to the design, and I put a lot of thought and time to it."

HONNA says that the Centennial Home Banner should be available by mid-July. Verifying a home's age will be more of an honor system, however.

"We can check our records to make sure a home is 100 years old, but we'll just trust that they are buying this because their home really is that old," Bell said. Funds from the Centennial Home Banner, like that of other HONNA banners, will benefit the neighborhood association. Bell said the flags are not typically big moneymakers, but the sense of pride they bring to the community may be priceless. "I think this is going to be great," Bell said. "I wish every house in the neighborhood had an Old Northeast flag." ●

"The Old Northeast has a lot of pride as a neighborhood, and we felt this flag was another way to instill pride," said HONNA President Nick Bell.

Bell and Sharon Kantner, a prominent local Realtor and longtime organizer of the neighborhood's annual Candlelight Tour of Homes, hatched the idea for a Centennial Home Banner last fall. And with so many local artists and creatives in St. Pete, it made sense to turn the banner design into a contest.

Earlier this year, HONNA received submissions and about 10 of the submitted designs made a short list. At last, the winner was Lana Suarez, an Old Northeast resident and a visual design professional.

"We didn't require the artists to be residents, but she is!" Bell said. "I think that's great. We have such a great diversity of talent in the neighborhood. And she was psyched."

Suarez spent weeks chipping away at her flag design in rare free moments. Between a full-time corporate career and a new baby at home, she somehow

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11am Silver Sneakers	11am Photos	11am Silver Sneakers	11am Chair Yoga	11am Silver Sneakers	11:30am Yoga	
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Tom Jones, the Flipper of Scripts, Reclaims Perceptions of the Tribe

Brandy Stark

Tom Jones: *Here We Stand*, hosted by the Museum of Fine Arts, explores the modern lives of Native Americans through the lens of one of the tribe, and is the first major retrospective of the Ho-Chunk photographer's work. Comprised of parts of a dozen series from Jones' body of work, it includes tribal elders, family life, spirituality, and ideas of cross-cultural appropriation. The pieces shift between documentary and conceptual, with an interest in challenging assumptions, exposing stereotypes, and revealing contemporary tribal experiences.

Jones, an accomplished artist, writer, curator, and educator, is also an enrolled member of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin. He was born in North Carolina but has Florida connections. He spent part of his youth in Orlando and members of his family once lived in St. Petersburg. At the age of 15, he moved to Wisconsin, which is the ancestral land of his tribe, later attending Columbia College in Chicago. His interest in photography developed at an early age as his father worked with Kodak and owned a photography lab. Starting in graduate school, he combined both interests to begin his lifelong journey of exploring and documenting contemporary Ho-Chunk life.

Jones' black-and-white images are a deliberate reference to prior photographers, such as Edward Curtis (1868 – 1952), whose work showed “vanishing” tribes in staged photos of Native Americans in traditional dress, with no reference to the tribal life of the time. Jones wanted to create works imparting that Native Americans are very much a part of the present day.

Jones' first endeavor was to capture the elders as part of a photographic essay on the contemporary life of his tribe. In 1998, as a graduate student, he took a bus three hours to reach community land. One image, *Choka Watching Oprah*, is of Jones' own grandfather, who was born in a wigwam. In the photo, an older man reclines on a couch in front of a small TV set, watching his favorite show.

He “loved to get his picture taken,” Jones says, “and at certain times he would actually tell me, ‘You know you should take a picture of this.’”

Another of his series, *Remnants*, features photos culled from the carpeting of casino floors. Casinos, which are often associated with modern tribes, are held only on trust land, where Jones was not allowed to bring his camera. The 8 x 10 images were captured on his cell phone, and within the framed glass above each picture, he includes a laser-etched pattern that makes a statement about Native American life in the era of casinos.

In the center of one room is the *Ho-Chunk Veterans Memorial*. Members of the tribe have fought for the country in all American wars except the War of 1812, when they sided with the British. Jones points out that Native Americans are one of the largest groups to participate in military service, preserving the warrior traditions of the tribes. He captures images of memorials



Dear America - My Country Tis of Thee



Jim Funmaker with Gourds, from The Ho-Chunk People series, 2001



Bryson Funmaker, 2020, from the Strong Unrelenting Spirits series

left to those who served, which often include photographs of the deceased, many in uniform, along with service flags and medals. Cigarettes – modern-day tobacco offerings for the dead – are left by the graves.

“The idea is that anyone can come up and smoke and remember the deceased,” he says.

Strong Unrelenting Spirits is one of the artist's most intimate series. Included is *Green Mother*, a photo of Jones' own mom. When the artist was a young child, his mother took him to a Sioux healing ceremony led by a medicine man named Robert Stead. As the women participants began to sing, the area was filled with bright, airy orbs, which, he explains, were the manifestation of the ancestor spirits. Each large photograph is embellished with beaded patterns that flow around the subjects.

“I'm using Ho-Chunk designs to give this a sense of the ancestors around us,” the artist explains. “I make the patterns in Photoshop first to create the beading template, which I then integrate with the photograph, and then I hand-stitch the beads on top.”

Dr. Jane Aspinwall, senior curator of photography for the MFA, adds, “Tom and I were talking about how you can see these on your phones and they are beautiful, but you really need to see these in person. As you walk by, your motion changes the perception of the pieces.”

One of the most insightful glimpses into Jones' artistic knowledge and his artist statement comes in the conceptual series, *I am an Indian First and an Artist Second*.

“I am using inspiration from another Native American artist who said that he wanted to be known as an artist first, Native American second. I am flipping that idea around and am saying that I'm a Native American first, artist second,” he said.

The series is made of digital scans of the bottom of modern plastic toys of Native Americans. The viewer only sees the mystery of color and shape, while, during the creation process, Jones sees the figures “locked in ready combat.” The result is a rainbow of abstract shapes and colors.

“While the works may not look Native, there is Native thought and knowledge within it. This comes from my background in painting and alludes to artists who were inspired by Native American art. These include Mark Rothko and Jackson Pollock, who got the idea for doing the art on the ground after he saw a Navaho sand painting demonstration in New York. And, of course, every artist has to do a Jasper Johns,” he laughs, pointing to *Fire Pit*, a work depicting a series of concentric circles. In *Disney*, he uses the bottom of a Pocahontas toy to create a luscious orange stripe, contrasting with green and yellow constructs from other figures.

The show is a phenomenal experience that makes the viewer move through multiple perceptions of Native Americans, their lives, and their place in American society, both real and imagined. “Jones' photographs emphasize a solid generational commitment to family, tribal community, and land,” Dr. Aspinwall adds. “His photographs reclaim appropriated images and set the historic record straight.”

Tom Jones: *Here We Stand* runs through August 27 at St. Petersburg's Museum of Fine Arts. For more on the museum or the exhibit, visit mfastpete.org.

Photos courtesy of the Museum of Wisconsin Art



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one area. Rainfall generally is becoming more intense, including flash floods. Recently nearly 26 inches of rain fell on Ft. Lauderdale over 12 hours.

As the atmosphere warms, there is increased evaporation and more water generated when it rains, causing more intense rainfall and related flooding. A 2022 study by Ryan Harp of Northwestern University and others has documented that for 17 climate regions in the United States, rainfall generally has become more intense over a 30-year period. For the eastern United States, including Central Florida and Tampa Bay, researchers documented a 4.5% to 5.7% increase in average daily rainfall.

Parts of Tampa Bay have witnessed record-breaking temperatures in the past few years. In the case of our cross-the-bay neighbor, Tampa experienced nine out of ten of its warmest years in the past decade. Climate Check, a real estate climate risk assessment research group, notes that in a typical year between 1985-2005, St. Petersburg experienced about seven days above 93.4°F in a year. They predict that by 2050, St. Petersburg is likely to experience an average of approximately 80 days per year over 93.4°F. The Gulf of Mexico warmed by 0.6F between 1982 and 2006. As water warms it expands, contributing to sea level rise. Studies by climate scientists at the Universities of Arizona and Tulane report that from 2010 to 2022 Gulf of Mexico sea levels rose nearly five inches, twice as fast as previously predicted.

In 2015 and again in 2016 St. Petersburg experienced several days of record-breaking rainfall. This overwhelmed the city's wastewater collection system and resulted in discharge of millions of gallons of wastewater and effluent into the bay and other areas. Subsequently, the state Department of Environmental Protection issued a "consent order" mandating overhaul of the city's wastewater system and levying an \$810,000 fine. In addition to the state consent order three environmental non-profits successfully sued the city in federal court seeking more stringent corrective actions than those contained in the state order.

Following the major rain events of 2015-2016 the city committed to allocate \$326 million to improve its sewage system and has since spent approximately \$16 million a year doing so. The city also increased its wastewater disposal capacity by 74.7 million gallons a day, and rehabilitated over 800,000 feet of pipe and over 5,500 manholes, resulting in an infiltration and intrusion reduction of 47%.

As a result of the state and federal orders, the city undertook development of a comprehensive plan known as the St. Pete Water Plan. The plan is a strategic



City image showing how the stormwater system works. Note the stormwater system is separate and independent from the wastewater system.

document addressing our city's aging water infrastructure in the areas of potable (drinking) water, reclaimed water, wastewater, stormwater, and natural water bodies such as the bay and lakes. A new Stormwater Master Plan (SMP) is part of this larger comprehensive plan.

The SMP is limited to mitigate flooding due to rainfall. It does not address flooding caused by surge due to hurricanes or storms. That will be addressed through a "Citywide Vulnerability Study," which will simulate surges to identify the relative risks of surge impact areas and recommend climate resilience measures such as improved seawalls, living shorelines, related pumping, and other measures. St. Pete's stormwater drains are not connected to the sanitary sewer system or treatment plants, so rainwater flows directly from storm drains into creeks and stormwater ponds to undergo treatment, and ultimately discharge into Tampa Bay and the Gulf. The wastewater drainage system is a separate component of the overarching St. Pete Water Plan.

The current SMP has not been updated since 1994. That plan established 26 drainage basins (with 1,186 subbasins; the new plan includes 12,682) throughout the city and listed 338 needed drainage projects. Approximately one-third of these projects were planned for accomplishment over a 20-year period and have been largely completed.

Updated weather event goals or standards for the new plan have been adopted. These are referred to as Level of Service (LOS). The 1994 plan referenced a standard of a 10-year storm with a one-hour duration resulting in 3.2 inches of rainfall. The new plan proposes multiple LOS standards based on 24 hours of rainfall: 10-year/24-hour/7.5 inches of rain; 25-year/24-hour/9 inches of rain; 100-year/24-hour/12 inches of rain.

Another parameter directing the plan is projected sea-level rise. The plan is based on meeting the Federal National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Intermediate Sea Level Rise projections. These projections estimated a 1.44-foot sea-level rise in the Tampa Bay area by 2050. All new development projects will need to meet the new LOS standards as part of the permitting process and be required to show that they will not contribute to any flooding when completed.

A major part of the plan is development of a new floodplain map. This new map does not replace FEMA flood maps used for evacuation and insurance purposes, but



Flooding at the St. Petersburg Yacht Club after the 1921 hurricane. The club plans to raise \$40 million to replace the current building to meet current FEMA and city standards.

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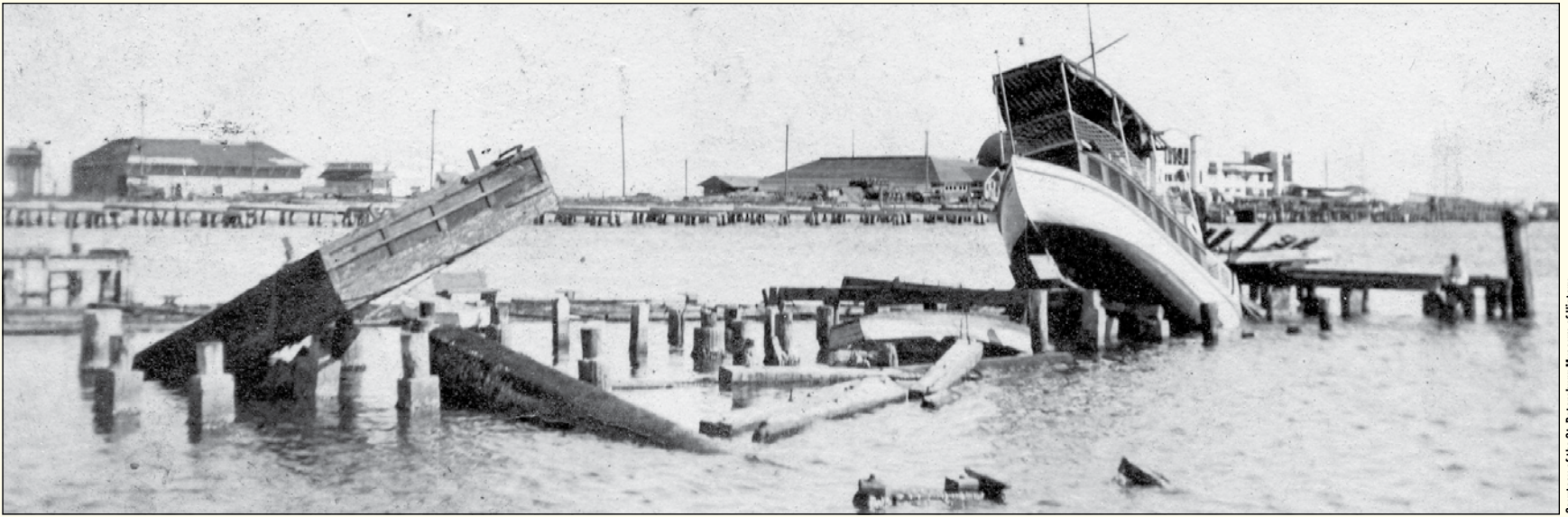
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Courtesy of the St. Petersburg Museum of History

The 1921 hurricane wreaked havoc on St Pete's Waterfront. Note buildings in the background fronting what is today approximately 2nd Avenue Northeast.

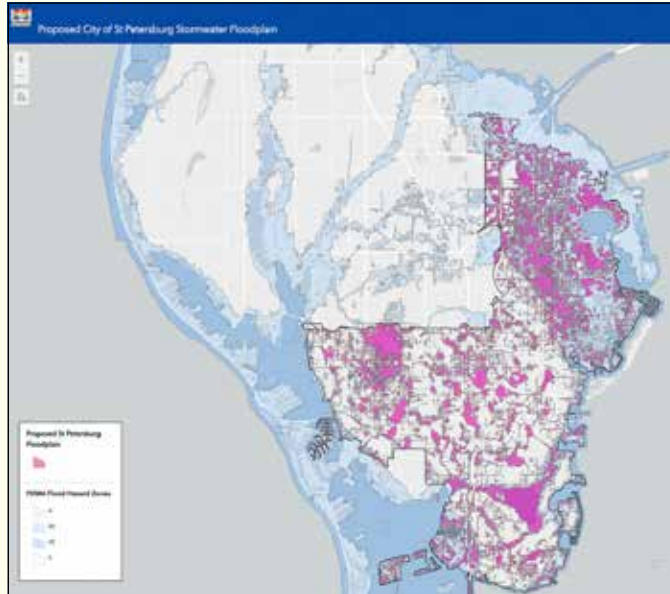
addresses the 10-, 25-, and 100-year design storm intensities as well as the 2050 sea-level rise standard. To further refine map accuracy, the city has installed water-level gauges in the stormwater system and used data from the flow meters compared to recorded rain events.

The new plan also proposes 76 major stormwater capital projects to be accomplished over a period of 20 years at a cost of \$760 million. High priority areas such as Shore Acres and Lake Maggiore already have projects underway. Based on the current stormwater utility rates that all water users pay, there will be sufficient funding to cover approximately 60% of the proposed projects over the next 20 years. These projects include expansion of the pipe system, new box culverts, street improvements to better handle stormwater, and others.

In addition to work on the new plan, the city is revising codes to promote Limited Impact Design to mitigate the effect of new construction on potential flooding. This includes incentives for underground stormwater vaults, pervious pavements, greywater systems, and vegetative swales. Other code revisions considered include better enforcement of development projects like right-of-way encroachment, damage due to unpermitted work, and illegal dumping of construction materials.

The SMP is an element included in the Community Rating System, which determines flood insurance rates for the public. Completion of the new SMP may improve St. Petersburg's rating under the Community Rating System of the National Flood Insurance Program. The city has a current rating of 5, which equates to a 25% discount on federal insurance policies. With the successful completion of the SMP, the city has the potential to achieve a rating of 4, which would equate to a 30% discount.

So, what about extreme weather events like what happened in Texas and more



New City 100-year storm floodplain map. Areas projected to flood are shown in pink. The new Stormwater Master Plan is intended to significantly reduce flooding from such a storm.

recently Ft. Lauderdale? Bresjesh Prayman, director of engineering and capital improvements for the city, says, "It's impossible to financially design for an event like that. Our goal is to design a system that will cover rainfall scenarios over the next 25 years that are extreme but feasible to accomplish."

The city has shared the draft plan with the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council and the Florida Flood Hub, both of which expressed agreement with the plan's model and assumptions. Justin Bloom of Suncoast Waterkeeper, one of the previously mentioned nonprofits that successfully sued the city following the 2015-2016 wastewater spills, said after reviewing a recent update on the new Stormwater Master Plan presented to city council, "On its surface, the Stormwater Master Plan appears to be a healthy commitment by the city to significant flood prevention and mitigation." Hopefully the new SMP can be accomplished in time to deal with the 10-, 25-, and 100-year floods it is designed to mitigate.

The city's Stormwater Master Plan design team includes Bresjesh Prayman, Daniel Sanders, Roger Johnson, and Fatima Sahrabi. Senior Professional Engineer Daniel Saunders worked for the city for 49 years and extended his retirement plans to see the SMP completed. Regretfully he passed away just before his retirement.

The city is soliciting public comment on the draft plan. Email comments to stormwater.masterplan.update@stpete.org. View relevant documents and learn more at stpete.org/stormwatermasterplan.

Will Michaels is a former director and trustee of the St. Petersburg Museum of History and a member of the City Community Planning and Preservation Commission. He is the author of The Making of St. Petersburg and The Hidden History of St. Petersburg. Reach him at wmichaels2222@gmail.com.



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Erica and Matt with Lily in downtown St. Pete



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~ Jeannie Carlson

The HONNA Tree Committee and Florida Native Landscape Make a Difference

In partnership with Lesli Larmon from Florida Native Landscape and Design, the HONNA Tree Committee have planted 136 shade trees in the parkways (or right of ways) in the Old Northeast since 2017 and they're gaining momentum.

People are now paying attention to how important large shade trees are in fighting climate change. They are essential for carbon dioxide sequestration, storm water mitigation, air pollution removal, and energy efficiency.

Have you ever noticed how much cooler it feels when you walk down a street with large shade trees

keeping the hot sun from scorching the earth and you?

This year, to raise additional funds for their tree project, HONNA held a Garden Stroll which enabled them to plant more trees this year than ever. They aren't planting any of the palm species because the accumulated benefits are negligible due to the fact that they don't sequester carbon at the same rates of shade/understory trees. When energy efficiency is factored in, palms provide less than 1/10th of the shade tree community benefits.

~Carol Kline

HONNA tree committee



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Quarterly Neighborhood Meeting Features Urban Coyotes

About 40 Old Northeast residents listened to Rhonda Latour from the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission discuss why coyotes are becoming more prevalent in the neighborhood, and how residents should deal with them. Latour was the guest speaker at the June 19 HONNA quarterly neighborhood meeting held at Westminster Palms.

Pinellas County may be the second smallest county by size in the state, but it has one of the largest coyote populations, according to Latour. This is evidence of the coyote's intelligence and its ability to take advantage of urban landscapes. They are opportunistic eaters and benefit from the abundance of food sources thanks to their human co-habitants, including feline feeding stations, food left outside for household pets, and accessible garbage containers.

Unlike their larger wolf cousins, coyotes are not classic hunters. They look for the quick catch – such as birds, rodents, and cats – that can be taken quickly and easily. This is the reason coyotes rarely threaten large dogs and humans. In fact, research proves dogs can pose a much greater threat to humans than do the wandering neighborhood coyotes.

Latour noted the idea of eradicating coyotes in the county would be fruitless. Males have urban territories of about three-square miles. You remove that male and he will be quickly replaced by another. And females can increase the number of pups per litter if the area can support a larger population. She reminded the audience that coyotes are here because they have access to reliable food sources. Therefore, refrain from feeding feral cats unattended and wild animals (which is illegal), keep pet food inside the house, and make sure household garbage is contained in tight containers.

In addition to the coyote discussion, there were updates on several issues, including the new HONNA "centennial home" flag (see story on page 8) and upcoming resident survey. The latest neighborhood flag to be sold on honna.org beginning in July commemorates homes that are at least 100 years old. The rich blue jewel tone background is a nice addition to the four "Preserve Historic Old Northeast" flags that abound in the neighborhood. The association expects owners of centennial homes will be proud to display this latest neighborhood symbol (at \$50). In addition, for the first time a "garden banner" version of the flag will be available for \$25.

Monique Kramer, the newest member of the HONNA board, was introduced. She and her husband, Rob, and greyhound, Lexi, have lived in the ONE for several years. Monique was a pediatric physical therapist for 25 years, specializing in infants with disabilities. She enjoys riding her bike around St. Pete, playing

pickleball, and traveling. Monique is a big fan of our beautiful street tree canopy and will be promoting the need to plant more trees while promoting the existing canopy. She also chairs the membership committee and is the homeowner liaison for the popular Porch Parties.

Board vice president Anna Broshears reminded attendees of the annual July 4th Children's Parade. The popular event features a short parade on Coffee Pot Boulevard with children, parents, and pets decked out in patriotic attire. The Florida Fife and Drum Corp provides music, and firefighters and a fire truck from Station No. 4 make an appearance for great photo ops with the kids. The St. Petersburg Righteously Outrageous Twirling Corps (ROTC) leads the parade with their marching prowess and patriotic music.

Board member Doug O'Dowd updated the attendees on the progress of the neighborhood marker and monument refreshing project. The beautification committee has finished cleaning and repainting the five headstone markers and will soon begin doing the same for the five large Old Northeast monuments. The committee also is working on refreshing the median landscapes and uplighting.

The next quarterly meeting will be September 18.

~ Nick Bell

Conversion of Westminster Church Property

Development plans are moving forward that include the preservation of the structures at the former Westminster Presbyterian Church at 11th Avenue NE and 1st Street N (with lots on 10th Avenue NE). Approximately 40 residents within 500 feet of the property and HONNA board members met recently with representatives of Belleair Development and property owners to review and discuss the company's plans before they submit them to the city for approval.



Plans call for converting the church sanctuary into a single-family home and creating two large townhomes in the former school building. New single-family homes are to be built on the property's three remaining lots. There are no plans to include apartments in the project.

Development of the property has been a contentious subject for a number of years. The property's structures are designated as local historic landmarks and, as such, need to be maintained but can be repurposed. The HONNA board has been working with Belleair and is supportive of its plan to preserve the current structures and erect single-family homes on the additional three lots. "We have always believed these structures are an integral part of the Historic Old Northeast and deserve to be protected," said Nick Bell, president of the HONNA board of directors. "The church sanctuary dates to the early days of the neighborhood and the school building served the neighborhood well over the years. By converting the structures to a single-family home and two townhomes, we can maintain the historical integrity of the buildings but repurpose them to serve the Old Northeast for years to come." Watch for additional updates as the project moves forward.

Resident Survey

Old Northeast residents have a chance this summer to make their voices and opinions heard about what they believe are the important issues facing our neighborhood. The HONNA board of directors is issuing a resident survey, the first one in five years, in order to gather information that will help it better serve ONE residents.

"We have a very dedicated and hard-working board," said Nick Bell, board president. "But without input from our residents it's kind of like having one hand tied behind our backs. This survey will give us valuable information about residents' concerns that we should be addressing, such as encroaching development and neighborhood preservation."

Much has changed since the last survey was conducted pre-pandemic in 2018. St. Petersburg is experiencing a development and population boom, both of which are impacting the Historic Old Northeast. Its proximity to downtown and the bay makes it not only a great place to live but also very attractive to developers. "These are just two issues facing our neighborhood," Nick continued, "and these and other topics can and will have an impact on our quality of life. Understanding how our residents feel about these items will aid the board in deciding how to address them as we work with city government."

The survey will also address things such as safety concerns, HONNA-sponsored events and neighborhood beautification. Nick says the survey will be online and accessible via a link in the Old Northeast e-blast newsletter and on honna.org. The board will also place door hangers on every resident's door to remind them to complete the important document. Prepare to make your voices heard!



Adding Color to Landmarks

In January, HONNA established a beautification committee to spruce up the various medians throughout the Old Northeast, five ONE headstones, and five entryway monuments into the neighborhood. The committee put together ideas that would reflect the

diversity and uniqueness of our neighborhood.

The Old Northeast headstones were painted by Kodie Talley, Jeff Scaritt, and Aidan and Doug O'Dowd [pictured are before and after photos of the headstone at Coffee Pot and Beach Drive], and the monuments are in the process of being painted. The committee chose to keep the base colors along with the original theme of the monuments but decided to spruce up the hexblocks with different colors. The colors for the hexblocks were inspired by the colors on the HONNA flags.



Over the coming months, the committee will be replanting the medians throughout the Historic ONE using native and Florida-friendly plants. We would love ideas where we can spruce the medians with hardy annuals to bring more color to these areas. If you are interested in joining the beautification committee, please contact honna.org and let us know!

~Doug O'Dowd



Porch Parties on "Summer Vacation"

The HONNA monthly Porch Parties rank as one of the favorite HONNA membership perks. For long-time residents, these get-togethers present a perfect opportunity to catch up with old friends. And for new residents, it's a chance to meet their neighbors and make new friends. But as residents take vacations or head north for the summer to escape the Florida heat, Porch Parties also go on hiatus.

"We usually average between 70 and 80 attendees at the Porch Parties," explains Nick Bell, HONNA president. "But because they are an outdoor activity, we believe it's best to take a break during summer's hot months though the board is working on them for the fall season," he says. "We're always on the hunt for residents to host the parties, and this time around we may mix it up a little. We're talking to the St. Pete History Museum, for instance, about hosting an 'Old Northeast Evening at the Museum' that would include cocktails and a lecture on the history of the city's first neighborhood."

So, stay tuned for details on upcoming porch parties when the summer starts to turn towards fall. ●



Rick Call and Maureen Robinson); 1500 Beach Drive NE, Leslie and Michael Singer (nominated by Eric Wallens).

Find new STARS posted monthly with yard signs, on honna.org, and on HONNA's Facebook page. We invite you to be a part of this effort, so nominate a neighbor or a refurbished property you admire in the ONE.

Have a home to honor? Send the information to Charleen McGrath at treasurer@honna.org. ●



TOM JONES

HERE WE STAND



A member of the Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin, Tom Jones's photographs explore issues of identity and geographic place within Native American communities.

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MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

Tom Jones: *Here We Stand* is organized by the Museum of Wisconsin Art

Tom Jones, *Peyton Grace Rapp*, from *Strong Unrelenting Spirits* series, 2018, Inkjet print and beadwork. Collection of Ken Karol and Greg French
Image credit: Museum of Wisconsin Art, West Bend, Wisconsin

inspired by the Lakeland Rocks group in Hillsborough County. “I spent the night before Thanksgiving 2016 painting rocks with my friends and family. We hid them all over Lakeland,” Laskey said. “Then, shortly after, I started rocking downtown.”

What started as a small group of people on an open Facebook group hiding painted rocks and re-posting their found treasures exploded into a group of more than 30,000 members. Laskey eventually made the group joinable by request only, though requests are often quickly granted.

One of the group’s most committed members, Kathy Powell, has been “rocking” since 2017. She’s painted 10,000 rocks since she first started, a hobby she sought to distract from losing a close family member. More than seven years later, and she still wants to spread a little kindness with her rocks and a paintbrush.

“I think it resonates with people so much because finding one of our rocks just puts a smile on your face,” Powell said. “I know one woman found a rock with the word ‘hope’ on it. She had just been diagnosed with cancer.”



A rock by St Pete Rocks member Kathy Powell, who has been painting and sharing her creations since 2017. Photo courtesy of Kathy Powell.

Powell has dozens of stories like this to share. One member found and posted a rock of Powell’s that reminded her of her grandmother, and after writing back and forth online for a while, Powell sent her a stone. “She said my rock brought tears to her eyes,” Powell said.

The popularity of St Pete Rocks didn’t happen overnight, though Laskey said the group went viral shortly after conception when 10 Tampa Bay aired a news segment on the artist concept in 2017. “I had to make it a private group because we started blowing up and getting spam on the page,” Laskey said, laughing. “But it’s for everyone. You don’t have to be an artist to be a part of this.”

Since those early days, St Pete Rocks members have made hiding colorful rocks an art every day in nearly every greenspace in town, from the Vinoy to the beaches and beyond. In fact, painted rocks pop up in all sorts of spots, from Publix parking lots to the grassy patches and tree hollows of the Old Northeast. What you do with the rock is up to you. Keep it, post it, re-hide it for someone else to find – there are no rules, though it’s always nice to share your treasure.



Rocks can be hidden anywhere in St. Pete. It’s up to you to find them. Photo courtesy of Kristen DeTroia.



Found in Old Northeast. Photo courtesy of Sheila Marie Berns.



A recent rock find in the Old Northeast. Photo courtesy of Angela Jane Smith.



“My nan used to read me a story book called ‘The Butterfly Children’ every weekend on our sleepovers. This looks just like the characters from her book,” one member wrote under Powell’s rock photo. Photo courtesy of Kathy Powell.

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A recent haul from North Shore Park. Courtesy of Kelly Ann Dolan

Members have also organized events, mainly pre-pandemic, where they get together to paint, or hide in local parks. They've rocked out on floats at the St. Pete Christmas Parade and Pinellas Park Christmas Parade, and set up tents at community events like Sanding Ovarations on the beach. "It's really taken on a life of its own," Powell said. "It's a good community, and so many people have become fast friends because of it. Definitely a lot of connections here."

If you want to participate, the process is fairly simple. Request to join St Pete Rocks and once you're there, feel free to go to town. Group administrators say that small rocks are often available at hardware or craft stores, but any old stone will do. The serious rockers often use outdoor-resistant paint and a small brush, but anyone is welcome to paint with what they have. It's not rocket science, after all.

"It doesn't take any talent, and it just lights people up to find a colorful rock like ours somewhere," Powell said. "I'm 61 years old, and I still just love to see the way people react when they find one of our rocks. It just feels good." ●

While this article highlights the St Pete Rocks group - sans period - there are other groups on social media, including the smaller, but active St Pete Rocks. You can also search "rocks" groups for many other local cities.

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MEET YOUR WRITERS



Suzanne Andrew
21st Avenue North

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

Twenty-two years! I'm originally from Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete.

The St. Pete Pier because it has everything: parks, restaurants, a beach, a museum, a coffee shop, space to exercise, art, crafts for sale, live music... The new pier is a wonderful addition to the waterfront park system in St. Pete.

Most interesting/enjoyable/exotic vacation you've taken.

Jordan: visiting Petra, the Dead Sea, sleeping in a tent in the desert at Wadi Rum.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list.

New Zealand and Iran.

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

Sojourner Truth. There's been some question lately as to if she really gave the "Ain't I a Woman" speech and I'd like to find out the answer.

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby.

Biking. And travel.

A great movie or TV series you'd recommend...

Not really my wheelhouse, but if I had to pick a movie it would be *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*.

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

Golden Retriever. They're just happy almost all the time.

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

My paternal grandmother. When ranching no longer provided her family an income she started her own insurance agency. When the local newspaper needed news from the ranching community, she started writing a weekly newspaper column. When she noticed old women in town were making more crafts than they could ever use, she started a consignment craft shop. Her life has inspired me to be fearless when taking on new challenges.

Current book you've read and would recommend.

The Personal Librarian by Benedict and Murray. The story of JP Morgan's personal librarian as he built the Morgan Library in NYC. The main character is an African American woman passing for white during the Gilded Age. Excellent read so far!

Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

Selling my last business myself. Struggled to find a business broker to work with, and just decided to sell it myself. And did.

Something people might not know about you.

In high school I played saxophone in what at the time was the country's only marching band performing on skis.

What do you do for a living?

Currently transitioning into my third career.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

My house is run by Ellie, a black cat rescued from an alley in Kenwood.



Nick Bell
HONNA president

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

I moved from San Francisco in August 2019 with my partner, Devin. I grew up on a farm near a small town in the far northwest corner of Missouri.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete.

Sunken Gardens.

Most interesting/enjoyable/exotic vacation you've taken.

Rafting the wild Pacuare River in Costa Rica.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list.

Transylvania and Great Barrier Reef.

What famous person would you like to meet and why?

Mark Twain. We could compare our experiences growing up in the Show Me state.

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby.

Cycling and gardening.

A great movie or TV series you'd recommend...

Somebody Somewhere on HBO Max. If I didn't know better, I'd swear I grew up in that town.

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

An Airedale. I should know, I've owned three of them.

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

Team management is not easy! Early on, I had a wonderful boss who taught me how to inspire, coach, and lead. Lynn had been the highest-level female executive at AT&T. She helped women navigate the male-dominated corporate world. She always rewarded folks who never expected it. She respected everyone at every level and made sure people knew they were appreciated. She was always ready to discuss anything that was bothering you. "You don't leave life at the door when you come to work so live your full life at all times."

Current book you've read and would recommend.

Five Days at Memorial by Sheri Fink. If you aren't worried about hurricanes yet, you will be.

Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

I lived in San Francisco for 25 years. I helped launch Healing Waters, an organization that provided free outdoor wilderness trips for people living with HIV/AIDS. Healing Waters provided a respite from the disease for people who didn't think they'd get the chance to raft a river or even hike through the coastal redwoods ever again. The trips offered a break from the daily routine of dealing with the disease and gave them a renewed sense of accomplishment and hope.

Tell us about your career.

Leaving small-town Missouri was probably the best career decision I ever made. After attaining a Bachelor of Journalism degree from the U. of Missouri, I worked my way up the corporate ladder at newspapers, startups, Fortune 500 companies, and a global ad agency. During the crazy Silicon Valley boom times, I managed to work for five companies that Oracle ended up acquiring. My career included stops in Kansas City, Miami, Boca Raton, Atlanta, and San Francisco. I called it quits when I moved here.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

I moved here with Devin to be closer to family. My brother winters in Sarasota and my mother relocated from north of Boston. My other brother travels between his farm north of Philly and NYC. We have Airedales, Joy and Duncan, and a feline bully named Mayo.



Zoe Kopp
21st Avenue North

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

I've lived here two-and-a-half years. I was born in Tarrytown, NY and lived in Florida from 1969-1985.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete.

I have to say all that downtown offers: museums like the James and Imagine, Northshore Park and the Pier.

Most interesting/enjoyable/exotic vacation you've taken.

Visiting Kashmir in India, paddling its lakes, and driving over the Himalayas to Ladakh.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list.

Traveling the silk road through the Caucuses and Turkmenistan.

What famous person would you like to meet and why?

Freya Stark who in the 1920s and '30s was one the first westerners to travel to western Iran and then through the rural areas of the Middle East, often on horseback. I'd like to meet a woman with such courage who broke free of so many of the female social norms of her time.

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby.

I enjoy moving – biking, dancing, swimming, walking, paddling, and sailing.

A great movie or TV series you'd recommend...

Singin' in the Rain because I love its optimism and the dancing and singing.

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

Newfoundland. They look dignified and huggable, love swimming, and are playful and hardworking.

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

While traveling in India I saw a family sharing a meal inside a large, cardboard refrigerator box that was their home. They were smiling, laughing, and joking with one another. Their situation of poverty brought tears to my eyes but, it also showed me so clearly that happiness is a choice we can make every day no matter what the challenges.

Current book you've read and would recommend?

The Little Prince is on our kitchen table. Namaya, my husband, and I are reading it in Italian now. It is "a children's book" but full of wisdom for us adults, too.

Tell us about an accomplishment of which you are proud.

This year the international non-profit GRACE Cares, which my husband and I founded, turned 21. GRACE Cares has helped thousands of people around the world by training local heroes in skills to help their communities get water, education, and healthcare.

Something people might not know about you.

My first career choice was archaeology, and I was lucky to volunteer at a Tequesta Indian Site under what is now the Miami Convention Center, in Ecuador at a pre-Colombian site, and in Italy at an Etruscan city site.

What do you do for a living?

I worked in public health in Florida and internationally. In 1981, I started a holistic women's health center in Tallahassee which taught self-care, and went on to work internationally with International Planned Parenthood Federation, CARE international, and Pfizer.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

I live with my husband, Namaya, a poet, musician, and artist who fills our home with beauty. I miss our son and his family, who live in Massachusetts. ●

Hot Art in the Summertime

Brandy Stark

It's summer, it's hot, but the art doesn't stop in this town! Take a few steps from the A/C in your car to the A/C in these spots to get your creative fix with this sampling of some of St. Pete's coolest local art and more.

Galleries

Florida CraftArt: Rebels. 510 Central Avenue. Through August 26, Monday – Saturday, 10 am – 5:30 pm; Sunday, noon – 5 pm. floridacraftart.org

It is said that artists have a rebellious streak, and this show is designed to showcase it. Explore what it means to be an art rebel and see some cutting-edge art reflecting those who are considered free thinkers, even in the art world.

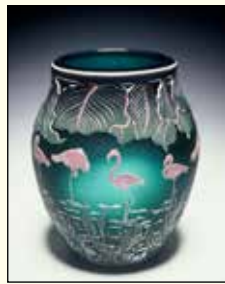
Morean Arts Center: Psychedelic. 719 Central Avenue. Through August 24. Open daily, 10 am to 5 pm. moreanartscenter.org

Time to bring out the lava lamps and the bell bottoms: the Morean is going psychedelic this summer. With that theme in mind, check out this member show featuring over 100 artists and support local art.

Also: Are you looking for a way to pass those long hot days of summer and enhance your art skills? Summer art classes for session two – July 24 to September 1 – are available. Topics include everything from figure drawing to sculpture, and more.

Chihuly Collection: Beyond the Sea. 720 Central Avenue. Through September 16. Monday – Saturday, 10 am – 5 pm; Sundays, 12 pm – 5 pm. moreanartscenter.org/beyond-the-sea

The ocean is a huge inspiration for renown glass artist Dale Chihuly who has spent most of his life on or near Puget Sound, and you can see that reflected in several of his glass series. The temporary gallery space at the Chihuly Collection features artists whose work “has an affinity for Chihuly’s interests and complements his unforgettable glass installations” – Ft. Myers-based painter Dora Knuteson and St. Pete-based glass sculptor Chuck Boux.



Glass art by Chuck Boux, featured in *Beyond the Sea* at the Chihuly Collection

Museums

Dali Museum: Where Ideas Come From: Dali's Drawings. Through October 22. 1 Dali Blvd, St. Petersburg. Daily, 10 am – 6 pm, Thursdays until 8 p.m. thedali.org

Where Ideas Come From: Dali's Drawings features 100 rarely seen works on paper from museum's permanent collection. Spanning the entire length of Dali's creative life, from 1916 through 1974, the exhibition provides



Allison Leigh Smith's "The Common Thread," courtesy of The James Museum

insight into the artist's creative process as seen over a variety of media, two new acquisitions: the ballet-related portrait of King Ludwig for *Bacchanale*, and the frontispiece *The Disappearing Face*.

The James Museum: Un/Natural Selections: Wildlife in Contemporary Art. 150 Central Avenue. Through September 17. Open 10 am to 5 pm, Monday, Wednesday – Sunday; 10 am to 8 pm on Tuesdays. thejamesmuseum.org

Un/Natural Selections features wildlife images from the collection of the National Museum of Wildlife Art that “dynamically confront categorizations and speak to the significance of wildlife in art – in unconventional ways.” The exhibit weaves in the artists' personal narratives while highlighting the “relationship between humanity and the natural world.”

Spots About Town

Artlofts: Cheryl Yellowhawk 10 5th Street North, above Florida CraftArt. Monday – Friday, 10 am – 5 pm; Saturday, noon – 4 pm; Second Saturday, 5 – 9 pm. theartlofts.com

Artist Cheryl Yellowhawk has explored many medium and subjects, returning recently to pastel drawing and oil paint. “Moving to Florida led me to painting beach scenes,” she says. “A far different adventure than capturing Southwestern landscape and Native ancestry” of her earlier work.

Coliseum: Cool Art Show. 535 4th Avenue North. July 22, 10 am – 5 pm; July 23, 10 am – 4 pm. pava-artists.org/cool-art-show

Now in its 34th year, summer favorite PAVA artists Cool Art Show is back. The concept was hatched in 1988 by a group of artists talking over chow mein and Buddha's Delight. Now, three decades later, the indoor summer art show, run by artists, continues its run with



Photography by James Reed to be featured at PAVA's Cool Art Show



"Touching Infinity in a Pink Bathing Suit" by Cheryl Yellowhawk

local artists showcasing their works in the historic Coliseum.

Smokin' 19: Independence. 3090 34th Street North. Through August 17. Daily, 11 am – 10 pm daily. smokin19.com

Celebrate America's birthday with an artistic exploration of freedom by local artists who retain 100% of the sales.

August 19 – September 15: *Favorite Places* What do local artists consider to be their favorite places? Are they real or part of their imagination? Explore that concept and more in this show. ●



Mixed media dog and bird sculpture by artist Joyce Curvin who will be at PAVA's Cool Art Show



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manufacturer until the city clarified its position on Coad's antisemitic speech. The St. Petersburg business community disavowed the statement, but otherwise turned a blind eye to Coad's behavior; he was later promoted within the Chamber of Commerce.

In St. Petersburg in the 1920s, antisemitism was becoming increasingly acceptable. "Restricted policies" existed in most of the private clubs and civic associations like the St. Petersburg Yacht Club, Rotary, the Suncoasters, and the Lions Club. Apartment listings included the line "Gentiles Only" in their advertisements in the *St. Petersburg Times*. Hotels like the Vinoy, the Don Cesar, and the Tides Hotel and Bath Club were also off limits, even if they had welcomed Jewish guests in the past.

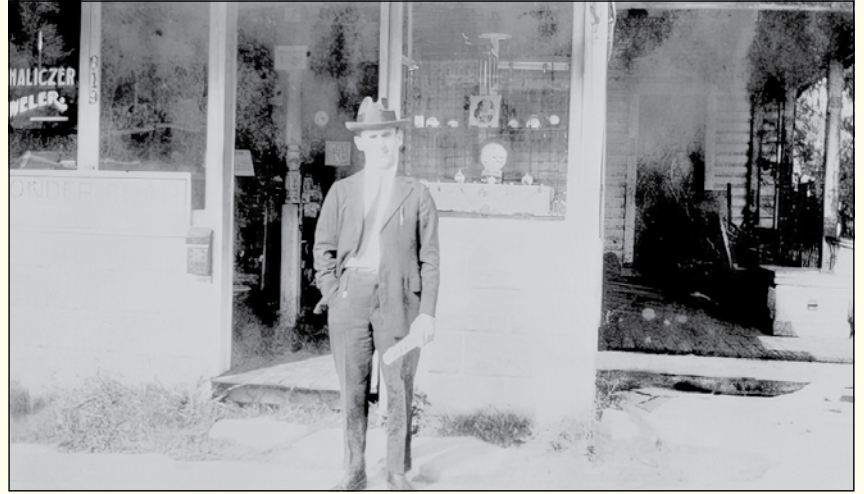
That was exactly what happened to Jay Miller's paternal grandfather, Jacob Miller. Having moved to St. Petersburg with his family in 1925, he spent a pleasant season as a "summer club" member of the Don CeSar Hotel in the late 1920s. When he called to rejoin the following summer, he was told that a fellow guest had complained and that he would not be allowed to join again. So, Miller decided to open his own hotel – immediately south of the Don CeSar, on land previously owned by that hotel. Jay recalls that his grandfather "had to use a skill to purchase the land, because the owners wouldn't sell to a Jewish person."

The Millers built a beautiful art deco building, with a large terrazzo porch on the front, and lobby that opened onto the back patio and the bay. The hotel opened in 1940, with 60 rooms, and expanded in later years to the Gulf-front property across the street. The name, Rellim, was the family name spelled backwards.

After a slow start, the inexperienced Millers grew into successful hoteliers. The Rellim became a thriving, high-end Gulf-front resort beloved by generations of families. When Jacob Miller passed away, his son Irwin and wife Sonya took over, and Sonya invigorated the social life of the hotel with a weekly newsletter, "The Rellim Tellim," and monthly theme parties where guests dressed up in elaborate costumes. Jerome Gilbert, the son of another early Jewish St. Petersburg settler and



Dr. Mark Benjamin and his mother Marilyn Benjamin, the daughter of Leon Haliczzer, one of the founding members of Congregation B'Nai Israel, and one of first Jewish residents of St. Petersburg.



Leon Haliczzer in front of one of his first jewelry stores, circa 1921. Courtesy of the Florida State Archives.




Old Northeast resident Jay Miller is descended from the city's earliest Jewish residents.

a frequent guest, was quoted in 2003 saying, "The Rellim provided the Jewish community with camaraderie and the fine social aspect of life."

Demand for accommodations and services for Jewish families increased along with the state's population. Five years after The Rellim debuted at the beach, the Empire Hotel opened on Arlington Avenue downtown, offering a kosher hotel and restaurant just a stone's throw from the city's first synagogues. Congregation B'Nai Israel, founded in 1923 by 13 Jewish men (including Marilyn Benjamin's father, Leon Haliczzer), held their first services in the back rooms of the stores of their founders, and later in rented spaces throughout

downtown. By 1935 they had raised the funds to erect their own building at 1039 Arlington Avenue North. The reform congregation of Temple Beth-El, founded in 1928, built their first temple a year prior, in 1934. The two synagogues were located just two blocks apart on Arlington Avenue, and many of their members lived and worked nearby on Arlington and Burlington Avenues, as well as on 9th Street North. Despite the antisemitism growing throughout the country and abroad, the Jewish community in St. Petersburg was thriving. By the 1960s both



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synagogues had outgrown their first Temples and moved to the west side of town, where they remain today.

The city, too, was outgrowing its antisemitism, but not without a struggle. In the early 1960s, Philip Benjamin, a prominent optometrist who had grown up in St. Petersburg, served in WWII, and returned to the city to open his practice (and marry Marilyn Haliczler), was nominated for membership in the Lions Club. Dr. Benjamin had been performing free eye exams for the club for more than 17 years. His wife Marilyn recalls what happened next:

“When they took the vote, he was blackballed. And the colleague who had nominated him was so angry about it that he said he was resigning.” Several other members of the club threatened to follow suit. Marilyn goes on: “It caused such a stir that they had a revote and Phillip was accepted. I asked him why he would want to be a member of a group that had tried to blackball him, and he said, ‘I have to show them that I can go forward, and I hope they can too. And that they should not do this again to anyone else.’”

It was not the only time that Philip was a quiet leader in the movement to end bigoted policies. His medical office was the first in St. Petersburg to desegregate its waiting room. Some white patients never returned, but Dr. Benjamin carried on because he believed that all his patients should be treated equally. Later, while serving as the chairman of the board of St. Petersburg Junior College, he oversaw the implementation of the school’s affirmative action policies. Minority representation in the staff and faculty grew exponentially.

After learning of the antisemitism that the Haliczler, Miller, and Benjamin families faced in St. Petersburg, it would be easy to assume that they might feel bitterness or resentment. But just the opposite seems to be true. Marilyn recalls her life in St. Petersburg with great fondness: “I really felt very little discrimination growing up, but I wasn’t looking for it. We were a very tight community. We would socialize with a youth group from Tampa, go to picnics and to the beach.” She laughs, “I ended up dating more boys from Tampa than from St. Pete!”

Her nephew Jay expresses similar sentiments. “We were a very small minority, and still are, even today. There was only one other Jewish child in my elementary class. But there was a huge family reunion every Christmas at the Rellim Hotel, and most of the guests were Jewish there, so I really learned about Jewish culture.”

Jay credits the Jewish tradition of studying and focus on education for the success that he and his family have experienced. His company, J Square Developers, built the Trader Joe’s store on 4th Street and are currently building the Whole Foods just a few blocks north. They are also one of three partners developing Orange Station on Central Avenue. As the grandson of the first president of Temple Beth-El on his father’s side, and one of the founders of Congregation B’nai Israel on his mother’s, he is descended from St. Petersburg’s Jewish pioneers on both sides of his family. In many ways, he continues their often-unsung legacy in the development of St. Petersburg. ●

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St. Pete's Pajama Party: Fifty Years of Sunrise Deals



Pink Soleil shop owner Kelly Homman is looking forward to her first Sunrise Sale behind the counter.



Former DBA President Susan Robertson at a past Sunrise Sale – one of 24 she's attended.



ZAA store owners Drew and Liza Fleming are looking forward to opening their doors bright and early.

Cindy Cockburn

For half a century St. Pete's Downtown Business Association has been toying with people's sleep cycles. Well, at least the ones who are looking for a good deal. On Thursday, July 20 starting at 6:43 am, the DBA invites anyone with a reliable alarm clock to what they call "St. Pete's largest Pajama Party." The Sunrise Sale is brought to you by the non-profit DBA, and this year marks the fiftieth – that's right, 5-0 – anniversary of the organization and their annual sale. I guess it's never too early to roll out of bed and support local business.

The DBA, which supports "the arts, retail, restaurants, banking, utilities, city government and other various types of businesses" in the downtown area, set a goal of at least 50 participating merchants for the event. This year, shoppers will find sale spots from Beach Drive to the EDGE district, and along 4th Street up to 13th Avenue.

Beach Drive resident and past DBA President Susan Robertson can't believe it's the fiftieth anniversary this year. "I absolutely adore the Sunrise Sale and I have been to 24 sales! It's such a unique event that brings together the best of both worlds: getting great deals and enjoying the beauty of the sunrise," she says. For early risers who love to shop, the Sunrise Sale really is a dream come true. "The event allows me to wear my favorite PJs while I shop, which makes it an even more comfortable and enjoyable experience for me. There's nothing like starting my day off with a cup of coffee in hand and wandering through the sales in my pajamas, finding incredible deals, and admiring the stunning scenery of our beautiful city at the same time. It's truly a one-of-a-kind event that I look forward to every year!"

As this year marks a special milestone, I popped in to talk to a few of the participating shops and to get their thoughts on the Sunrise Sale.

Old Northeast resident and shop owner Liza Fleming told me she can't wait to open her doors that morning. She's the owner of ZAA Dress Up Studio on 1st Avenue North, getting ready to celebrate her five-year anniversary in August. Says Fleming, "I don't sell clothes, I sell compliments."

Plain Jane owner Karen Porterfield has participated in the Sunrise Sale for nine years, and her store on Central Avenue geared up early for the event. "Last year, we had an early crowd of high-energy young women who showed up in groups." As they say, the early bird gets the discount – and the mimosas – but Porterfield expects to be open until 6:30 pm.

Old Northeast resident and DBA President Jose Martinez is also president of Sartorial, Inc. men's store, where attendees will find a high-energy scene. "The plan for Sartorial is to have a tent set up outside with a festive vibe of music, drinks, and donuts." Jose and his wife Natalie (also on the event committee) have plenty of past Sunrise Sale stories to tell. "The most memorable was when we had a sleeper outside the store one year. He was determined to get a one-of-a-kind jacket and, at 70% off,

it was indeed quite a steal. Another sweet memory is seeing the ladies in their matching pajamas and enjoying mimosas, sangria, and iced coffee."

Next to Sartorial, Savory Spice Shop owner Chef Ivan loves saying "welcome" to customers each year. His favorite part? "The fun pajama outfits that our customers sport while waiting for the doors to open on Sunrise Sale morning and the parade of creative pajama outfits during the event."

Shelli Hemans is the Visitor Center and St. Pete Store manager, working for the Chamber of Commerce for 10 years. She has seen seven Sunrise Sales and, along with her associate Chris Sabo, will welcome visitors early. "We have the work of 99 local artists represented in the store and offer t-shirts, hats, candles, ornaments, even children's clothes in a niche atmosphere that we call 'St. Pete' centric. All items have a St. Pete theme."

Hemans says she'll get some shopping in as well and loves the bargains. She shops with friends, wearing PJs and brightly colored curlers in her hair. Rebecca Pavlik, an Old Northeast resident and the newest employee at the St. Pete Store and Visitor Center, says she's also excited to work and shop her very first "Pajama Party."

Sunrise Sale committee Tami Simms has many fond memories of the event through the years – mostly of the deals she snagged: "I love to get my holiday shopping in early. In the past, I've scored a lobster pot (all the way back in 1996), an evening gown one year, expensive shoes for a steal, and an odd-numbered set of champagne flutes for \$1 apiece."

For those new to the early morning event, the DBA has a special kick-off. This one starts in the EDGE district with a traditional "cutting of the cake" held adjacent to Ashe Couture Boutique at 1027 Central Avenue. Credit goes to Sweet Divas Chocolates for the special 50th anniversary cake.

"It's always a surprise what our specials will be," says Mike Shapiro, owner of Shapiro's on Beach Drive. He's seen St. Pete grow and change quite a lot since he participated in his first Sunrise Sale in 1998. "You have to get here early."

Looking for more mimosas? Kelly Homman will have them along with the deals at her Pink Soleil store on Beach Drive, which opened April 1. She said she loved shopping the sale each year as a St. Pete resident. "It was our tradition to wait in line at many stores with family and friends in the past because we knew the bargains were worth it." This will be her first time on the other side of the counter.

As you might expect from a five-decade event, the Sunrise Sale holds many fond memories for all of us who live, work, and play in the neighborhood. I even spoke to a woman who said she will be going to her fortieth Sunrise Sale. Pauline Brockman used to shop with her mom every year and now goes with her adult daughter – in special pajamas just for the event. ●

Find a map of participating businesses and more at stpetedowntownbiz.com/sunrise-sale.html.

"There's nothing like starting my day off with a cup of coffee in hand and wandering through the sales in my pajamas, finding incredible deals, and admiring the stunning scenery of our beautiful city at the same time. It's truly a one-of-a-kind event that I look forward to every year!"

Sunlit After Dark Celebrates St. Pete's Thriving Literary Scene

Jeannie Carlson

On May 12, St. Petersburg Press and nonprofit literary arts organization Keep St. Pete Lit joined forces to celebrate St. Pete's literary scene at the Palladium Theatre's Side Door. This inaugural event, "Sunlit After Dark," marked the collaboration of the two grassroots literary organizations to revel in the positive impact that reading and writing plays in St. Pete.

Highlights of the festivities included presentations of the Roy Peter Clark Award, Literary Year in Review, an introduction of special local literary guests, and music by live band Front Porch Picnic as well as light appetizers and cash bar. General admission was free, but VIP tickets, to benefit Keep St. Pete Lit, were \$100 each, and included two drink vouchers, priority seating, a St. Petersburg Press t-shirt, and two St. Petersburg Press books signed by the authors.

The venue was chock-full of what could be described as a who's who of local literary luminaries. Paul Wilborn, executive director of the Palladium Theatre, served as master of ceremonies, and began by introducing Joe Hamilton, founder of St. Petersburg Press and *St. Pete Catalyst*. Honorees included Maureen McDole, founder and executive director of Keep St. Pete Lit; Dominic Howarth, book manager of the independent bookstore Book + Bottle; Colette Bancroft, book editor for the *Tampa Bay Times* and first recipient of the RPC Award; and Amy J. Cianci, publisher and engagement director at St. Petersburg Press.

Roy Peter Clark, renowned writer, editor, educator, and vice president of the Poynter Institute for Media Studies presented the award segment. Four honorees were recognized for their contributions to St. Pete's literary scene: Peter Kageyama, novelist and community development consultant; Michelle Jenquin, third-generation antiquarian bookseller and owner of the historic Wilson's Book World; Leonora LaPeter Anton, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist; and Heather

Robinson, Pinellas County Schools media specialist and librarian.

Roy Peter Clark presented his namesake award to 25-year-old poet Denzel Johnson-Green. The RPC Award is sponsored by St. Petersburg Press "in recognition of the recipient's outstanding contribution to the greater St. Petersburg literary community." Johnson-Green started out in Eagle River, Alaska before moving to St. Pete where he has become a fixture at various local coffee shops industriously writing and reading poetry as well as encouraging others to do the same. He also publishes a local poetry magazine, *Neptune*. Clark calls



Roy Peter Clark, left, presented his namesake award to poet Denzel Johnson-Green for "outstanding contribution to the greater St. Petersburg literary community."

Johnson-Green a "poetry activist" for his dedication to promoting local poetry.

The current and future climate of publishing looks positive, according to the evening's literary review speakers. In 2019, a conversation between writers Paul Wilborn and Joe Hamilton spearheaded the birth of St. Petersburg Press, "author-centric publishing for our city's storytellers, influencers, and innovators."

Amy Cianci, publisher and engagement director for St. Petersburg Press, reported that the organization has published 33 titles for sale worldwide since then, with more on the way. "I go on a journey with every one of the authors," said Cianci.

Howarth of Book + Bottle said that independent bookstores' sales went up since the pandemic, a fact that both surprised and delighted him, adding that this was no passing trend – Book + Bottle doubled its sales from 2022 to 2023.

But the evening's most uplifting stories came from Maureen McDole whose Keep St. Pete Lit has made reading and writing more accessible to children and young people in St. Petersburg over the last 10 years. "We have expanded our youth programming since we started our outreach in 2018 and are now offering classes at local senior centers as well," said McDole.



Keep St. Pete Lit founder Maureen McDole with son, Victor James, who created the cover art for her third book of poetry, published by St. Petersburg Press



Amy Cianci, publisher and engagement director for St. Petersburg Press

And that's not all. Keep St. Pete Lit has poetry open mics, book clubs, and has taken over as the publisher of Yellow Jacket Press, which has been the premier poetry chapbook publisher in Florida since 2008. Every year they partner with USF-St. Pete on Poetry Loud, a statewide poetry recitation contest for high school students sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts.

"Tune in weekly for our podcast Typewriter Talks, where we interview writers about their writing process," said McDole. "We also have eight WORD! Book Boxes around South St. Pete where we give out free, culturally diverse children's books."

McDole also introduced Sara Ries Dziekonski, Keep St. Pete Lit's main elementary creative writing teacher for the last five years. Dziekonski teaches at Eisenhower Elementary, New Heights Elementary, 74th Street Elementary, Dunedin Elementary, Gulfport Elementary, and High Point Elementary. She explained that, when she first started working with the children, they didn't have the tools and writing skills they needed to express the amazing energy of their stories. Said Dziekonski, "Now they do!"

Find more on Keep St. Pete Lit at keepstpetelit.org and St. Petersburg Press at stpetersburgpress.com.

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‘Where Have You Gone, Joe DiMaggio’s Club House?’ and Other Yankee Yarns

Jon Kile

Slugger Babe Ruth, the Iron Horse Lou Gehrig, Joltin’ Joe DiMaggio and... best-selling author Dennis Lehane. Three are Yankees and the fourth is “a Yankee.” All are part of the Old Northeast lore of colorful characters and notable people who’ve passed through the neighborhood. However, separating fact from fiction is tricky.

The Great Bambino is referenced so often HONNA could sell signs saying “Babe Ruth Slept Here.” It might be a real moneymaker, given the number of places he’s said to have hung his cap over the course of 15 springs in St. Pete. From the Flori de Leon Apartments (where he and Gehrig rented dualling penthouses) to the Jungle Country Club Hotel to the Snell Isle Apartments, the Babe got around. One house he rented is undergoing a renovation of Ruthian proportions.

In a 1969 *St. Petersburg Times* article, Harry Woods recalls renting the home at 346 16th Ave NE to Ruth, his wife Clair, and his stepdaughter Dorothy. While doing some work on the house Woods found a whiskey bottle under the floor that he could only attribute to the Babe. In the current real estate boom, the modest home might have been a tear-down if not for its history with the Sultan of Swat. Instead, the House that Ruth Rented should perhaps become known as the House that Maureen Stafford Rebuilt.

Stafford bought the house two years ago. She has been renovating historic homes for four decades, but the amount of work this rehab has entailed surprised even her. To see it underway is to see a house being built within a house. Termite damage was so extensive



Ruth and Lou Gehrig pose with fan Dick Mayes at a spring training game in St. Pete in the '30s. Right: Maureen Stafford is deep into a massive restoration of the house at 346 16th Ave NE, purportedly once rented by Babe Ruth and his family.



that nearly everything except the front wall, the roof rafters and substrate has been replaced. Stafford is reinstalling east-facing windows that were removed, and she is converting the garage into living space. A prior owner who put in a deep pool saved money by spreading the excavated dirt around the property, choking the air circulation under the house, and creating drainage issues.

Don’t mistake Stafford for a “flipper” looking to make a quick buck. The “Babe Ruth House” will undergo over two years of work in an area where an empty lot can cost as much as seven figures.

“When it’s done, I need to get close to \$2 million to come out ahead,” Stafford says. It’s a tall order for a cozy three-bedroom house in a market that remains hot despite rising interest rates. Whoever buys it can

trust the quality of the work, as Stafford is known for hiring excellent craftsmen. She recounted a piece of advice she got from Barry Flaherty, a contractor who’s worked on many historic St. Pete buildings. “He told me early on: ‘Build relationships. That’s what you rely on in this business.’” Gesturing to the carpenters installing fresh wood siding, she said, “I couldn’t do it without the wonderful work of excellent craftsmen who can solve problems as we go.”

It was the fact that Babe Ruth was a spring tenant that drew her to the project. She knew she was probably the only chance the home had to be saved. “I’m either a saint or a fool,” she said with a laugh.

Another nearby Yankee haunt is only a memory. Until 2004, a log cabin stood on a large lot at 746 14th Ave NE. The cabin was an oddity in the neighborhood,

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The home at 1330 Cherry Street might have originally sat on Beach Drive, and was home to author Dennis Lehane for several years. Right: The house on Cherry Street is as quirky as its history.



erected in 1936 during the Great Depression, when home building in St. Pete was slow. Newspaper accounts from when it was removed say that it was owned by a Yankee fan named Chester G. Myers who turned it over to the team each spring to be used as a clubhouse during the era of Lou Gehrig and Joe DiMaggio.

In 2004, the property went up for sale and the owner offered the cabin for free to anyone who would take it away and preserve the piece of history. A gentleman stepped forward with plans to reassemble the cabin near Thonotosassa. Whether this ever happened is doubtful. A 2006 *Tampa Tribune* article said the logs were sitting in shipping containers and the owner hoping for a historic designation that would get him around modern building codes. Google Street View of a property associated with the owner reveals no cabin. Attempts to reach him on social media went unanswered.

Not All Yankees Play Ball

Two and a half blocks away, another house that may or may not rest in its original location hosted plenty of Yankees, but probably not the pinstripe variety. The home at 1330 Cherry Street was the subject of a 2007 article in this paper that speculated the house was actually older than the 1919 date listed in property records and was a fishing lodge originally located somewhere along Beach Drive. Unnamed old-timers speculated that it was moved to its present location after the hurricane of 1921 to get away from the next flood. The story is bolstered by phrases like “legend has it” and cites – but does not name – an 81-year-old gentleman who heard these stories from his father.

The further we get from the events in question, the harder it becomes to find the

answers. If this home was moved, there’s no evidence on the property card. Rumors of a fire or flood that destroyed property records are likely greatly exaggerated. A hard look at early Sanborn maps doesn’t reveal any structures that might have been relocated, but that doesn’t mean it didn’t happen, as homes were moved without fanfare in those days. Old newspaper ads reveal that the home was once divided into rooms to be rented, and the chance that anglers were among its visitors is likely. Its 1919 construction date certainly explains the high ceilings and transom windows that are less common in the many 1925 homes in the Old Northeast.

What the writer of that 2007 story didn’t know was that the home’s next owner would be a bestselling author whose books have been made into major films. Boston native, Eckerd College graduate, and frequent visiting instructor Dennis Lehane bought the home in 2007 and lived there for several years before moving to 20th Avenue and ultimately leaving for Southern California. Lehane is known for *Mystic River*, *Shutter Island*, *Gone Baby Gone*, *Live by Night* (set in Ybor City), and many others that didn’t make it to the silver screen.

Tiffany McAlister is the Realtor handling the home’s market listing. She pointed out the back porch, built on a slant. Is it to drain fish guts from the cleaning of the daily catch? Or was it just meant to handle a mundane rainstorm? It probably doesn’t matter, because the house’s decorative windows, large screened front porch, quirky upstairs bedroom space, swimming pool, and features designed to battle Florida’s warm weather make it a truly special home that has received the right care for more than a century.

But did Babe Ruth clean a tarpon on the back porch? Maybe! ●

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Color Me Inspired: New Mural Brightens Up Historic Condo Complex

Amanda Hagood

It has never been unusual for Burt and Carol Kline to see pelicans from the porch of their Whispering Waters condominium, located just across Shore Drive from a peaceful stretch of Tampa Bay. But a 15-foot-tall pelican in brilliant shades of purple, blue, and yellow? That's something only a gorgeous marriage of art and nature – and Florida-inspired painter Belinda Davis – could produce.

The pelican, shown in close-up against a bright turquoise sea, with a glimpse of St. Pete's historic Inverted Pyramid Pier in the distance, is the subject of a new mural Davis recently finished at the condominium complex. Nestled among the eight midcentury buildings, their lush plantings and tranquil blue pools, the mural makes an inspiring chromatic statement on what was once the patchy gray roof of a transformer bunker.

"Color is my thing," says Davis. "I think I've always seen it where other people don't."

Davis, who is largely self-taught, credits her high school art teacher for recognizing and encouraging her interest in painting. Though she set out to study painting and Hillsborough Community College, administrative changes led her scholarship to dry up before she could begin. And by then, her husband needed to move the family for work. While she turned to property management to help pay the bills, she kept practicing her art on her own. "Art was always there, on the side," she remembers. By the time she returned to St. Pete in 2010, she had learned enough to begin teaching classes of her own.

Her Pelican/Pier project at Whispering Waters – or, as residents have dubbed him, "Paulie Pelican" – is not her first mural. That honor goes to a scene she painted, at age 13, on the walls of her newborn cousin's nursery. She also created a memorial tribute to U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Flotilla No. 73, inspired by vessels and scenes her family members have experienced while in service, for a wall of the USCGA building in Madeira Beach.

Her choice of image for the Whispering Waters project, so well suited to its environs, came from an acrylic painting she has long treasured – pelicans are one of her favorite Florida critters. To recreate the image, she created a grid of letters and numbers that helped her to lay down large solid blocks of color. On top of that, she filled in the finer details – stroke after stroke – that give Paulie his feathery depth and texture. A friend, photographer Mark Rapien, helped her capture the entire process in a nifty time lapse montage.

The horizontal surface she was working on posed some special challenges. For much of the morning, it was covered with dew and too wet to work on. By midday, it was baked in direct light that cooked the paint and made it too hard to see. "I'd have to wait

until around 4 pm and paint until it got too dark," she recalls. "Or until the mosquitoes got too bad!" Not to mention those long stretches of sitting, squatting, and bending over the hard surface, which took a toll on her body.



The new pelican mural has been dubbed "Paulie."

But after more than three months' labor, she is satisfied with the work. "I'm so grateful to have the opportunity to paint this image on a large scale," she reflects.

Whispering Waters neighbors agree. "It has certainly added more charm to our beautiful courtyard," wrote Burt Kline in a recent email to the community. He and Carol were one of five Whispering Waters couples whose financial support made the project possible. Beyond beautifying the landscape, Kline sees the mural as keeping pace with the evolving life of the city around it. "St. Pete has



Whispering Waters' new mural is a pop of color viewable to visitors and residents from above.

stroke after stroke – that give Paulie his feathery depth and texture. A friend, photographer Mark Rapien, helped her capture the entire process in a nifty time lapse montage.

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Whispering Waters is an iconic mid-century complex in the Old Northeast. Image via Zillow.



Artist Belinda Davis says "color is my thing."

become a mecca for local art. We at Whispering Waters have jumped on that bandwagon."

This wouldn't be the first time Whispering Waters helped to set a trend. The complex, which was constructed in 1960, was the first condominium of its kind in the city: a "plush new co-operative venture overlooking Tampa Bay," reported the

St. Petersburg Times in 1960. The complex was modeled on avant-garde developments that builder Lionel Mayell had created in Long Beach, Santa Barbara, and Hollywood. Conceived as a refined housing for wealthy retirees, luxuries in each unit included heating and air conditioning, bathrooms trimmed in Italian marble, and airy kitchens equipped with dishwashers and garbage disposals. Fifty-three units in eight buildings – all with balconies wrapped in a distinctive, delicate metal trim – varied from a small efficiency apartment (valued at \$13,000) to penthouse (\$45,000).

From where I stand on the breezy balcony of the Klines' condo, with the ever-changing view of Tampa Bay and the city's new Pier beyond, Davis's mural seems to capture so much of what makes living in St. Pete special. It depicts natural Florida, tinted with the brilliant light of our love and fascination for this unique place – the vibrant colors it projects in our imaginations. It reminds me of something Davis says, reflecting on her own evolution as an artist. "We are all born to create," she insists. "We all have it within us, we just put limitations on it."

In other words, when you find inspiration – whether it's creating an extraordinary mural or investing in the beauty and creativity of your community – you've got to fly with it. I smile down at Paulie, knowing he'll understand. ◆

Check out the video of Belinda Davis creating her mural at tinyurl.com/pelican-timelapse.

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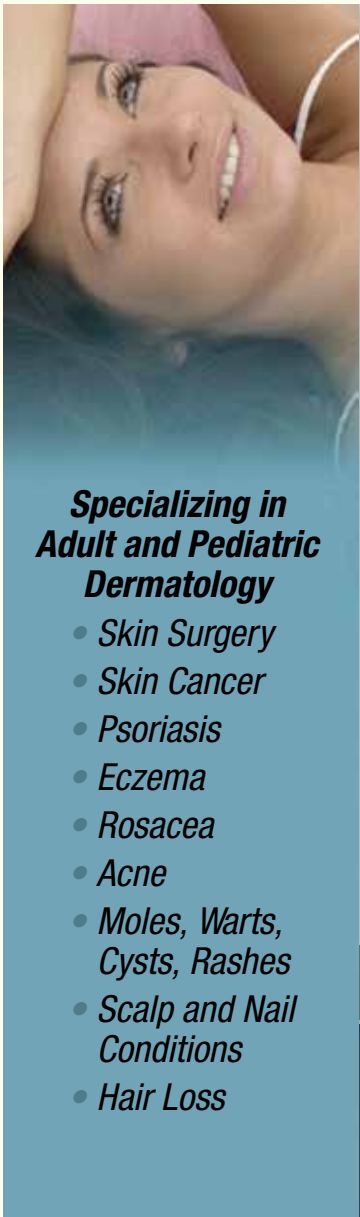
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Fun at the Fairgrounds



Earlier this year, I had a friend in town from Washington state. We were looking for something different to do indoors, and after some research, Patti and I decided on Fairgrounds St. Pete.

This very hip arts destination presents a range of creative fun art and technology exhibits in the heart of the Warehouse Arts District, at The Factory St. Pete, along the Pinellas Trail, 800 28th St. South, about a five-minute drive from downtown. As you walk through the massive and detailed indoor installations you can scan the QR codes on the wall to find out more about a particular piece or scene and read up on the artists in that zone.

We spent about 90 minutes engrossed in the variety of quirky exhibits, colors, lighting, and just plain cool displays – many with a nostalgic old-Florida vibe that invokes vacations of the past. There is a well-curated little gift shop at the end and parking is easy and free. Totally worth a visit! ●

~ Lynn Lotkowitz



HEY, WHAT'S THAT?

Your Guide to Yard Oddities in Old Northeast

They say gardening takes patience. Old Northeast resident Rick Miller knows a little about that. He emailed to tell us about the bromeliad growing in his yard. It's called *alcantarea imperialis*, and the plant rewards growers with blooms stretching up to eight feet high. However, you might pay off a 30-year mortgage and never see the awesome display because this plant can take at least eight years – and sometimes up to four

decades – to send up its tower of flower. The flower can last up to a year, but when the bloom is done, the show is over.

Miller explained, "There is no next year for this one as it will die after flowering. The bright side is it should throw off one or two pups at the base before it goes and then I'll start them anew. I'll remove the shoots and plant them and start the cycle all over again."

Alcantarea imperialis, also known as the giant bromeliad or imperial bromeliad, is native to Brazil, so it's no surprise that it likes the climate in St. Petersburg. Seasoned residents might know that a bromeliad is a "pitcher plant" that can hold plenty of water, and, if left untreated, can breed mosquitoes. The largest imperial bromeliads can catch and hold nearly eight gallons of rainwater. For a plant that takes so long to reproduce, it makes up for it with a stalk that can produce 400 to 600 flowers and 80,000 seeds.

Check out this specimen located on the right of way on 2nd Street North between 9th and 10th Avenue. See it before it's gone, lest we wait another generation for the next display. Thanks to Rick for sending this in.

Do you have a weird plant you want to see in these pages? Email jkilewrites@gmail.com.

~ Jon Kile





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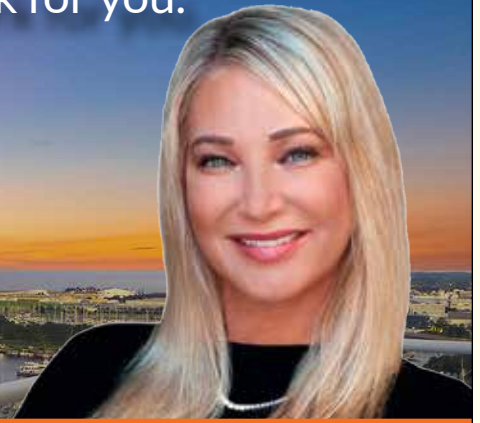
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