



NORTHEAST JOURNAL

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St. Petersburg, Florida

July/August 2024

Est. September 2004



Over 600 people came out Mother's Day weekend to help paint the mural.

Inspired by the Mission Hundreds Help Paint Community Mural

Brandy Stark

A new mural in St. Pete's Edge District promises to be more than just a pretty picture: Two hands reach toward each other; one releases butterflies that gently flutter toward the lotus flower clutched in the other's hand. An inscription reads, "Compassion in action."

The work was commissioned by the Gulf Coast Jewish Family and Community Services, a not-for-profit organization that helps people "of all ages, faiths, cultures, and lifestyles" across a vast spectrum of challenges, to

celebrate the org's 50th anniversary theme. Gulf Coast JFCS Communications Manager Hana Cowart explains that the mural was "inspired by our mission," and was "painted to life by clients, staff, donors, funders, and community supporters."

To oversee the project, the org chose artist Alyssa Marie, who moved from Colorado to St. Pete in 2017. She has a BFA in communication design with an emphasis on fine art from Metropolitan University of Denver and has done paint-by-number community murals across the nation.

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Halley's Comet 1910 Visit Stirs Up St. Pete



Image of Halley's Comet taken in 1910, the first year the comet was photographed.

Will Michaels

Halley's comet last appeared in 1986 and will next appear in 2061. The celestial body appears cyclically every 75 to 79 years and has been observed and recorded as early as 240 BCE. But it was not until 1705 that astronomer Edmond Halley determined the cyclical appearances were reappearances of the same comet. And thus, the comet was named after him. The comet itself is composed of a nucleus described by some scientists as a "rubble pile" of ice, dust, and frozen methane, and a "coma" or tail composed of volatiles like water, methane, ammonia, and carbon dioxide.

Continued on page 14

Keeping the Vibe Alive Historic Preservation Is Much More Than Character

Laura Flint

"Laid back, quirky, artsy, funky, creative, unique." Those are the words used to describe our city in the opening of a recent report about St. Petersburg, *Keeping the Vibe Alive: The Impact of Historic Preservation in St. Pete*. The report was commissioned by Preserve the 'Burg and completed by PlaceEconomics, a private-sector firm that analyzes the economic impacts of historic preservation. PlaceEconomics CEO Donovan Rypkema presented the report at the Historic Preservation Expo at the St. Petersburg Museum of History of May 10.

Keeping the Vibe Alive highlights significant contributions by historic preservation to the city's economy, identity, and community. It also reveals some of the city's challenges, such as housing affordability amidst new development, and the risk of losing the city's uniqueness in the wake of growth and change. Most importantly, it debunks the myth that historic preservation has a detrimental effect on the economics and vitality of the city, noting that "the findings indicate that



People stroll along the historic 600 block of Central Avenue.

Continued on page 20

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Give 'Em Something to Root For

By the time you have this paper in your hands, we will be close to the start of the 2024 Olympics. I, for one, cannot wait. I love the Olympics. All the countries and the pageantry and the drama – winter or summer, I eat it up. And let's face it – Paris! Could there be a more romantic backdrop? I'd watch the marathons for the scenery alone.

Anyway, there's a lot I love about the Olympics (and the less publicized, but often more spectacular Paralympics). From the obscure events (break dancing!) to the endless iterations of swimming, I really will watch it all. But it's not just about the competition for me. If you read this space, you know that my passion is storytelling. And it's stories that make the Olympics truly compelling.

Think about it: Ten athletes you've never heard of are about to line up at the starting block. Who cares who wins? Then NBC launches into the piece about how one overcame a car accident and could hardly walk a year ago. Now you want that person to win more than anything. Because that's the power of a story.

I think about that typical "Olympic story" often when we put together the paper. The world is made of stories – everyone has plenty – but when you tell a story, people get invested. They connect. In this issue, as always, I hope you find connections, no matter how small: to artists building networks, to the legacy of local history, to the intrepid indie theater, and our own tenacious athletes.

I hope through these pages you find yourself rooting for them. Because that's what builds a community. And that's the whole point. ~ Shelly Wilson, Editor



The editor's wife, Maria, in Montreal. The editor was so excited about this Olympic podium she forgot to get a picture of herself on it.

As ever, if you've got a story, I'd love to hear it: editor@northeastjournal.org.

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ADVERTISING
Susan Seta-Williams
(727) 259-3149
northeastjournal@gmail.com

EDITORIAL
Shelly Wilson, *Managing Editor*
editor@northeastjournal.org
Julie L. Johnston, *Copy Editing*

ART DIRECTION/PRODUCTION
Julie L. Johnston, *Ad Design/Layout*
JohnstonGraphicDesigner@gmail.com

DISTRIBUTION
For questions about Distribution,
email info@greatergoodmedia.com

WRITERS AND CONTRIBUTORS
Abby Baker
Jeannie Carlson
Rick Carson
Cindy Cockburn
Mary Fletcher
Laura Flint

Lynn Lotkowitz
Will Michaels
Samantha Bond Richman
Brandy Stark
Janan Talafer
Shelly Wilson

PHOTOGRAPHY
M. Shackelford Burns
Brandy Stark
NEJ contributors and the community at large

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Terry Hornsby, AWM
Senior Vice President –
Financial Advisor
(727) 895-8869
terry.hornsby@rbc.com

Michael C. Funsch, CFA®, CPFA™
Senior Vice President –
Financial Advisor
(727) 502-3668
michael.funsch@rbc.com

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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.



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, born in NYC and has lived in St. Pete for 10 years. As owner of C.C. Communications for 20+ years, she worked with a variety of clients, from the mayor of St. Pete 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.



Mary Fletcher was a *St. Peter Times* advertising graphic designer for 20-years. She is president and designer for The Florida Aviation Historical Society; was the Board secretary of Flight 2014; and piloted for the Civil Air Patrol search-and-rescues and Sundown Patrols. Mary is active in the Ninety-Nines and the Florida Suncoast Chapter.



Laura Flint, a Tennessee native, moved to St. Pete in 2017. With her master's in literature, she began a career in youth sports and recreation. For Preserve the 'Burg, she began spending time with volunteers, planning events, and writing about special places and neighborhoods in St. Pete. Laura lives in St. Pete with her husband and two children.



Lynn Lotkowitz spent years in radio in New York, and in business development/management at *Florida Trend Magazine*. She volunteers and enjoys traveling internationally.



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*. [wjmicahels2@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.



Janan Talafer A long-time Snell Isle resident, Janan was the editor of the *Northeast Journal* for many years, and still enjoys writing about people and places in St. Petersburg. She loves swing dancing, blues music, and gardening, even when the weeds threaten to overtake the yard. [janantalafer@gmail.com]



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Passion for the Game: Meet Local Volleyball Star Amber Bennett

Cindy Cockburn

Amber Bennett could be the poster child for the “St. Pete dream” of living, working, and making the most of our Sunshine City. In her “day job” she’s a real estate rock star, but early each the morning, she’s an elite athlete. Volleyball is her game.

For the past nine years, Amber has trained in the heart of downtown. If you have ever passed by the beach volleyball courts at North Shore, you may have been watching volleyball players from around the world training in our slice of paradise.

I caught up with Amber to chat a few days before she was heading off to compete in yet another tournament. This time in Mexico, her final Paris 2024 qualification opportunity: the NORCECA Olympic qualification tournament finals in Tlaxcala in June.

When did you realize you were born to be involved with athletics?

It’s in my blood! My family is pretty athletic, and I’ve always loved playing sports or being involved with sports somehow. My paternal grandfather played in the NFL; my dad, Bralyn Bennett Sr., was a receiver for the University of South Carolina and went on to be a sports agent; my uncle, Brandon Bennett Sr., also played at South Carolina, then had 10 years in the NFL (my dad was his agent); my mother, Angela Larsen Bennett, swam competitively growing up in St. Croix, USVI; my maternal uncle, Lenny Larsen, played volleyball for the USVI men’s national team.

From my generation: my younger brother, Bralyn Jr., played football at Elon University; my middle little



Amber Bennett following her passion on the beach volleyball court.

brother, Malik played club volleyball and competed in esports at Coastal Carolina; my baby brother, Omari, is a rising sophomore at Campbell University and runs track; my cousins, Lauren and Bianca, played volleyball for Coker College; my cousins, Braydon and Brandon Jr., play football at Coastal Carolina and run track at limestone college.

When did your dreams of law school switch to competing in sports internationally?

In college at Tulane University. I majored in business management and the plan was to go to law school and then to become a sports agent or work in the front office of an NFL team. Sports were always going to be a part of my life!

I did not go to law school and chose to pursue the opportunity to play beach volleyball internationally instead. I’m currently a realtor on a commercial real estate team working in developer services, in the process of wrapping up the sales for an amazing condo project downtown called Reflection.

What sports did you play as a child and at what age did you find volleyball was your passion?

I’ve participated in competitive sports since I was 6, when I started karate and then I picked up track in middle school. I started playing volleyball in the seventh grade because my uncle and his daughters played, and I looked up to my big cousins. I was hooked immediately and spent all my time trying to figure out how to play as often and as long as I could. My plans worked as I went on to play indoor and beach volleyball at Tulane University.

Did you end up in St. Pete because of volleyball?

I did! I began playing for the United States Virgin Islands (USVI) women’s national beach volleyball team after college. My mother’s family is from St. Croix. I moved here for better training/prep for the 2016 Rio [Olympic] qualifiers. We were knocked out in round three of four of the continental cup qualifiers.

I moved to St. Pete to live and train with Pri Piantadosi-Lima of Optimum

Beach. I coached and co-directed the indoor club (no longer in existence) and I still train with Optimum Beach to this day. Fun fact: Optimum Beach’s founder/owner Pri is now the head coach of USF’s women’s beach volleyball team, and her wife is the head coach of indoor at Eckerd College, among other roles.

Who are you playing with now?

I still play for the US Virgin Islands and on the NORCECA Tour (a combination of the words North, Central America, and Caribbean Volleyball). I also play in smaller local and domestic tour stops like SSOVA, Rockstar, etc.

Where has your volleyball passion taken you?

I’ve been to 12 countries for beach volleyball, all in North America, Central America, the Caribbean, and once to Colombia. My favorite trip is always Cuba.

What are the chances you could be involved in the Paris Olympics?

Greater than zero percent! We’re ranked 8th in the tournament of 12 and only one bid is given from this tournament. Depending on which country wins, I may be able to qualify with a top three finish.

Update: We finished the place that we came in: 8th, so no Paris for us. But it was still an amazing experience! Every time I compete, I’m always grateful for the opportunity to play again at the highest level, but I’m also grateful for the ability to reconnect with the athletes from other countries who are now close friends. Congratulations to the Canadian men’s and women’s teams who won their bids to Paris! ●



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Continuing the Mission

HONNA President Works to Promote, Preserve, and Protect

Samantha Bond Richman

Probably one of the first things you see when you venture off 4th Street to the east, in the area just south of 30th Avenue, are the massive oaks creating many canopied streets along the way to downtown St. Petersburg, the Vinoy, the Pier, and the many fabulous local parks. Whatever their destination, visitors take notice. The variety and interest of the architecture – some of it over 100 years old – is also sure to catch the eye, from bungalows with shady front porches to large affairs with grand columns, iron railings, and balconies. The lawns vary from native plants, grass, and anthills to immaculate green masterpieces with fountains, statues, and flowers to match the house. There is, after all, something for everyone in the eclectic Old Northeast.

The Old Northeast neighborhood is a jewel to those who love her. This is the story of HONNA, the Historic



HONNA President Nick Bell moved to ONE in 2019 and joined the board in 2022.

Old Northeast Neighborhood Association, a not-for-profit consisting of an elected board of directors supported by member volunteers. They are tasked with continually improving the community for all stakeholders, including residents and

homeowners, visitors, businesses, the city of St. Petersburg, and even the state of Florida. HONNA does important work.

The organization itself has been around since roughly 1974, and recently welcomed a new board

president with a driving desire to help, and the experience to implement ambitious plans.

Nick Bell came to the Old Northeast in 2019 after visiting, with an idea that he might retire nearby and ended up “falling in love with the place.” Spoiler alert: this is a common sentiment around here. Nick is a retired marketing executive with an extensive professional background in producing “ROI-based marketing programs, media relations, and brand strategies,” according to his profile on LinkedIn, with his practice largely focused on serving tech customers. By all appearances, he’s a sharp guy, and the kind who grows where planted – an intentional pun as Nick is an avid gardener.

Nick lives with his partner Devin in the 1929 Colonial Revival home they renovated together, their fourth project in as many cities where Nick also served as a homeowners’ association member and volunteer. He joined the Board of Directors at



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HONNA in 2022 and became president in 2023. His immediate plans required that he build a team of volunteers based on what he saw as the needs of the organization. Using his professional team-building experience, Nick explains he “recruited for the skillsets we needed, and consciously built cohesion among the board.” Clear evidence of this effective management tool, the HONNA website has lately been transformed to a beautiful, functional representation of the neighborhood association.

While it may not seem like much, creating a vital communication tool to attract, engage, and retain association members and volunteers helps drive success. The site also highlights HONNA’s long-standing mission to “promote, preserve, and protect the quality of life in our unique corner of the world.”

With Nick’s guidance, the HONNA team took the pragmatic approach of conducting a neighborhood survey prior to a brainstorming session over the results. This identified some of the

more universal concerns of the community, and probably some differences in opinion as well. Nick feels that improving the community not only improves the lives of its residents, it also helps support property values: “A rising tide lifts all boats,” he says with a grin.

One of the most popular features of the Old Northeast, the tree canopy, is getting the attention it deserves (read more on page 17), while preservation remains a priority for the board. Nick hopes to educate his neighbors on the benefits of restoring properties rather than, “having a wrecking ball mentality.” Construction variances, local commercial projects, and increased traffic – much of it on narrow brick roads – are all regular board concerns.

HONNA organizes myriad special events for neighbors to share their home pride, from parades to monthly Porch Parties to the December holiday Candlelight Tour of Homes, which benefits HONNA projects, like funding for new trees. Art in the Garden, a new tradition, combines home exterior tours in gardens, porches and gazebos. Some will feature artwork, local musician accompaniment, and other creative endeavors for visitors to stroll, enjoy, and embrace the experience.



HONNA helps maintain neighborhood signs.



HONNA banners help raise money for neighborhood projects.



HONNA’s 4th of July Parade is one of many popular neighborhood events.

If you’re new to the neighborhood, or just want to get more involved, check in at HONNA.org, or stop by a Porch Party. From volunteer work to simply hanging a banner, every little bit helps one of St. Pete’s most beautiful, historic neighborhoods continue to improve. ●

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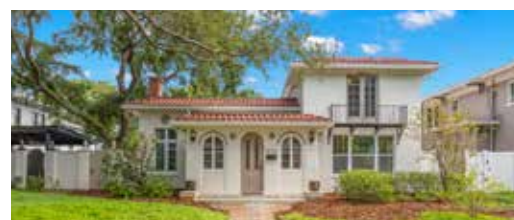
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Dr. Sandra Braham, president and CEO of Gulf Coast JFCS, paints *Compassion in Action*.



Raymond, the Rays mascot, paints *Compassion in Action*.



Former St. Pete Mayor Rick Kriseman, Gulf Coast JFCS Development Committee Chair, helps out.



Alyssa Marie, founder of the Happy Murals Project.

“We chose her as she is both a well-established artist in the area and has experience doing community events,” says Cowart. “This is the largest paint-by-numbers mural that she has done. She made this whole thing very easy for us, too.”

Says Marie, the communal effort of a paint-by-numbers mural, which is part of the Happy Murals project she produces, was a natural fit.

“When I started this, I just wanted to find a way to get everybody involved,” Marie says. “I had painted murals for years by myself and when I did, I would find people were so interested in the process. I wanted to think about a way to allow others to paint a mural with me. Then remembered the paint-by-number books that I did as a kid, and it came together perfectly.”

Marie also works to find the right design to fit with the organization that sponsors it. Gulf Coast JFCS’s mission is to help the most vulnerable individuals throughout the community find safety, comfort, and a path toward a fulfilling life. According to their site, they reach 30,000 people annually throughout the greater Tampa Bay area. They also recently received a \$450,000 grant renewal from the NFL’s Inspire Change social justice initiative. The new two-year grant will be used to expand youth services in the Community Assistance and Life Liaison (CALL) program, which trains social workers and mental health professionals to proactively respond to nonviolent and noncriminal 911 calls.

“This project really resonated with me,” Marie says. “It is an intermeshing with kindred spirits whenever someone wants to work on these [murals]. I really love it because I get to see the community come together to do the art, and the end result is a big mosaic of communication that stands independently.”

The mural’s symbolism is deliberate: The lotus is known as the flower of compassion, Cowart explains. “As the butterflies are released from one hand, they connect with the flower. Each needs the other to continue on.”

Even the location and placement of the painting was designed to honor a pioneer of local cultural diversity: Dr. Philip Benjamin. You can find it on the west side of the building that housed his



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optometrist practice, built in 1969. Though Dr. Benjamin passed away in 1998 at the age of 73, his imprint upon this area is indelible.

"I never met him in life, but I feel like I know him because of his reputation and his legacy," Cowart says. "His family was integral in creating this mural, including his widow, Marilyn. They got brushes and helped us to paint."

Benjamin was an ardent supporter of the then-St. Petersburg Junior College. He served a vice chairman and chairman on the board of trustees where he worked to establish affirmative action policies and expanded the diversity of campus employees. He also aided in the creation of the college's Health Education Center. SPJC named the Social Arts Building in his honor in 1984.

The new mural's location also pays homage to the Jewish history of Arlington Avenue N. As the Jewish population grew in the area, accommodations and services expanded accordingly. Congregation B'nai Israel and Temple Beth-El, both founded in the early 20th century, played vital roles in the community with their synagogues, located just blocks apart on Arlington Avenue. The mural was cosponsored by the Tampa Bay Rays, Amuni Financial, the Benjamin Family Foundation, and Frank Edgar of Creative Catering Company.

The entire mural project was organized to engage a variety of people and to promote diversity. Approximately 600 people, including relatives of Dr. Benjamin, former mayors, and community volunteers, came out over Mother's Day weekend to work on the mural. Cowart and Marie agree that the volunteers were the best part of the project.

"We loved seeing how the community responded. It was like a Gulf

Coast JFCS reunion! We truly got to see the people that the agency has touched and how we touched them," Cowart says. "Truly, every single person that we spoke to walked away with a smile."

"The days go by so fast, but it's wonderful to see two people who are strangers standing next to each other who start talking to see how they connect to the project – to either the organization or to me," Marie says. "Before you know it, they are making bonds, laughing, and exchanging Instagram accounts. I love to see those connections develop!"

How exactly does paint-by-numbers work on such a large scale? "This was a big mural that reached 16 feet at its tallest point, and it was 105 feet long," says Maria. "I have a team working with me so when people come, they are given a cup of paint with a number on them. They go to the mural and find a corresponding section with that number to paint. Children are allowed to go on the lower part and those who are good with heights paint on the ladders. Everyone has a 30-minute slot that they sign up for ahead of time, and it goes pretty smoothly."

"It was a very hot Florida weekend, so organizing 600 people to come out to paint inside the lines while enjoying themselves might have been a challenge, but Alyssa handled everything beautifully," said Cowart. "We hope that it inspires the community to be compassionate in action and to think about how compassion can be brought into their lives. I hope they bring that compassion into the world and into supporting our work." ●

View the new mural at 929 1st Ave. N. Learn more at gulfoastjewishfamilyandcommunityservices.org or follow the Happy Mural Project at thehappy muralproject.com.

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Emily Martinez, 27 DIC, 1974 (*Mother's Embrace*) (detail), 2024, Acrylic on canvas and wood



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Lizzi Bougatsos, *Idolize the Burn*, 2022, Brass chandelier, red wax, silver, candles, resin dipped toe shoes, and wood. Courtesy of the artist and James Fuentes Gallery, NY.



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MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS ST. PETE

In 1986, Soviet probes Vega 1 and 2 made fly-bys of the comet and took the first images of its nucleus. Additional probes followed, launched by the European Space Agency and Japan, collectively known as the “Halley Armada.” Two US Space Shuttle missions were scheduled to observe Halley’s comet from low Earth orbit. The STS-51-L mission carried the Shuttle Pointed Tool for Astronomy satellite, also called the “Halley’s Comet Experimental Deployable.” The mission ended in disaster when the Space Shuttle *Challenger* exploded in flight, killing all seven astronauts onboard. After the *Challenger* disaster, the second shuttle mission was cancelled. Overall, the 1986 appearance of Halley’s comet was the least favorable known. The comet and Earth were on opposite sides of the Sun, creating the worst viewing circumstance possible.

Prior to 1986, the comet last appeared in the Tampa Bay area in 1910. The then-St. Petersburg Times published an account of the comet’s pass-by, likely written by editor William L. Straub: “Wide-eyed persons in all parts of Tampa yesterday peered at Halley’s comet through smoked glasses. They saw a great, gleaming ball, nearly as large to the eyes as the sun itself, approach the solar luminary and glide past it. At the moment of contact, one could not repress a slight shiver of apprehension.”

During that year, for the first time spectroscopic analysis was used to analyze the tail of the comet and the presence of toxic cyanogen gas was discovered. A French astronomer, Camille Flammarion, was misquoted as saying the gas “would impregnate the atmosphere and possibly snuff out all life on the planet.” He actually said, “The poisoning of humanity by deleterious gases is improbable,” and that the matter in the comet’s tail was so tenuous that it would have no noticeable effect. However, he then went on to speculate what might happen were the comet to pass through Earth’s atmosphere, which would not have been good. Despite his reassurances



Artist Giotto di Bondone witnessed Halley's comet in 1301 and incorporated it into his painting, Adoration of the Magi.

and those of other scientists, the damage had already been done as panic broke out in some parts of the country with people buying gas masks, “anti-comet pills,” and “anti-comet umbrellas.”

Straub’s *Times* article continued, “For several hours of the day, this Earth of ours was declared by scientists to be enveloped in the gaseous vapors of its tail. We saw it not, neither did we feel it. There were no meteoric showers, no auroras, no atmospheric disturbances. Our old globe, which has encountered the shocks of ages and upon which countless generations have wrought and fought and won and lost and lived and died, passed through this little experience none the worse – emerged with the same eternity, long aspect of indestructibility, the sublime regularity of its revolution and evolution undisturbed and uninterrupted.”

As if in the interest of balanced news, adjacent to this article/editorial, was a column entitled, “Suffered from Comet Gas.” The article reported that during the passage of the comet an employee of the Eureka Stone Paving Company “was suddenly taken with an uncontrollable fit of laughing and shouting. He alternately cried and sang and nothing seemed to have any effect on him. Finally, Dr. Ridgely diagnosed his case as an overdose of comet gas, apparently acting the same as the ordinary gas used by dentists. After the comet had passed [he] was again restored to his natural condition.”

The only other instance of fits or panic found reported in the Tampa Bay area was in an account of the cruise of the yacht *Belle* by George F. Wright: Upon stopping at the hamlet of Osprey near Sarasota it was noted that the people of Osprey “expected a collision of comet and Earth.” The log for May 19 reads, “We awoke early to find the old world still doing business at the same old stand: all Nature seemed to rejoice and the songs of the birds in the trees were the sweetest I ever heard. The natives were very much alarmed, and almost terrorized and were relieved, but still apprehensive of future trouble with the comet.”

However, at least in St. Petersburg, for the most part it appears Halley’s visit was taken in stride and not without humor. On the front page of the *Times* for May 17, 1910, was a major article with the header, “Saw the Angels Sunday Morning.” This tongue-in-cheek piece builds on the many night comet parties held in the city. It reports that one of the good citizens of the town had “taken aboard a sufficient quantity of distilled corn to last him over the Sabbath.” He slowly wandered home “about the time that the comet parties were in session” and was amazed to see a group of “white robed figures” on the lawn of what he believed to be a cemetery. As he walked on, he saw another group. “Startled he looked in all directions and saw issuing from the trees and shrubbery other groups, as he looked up to

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see if there were any in the air he saw the long and glistening tail of the comet....Arriving at the front door of his own home...there coming out of his own front door was a group of three more angels...When after explanations were made and he learned that he had been witnessing a few comet parties, and that it was not the end of the world, he slowly went to bed, not however before he had signed the [temperance] pledge.”

Another was seized upon the frequent references to the comet’s tail, comparing it to various critters. “Usually a comet’s tail is as harmless as a rabbit’s, but the one now swishing through the heavens is said to be composed largely of twenty-cent gas and is dangerous to life.” The writer cautioned, “Do not attempt to step on a comet’s tail, because no one knows what would happen if you did.” Others resorted to doggerel:

*The comet doubtless is the cause
Of many of our ills.
Because it boosts the prices up
We cannot pay or bills.
It must be that. We’ve scanned the list
Of causes left and right,
And there is not in earth or sky
Another cause in sight.*

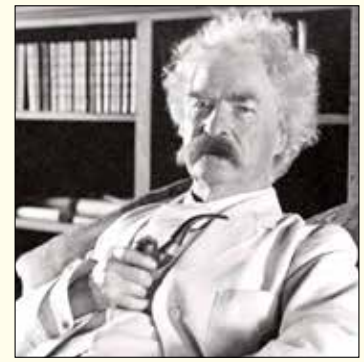
While there was much ado about the comet in the *Times* there was even more in the *Tampa Morning Tribune* published across the bay. (This may be due to the fact that the *Times* published only twice a week whereas the *Tribune* published daily.) Some in Tampa offered a spiritual interpretation of the comet. One reader went so far as to assert the comet as being the



Portrait of Sir Edmund Halley painted by Thomas Murray in 1687



In 1910, St. Petersburg Times editor William L. Straub editorialized the impact of Halley’s fly-by on the city.



Mark Twain’s famously said, “I came in with Halley’s Comet in 1835. It is coming again next year [1910], and I expect to go out with it.” He did.

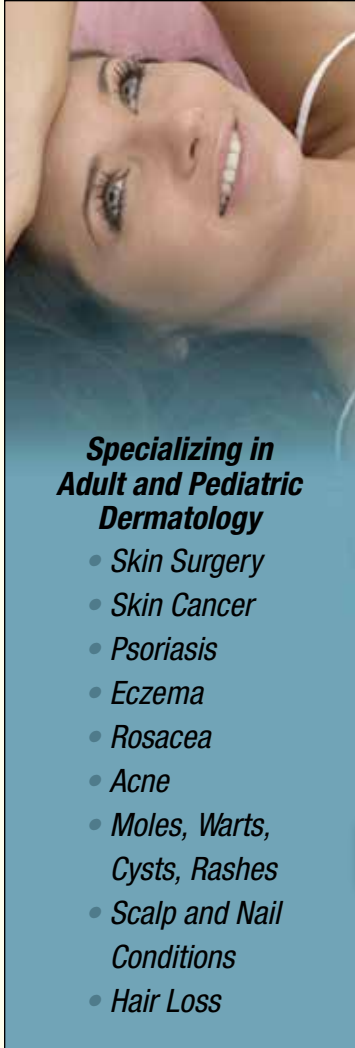
“chariot of God” in which God rode to visit his celestial systems “just like a man who is riding around among his grain farms.” A professor Kaempffert writing in *Cosmopolitan* magazine was referenced by the *Tribune* as theorizing that Halley’s comet might have been the Star of Bethlehem. There are many theories regarding celestial events occurring about the time of the birth of Christ including the appearance of a comet. Halley’s comet was visible in 12 CE. A famous medieval painting by Giotto di Bondone called the *Adoration of the Magi* shows the three wisemen at the birth of Christ with Halley’s comet in the sky. Giotto had witnessed the comet in 1301. The European Space Agency’s spacecraft sent to photograph the 1986 appearance of Halley’s comet was named in honor of Giotto.

The *Tribune* did more than provide extensive news coverage of the phenomena. To prevent Tampa residents from missing good viewing opportunities, the paper offered to call residents at their homes. On

May 12, 13, and 14 more than 200 calls were made. Additionally, the Board of Trade mailed 3,000 postcards hyping the city with the notation, “Mailed May 18, 1910, to show the world that Halley’s comet never touched us. We are still doing business at the old stand.” Actually, the *Tribune* reported that most people watching the sky on May 18 using smoked glasses saw nothing. Those few who claimed they did see something were discounted by the local Weather Bureau. What they “really saw were streaks and blots on the glasses which had not been properly prepared so that the lampblack was distributed smoothly.”

In all, the 1910 passing of Halley’s comet was a brief but spectacular interruption in everyday life in St. Petersburg. ●

Will Michaels is a former director of the St. Petersburg Museum of History and the author of The Making of St. Petersburg and The Hidden History of St. Petersburg. wmicahals2222@gmail.com or 727-420-9195.



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HONNA June Quarterly Meeting

The June quarterly meeting featured the city codes director and HONNA project updates.

St. Petersburg Codes Compliance Director Joe Waugh was guest speaker at the June 17 neighborhood meeting attended by approximately 70 residents. The director held a Q&A session after explaining the difference between civil citations and code violations, which are often confused.

Civil citations, he explained, are for common issues involving homeowners and simple fines, like overgrown vegetation. Code violations, on the other hand, are for larger issues that involve hearings and liens.

Waugh addressed concerns about overgrown vegetation in the neighborhood that impedes pedestrians. Ironically, it's the abundance of beautiful landscaping that distinguishes the Old Northeast from other neighborhoods. But, as he pointed out, lush vegetation cannot restrict safe

passage of pedestrians on city sidewalks. Waugh also addressed other code-related issues such as ADUs and pervious vs. impervious surfaces.

HONNA President Nick Bell updated residents on a host of projects the HONNA Board of Directors has been working on, including:

- Neighborhood Gateway Monuments Begun a year ago, this project to clean, paint, and relandscape the five monuments marking the entrances to the Old Northeast is complete. The next phase involves repairing and or replacing the lighting that will illuminate the monuments at night. In addition, the city has recently cleaned, repaired, and repainted the Granada Terrace monuments. About half the light fixtures on the monuments are not working and this will be addressed.
- Tree Canopy Inventory and Planting Approximately half the neighborhood's 400 blocks have now been inventoried, including the number, size, and variety of trees on the public right-of-way. In addition, this year's initial HONNA-sponsored tree planting is underway, with new varieties to choose from and updated care instructions.
- 26th Annual Candlelight Tour of Homes It takes the proverbial village and five months to produce this holiday season favorite and major fundraiser for HONNA. The tour committee is in the process of forming. Interested parties can "raise their hand" by emailing president@HONNA.org. The committee will be seeking homes to be considered for the tour. To nominate a potential tour home, use the same email address.



Joe Waugh and Nick Bell



- 1st Street Lighting Begun many years ago, this involves erecting "acorn" streetlamps from 5th Avenue N. to 30th Avenue N. The final four light posts are due to be installed in the coming few weeks.



- The Former Westminster Church Property The former church sanctuary and attached school are to be turned into a single-family residence and two townhomes respectively. Bellaire Development has been working closely with the city and HONNA on detailed plans for the property. Approval of the design plans may occur within the next couple months.

Two awards were presented during the meeting for outstanding work by two tree inventory project volunteers. Linda Boorman surveyed 27 blocks and plotted 333 trees. Janice Herbert surveyed 36 blocks and plotted 536 trees. Each hard-working volunteer received a \$100 gift certificate at Lida's Jungle. The survey work is not complete so please contact Board Member Monique Kramer at moniquek522@gmail.com to join the tree team. You may also email Monique to apply for a HONNA tree to be planted on your right-of-way.

The next quarterly meeting will be held September 16 at Westminster Palms. All Old Northeast residents are encouraged to attend. Watch upcoming HONNA e-blasts for more information. Porch Parties are on vacation for the summer and will resume in September.

Old NE's Own "Pan Am Building"

The grand yellow structure on the corner of 10th Avenue N. and 2nd Street is the home of 16 mid-century-style units. According to St. Petersburg's archival records, the area was named the Colonial Heights subdivision, and owner John W. Burger was granted a State Hotel permit in 1955. It functioned as individual apartments with maid service until 1958. At that time, a board of directors was elected and established the property as "Pan American Apartments Inc," and resident owners were referred to as "stockholders."

In 1983, an application to the city was submitted to incorporate Pan Am Apartments as a non-profit organization, which established it as a co-op. Co-ops traditionally allow each owner to assist in the maintenance/upkeep of the building, thus mitigating external contractor expenses. That status lasted for 23 years. In 2006, a request was submitted to the Commission on Human Relations to establish the property as a "55+" adult only community, but this was never followed through. Finally, in 2007, the request to convert its co-op status to condominium form of ownership began.

While the original architect of the Pan Am building cannot be established, we acknowledge that in the mid-20th century, St. Petersburg saw the rise of modernist and mid-century architectural styles. Through the years, simple architectural features have been updated at the Pan Am; for example, removal of the jalousie-style windows for drop style. The simple front doors were changed to a modern decorative style, capturing the aura of mid-century design. Each unit (approximately 510 square feet) is very different, with a character of its own – some have the original tile bathrooms signature of that era, and some more modern. One thing that is clearly appreciated by all is its location as a trademark of the Old Northeast. Many strangers often take a picture in front of, or on the second-floor landing of the building, as if there's a special notoriety to its existence. For those of us who live here, we think there is!

~ HONNA member Maria L. Abadesco



Rowdies to Host Special Night for ONE Residents

Our local soccer team is extending an exclusive invitation to Old Northeast residents for their game against the Charleston Battery at "727 Night." Residents attending the July 27 game at Al Lang Stadium will enjoy discounted \$7.27 prices on 16 oz. beers, Viva Tequila Seltzers, and their delicious hamburgers. And the neighborhood will benefit as \$10 from each ticket purchase will be donated to HONNA.

The partnership between the Rowdies and HONNA is a great way for Old Northeast friends and families to partake in thrilling soccer action while at the same time benefiting HONNA. The Rowdies believe neighborhood associations like HONNA are the fabric of our community and the heart of the Rowdies fanbase. They value the support and spirit we bring, and this is their way of giving back.

Go to evo-enterprise.com/event/727night21111 to get your tickets for only \$25. Let's make this a great ONE night at the Rowdies!



Stay Connected

HONNA invites and encourages you to stay connected and on top of programs, events, and other happenings in our neighborhood. It's a great way to learn more about the neighborhood, become involved, share ideas, learn about events and dates of porch parties, and provide feedback. Share/Like us at [Facebook.com/honna.org](https://www.facebook.com/honna.org). Visit HONNA.org and become a HONNA member to receive periodic informative email announcements. Volunteer for a project, program, or event (such as the Candlelight Tour of Homes, Trunk or Treat and Porch Parties). ●



HONNA Board Member Monique Kramer, left, recently kicked off this year's ONE tree-planting program with the help of the crew from local landscaping firm Wise Hands. Homeowner Emily Gorman, right, is the proud new owner of two winged elm trees on her right-of-way.

Residents Urged to Apply to Street Tree Program

This year's Old Northeast tree-planting program has officially begun. A dozen new trees were planted in front of homes on the city right-of-way at the end of June. The free tree program is a major endeavor sponsored by HONNA.

"Protecting and enhancing our vital canopy is a major objective for the HONNA Board of Directors," said President Nick Bell. "Our beautiful tree canopy is a signature characteristic of the ONE, but even more importantly it plays a critical role in combating the effects of climate change."

The 2024 program, run by Board Member Monique Kramer and the HONNA Tree Committee, has been revamped to provide residents with a choice of four new trees, all native to Florida. "The Old Northeast is blessed with hundreds of beautiful live oaks," Monique pointed out, "but it's important we work to diversify our canopy's species." The new varieties include West Indian mahogany, winged elm, sand live oak, and Eagleston holly.

Any neighborhood resident with open space on their right-of-way is welcome to apply for one or more trees. A member of the tree committee will meet with the applicant to review the location and discuss which tree variety would best fit the space.

HONNA has contracted with local landscaping firm Wise Hands to supply and plant the neighborhood trees, each valued at approximately \$400. But property owners are tasked with caring for and making sure the trees survive. Each tree comes with a watering bag, moisture meter, applied mulch, cedar stakes, and detailed care instructions.

To apply for a tree, email Monique Kramer at moniquek522@gmail.com. ●



HONNA'S SHINING STARS

To honor ONE homeowners for preserving or updating their home or property and investing to keep the character and history of their homes intact, HONNA recognizes them with the Neighborhood STAR Award.

Here are the STARS for July and August: 325 15th Avenue NE, Casa Nina Apartments, LLC; 533-535 1st Street NE, Old NE Investments, LLC

Watch for new STARS each month, on HONNA.org and HONNA's Facebook page. Have a home to honor? Send info to Charleen McGrath at cfmcgrath@msn.com. ●





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Meet the Guild Helping to Keep Local Opera Alive

Abby Baker

Whatever preconceptions you have about the art form that is opera, the St. Petersburg Opera Guild may just change them.

“You can wear a t-shirt to the opera, and stop in on your lunch break,” says guild volunteer and opera enthusiast Kitty Grubb. “There are subtitles, you don’t need to know Italian. It’s for everyone, and that’s what people don’t understand.”

The St. Pete Opera Guild is a 501c3 that supports St. Pete Opera, but it is its own entity – don’t confuse SPO with the guild. While St. Pete Opera, founded in 2007, is a company that puts on shows, the guild, founded in 1964, is a community infrastructure that supports and promotes all opera, especially young people who are coming into the art form.

You may not think of high schoolers as the main players in the St. Pete opera world, but surprisingly, there is a colorful community of elementary school, high school, and undergraduate youth that actively study and perform opera.

“What are you gonna do with your one crazy life?” Grubb asks. For these kids, it’s opera.

Surprising History

It’s 1964 in St. Petersburg and there’s a new charity in town: The Service Guild of the St. Petersburg Civic Opera Guild, Inc. While the name may have been formidable, the direction wasn’t crystal clear for the group, which was formed to support opera – any opera – in the community.



Each year, the St. Pete Opera Company presents Pinocchio to Pinellas County elementary students. It’s up to the St. Pete Opera guild to bring in the students.



“You can wear a t-shirt to the opera, and stop in to a luncheon show on your lunch break,” said guild volunteer Kitty Grubb.

Then, in 1970, the guild established a defining tradition: operatic vocal competition for high school and college students, with scholarship monies awarded to the participants. Because music and performing arts students aren’t typically up to their ears in finance opportunities, word traveled fast.

“I’ll still meet people at events that mention, ‘Hey! I won one of your competitions in the ‘90s,’” says guild member and current SPO Artistic Administrator Michael Roberts.

In 2015, the group changed its name to the St. Petersburg Opera Guild. Throughout the 2010s the

guild’s mission has remained largely the same, and the vocal competitions and opera luncheons have stuck around over the last 60 years.

However, to help keep local opera alive in the community, the guild added several new programs, traditions, and even digitized to keep up. Word of mouth became a navigable website; flyers have become PDFs.

“Like it or not, times are changing,” says Roberts, “and we have to change too.”

For the Kids

For some Pinellas County third graders, the day the guild comes to their music class to teach them about opera may just be another day. For others, it’s one they might never forget.

Each year, the guild goes to schools to introduce kids to the art form and teach some of the music.

Third-grade classes are then invited to an SPO showing of *Pinocchio*. (Like many famous operas, *Pinocchio* can be a tad dark. The act is lightened up a bit for young audiences.) Seeing and learning about opera at a young age can have a big impact.

“The kids are so entranced,” says Roberts. “[They ask] ‘How can they sing that loud without a microphone?’”

Perhaps the most renowned guild event is the High School and College and Adult Vocal Competitions. Each year, high school, college, and postgraduate singers, adorned in their best formal



Teresa Ancaya, on piano, and operatic performer Majja Lisa Currie performing at one of the St. Pete Opera Luncheons.



2024 St. Pete Opera Guild’s High School Vocal Competition winners: Helena Peterson, Declan Thies, & Sarah Wilks.

Photos courtesy of the St. Pete Opera Guild

wear, perform in front of a panel of judges. The best leave with their money awards. All leave with more connections, and the possibility of making an impression that will get them hired on a production eventually.

“Cash prizes, that’s what it’s all about,” Roberts said. “But really, we want to support these young artists.”

Phantom of the Funds

To be able to pay the young opera artists, one must first make money.

“Pretty much all the money we make from our fundraising efforts goes back into paying our artists,” said Sharron Robbins, longtime guild volunteer and vice president of membership. “Our focus and goal is to promote opera to the youngsters, but we of course have to have enough money to pay for our competitions.”

Throughout the year, the guild makes money through their Opera Luncheons. Artists sing, supporters mingle, and everyone gets lunch. Not an entire production, but a taste. Some hired artists are local talent who have been involved in the art form since high school and have even competed in the guild’s vocal competitions.

The guild’s chief money-maker, however, is Silver Bells, an operatic

event and benefit responsible for much of the yearly budget. It happens each December, and while the event is popular, there’s still room to grow.

“A lot of people don’t realize how much talent we have in the area,” Grubb said. “I mean look, we have this 60-year-old guild, and no one even knows about it.”

Opera is Not Elite

The easiest way to see if opera is for you? Go to a show. “If you can just get someone in front of a live opera, it’s another ball game entirely,” Roberts said. “It’s the movie versus seeing it live on Broadway. People are really singing and dancing up there.”

SPO presents shows year-round, and you can also find performances regularly at the Straz, Ruth Eckerd Hall, the Mahaffey and other local venues.

If you want to volunteer, or become a member of guild, the opportunities are always open. Volunteers help paint and create sets, spread the word, and just generally support the art. They are the uncredited players behind the growth of opera in St. Pete.

Says Grubb, “This organization has been glorious, without getting a lot of glory.” ●

Learn more, find an event, or check out volunteering at stpeteoperaguild.org

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historic preservation is essential to the vibe and character that so many associate with St. Petersburg.”

One of the central discoveries in the report is the positive impact of historic preservation on property values. The research found that property values are greater in historic districts than the rest of the city. There is a fear that the guidelines and regulations that come with local historic designations can lead to lower property values, but the study finds that this is not true in St. Pete. In fact, when looking at the change in single-family home property values in single from 2008-2022 (significant, as this timeline includes the Great Recession that seriously affected real estate values), the study noted that “local historic districts recovered from the 2008 recession faster than the rest of the city.”

At the heart of the report is the recognition of historic preservation as a stimulus for economic revitalization. Central Avenue is noted in the report as a prime example, with report author Rypkema calling it the “spine or the backbone of the city.” From 1st Street to 31st Street, 60% of the buildings were built before 1960, with the majority built during the 1920s boom and the post-war 1950s boom. A survey of a broad range of St. Pete residents throughout the city showed that nearly 80% of respondents said they visited once or twice a month; 43% said they visited the area weekly.

Why are St. Pete inhabitants so drawn to this area? Is it the many restaurants, shops, and bars? Is it the historic architecture, the murals, and other public art? The study asked respondents what variables were important when visiting Central Avenue, and found that walkability, safety, attractiveness of the area, and many local businesses were important variables, but interestingly, 90% said that the historic character of the area was either very important or somewhat important in visiting Central; 88% said the St. Pete “vibe” of the area was very or somewhat important when visiting Central.

Keeping the Vibe Alive also takes a deeper look at the extreme job growth on Central compared to the rest of the city, the number of locally owned businesses, as well as the large number of minority- and women-owned businesses along this strip. It also shows that occupancy rates are higher in older buildings than in newer buildings, implying that the character of older buildings is a prominent factor.

St. Pete is a growing city filled with exciting new development, but it is no secret that scarcity of affordable housing is major issue. One of the report’s



Crislip Arcade in the historic downtown strip of Central Avenue



Bodega restaurant occupies a structure built before the 1960s.



The report finds that older and historic homes provide a significant portion of affordable housing options.


findings is that older buildings provide affordable housing throughout the city. “There are neighborhoods in St. Petersburg with a concentration of older housing and low-income households. In those neighborhoods, 60% of the households make less than the city median income, and monthly housing costs for both owners and renters are significantly lower than in the rest of the city.” While existing

older homes provide housing for St. Pete inhabitants with modest incomes, most of these homes are not historically protected and are at risk of being demolished, adding to the dearth of affordable housing options.

Keeping the Vibe Alive does not suggest that new development is not welcome in the city, however. At the preservation summit hosted by Preserve the ‘Burg, Rypkema said, “You are not making affordable housing when you are building units that rent for \$3000 a month. It is not a bad thing; there is a market for \$3000 apartments, but that is not the solution for affordable housing. The solution, in part, is keeping the stuff you have already.”

According to report’s survey, the St. Pete community agrees. When asked what was important for the future of St. Pete, nearly half of the respondents had affordable housing as one of their top three choices, and the report finds that some of these housing challenges can be addressed through historic preservation as a strategy to promote equitable development.


Though *Keeping the Vibe Alive* found that historic preservation is “essential” to the makeup of St. Pete’s character, it also states that, “While there are 10 local historic districts, less than 1% of structures built more than 60 years ago have any regulatory protection.” That means the historic buildings like we see on Central, and many of the affordable older homes are at risk of being torn down.



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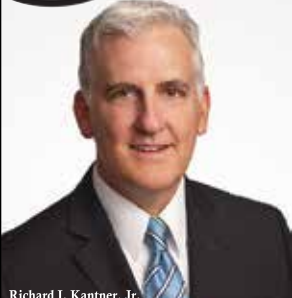
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Cressy House, located in the Historic Old Northeast, was designated as a local landmark in March.



"Historic housing IS affordable housing," says Preserve the 'Burg

So, what's next? What does Preserve the 'Burg do with this information? Executive Director Manny Leto discussed the importance of a report like this to fight the skepticism and criticism that dogs preservation efforts. Some assume that preservationists only want to save a building because of its history, or its architecture, and wonder if that's a good enough reason. *Keeping the Vibe Alive* offers real data about how preservation benefits our city as a

whole – data that can also be compared with other cities that have undergone the same or similar studies and show where St. Pete stands amongst them.

Says Leto, "It is up to Preserve the 'Burg, the city, and allied organizations to take this information and ask what needs to happen. The goal is to also encourage the community to look at historic preservation in a different way."

Rypkema agrees, saying, "The study lets people step back and make policy decisions based on evidence as opposed to emotion or conventional wisdom. Our role is presenting ammunition to local advocates so that they have a base to make their case individually to city council members, the mayor, or whoever." ◆

View the full report at preservetheburg.org. Watch Donovan Rypkema's presentation at [youtube.com/watch?v=2-auwkYHk1M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-auwkYHk1M).

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This Art is Too Cool

Brandy Stark

Beat the heat and get inspired with art exhibits and events all over the 'Burg this summer. Here's a sampling of some of our favorites.

Art Centers

Florida CraftArt: Heroes. 510 Central Avenue. July 11-Aug 24. M-Sat, 10 am-5:30 pm; Sun, noon-5 pm. floridacraftart.org

Whether you are captivated by legendary figures from mythology, fascinated by everyday heroes in our communities, or inspired by personal tales of resilience and triumph, you'll find something to connect with at *Heroes*.

Morean Arts Center: Wish You Were Here. 719 Central Avenue. July 13-Sept 24. Daily, 10 am-5 pm. moreanartscenter.org

This year's summer members' art show at the Morean celebrates vacation, with artists showing their interpretation of their favorite vacation spots, memories, or upcoming trips. All pieces are inspired by postcard art celebrating the state of rest and fun.

Tropical Splendor: Paintings by Elizabeth Barenis. July 13-Sept 24. Meet the artist on Thursday, August 8 for a gallery talk at 6 pm.

Last year's Margaret Murphy Steward Best of Show winner, Elizabeth Barenis, has won shows paintings sourced from her own photography in a style the artist calls "Abstract Precisionism, which refers to the generalized shapes and clean lines reminiscent of Cubism," work she calls "ultimately grounded in tranquil moments of beauty."

ICONIC: Patricia Kluwe-Derderian. July 13-Aug 29. Patricia Kluwe-Derderian's engaging painting of Beach Drive won Best in Show and a solo exhibition



Florida CraftArt celebrates our idols and inspirations with their exhibit, *Heroes*.



Patricia Kluwe-Derderian's vibrant pallet in *ICONIC* at the Morean.



Water is a theme at ArtLofts' *Splash!*

clay sculpture, Dakota invites the ability to inhabit, if for a moment, another's body.

Studios and Galleries

Artlofts Gallery and Studios: Splash! 5th Street N, above Florida CraftArt. Through 31. M-F, 10 am-5 pm; Sat, 12-4 pm; Second Saturday, 5-9 pm. Contact Susan Hess, 727-504-8788.

The 18 artists of this gallery and studio space celebrate the summer heat with a cool water-themed show, *Splash!* Each artist invites another artist each to join this summer celebration. Swimming? Mermaids? Water sports? Oh my! Special guest Javier Dones will be suited up as a merman, fins and all, for a free photo opportunity with the public.

Pointed View, Aug 1-31. Opening Second Saturday, Aug 10, 5-9 pm.

Former *St. Petersburg Times* photographer and photo editor Joe Walles shoots black-and-white documentary-style photography, capturing everything from city life to wilderness and from people to natural textures. Walles has exhibited his award-winning work since 1979, including solo shows at Florida Gulf Coast Arts Center and the Arts Center in St. Petersburg.

Brenda McMahon Gallery: Floridian Wildflower. 2901 Beach Blvd S., #104, Gulfport. Through July 31. Hours and more at brendamcmahongallery.com

Jenny Bleackley's Florida Wildflower series of paintings started during lockdown, inspired by her walks around the parks of Pinellas. "I'm enchanted by the wildflowers' beauty and determination to thrive," she says. "The purpose of my series is to promote the raw beauty of the Floridian landscape, to encourage more people to support the delicate eco-systems."

at the Morean. Her paintings are marked by the efficient linework and vibrant energy of fashion design, and a bright color palette that is all her own.

Morean Center for Clay: uncomfortable as i am: Solo Exhibition by Dakota Parkinson. 420 22nd Street S. Through July 31. W-Sat, 10 am-5 pm.

Using her literal body and clay, Parkinson "confronts the ideas of discomfort and transness with a challengingly intimate lens.... Through faceless

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Javier Dones suits up as a Merman for Splash!



Joe Waller's photography exhibit Pointed View opens at ArtLofts in August



Raccoons, opossums, and more will feature in Bayboro Brewing's Classy "Trash Animal" Art Show

Spots About Town

Studio Public House: *Laugh It Up!* 2950 Central Ave. Through July 31. Hours and more at thestudio-publichouse.com

Need a good laugh and a pint? Check out this "hilarious and quirky art show" showcasing humor-themed works by local artists, "guaranteed to make you chuckle and smile."

Lewis House, Eckerd College: *Black & White.* 4200 54th Avenue S. Through July 31. M-F, 9 am-5 pm.

The Women's Caucus of Artists Florida Chapter presents a diverse collection of styles in a uniform format: all canvases are 18 x 18 feature work only in black and white.

Bar@584: *Surreal.* 48 Central Ave. Through August 3rd. Mon-Sun, 11 am-3 pm. facebook.com/bar548dtsp

"Transcend the ordinary and delve into the extraordinary world of surrealism" with paintings, digital art, photography, and mixed media to "challenge your reality and ignite the imagination."

Adventure Awaits. Aug 3-Sept 7.

Local artists display works relating to the great outdoors, from personal adventure to mythical quests, national parks, sports and more.

Bayboro Brewing Co: *Classy "Trash Animal" Art Show.* 2390 5th Avenue S. Through August. Hours and more at bayborobrewing.net

Do you love possums and prosecco? Marsupials and mimosas? Then Bayboro Brewing Co invites you to an "ironically classy 'trash animal'-themed art show." Check out "lovely and humorous" paintings of possums, skunks, and raccoons through August.

Events

Coliseum: *The 35th Annual Cool Art Show.* 535 4th Avenue N. July 20, 10 am-5 pm; July 21, 10 am-4 pm. pava-artists.org

The summer staple of art shows is back, hosted in a historic – air-conditioned – location. View works from 70 of Florida's most talented artists including a diverse range of visual and functional art, including paintings, woodwork, ceramics, photography, metalwork, glass art, fiber art, digital art, mixed media, and jewelry. Enjoy artist demonstrations and a variety of hands-on children's art activities for kids of all ages. ●

How Ben Got Back On Course

Recently relocated St. Pete resident Ben E. started feeling the discomfort of a pinched nerve in his neck about almost a month ago. The nerve that was pinched was causing numbness and a tingling sensation all the way down into the fingers on his right hand. Ben knew that he had a history of degenerative disc disease in his neck and was searching for a solution that didn't involve surgery or strong drugs. Ben stated, "I'm recently retired and I don't want to start this new chapter of my life drugged up or lying in a hospital bed for weeks on end. So I chose to start off with one of the least invasive treatments possible."

Ben has been a golfer most of his life but now that he is retired he likes to spend his new found freedom golfing a few times a week. He complains that the discomfort in his hand was making it hard to enjoy the game. "I'm not saying that the numbness is the reason my golf game wasn't that great lately, but the thought is always in the back of my mind. Losing a couple games of golf is the least of my worries. The numbness in my fingers is a sensation that affects every moment of my life and I just couldn't stand it anymore."

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One of Ben's golfing partners had found that acupuncture helped his knee pain in the past and he recommended Ben to go visit Dr. Matthew Mann at St. Petersburg Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine. Dr. Matthew Mann DAOM, AP uses the evidence-based science of acupuncture with other integrative techniques like ATP Resonance Biotherapy™ that assist in improving blood flow which is critical when trying to help treat spinal issues. Dr. Mann has been practicing acupuncture and East Asian medicine for over a decade. He offers non-surgical, non-drug options, specializing in complex chronic cases of pain and internal medicine. Especially cases like Ben's where the prevailing thought is that only surgery or pain medications help. "I am glad I found Dr. Mann! Thanks to his treatments, I can now feel my fingers again and it was relatively quick and painless."

If pinched nerves or chronic pain has kept you from enjoying the life you imagined living in our beautiful sunshine city, give Dr. Mann and his caring team at St. Petersburg Acupuncture & Integrative Medicine a call at 727 - 235 - 0435. Like Ben, you can get your life back on course too!

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Sidney Wilson with Ray in the Old Northeast



Zach Stubna with Lola in Downtown St. Pete



Jadyn Bishoff with "security guard" Kobe in the Old Northeast



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Green Light: St. Pete's Art House Theater Mixes It Up

Lynn Lotkowitz

Recently I sat down with the owner of St. Pete's indie Green Light Cinema, Mike Hazlett, who explained his mission simply: "We want to bring perspective and art from all over the world to the St. Pete community." It's been a journey to get here.

Mike tells me he first learned the movie business in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where he managed a 900-seat theater for eight years and worked at learning all aspects of the industry. He then moved into running a 2,000-seat movie theater in Portland, Maine for another seven years. Performing arts and film, he tells me, are in his blood.

Mike and Sue Hazlett eventually moved to St. Pete. With children grown and Mike retired from running large movie theaters in Boston, they were looking for a change. They had vacationed on Florida's west coast and thought St. Pete was "such a cool city." When they arrived, however, they were surprised there wasn't an independent movie theater in town.

But while Mike and Sue dreamed of bringing indie cinema culture to town, their timing couldn't have been more challenging. Green Light opened in the midst of the pandemic, which ultimately limited the number of patrons they could allow, while many movie productions were delayed or cancelled. Additionally, people's habits were changing and streaming was becoming more of a factor. Needless to say, the first few years have been tough for Green Light. Mike told me year-over-year audience numbers are up, however, and 2025 promises to be even better.

What generates strong attendance? Mike says, "Oscar shorts are very popular and award season – January, February, and March – bring the strongest attendance. There's a lot of buzz surrounding Oscars and the film industry."

While summer might seem to belong to the "blockbusters," however, Mike says there's always a niche for indie film.



Owners Mike and Sue Hazlett were surprised to find St. Pete didn't have an indie art theater.



Mike salvaged the theater's plush velvet seating from the local AMC.

"The good news for us is we curate films, seeking out the best films for our audience," says Mike. "We have good relationships with big distributors. This insures we are showing the cream of the crop of independent films."

I spoke with Jeff Mann, St. Pete resident and film producer who showed the documentary *Americomned* at Green Light. Jeff and the director featured in a panel discussion after a public showing, and also rented the theater for a private screening for friends and invited guests.

"Green Light brings the whole indie film experience to St. Pete, which was sorely needed in our community," says Jeff. "It provides a great space to enjoy great art with each other, something that is important in today's era of streaming alone at home."

And in a world where every other movie seems like a recycled superhero story or franchise fare, it's up to independent theaters to bring cinematic diversity. Green Light gives locals a chance to see new and old indie films, shorts, classics, foreign films,

documentaries, and even local films that you're not likely to find streaming.

Says Green Light patron Robin, a retired USF faculty member, "The most powerful film experiences I have had were in independent art theaters. My favorite is *The Colonial* in little Bethlehem, New Hampshire. The community kept it going, even upgrading the bathrooms and installing air conditioning. Known for its arts scene, St. Petersburg's lack of such a venue was surprising. Green Light is filling this void!"

Like many indie theaters, Green Light is more than a big screen. Since opening, they've fostered partnerships with community organizations and local cultural institutions, including The St. Pete Downtown Neighborhood Association and

Radio St. Pete. The theater also offers a space for acting classes. SAG actress and coach Eugenie Bondurant's Station 12 Studio runs once a quarter for eight weeks, and more than two hundred acting students have gone through the program in the last two years. Mike says they're always looking for special event opportunities in the future, making Green Light a true cultural hub for the community.

Green Light has gained a thing or two from the big area theaters, however. The cinema's red velvet seats actually came from the AMC Sundial just blocks away. "I was walking past one day and saw that they were throwing all these great movie seats into the dumpster," says Mike. "I guess it was while they were converting to the big recliners. I was like, 'Time out, guys!' The next day I came back with a big truck and a bunch of guys. It saved me a chunk of money. And the best part? I have another hundred in storage." ♦

Learn more about Green Light Cinema and their upcoming features and events at greenlightstpete.com or follow them on Facebook and Instagram.



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ONE Resident Writes Through the Storms



Abby Baker

Hurricane Blues

Miller is no stranger to writing about Florida's muggiest bits. Her first *Snack Sized Florida Story*, *Frankenskeeters*, is a classic murder mystery set in Central Florida's messy swamps and theme park lore. Her latest, *Hurricane Blues*, follows the same protagonist: environmentalist by day and private investigator by night, Johnnie Devine.

"She's tenacious, she's fearless," says Miller. "When she sees a sign that says, 'No Trespassing,' she thinks it means 'Go for Trespassing.'"

Like many major characters, Johnnie may be based on her creator, and readers may pick up on local parallels such as the environmental group she works for being based on St. Pete's Tampa Bay Watch.

Hurricane Blues is set in the middle of hurricane season, and also deals with currently hot topics in Florida, such as women's reproductive rights. "I don't take a particular stand, but I show both sides with compassion," Miller explained.

Despite being an artist in the form of an author and musician, Miller is a closeted science nerd. She was a Pinellas County Public School teacher for 10 years and follows Florida news (its weather and beyond) from a scientific mindset.

"Waiting for the storm is like waiting for a malevolent baby to be born," Miller said. "I'm a full-fledged follower of the Hurricane Center. I used to summarize what I would read for my friends, and I did that to calm myself."



That feeling of dread and excitement we all go through during hurricane season? Mary Miller calls it the "Hurricane Blues," which is also the name of her latest book, released this June, at the start of Florida's hurricane season.

The Old Northeast resident is a born-and-raised Florida local with a story that takes us back to old school St. Pete. She's the creator of the *Snack Sized Florida Series* of Florida-based mysteries.

"I get the best compliments when people tell me they were reading one of my books by the pool, or by the beach," Miller said. "I want them to be fun, like opening a bag of potato chips."

Inky Florida Roots

After moving to St. Pete when her "folks were chased out of Fort Myers" by Hurricane Donna, Miller grew up close to her brother, Captain Bill Miller, who attended Stetson Law School.

"He came to me with an idea about publishing, before the internet was a thing," Miller said. "Computers just had green letters on a black screen."

Writing has been a life-long pursuit for Miller – at just 7 years old, she wrote a letter to the editor of the then-*St. Petersburg Times* titled "Concerned about Crabs." Miller's first stab into traditional publishing, however, was a small book detailing cruise discounts. Her brother did the research, she did the writing, and they started a cruise-only travel agency.

Years later, Miller expanded her travel industry non-fiction into the *Snack Sized Florida Series*. She worked as a Pinellas County school teacher and started exploring jazz as a singer in a local band, the Daddy-OS. But writing is something Miller always comes back to.

"It's a labor of love, like a jealous lover," Miller said. "I always wish I was in the flow of writing. I steal a moment here and there."

Storm Tips from the Heart of the Storm

Despite the local legend of a Tocobaga Indian Tribe's blessing to protect the Tampa Bay area from hurricanes and storms, Miller thinks the St. Pete and surrounding areas simply have been lucky – and one day we might not be. Miller shares her few tips for enduring the season without succumbing to "the blues."

1) Avoid the hysteria: Stock up on excess water, batteries, candles and more as soon as possible. The last place you want to be before a hurricane is a grocery store parking lot.

2) Follow the storm, but don't glue yourself to the screen: Miller recalls years of following the spaghetti models on TV for days on end. One year, she packed her bags, five days of clothes, insurance policy, passport, and sprinted to West Virginia. "Needless to say, Tampa was fine, and it's better to be safe than sorry, but as long as you're staying informed and following law enforcement recommendations, leave it at that."

3) Make the best of it: Following local news, and staying safe and well-stocked are the most important things – but maybe throw some cards or board games into that emergency kit. If you're lucky enough to hole up with family or friends during an outage, Miller says a candle-lit game party is a great way to get your mind off things.

4) Channel your stormy energy into something productive: Instead of worrying about "what ifs," Miller recommends using the hours at home around a storm catching up on what you love. Read a book, reorganize your bathroom, write, yoga, anything to turn something dark and stormy into a chance at escape. For writers, Miller recommends they "steal every hour they can for their craft." ●

Hurricane season runs through November and is predicted to be an active one. Find more tips and local resources at pinellas.gov/topic/safety-emergencies/hurricanes.

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Liquid to Land

Boat Tour Celebrates History and Nature



Photo courtesy of the Museum of History

The boat tour is a partnership with the Museum of History and Tampa Bay Watch.

Laura Flint

St. Pete Museum of History has a mission “to share Florida’s stories as the hub of scholarship and learning – to inspire, entertain, and promote civic engagement.” It’s no small order, but the museum makes it happen through thoughtful, creative exhibits, special events, and various history tours. One newer offering is a history lesson by boat titled, *Liquid to Land: Discover St. Pete’s Waterfront History*. This tour, touted as the city’s only historic boat tour, is in partnership with the Tampa Bay Watch Discovery Center, dedicated to the preservation and restoration of the bay’s natural habitats. *Liquid to Land* promises to take guests back in time while experiencing the beautiful nature of Tampa Bay and its shorelines.

The tour departs from the St. Pete Pier and immediately gives guests the opportunity to learn about St. Pete’s history from a very different perspective. Museum Executive Director Rui Farias leads the tour and takes us back to the beginning of St. Pete as the “city that was never meant to be,” from its original purpose as an industrial port city. Farias covers an immense amount of history during the two-hour ride, and he does so in a most entertaining way. Covering the 1800s to today, the tour includes topics such as aviation, our waterfront parks, segregation, St. Pete pop culture through the years, architecture, war, historic myths and truths, prohibition, and the list goes on. One of the highlights is seeing some of St. Pete’s special landmarks from the water, such as the Pier, the historic

Vinoy Hotel, the beautiful Snell mansion, along with stunning water views of the bay’s natural environment.

Unfortunately, the beautiful history and development of our city comes with a price, and the partnership with Tampa Bay Watch allows us to understand more. Education Specialist Dakoeta Pinto discussed the various ways that the dredge-and-fill practices that created our current waterfront has affected its habitats. He also provided invaluable expertise on the bay’s ecology and discussed the importance of preserving Tampa Bay’s delicate ecosystem.

As the tour explored various areas of the bay, Pinto pointed out the different mangroves, various bird species, and other wildlife – including a dolphin cameo, to the delight of the guests. Pinto also explained how oyster reef balls can stabilize the shoreline, showing how humans can make a positive impact on the bay’s health.

The boat tour invites visitors to learn our city’s abundant human history while highlighting the importance of conservation of Tampa Bay’s natural environment. The partnership between the Museum of History and Tampa Bay Watch caters to both history and nature enthusiasts, and reminds visitors that our past is always interwoven with the present, and future, of Tampa Bay. ●

Find the next tour and many other Museum of History events at spmoh.com/events.



Museum Executive Director Rui Farias leads the tour.



The tour takes you up into Coffee Pot Bayou and past Bird Island.



Cat and the Spinet

This dusty damper is
 Devoid of dynamic vibrations ~
 Snoozing strings drowse on
 Undisturbed by hampered
 Harmonizing hammers ~
 Sour spinster keys do not
 Miss the sweet coupling
 Touch of trilling fingers
 On cool innocent ivory ~
 My magnificent mute mahogany,
 Were I accomplished and you attuned
 There would be no monotony for us ~



Manatee and Me

Startled at the shallows
 By the border of the berth ~
 Beneath fractious feet
 Both wood and water
 Separate flesh and blubber
 From being more fully acquainted ~
 A fraction of curiosity is shared

~ Jeannie Carlson

What a Catch!

Old Northeast resident Sally Scott took this photo of an osprey with his dinner in a tree in her front yard on Coffee Pot Blvd. in early June. Neighbors have named the bird Ozzie, and say he regularly stops by with his catches.

“He is in that tree every day in late afternoon, scoping out what he’s going to eat for dinner,” wrote Sally. “Yesterday he decided on a big catfish – something has to eat them!”



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MEET YOUR NEIGHBORS



Sally Scott
Coffee Pot Blvd

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

My husband Randy and I moved to St. Pete fulltime a year ago. I was born in Tallahassee, spent time in Atlanta, Cincinnati, as well as Gainesville, FL.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

I don't have just one favorite place to visit in St. Pete – my favorite things to do is to walk around the streets in the Old Northeast and to explore local shops.

Most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation you've taken?

We recently traveled to Spain, Morocco, and Portugal. My favorite was Croatia a few years ago. The cities are so beautiful, clean, safe, and the people so friendly.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

Many places on my bucket list but two high ones are to visit the Galapagos and go on an African Safari.

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

I would love to have lunch with Melinda Gates. She's so resilient and action oriented. She has such strength of character.

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby?

I love to day-hike (not a big camper!) and to ride my beach cruiser bike along the water in St. Pete is a lot of fun.

A great movie you'd recommend or current TV series you are watching?

I've been binging on *Suits*, I will admit. A favorite movie is *Grand Canyon* because its a great story about how we can positively impact others' lives when we step out of our comfort zones to be there for others

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

I have no idea what breed of dog I'd be because I'm rather independent and dogs usually are not.

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

I am inspired by many that face tough challenges in life and become better rather than bitter. My dad is one of those people. Grew up very poor during the Depression, only one in his family to go to college (on the GI Bill), then served in WWII, and was awarded Bronze Star for Bravery and Purple Heart. He lived life to the fullest and always had a smile on his face.

Current book you've read and would recommend?

I recently read *Among the Beautiful Beasts* by Lori McMullen. It is a terrific book about the untold story of Marjory Stoneman Douglas. She was far more than an activist for the Everglades. She was a resilient woman who paved her own way in life despite many extreme challenges.

Tell us about an accomplishment, current or past, of which you are proud.

As a Guardian Ad Litem I worked hard to get two young boys a new start in life through finding a family to adopt them.

Something people might not know about you?

I'm one of a small number of people that is a super taster. When I have a terrific meal, it is wonderful. Truth is many times I taste off flavors that others do not. Most of the time I keep it to myself!

What do you do for a living? Or, if you are retired, tell us about your career.

I was in sales and marketing with Procter & Gamble for many years. I have also worked as a consultant and real estate investor.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

My husband and I have three adult sons and a very old dog named Kobie. He loves to walk along Coffee Pot waterfront and see all the other dogs.



Anna Broshears
17th Ave NE

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

I have lived in St. Pete for eight years. I am originally from Indianapolis where we raised our children. They all left Indianapolis for their careers, so we decided to move somewhere warmer.

Favorite place to visit in St. Pete?

My favorite place to visit in St. Pete is the St. Petersburg Museum of History. Their programs and exhibits are wonderful. They have historic boat tours, trolley tours, and even ghost tours. Their Happy Hour with the Historian lectures are pure delight.

Most interesting, enjoyable, or exotic vacation you've taken?

My favorite vacation was staying in a castle in the Rhine Valley in a small town called Oberwesel, Germany. The castle was hundreds of years old, and we stayed in the tower that had a balcony which overlooked the valley. It was magical.

Top two places in the world on your bucket list?

Florence, Italy and Edinburgh, Scotland.

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

Ornulf Opdahl the famous Norwegian painter. His paintings are the most beautiful I have ever seen, and his technique is curious. I would love to be able to sit down with him and pick his brain.

Favorite sport, recreational activity, or hobby?

I am obsessed with cryptograms. The more difficult, the better. I also love to paint in oils and acrylics.

A great movie you'd recommend or current TV series you are watching?

I only watch BritBox. I am currently working on the series, my second time around, *A Touch of Frost*. I have also watched all 13 years of *Vera*.

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

A mutt. They are lovable and they need us.

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

My best friend in Indiana passed away in 2020. She was diagnosed with terminal cancer and lived for eight months. She made a list of everything she wanted to see and do and completed that list with the help of family and friends. She was the kindest person I ever knew and she never once complained. She left with grace.

Current book you've read and would recommend?

Anything by Philippa Gregory. I love historical fiction. Especially the Tudor period.

Tell us about an accomplishment, current or past, of which you are proud.

Getting my bachelor's degree in biology and chemistry and then going on to be accepted into the cytology program at the Indiana University School of Medicine. I grew up in a General Motors town where everyone went to work in the factory. I made up my mind to be different.

Something people might not know about you?

Gee whiz, that's a tough one. Everyone who knows me, knows that I'm pretty much an open book.

What do you do for a living? Or, if you are retired, tell us about your career.

I am retired. I worked at the Indiana University School of Medicine in Cytopathology and primarily taught residents, medical students, and cytology students how to diagnose pancreatic tumors.

Tell us something about your family and pets.

My husband and I have been together for 30 years and have a wonderful, blended family of three boys and a girl. They live all over the country and in Europe. My husband asked me for one decade of no kids and no pets. Well, he didn't get it. Little Shirley Ann is our rescue kitty and the love of our lives. ●

Women's Club Helps Support Children's Dreams



Woman's Club member Jennifer Brackney (left) co-chaired the event with Director of Dreams Sara Lauderback (center) and Dream Fund Volunteer Coordinator Alissa Safko (right).

Sixteen enthusiastic St. Petersburg Woman's Club members, all dressed in pink, partnered with the Children's Dream Foundation Sunday, May 5, for a Mother's Day event. Twenty-five "Dream" children, their mothers, and siblings spent time at the clubhouse on Snell Isle

for stress-free fun and sweet treats. Woman's Club member Jennifer Brackney co-chaired the event with Director of Dreams Sara Lauderback and Dream Fund Volunteer Coordinator Alissa Safko. The Children's Dream Fund is a St. Petersburg nonprofit with the single purpose of fulfilling dreams for kids ages 3-21 in West Central Florida who have been diagnosed with a life-threatening illness. Since its founding in 1981, the Children's Dream Fund has made dreams come true for over 3,500 children. Over 50% of all dream costs are covered by in-kind donations and over 82% of every dollar raised goes directly to granting dreams. ● ~ *Mary Fletcher*

Kids and Kubs Softball Is Back



Photos courtesy of Kids and Kubs

Attention all senior softball fans! Kids and Kubs, aka the Three-Quarter Century Softball Club, has free summer softball play open to all players, male and female, over 60, at St. Petersburg's North Shore Park.

Now is the time to get in shape with pickup games on Tuesdays and Thursdays (weather permitting) at 9:30 am through late October, when the club's IntraClub schedule begins. Games are played at 901 North Shore Park Blvd; the home diamond is across from the St. Petersburg Aquatic Center.

Prior softball experience is not required, although that is helpful. Players must be able to throw a softball, catch, and swing a bat. Players over 60



are encouraged to participate in the Summer Ball sessions. However, they are not eligible for Kids and Kubs membership until age 74. ●

For more information, contact Mike Vander Syde at 727-527-6323 or mvandersyde@msn.com.

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